

The phraseological patterns of *fun* and *funny*

A corpus-based investigation

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Abstract

This project examines the patterns of use of *fun* and *funny* in American and British English using a data-driven phraseological approach to corpus linguistics to show similarities and differences between their use and shades of meaning. It consists of a theoretical part, presenting and exploring the field of phraseology advocated by authors like Sinclair (1991), Hunston and Francis (2000), and Stubbs (2001), and discussing central terms and definitions. In the empirical part, this project thoroughly maps out the patterns of *fun* and *funny* using two large-scale, balanced corpora, *The Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA) and *The British National Corpus* (BNC). Both qualitative and quantitative research methods are used in exploring the corpora. The findings are also compared to a dictionary and a grammar.

One of the main findings is that *fun* is a central adjective in COCA and a peripheral one in the BNC. This is reflected in differences in its collocations, colligations and other patterns of *fun* in the corpora. *Funny* is found to have a continuum of meanings, and it is also found to be used without evaluative force in introductions or ‘frames’ of the discourse. The difference between the use of *fun* and *funny* often resides in the patterns they prefer, and they are found to evaluate different types of words.

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Notational conventions

Angle brackets <...> are used to show search strings

CAPITAL LETTERS represent the lemma of a verb

Double quotation marks“...” are used to show patterns that occur in variable forms

Abbreviations used

BNC :The British National Corpus

COCA: The Corpus of Contemporary American English

AmE: American English (US)

BrE: British English

Pmw: per million words

Min freq: minimum frequency

1 Introduction

“You shall know a word by the company it keeps” (Firth 1957: 11)

The compilation, and even more importantly, the availability, of large-scale electronic corpora have opened up many new possibilities for language research. Most significantly, the study of *use* is made feasible, the corpora facilitate doing empirical linguistic research, and open up for data-driven research approaches. They can also be used for both quantitative and qualitative research methods. This has given new life to a field of linguistics called *phraseology*.

Primarily used for exploring fixed and opaque phrases, phraseology was advocated by Russian and German scholars, and more recently works by Cowie (1981), Gläser (1998), and Fiedler (2007), among others. However, with the new corpora it has become evident that these non-compositional, fixed sequences are not very common in everyday language. It also became evident that English is largely built up of semi-fixed, opaque or compositional ‘collocations’, ‘patterns’, ‘frames’ etc. Moreover, this new insight correlates with the Firthian, Construction Grammar, and Cognitive Linguistic view that the division between grammar and lexis is an unnatural one. A great deal of interesting work has been done in this field. Biber and Reppen’s lexico-grammar (1998), Hunston and Francis’ Pattern grammar (2000), Stubbs (2001) and not least Sinclair (e.g. 1991). The core principles in this corpus-based Firthian/Sinclairian tradition are:

1. Linguistics is essentially a social science and an applied science
2. Language should be studied in actual, attested, authentic instances of use. Not as intuitive, invented, isolated sentences
3. The unit of study must be whole texts
4. Texts and text types must be studied comparatively across text corpora
5. Linguistics is concerned with the study of meaning; form and meaning are inseparable
There is no boundary between lexis and syntax; lexis and syntax are interdependent
6. Much language is routine
7. Language in use transmits the culture
8. Saussurian dualisms¹ are misconceived (Stubbs 1993: 2)

¹ Saussure distinguished between *langue* and *parole*. *Langue* is the shared knowledge of a speech community, it has systematic organization and is the knowledge native speakers have of their language. In Chomskyan

Further assumptions are that the meaning of words can be inferred from their surroundings, cf. Firth's famous quote in the beginning of this chapter. Hunston points out that there are many words in English that have similar meanings, but that are not necessarily interchangeable. She claims that the meanings of near-synonymous words can be distinguished "by the patterns or phraseologies in which they typically occur" and that "[d]istinguishing between the meanings is a matter of distinguishing between patterns of usage" (Hunston 2002: 45-47).

"Unnatural sounding language" typically arises from awkward collocations. Pawley and Syder (1983) suggest that a way in which non-native speakers can give themselves away is by using correct, grammatical sequences, but not choosing the idiomatic sequence that a native speaker would do. This is ascribed to how first language learners acquire their native tongue through complex strings, versus how a second language learner starts with small units and uses these to build complex strings (Wray 2002: 206). These insights have implications for the field of language teaching.. Even words that are not ambiguous can "have a strong tendency to co-occur within predictable lexico-syntactic frames" (Stubbs 2001: 87). This quote is taken from Stubbs' treatment of some set phrases in German and English (e.g. on a map it always says *You are here* in English and *Standort* in German):

The examples are all transparent in meaning: that is, they are idiomatic, but they are not idioms. More accurately, they pose no problem for *decoding*: even if you have never heard these combinations before, you will understand them as long as you understand the individual words. But they do pose a problem for *encoding*: you just have to know that these are the conventional ways of saying these things. Fillmore et al. (1998: 504-5, following Makkai 1972) distinguish in this sense between idioms of decoding and encoding" (Stubbs 2001: 59)

Learners of English sometimes treat the word *funny* as the adjective corresponding to the noun *fun*, like the word *sunny* is the adjective corresponding to *sun*. This was probably the case etymologically (see e.g. the OED [f. FUN *n.* + -Y¹.]²) but today the words have different meanings, and *fun* is also used as an adjective. These concordance lines from *the Corpus of*

terms this is the speaker's *competence*. *Parole* is the behavior of the individual speaker, idiosyncratic and unpredictable. Chomskyans call this *performance*. *Parole* or *performance* are not seen as interesting to the study of language, and also as unobservable. *Langue* or *competence* is the only interesting object of study, however, this is also viewed as unobservable. This entails that, in this tradition of linguistics, the use of corpora is of little interest.

²http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50091012?query_type=word&queryword=funny&first=1&max_to_show=10&sort_type=alpha&result_place=2&search_id=WN0L-qfqWDR-3473&hilite=50091012

*Contemporary American English (COCA)*³ indicate that word class not always separates these two words:

- (1) " My goal for Poetry Month is to teach the students that poetry can be fun and funny, " Gaddy says. (COCA, 2005, Magazine)
- (2) Testament to our belief that Washington can be fun and funny. (COCA, 1998, Spoken)

My study has a descriptive aim. I aim to map out the patterns and phraseologies in which *fun* and *funny* occur. In addition to being an area fraught with possibilities for error for learners, recurrent strings constitute difficulties for computers as well. Discovery and description of patterns and multiword expressions are crucial to the development of NLP resources that involve semantics. My ultimate research goal is to contribute to the compilation of a "grammar of meaning".

[A]s we build up and refine the semantic sets associated with a structure, we move closer to a position where we can compile a grammar of the typical meanings that human communication encodes, and recognise the untypical and therefore foregrounded meanings whenever we come across them"(Francis (1993: 155).

My superordinate issues are:

- Is submitting two similar words to a phraseology-guided, data-driven corpus investigation a fruitful way to compare and contrast the use of two similar words?

And even more superordinate:

- Is using large-scale, balanced corpora fruitful for this kind of language research?

My research questions are:

- What are the main patterns of usage of *fun*?
 - Is *fun* used as an adjective?
- What are the main patterns of usage of *funny*?
- Are there differences in the use of *fun* and *funny* in British and American English?

To answer these questions I will use two large scale corpora of American and British English as my material and phraseology as my approach, see further section 2. In my project, I investigate two quite frequent words, (*fun* and *funny*) with a common etymology, see section 1.1.4. They are not words that are interesting to phraseology because they frequently occur in idioms, or because their meanings are particularly opaque. However, the current study aims to show that valuable insight can be gained by submitting the two words to phraseological

³ See section 3.2 for information about this corpus

investigation using large-scale balanced corpora. But before embarking on the corpus investigation, I will look at how the two words are described in a grammar, *A comprehensive grammar of the English language* (Quirk et al. 1985), and in *the Oxford English Dictionary*.

1.1 *Fun and funny in grammars and dictionaries*

1.1.1 *Fun in A comprehensive grammar of the English language*

Fun can be described as a noncount (uncountable), abstract noun (Quirk et al. 2005: 246-247), or a qualitative, evaluative adjective. This means that the word has a double word class membership.

Quirk et al. (1985) note that “*Fun* is primarily a regular noncount noun: *a great deal of fun, great fun, some fun*. However, in informal usage (esp AmE), *fun* has been fully converted into an adjective: *The party was fun; a fun person; a very fun party*” (Quirk et al. 1985: 412, 7.14 note c). Quirk et al. (1985: 70) further use the word *homomorph* to describe words with the same morphological form but different syntactic functions (e.g. *fun*, adjective and *fun*, noun). They suggest that this is related to processes of word-formation, that is, functional conversion/functional shift/zero derivation, explained as “the derivational process whereby an item is adapted or converted to a new word class without an addition of an affix” (Quirk et al. 1985: 1558, App 1.43). Conversion is treated as a process “for *extending* the lexical resources of the language”, rather than a historical process (1985: App. 1.44). They also note that the converted item might not have the same semantic range as it had/has in the “original” word class (Quirk et al. 1985: 1560, app 1.46). Furthermore, a criterion is set for conversion from noun to adjective: “membership of this category can be postulated only when the noun form occurs in predicative as well as in attributive function [...] since the latter is freely available for nouns within the grammar of the noun phrase” (Quirk et al. 1985: 1562: 1.51).

Four criteria for adjectives are presented, however, not all adjectives possess all four.

According to these criteria, adjectives

- **freely occur in attributive function (premodify a noun, between the determiner and the head of a noun phrase);**

- (3) These are both educational and fun days and all ages, from primary to junior and senior schools have already booked their places. (BNC, CJ6)
- **freely occur in predicative function (function as subject or object complement);**
- (4) Maisie showed worrying signs of interest in feminism. ‘It sounds **fun!**’ she said. (BNC, ASS)
- **can be premodified by the intensifier *very*;**
- (5) She loves giving away free stuff to people. It's very campy, it's **very fun**, so she could be in the running. (COCA, 2007, Spoken)
- **can take comparative and superlative forms (by means of inflection (-er and -est) or by addition of premodifiers *more* and *most*) (Quirk et al. 1985: 402-403).**
- (6) LOWRY: It's definitely easier and **funner** to talk about it, there's no doubt about it. And we have seen kind of a melding together of the political and the tabloid culture when it comes to the media. (COCA, 2000, Spoken)
- (7) Use the kookiest, prettiest, **funnest**, most interesting or elegant cocktail glasses you can find - dip rims in fruit juice and then into colored sugar (COCA, 2004, Newspaper)
- (8) You meet some of the wildest, wackiest, weirdest, **most fun** people — and at the same time there's some really dark forces at work.’ (BNC, ACP)

Classification of *fun* as adjective according to Quirk et al. would probably result in *fun* as more peripheral in BrE (BNC) (- for very and inflectional comparison) and more central in AmE (COCA) (+ for all criteria, even for inflectional comparison)

1.1.2 *Fun in the Oxford English Dictionary*

As a starting point I will look at how *fun* is defined and explained in a monolingual dictionary, the *Oxford English Dictionary*⁴ The etymology in the OED of *fun*, noun suggests that it probably developed from fun as a verb: [prob. f. FUN v.]

It further list three senses of fun as a noun: The first is obsolete: “A cheat or trick; a hoax, a practical joke”. This sense will not be commented further. Table 1 contains the two remaining senses.

<p>Sense 2 A): Diversion, amusement, sport; also, boisterous jocularly or gaiety, drollery. Also, a source or cause of amusement or pleasure.</p>	<p>Usage B) Phr. <i>to make fun of, poke fun at</i> (a person, etc.): to ridicule. <i>for</i> or <i>in fun</i>: as a joke, sportively, not seriously. (<i>he, it is</i>) <i>good, great fun</i>: a source of much amusement. <i>like fun</i>: energetically, very quickly, vigorously. <i>what fun!</i> how very amusing! <i>for the fun of the thing</i>: for amusement; <i>to have fun (with)</i>: to enjoy (a process); <i>spec.</i> to have sexual intercourse.</p> <p>Usage C) Exciting goings-on. Also fun and games, <i>freq.</i> used ironically;</p>
--	---

⁴http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50090878?query_type=word&queryword=fun&first=1&max_to_show=10&sort_type=alpha&result_place=1&search_id=Dpfl-CTHTdK-3732&hilite=50090878

	<i>spec. amatory play. colloq.</i>
Sense 3 A) Comb. , as <i>fun-loving</i> adj. Also <i>attrib.</i> , passing into <i>adj.</i> with the sense ‘amusing, entertaining, enjoyable’.	Usage B) Special comb., as fun fair , a fair (or that part of a fair) which is devoted to amusements and side-shows; funfest chiefly <i>U.S.</i> , a gathering for the purposes of amusement; fun-maker , a comedian, humorist, jester; fun run orig. <i>U.S.</i> , an organized and largely uncompetitive long-distance run, esp. characterized by the mass participation of occasional (often sponsored) runners; also fun runner , one who takes part in a long-distance run for fun, rather than competitively; fun running .

Table 1. Sense of *fun* in the OED

1.1.3 *Funny* in *A comprehensive grammar of the English language*

Funny can be described as a qualitative, evaluative, gradable adjective. It can be used attributively and predicatively, and as a postmodifier in noun phrases. It is compared by means of inflectional endings (<funnier> (COCA 397, BNC 60), <funniest> (COCA 833, BNC 120), but it does also occur compared periphrastically, by adverb modifiers <more> (25 in COCA, 7 in BNC) and <most> (6 in COCA, 1 in the BNC). Interestingly, the superlative <funniest> is more frequent in both corpora.

As mentioned in section 1.1.1, Quirk et al. (1985) define four criteria for adjectives. I have postulated that, depending on the variety and the register, *fun* can be said to possess two or three (or even four) of these qualities. *Funny*, on the other hand, possesses all 4 of these qualities, and is thus a *central* adjective: The criteria are:

- **attributive function;**

(9) KOTB: But here' s the funny thing, I had a great... GIFFORD: Waste of time, let me tell you. Just been scoped and I' m singing to her. I think I must be on the call of duty. Grrr. That sound. KOTB: I had a gift for you and I left it at the Mandarin Oriental. (COCA, 2009, Spoken)

- **predicative function;**

(10)The new book is funny and depressing at considerable length, and there are moments when a wee terror comes of its expanded universe. (BNC, A05)

- **intensifier *very*;**

(11)It's not hard to see why even when clean, Kamrok's verses are **very funny**. (BNC, K3X)

- **comparative and superlative forms**

(12)Featuring both his usual team of recurring players plus excellent additions, Kevin Smith's sequel is as good, if not even **funnier** than the terrific original. One of the **funniest** films to be released so far this year. (COCA, 2006, Newspaper)

1.1.4 *Funny* in the *Oxford English Dictionary*

The *Oxford English Dictionary*⁵ gives the etymology of *funny* as being a derivation of *fun* noun: [f. FUN n. + -Y1.] The dictionary further lists 4 senses for *funny* adjective (A). Number 3 is obsolete: “*slang*. Tippy. *Obs*”. Interestingly, *fun* (*affording fun*) is used to describe *funny* in sense 1 in the OED. B is *funny* plural noun, and it only has one sense.

<p>A Sense 1. a. Affording fun, mirth-producing, comical, facetious.</p>	<p>Usage b. <i>funny business</i>, action (on the part of a clown or actor) intended to excite laughter; hence, jesting, nonsense; also <i>slang</i>, fooling or monkeying about; deceitful or underhand practices; similarly <i>funny stuff</i>, <i>funny dope</i>; <i>funny column</i>, <i>paper</i>, a (section of a) newspaper containing humorous matter or illustrations. orig. <i>U.S.</i></p>
<p>A Sense 2. a. Curious, queer, odd, strange. <i>colloq.</i></p>	<p>Usage b. <i>funny-peculiar</i>, a colloquialism introduced to distinguish sense 2 from sense 1 (<i>funny-ha-ha</i>), the two antithetic expressions freq. appearing together.</p>
<p>Addition 1993: [A.] [2.]</p>	<p>Usage c. <i>funny money colloq.</i> (orig. <i>U.S.</i>), money which for some reason is not what it seems: <i>spec.</i> (a) currency which has been devalued by inflation; (b) counterfeit currency; (c) financial assets which have been created or amassed by incomprehensible or unscrupulous accounting; also, a ridiculously large amount of money.</p>
<p>A Sense 4.</p>	<p><i>Comb.</i>, as <i>funny-looking</i> adj.; funny-bone, the popular name for that part of the elbow over which the ulnar nerve passes, from the peculiar sensation experienced when it is struck; also <i>fig.</i>; funny-face, a <i>joc.</i> and <i>colloq.</i> form of address; funny farm <i>slang</i>, a mental hospital; funny-man, a professional jester; funny party <i>Naut.</i>, a ship's concert party.</p>
<p>B. n. pl.</p>	<p>Comic illustrations, etc.; <i>spec.</i> comic strips, or the section of a newspaper devoted to these (D.A.)..Hence, funny persons, books, etc.; jokes. <i>rare</i> in <i>sing.</i> orig. <i>U.S.</i> Hence funnily <i>adv.</i>, in a funny manner; funniness, the quality or state of being funny; a funny saying or joke. Also funnyism <i>nonce-wd.</i>, a joke</p>

Table 2. Senses of *funny* in the OED

1.2 Plan of the study

The structure of the following chapters is as follows:

- **Phraseology:** The theoretical background for the paper is outlined, key concepts are discussed and terms and definitions used in this study are introduced.
- **Material and methods:** Research methods and corpus linguistics is discussed, the corpora are introduced and some issues with using the corpora are treated.

⁵http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50091012?query_type=word&queryword=funny&first=1&max_to_show=10&sort_type=alpha&result_place=2&search_id=WN0L-qfqWDR-3473&hilite=50091012

- **Results of the investigation of the British National Corpus** The findings from the investigation of the patterns of *fun* and *funny* are presented. The use and patterns of *fun* and *funny* are compared.
- **Results of the investigation of the Corpus of Contemporary American English:** The findings from the investigation of the patterns of *fun* and *funny* are presented. The use and patterns of *fun* and *funny* are compared. The use and patterns of *fun* and *funny* in COCA are compared to the BNC.
- **Summary and concluding remarks :** Comparisons of the two corpora and the two words are summarized and some concluding remarks are offered. Suggestions for further research are given.

2 Phraseology

“No word is an island” (Stewart 2010: 56)

This project is a corpus investigation within the framework of phraseology. Phraseology is a term that has been used to describe a variety of aspects of the study of phrases, and consists of different traditions. However, Granger and Paquot (2008) define two main directions:

- A tradition of Russian (East European) scholars, and more recently, Cowie. They see the most opaque and idiomatic expressions as most “core”, and do not regard free and variable combinations as part of phraseology. Granger and Paquot (2008: 29, following Nesselhauf (2004)) dub this “the phraseological approach”, while Granger and Meunier (2008: xxii) refer to it as a ‘lexicographic phraseology’.
- A newer tradition, spearheaded by Sinclair, “has literally turned phraseology on its head” (Granger and Paquot 2008: 29). This approach to phraseology is corpus-driven, inductive and frequency based, i.e. it does not identify lexical units/multi word units using semantic criteria, but frequency criteria. Granger and Paquot (2008) call this “the distributional or frequency-based approach” (2008: 28-31). Granger and Meunier (2008: xxii) refer to a “data-driven phraseology”.

I will be using phraseology in the “Sinclarian” or “Firthian” sense for this project⁶. This tradition runs contrary to the Chomskyan tradition, which relies on native speaker intuition, and is not concerned with meaning, but rather a ‘pure’ grammar. Sinclair argues that language should be studied as it naturally occurs and not through invented examples (in Carter 2004: 2). In Sinclair’s own words “One does not study all of botany by making artificial flowers” (Sinclair 1991: 6). The very notion of phraseology seems to be in conflict with generative linguistics. Gries (2008) says that: “Given (i) a linguistic system involving only perfectly productive rules and a lexicon as a grab bag of exceptions and (ii) the objective of developing a language-independent / universal grammar, there has never been a systematic identification of the inventory of phraselogsms in a language within transformational-generative grammar” (Gries 2008: 19). As Gries points out, phraseology finds a better match within cognitive linguistic theory (cf. Langacker 1987), or within Construction Grammar (cf. Goldberg 1995),

⁶ See section 1 for a comprehensive list of Firthian/Sinclairian principles.

which respectively have the symbolic unit and the construction as their ‘central unit of analysis’. This makes these frameworks much more compatible with phraseology (Gries 2008: 14).

As mentioned above, this tradition is reliant on the emergence of large computer corpora, and Sinclair’s investigations of these have been key in the development of his theories (Carter 2004: 2-3).

In Sinclair (1987(a)) two models for interpreting text are set out: the Open-Choice Principle and the Idiom Principle.

2.1 The Open-choice Principle and the Idiom Principle

Conversation is much more of a roughly prescribed ritual than most people think. Once someone speaks to you, you are in a relatively determined context and you are not free just to say what you please. We are born individuals. But to satisfy our needs we have to become social persons ... it is [in] the study of conversation ... that we shall find the key to a better understanding of what language really is and how it works. (Firth 1935: 66, 70-71)

The Open-choice Principle treats each word as a unit of meaning (Sinclair 1991: 175). It implies a choice being made for every word that is used, in Sinclair’s (1991: 109) words “at each point where a unit is completed [...], a large range of choice opens up and the only constraint is grammaticalness”. This is the model upon which most grammars are made and is the “normal way” of viewing language (Sinclair 1991: 109).

The Idiom Principle can be summed up like this: “a language user has available to him or her a large number of semi-preconstructed phrases that constitute single choices, even though they might appear to be analysable into segments” (Sinclair 1991: 110). This principle is in play whenever the Open-choice Principle is not, or rather, the Idiom Principle will be the principle first applied when interpreting text, and only if this model fails to account for the text, the open-choice principle sets in (Sinclair 1991: 110, 114). Kjellmer (1991) combines two analogies made by Aitchison (1987) and Sinclair (1987a), into an analogy of driving a car, which illustrates the interplay of the two principles quite well:

When we are driving a car, we have a goal most of the time (although we may occasionally drive for the sake of driving). To get to our goal we have to abide by the traffic rules and follow certain stretches of road. If we know the lay of the land reasonably well, we do not stop at every street corner to

make fresh decisions, but we do have to make minor decisions at most crossroads and major decisions at main junctions. There is only a limited number of ways of reaching a given goal, and few personal variations ordinarily occur (like driving across a lawn, or on the pavement). In a similar fashion we normally have a goal in speaking or writing (although again we may speak for the sake of speaking). We have to obey the rules laid down by the grammar of our language and we normally follow certain 'lexical stretches', i.e. well-established sequences of words. If we speak the language reasonably well, we do not stop at every word or every few words to get our bearings; a lexical stretch will often link up or overlap with other lexical stretches that will take us further along our chosen path. Decisions will of course have to be taken, minor ones at the 'crossroads', at breaks between lexical stretches, and major ones at the 'main junctions', where one train of thought succeeds another. Again, few personal deviations from the established pattern occur, such as choosing unexpected words or ungrammatical forms. So, just as in driving, we use semi-automated routines in speaking and writing; both traffic rules/grammatical rules and a road network/a set of lexical stretches are essential to ensure adequate communication (Kjellmer 1991: 122-123)

In an article in *Textus* in 1996, Sinclair says that these two principles should be seen as endpoints of a continuum, similar to the ethical terms *freedom* and *determinism*. What belongs to the part of the continuum that lies closer to the endpoint of the Open-Choice Principle he calls *terminological tendency*. Here we find technical terms, legal texts, etc. On the other side, towards the endpoint of the Idiom Principle, there is a *phraseological tendency*. This is where we find collocation, "and other features of idiomaticity" (Sinclair (1996)2004: 29). The hypothesis that comes out of this is that of *extended units of meaning*, that "units of meaning are largely phrasal [...] The idea of a word carrying meaning on its own would be relegated to the margins of linguistic interest, in the enumeration of flora and fauna for example" (Sinclair (1996)2004: 30). This is the central notion of this tradition of phraseology – that virtually *all* meaning is phrasal to some extent.

Gries (2008) shows how Sinclair's Idiom Principle ties in with Pawley and Syder's (1983: 213-215ff) claim:

...that speakers' mental lexicon do contain much more than just lexical primitives, namely hundreds of thousands of prefabricated items that *could* be productively assembled but are, as a result of frequent encounter, redundantly stored and accessed. Thus, the analysis of phraseologisms does not only reveal patterns, and maybe peculiarities, of usage, but can also ultimately lead to more refined statements about matters of mental representation within the linguistic system (Gries in Granger and Meunier 2008: 17-18).

2.2 Sinclair's model of extended units of meaning

We should apply only frameworks that are loose and flexible, in order to accommodate the new information that will come from the text. We should expect to encounter unusual phenomena; we should accept that a large part of our linguistic behaviour is subliminal, and that therefore we may find a lot of surprises. We should search for models that are especially appropriate to the study of lexis and discourse (Sinclair 1990/2004: 23).

The main idea behind the Idiom Principle is the co-selection of words. Sinclair ((1996) 2004) presents four categories of co-selection: *collocation*, *colligation*, *semantic preference* and *semantic prosody*. The categories increase in abstraction, with collocation being the least abstract and semantic prosody the most abstract.

Stubbs (2009) shows how this model of co-selection makes lexis fit into traditional linguistic description: *collocation* is the lexical component, *colligation* is the syntactic one, *semantic preference* is the semantic component and *semantic prosody* is the pragmatic component of the lexical item (Stubbs 2009: 22-23)

2.2.1 Collocation

Traditionally attributed to Firth (1957b), collocation is a word-to-word relationship. In Sinclair (1996) it is defined as “a frequent co-occurrence of words” ((1996) 2004: 28). Central to the notion of collocation is the notion of a ‘node’ – which is the word we are investigating, and the ‘span’, which refers to how many words left and right of the node we choose to investigate. Sinclair usually advocates the use of a span of 4:4, four words to the left of the node and four words to the right (Sinclair 1991: 106). I, however, have chosen to use a span of 5:5 as default, following the definition in the COBUILD dictionary project:

[t]he definition of regular or significant collocates was ‘lexical items occurring within five words either way of the headword with a greater frequency than the law of averages would lead you to expect’ (...) Collocation was established only on the basis of corpus evidence (COBUILD dictionary project, Krishnamurthy 1987: 70)

When discussing collocation, different authors have different definitions of the term. Firth (in Palmer 1968: 18) defines collocation as a relationship of ‘mutual expectancy’: “statements of the habitual or customary places of that word in collocational order but not in any other contextual order and emphatically not in any grammatical order. The collocation of a word or

a ‘piece’ is not to be regarded as mere juxtaposition, it is an order of *mutual expectancy*” (in Stewart 2010: 85). Hoey (1991) defines collocation as “the relationship a lexical item has with items which appear with greater than random probability in its (textual) context” (1991: 7), and thus calling for statistical measures to determine collocation.

It seems that the definition of collocation is a great source of confusion in phraseology. This makes getting oriented in the field more difficult and also seems to lead to quite a few misunderstandings. One example is the use of the word ‘collocate’. In the *Cobuild* definition above, collocate is defined exactly like collocation, with a frequency threshold. However, there are examples in the literature (e.g. Stubbs 2001: 63 Idiosyncratic collocates vs. typical collocates) of the use of ‘collocate’ as ‘co-occurrence’, and also of using ‘collocation’ to mean a mere co-occurrence. This might be why Granger and Paquot (2008: 40) decided to avoid the term ‘collocation’ all together, and rather use ‘co-occurrence’. However, this would entail that they do not distinguish between statistically significant collocation and mere co-occurrence. In this project, I will use the term ‘collocation’ to mean a co-occurrence that is considered statistically significant by its Mutual Information value.

There is also the question of whether a collocation is only instantiated in identical form. Kjellmer (1991: 116) advocates this interpretation, and only includes “sequences that recur in *identical form*” in his definition of collocation. Gries (2008), on the other hand, uses a frequently cited example of collocation “strong tea” to show that his definition of collocation is different: “the collocation of *strong* and *tea* would be instantiated both by *strong tea* and *the tea is strong*” (Gries 2008: 16). Following Gries’ definition, the notion of *span* is important; with a 1:1 span the collocational relationship between *strong* and *tea* in the second example would not have been discovered.

Kjellmer (1991) points out that collocations can be manipulated. “If as speakers of a language we thus very largely make use of chunks of prefabricated matter that allow us to move swiftly through the discourse, and if as listeners we expect other speakers to behave in the same way, this implies that anyone who happens to manipulate this mechanism of language will create something of a surprise effect”. These effects may be learners producing un-English sentences or native speakers making mistakes, but also and more often as a means of producing humor (Kjellmer 1991: 123).

2.2.2 Colligation

Colligation is also a term attributed to Firth (1957 b). It is one step up in abstraction from collocation, and is defined as “the co-occurrence of grammatical choices” (Sinclair (1996) 2004: 32). Describing something as colligation requires deciding on categories (e.g. parts of speech) to divide the elements into. By Stubbs (2001: 65) it is defined as a “relation between a pair of grammatical categories or [...] a pairing of lexis and grammar”. Stubbs exemplifies with case being “a word-form that frequently co-occurs with the grammatical category of quantifier” (Stubbs 2001: 65).

Gries (2008: 16) suggests that the way the term colligation is used is not completely in accordance with Firth’s (in Palmer 1968: 182) definition “the co-occurrence of grammatical patterns”, but that it is used to describe a kind of “phraseologism” (which is the term Gries has adopted for a unit of meaning that spans more than one orthographical word) “namely one in which one or more words habitually co-occur with a grammatical pattern”, exemplifying with how the verb HEM is frequently used in the passive (the dress was hemmed, not I hemmed the dress).

2.2.3 Semantic preference

Semantic preference is concerned with what semantic field(s) the different words that co-occur with the node belong to. It is one step further up in abstraction, requiring that we free ourselves from word class or position (Sinclair 1996/2004: 33 and 1998/2004: 142).

“Semantic preference is the restriction of regular co-occurrence to items which share a semantic feature, for example that they are both about, say, sport or suffering” (Sinclair 1998/2004: 142). Hoey (2005) talks about *semantic association*, rather than semantic preference, within his theory of lexical priming: “whenever we encounter a word, syllable or combinations of words, we note subconsciously the words it occurs with (its collocations), the meanings with which it is associated (its semantic associations), the grammatical patterns it is associated with (its colligations), and the interactive functions it contributes to serving (its pragmatic associations)” (Hoey 2009: 34).

A good example for investigation of semantic preference is the expression *naked eye*. Sinclair (1998) found that, in his sample, *naked eye* with preposition at position – 2 frequently (almost always) had a word or phrase with the semantic feature *visibility* in -3. Examples of verbs with this semantic preference are *detect*, *appear*, *viewed*, *read* and adjectives *apparent*,

evident, obvious, undetectable. Most of these are found in -3 in this particular case, but semantic preference may also appear “further out” (Sinclair 1998/2004: 32-33).

2.2.4 Semantic prosody

The term ‘prosody’, which is generally used in linguistics to refer to the sound or rhythm of words, is applied here to the sound of meanings rather than phonemes and particularly to the way in which words and expressions create an aura of meaning capable of affecting words around them (Gavioli 2005: 46)

“Semantic prosody is instantiated when a word such as CAUSE co-occurs regularly with words that share a given meaning or meanings, and then acquires some of the meaning(s) of those words as a result. This acquired meaning is known as semantic prosody” (Stewart 2010: 1)

The term *semantic prosody* was coined by Louw (1993). It shows speaker attitude and is thus a feature of pragmatics (Sinclair 1996/2004: 34). Sinclair also calls it “the determiner of meaning as a whole” (1998: 141) and “the junction of form and function. The reason why we choose to express ourselves in one way rather than another is coded in the prosody” (Sinclair 2004: 174). However, semantic prosody is the most abstract of the categories and is the least easily retrieved (Sinclair 2004: 174). This is also a term that has been used differently by different authors. “Indeed, in accordance with whichever of its multiple features is/are prioritised, it has been approached in such diverse ways that it has ended up meaning markedly different things to different people” (Stewart 2010: 3). One of the central differences is how semantic prosody is defined in relation to connotation.

The *Collins Cobuild English Dictionary for Advanced Learners* 1995 edition defines connotation like this: “The connotation of a particular word or name are the ideas or qualities which it makes you think of” (1995: 343). Louw (2000) tries to distinguish semantic prosody from connotation by calling it “schematic knowledge of repeated events”, while semantic prosodies are “more strictly functional or attitudinal” “relate directly to what literary critics call authorial tone and are supported by a series of collocates” (Louw 2000: 50). However, as Stewart (2010) points out, highlighting collocational aspects of semantic prosody to distinguish it from connotation, achieves only a degrading of the notion of semantic prosody. “[T]he very raison d’être of semantic prosody, and perhaps its greatest strength, rests upon the fact that it is not, or not only a collocational phenomenon” (Stewart 2010: 87). Also Hoey (1997: 5) makes this point: “Of course ... semantic prosody will include many items that are also collocations, but what makes the notion so useful is that it cannot be subsumed by its collocates”.

If we look back to the discussion about the term collocation, it seems that the authors

who define semantic prosody as a collocational phenomenon may be using this term in the meaning “co-occurrence”; they use ‘collocates’ to describe any words surrounding the node, rather than using it to talk about a statistical relationship of mutual expectancy. A clue could be the fact that Sinclair (whose definition I have used for the term collocation) does not use ‘collocate’ when talking about semantic prosody, but ‘the subjects of’ or ‘the main vocabulary’ (Stewart 2010: 87).

It might be easier to understand semantic prosody if we take Stubbs’s (1995) approach. He claims that the prosody lies in the surrounding words, and that it might be seen as one step before a word develops a connotation: “CAUSE is near the stage where the word itself, out of context, has negative connotations (AFFECT is already at this point)” (1995: 50).

2.2.5 Stubbs’ three additional categories

Stubbs (2001: 88) adds three more categories to this model. These are

Strength of attraction : Probability of co-occurrence. This can be investigated using a statistical measure, such as Mutual Information (MI) or Log-Likelihood (LL).

Position and positional mobility : Is the relative position of the elements in the unit variable? Stubbs gives the example *spick and span*, where the elements always occur in that order.

Distribution in text-types: Is the unit in question a phenomenon of English in general, in a genre, such as journalism, or in a specialized text-type such as recipes? (Stubbs 2001: 88).

The concepts from Sinclair’s *Model of extended units of meaning* will be used to identify and discuss patterns of usage of *fun* and *funny* in my study. The top lexical collocations will be used as a starting point, and the colligations found have structured my analysis. Semantic preference, semantic prosody, strength of attraction, positional mobility and distribution in text-types will be commented on within each section, where it is relevant.

2.3 Phraseology and linguistic theory

Gries (2008) points out that Cognitive Grammar is an especially suitable linguistic theory for phraseology. This is Langacker’s (1987: 57) definition of a symbolic unit (the core of Cognitive Grammar): “a structure that a speaker has mastered quite thoroughly, to the extent that he can employ it in a largely automatic fashion, without having to focus his attention specifically on its individual parts for their arrangement [...] he has no need to reflect on how to put it together” (Langacker 1987: 57). This is highly reminiscent of Sinclair’s idiom

principle, (and of the ‘driving’ analogy that Kjellmer (1991) uses to illustrate it, see section 2.1). However, a symbolic unit in Cognitive Grammar includes single words as well as argument structure constructions and clause patterns, and is thus a broader category than what the subject of analysis of phraseology is, which is more than one word (Gries 2008: 14).

Gries also points out that Construction Grammar (Goldberg 1995) is compatible with phraseology, with the ‘central linguistic unit’ being the construction. Stubbs (2009) also makes this point, in the following quote:

Pattern Grammar and Construction Grammar both conclude that the primary unit of meaning is not the individual word, but a phrasal construction which consists of lexical, grammatical, semantic and pragmatic relations, and that the traditional part of speech system is suspect: syntactic relations can be stated only within larger constructions (2009: 27).

However, in Construction Grammar ‘non-compositionality’ (or rather ‘non-predictability’ in Goldberg’s words) is a requirement: this differs from my approach to phraseology, and also from Gries’ parameter settings, see section 2.4.

Put differently, *symbolic unit* is a general notion, *construction* as defined above is slightly more specific by requiring one non-predictable aspect, and *phraseologism* as defined here is also more specific by not requiring non-predictability, but at least one lexically specified element (Gries 2008: 14)

2.4 The phraseological unit

‘Multi word unit’, ‘Phrasal unit’, ‘Lexical item’, ‘Extended unit of meaning’, ‘Word combination’? As I have shown above, there is no unity in the literature on terminology in phraseology. Nor when determining what the subject of analysis is to be called, and what criteria must be filled for the unit to be interesting for phraseology.

As mentioned above, I am taking a frequency based, data-driven approach to phraseology in this project. This means that I will not be taking Gläser’s (1998: 126) definition of a phraseological unit: “Idioms form the majority and may be regarded as the prototype of the phraseological unit”. This definition takes a figurative unit as its subject of analysis, with non-compositional semantics, and belongs in the realm of phraseology for lexicographical purposes, or “the phraseological approach” (see p.9).

I will rather follow a definition along the lines of Gries’ (2008) “phraseologisms”. He sets out to ensure compatibility between studies in phraseology, and thus defines six parameters that he suggests be used by authors to show how they define their subject of analysis:

- i. the *nature* of the elements involved in phraseologism;
- ii. the *number* of elements involved in phraseologism;
- iii. the *number of times* an expression must be observed before it counts as a phraseologism;
- iv. the permissible *distance* between the elements involved in phraseologism;
- v. the degree of *lexical and syntactic flexibility* of the elements involved;
- vi. the role that *semantic unity* and *semantic non-compositionality / non-predictability* play in the definition (Gries 2008: 4)

Gries (2008) sets the parameters like this:

[A] phraseologism is defined as the co-occurrence of a form or a lemma of a lexical item and one or more additional linguistic elements of various kinds which function as one semantic unit in a clause or sentence and whose frequency of co-occurrence is larger than expected on the basis of chance (Gries 2008: 6).

From this definition it is evident that non-compositionality is not a criterion for Gries' 'phraseologisms'. This seems to be one of the main dividing lines between the two approaches, along with the notion of "fixedness" (parameter v). I will work along the lines that Gries (2008) sets up. A unit of meaning will be distinguished from a string of words using criteria of frequency and semantic unity, not non-compositionality and fixedness.

Granger and Paquot (2008) put it like this:

[O]veremphasis on fixedness and non-compositionality has tended to obscure the role played by a wide range of recurrent and co-occurrent units which are fully regular, both syntactically and semantically, and yet clearly belong to the field of phraseology (Granger and Paquot 2008: 45).

2.5 Terms and definitions used in my analysis

Sinclair's definition of a 'lexical item' appeals to me:

a unit of description made up of words and phrases [...] Elements in the surrounding context of a word or a phrase are incorporated in a larger structure when the pattern is strong enough. The lexical item balances syntagmatic and paradigmatic patterns, using the same descriptive categories to describe both dimensions (Sinclair 1998/2004: 148).

However, the words 'lexical item' implies too much unity and idiomaticity to me, and I would rather like to use the word 'pattern' as a general term for my subject of analysis. A 'pattern of a word' is in Hunston and Francis (2000) defined as "all the words and structures which are regularly associated with the word and which contributes to its meaning" (2000: 37). I also define 'pattern' as a loose term, including both lexical and grammatical co-

occurrences. A pattern can have different realizations, interfering elements between the necessary conditions. I will use the term ‘colligation’ (0) to refer to grammatical patterns. For the term ‘collocation’, I will follow Sinclair (2.2.1). I will use the definition used by Gries (2008), and not the one used by Kjellmer (1991), and include as ‘collocation’ words that occur in a span of 5:5 of the node. Furthermore, I will use ‘co-occur’ as a verb and ‘collocate’ as a noun. A ‘collocate’ is thus defined as one part of a ‘collocation’. I will also be using the terms ‘Open-Choice Principle’ and ‘Idiom Principle’ (Sinclair, see section 2.1) to distinguish between when it is relevant or interesting to talk about collocation, colligation, etc., and when these do not come into play.

I will do as Gries (2008) suggests, and use his parameters to define my subjects of analysis, which I will call ‘patterns’:

- i. The nature of the elements that I will comment on in my analysis will have at least one lexically specified element, and this element will always be *fun* or *funny*;
- ii. The minimum number of elements that I will include in a pattern is two. I will, however, always seek longer, recurring patterns;
- iii. The default minimum frequency of occurrence of patterns is three for the British National Corpus and 15 for the Corpus of Contemporary American English. I will, however, on occasion manipulate this for reasons of comparison etc. Nevertheless, patterns that occur less than three times will not be regarded as relevant for the purpose of this study;
- iv. The permissible distance of the elements in a pattern will usually be within a span of 5:5, or within sentence boundaries. However, I will on occasion comment on elements that are not found within these boundaries;
- v. I will allow for a high degree of lexical and syntactic flexibility;
- vi. I will not use semantic non-compositionality or non-predictability as a criterion for what patterns to investigate. I will, however, comment on compositionality when I see fit. (Based on Gries 2008: 4).

3 Material and methods

In this section I will explore some research methods and discuss my choices of these. I will also present the two corpora that I have used as material for this study, and the other tools that I have used to gather data. I will also discuss how the use of corpora can be useful for phraseological analysis.

3.1 Qualitative vs. quantitative methods

The decision of whether to choose a quantitative or a qualitative design is a philosophical question. Which methods to choose will depend on the nature of the project, the type of information needed, the context of the study and the availability of resources (time, money, and human) (James Neill, 2007)

The quote above illustrates well what one has to consider when deciding on using qualitative or quantitative methods. Perhaps the single most important factor when choosing a method is *the type of information needed*. This will be largely determined by the research questions that are to be answered. As Johnstone (2000) points out, research questions about *how* and *why* are best answered using qualitative methods, while questions concerning *how often* and *how much* are suitable for quantitative research methods (Johnstone 2000: 34-35)

The choice between quantitative and qualitative methods may also be influenced by your theoretical stance, e.g. whether or not you believe that frequency counts can say something about a language, or if observation data can generalize to a larger population.

Some researchers feel that purely qualitative approaches lack the rigour of research which can be supported by figures to show how commonly or frequently certain patterns crop up. They feel that, without such figures, no generalizations about trends in language usage can be made. Others hotly contest the validity of quantitative approaches, however. They feel that to elicit data which is suitable for counting and comparisons, it is necessary to use techniques which prevent truly 'natural' and spontaneous language from being produced (the 'observer's paradox' [...]) (Wray et al. 1998: 96)

One goal for research is that the procedures employed are 'valid' and 'reliable'. Johnstone (2000: 61) defines the terms thus: "A research procedure is "reliable" if it produces the same results each time it is employed. A procedure is "valid" if the results it yields are correct or true". Quantitative data are traditionally thought to be reliable, while qualitative data are not.

However, using a corpus can give you 'reliable' data in that you can go back to the corpus and find the same data, and it can be used with qualitative research methods.

Ensuring 'validity' might not be as easily achieved, as it deals with what is "true" and

“correct”. Johnstone gives some suggestions to how we, as humanists, can approach validity in our research methods:

How can we tell when a conclusion we draw is valid? [...] One question we can ask is whether we are really observing what we set out to observe. [...] We can also ask whether we have labeled things in the best way [...] Furthermore, we can ask whether we really know what the variables are [...] Since observations are always “theory dependent” [...], we have to scrutinize the explicit and unconscious theories we start out with very carefully (Johnstone 2000: 62-63).

These issues should be considered when working both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Returning to the quote by Neill (2007), the availability of resources will to some extent determine what research methods are applied. Using corpora one can get access to a large amount of data in a short amount of time, and some are even freely available on the Internet. When studying English, there are good choices of large, balanced corpora to use in research. However, as Johannessen (2003: 164, 166) points out, one should take care when using corpora quantitatively, as few corpora are completely balanced, and thus contain sampling bias. Quantitative analysis and statistics may conceal this in an unfortunate way.

In a call for papers from the Freiburg University on Linguist List 2010-05-05, I found this description of why quantitative analysis is important: “some sort of quantitative analysis technique to see the woods for the trees”. I infer that qualitative analysis will allow me to see the trees, and in this study my aim will be to both see the woods and the trees in it. I have therefore chosen to use quantitative methods in that I count frequencies and rank patterns and collocations accordingly. To explore the questions *how often* does, e.g. a pattern occurs, and to compare *how much* does, e.g., a colligation appear in the two corpora, I calculate percentages and I normalize frequencies to per million words. However, I also use qualitative methods in that I, as Johannessen (2003: 149) suggests, use the corpora as a “fishing pond”, using it to extract a large number of concordance lines and applying qualitative methods by extracting interesting and recurring patterns and look at a wider context. Doing this I hope to also get to the meanings of *fun* and *funny*, *how* and *why* are they used the way they are.

3.2 Material – the corpora and other tools

I have used two corpora to investigate *fun* and *funny*.

- British National Corpus (BNC)
- Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)

For investigating British English (BrE) I have used *The British National Corpus*. This corpus consists of approximately 100 million words of spoken (10%) and written (90%) texts. These were all gathered in the early 1990s, and the corpus seeks to be representative of “the later part of the 20th century”. The corpus is *Monolingual* (only British English) *synchronic* (texts from the late 20th century) *general* (Texts from different styles, genre, etc.) and *sample* (samples of 45,000 words are extracted from longer written sources to ensure a wide coverage of texts)

Below are some examples of what types of text the BNC contains:

The **written part** of the BNC (90%) includes, for example, extracts from regional and national newspapers, specialist periodicals and journals for all ages and interests, academic books and popular fiction, published and unpublished letters and memoranda, school and university essays, among many other kinds of text. The **spoken part** (10%) consists of orthographic transcriptions of unscripted informal conversations (recorded by volunteers selected from different age, region and social classes in a demographically balanced way) and spoken language collected in different contexts, ranging from formal business or government meetings to radio shows and phone-ins⁷

For more information about the BNC, see <http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/>.

For performing searches of the BNC I have used the BNCweb (CQP-Edition). I have also used Fletcher’s *Phrases in English* (PIE)⁸ to search the BNC. PIE is a program that allows for easier retrieval of phrases and n-grams, making it ideal for investigations in phraseology.

I have used the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA) to explore the words in an American English context. COCA consists of 400 + million words, (20 million words per year) divided into four time periods (1990-1994, 1995-1999, 2000-2004, 2005-2009) and five text categories (spoken, fiction, magazine, newspaper, academic). This makes COCA, as opposed to the BNC, useful for diachronic investigations, as well as synchronic ones. It is freely available online at www.americancorpus.org.

I have also used another program to explore COCA, a concordance called AntConc⁹. This is useful because COCA does not give many possibilities for manipulating the concordance lines to find patterns, etc. Uploading a sample into AntConc allowed me to sort, compute clusters, etc.

⁷ <http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/corpus/index.xml>

⁸ <http://www.phrasesinenglish.org/PIE/>

⁹ <http://www.antlab.sci.waseda.ac.jp/software.html>

Using these corpora, I attempt to shed light on four synchronic dimensions:

- *Fun* in the BNC compared to *funny* in the BNC;
- *Fun* in COCA compared to *funny* in COCA;
- *Fun* in the BNC compared to *fun* in COCA
- *Funny* in the BNC compared to *funny* in COCA

Furthermore, I will utilize the possibility in COCA for a diachronic dimension (which now spans 20 years). Comparing the BNC to COCA might also be said to include a certain diachronic dimension, as all the text in the BNC were compiled in the early 1990s.

3.2.1 Issues with the corpora

There are some issues connected with working with, and comparing these two corpora.

One issue is the matter of co-text. In COCA, only a limited amount of co-text is given. This is because the texts in COCA are protected by copyright law. However, the corpus uses these texts by claiming “Fair use”¹⁰. This has been ensured through, among other things, only letting end users access a small amount of text. For more information, see <http://www.americancorpus.org/>.

Another issue with COCA, is that it changes. Recently, texts for 2010 were added and the texts for 2009 were supplemented, and the corpus is updated once or twice a year. This, of course, means that frequencies obtained from COCA are less replicable than the ones obtained using the BNC.

Furthermore, the names of the speakers in the Spoken section of COCA are sometimes wrong, which becomes evident when looking at the co-text and the title. This makes reading the concordance lines somewhat confusing. However, it seems that some or all of these mistakes have been corrected. Here is an example that I found in 2009.:

I feel really great. This is the **funnest** thing I've ever done. UNIDENTIFIED CNN ANNOUNCER What, you think I'm funny or the funny is what? Mr. WILLIE WILLIAMS (Chief, LAPD) No, the **funnest** thing. The most fun thing I've ever done. UNIDENTIFIED CNN ANNOUNCER All right. (COCA, 2003, Spoken)

However, looking up the same example in COCA in 2010 gives this result:

¹⁰ http://fairuse.stanford.edu/Copyright_and_Fair_Use_Overview/chapter9/9-b.html

I feel really great. This is the **funnest** thing I've ever done. Mr-TAVERNA: What, you think I'm funny or the funny is what? SEIGEL: No, the **funnest** thing. The most fun thing I've ever done. Mr-TAVERNA: All right. (COCA, 2003, Spoken)

In the BNC, one is given access to a large amount of information about dispersion of the word or combination. However, not all texts give the same information, and looking at this information (especially at the standardized figures) might hide more than it reveals. For instance, the information that is given about age of author of the texts is made up of the known age of the author of very few of the texts in the corpus. 73.92% of texts have an author whose age is unknown, and the number of texts in the corpus by authors belonging to the age group 0-14 is 3. There is a heavy bias in text written by authors in the age-groups 35-44 and 45-59. Considering these factors, in addition to the fact that COCA does not give this information about author, I have decided not to use information about author in this study.

Possibly the most important issue has to do with the corpora that I have chosen to work with being very large, and the words I have been searching for are high frequency (at least top 2000 in COCA). I prefer to manually check frequencies (see discussion about tags below), however, this is not always feasible with the amounts of data returned, the time constraints and the availability of human resources (me). This, along with the fact that the frequencies in COCA actually change, entails that the frequencies I report on in this study are not always to be taken as absolutes, but rather as approximations. The frequencies that I cite for the BNC will more often be replicable and accurate, however, even when I manually check the frequencies there is always a risk that I count wrong, overlook something or other “human errors”. It is therefore better to see the frequencies as approximations.

Another difference between the two corpora worth noting is that the BNC does not have a diachronic dimension. Also, when calculating collocations, COCA seems to calculate across sentence boundaries, while the BNC does not. See section 5.2.1

The spoken data in the BNC and COCA are different. While the BNC contains transcribed spoken data from recorded informal and formal conversations, in addition to broadcast data, COCA only contains transcripts of unscripted conversation from television and radio. The spoken sections from the corpora can thus not be said to be directly comparable. Especially with a word like *fun* there are a lot of problems with the automatic taggers used in these corpora. Sometimes it is tagged as a noun while it should be tagged as an adjective (which could be explained, at least in the BNC, by traditional, etymological use

of *fun* only as a noun), but there are also instances of the opposite, that is, *fun* is sometimes tagged as an adjective where I consider it to be a noun usage.

3.3 Using corpus linguistics in phraseology

To answer my research questions, I have chosen to use corpora. This implies viewing linguistics as an *empirical* science. A dichotomy is proposed between the “armchair linguist” and the “corpus linguist”, or between “Intuition-based grammars” and “observation-based grammars” (Aarts 1991).

This empirical view takes these assumptions to be true: “[T]hat observed language is a more valid object of study than intuition, that it matters how frequently a linguistic item occurs, and that a corpus can be extrapolated to a more general category of language” (Hunston 2002: 39). It emphasizes the importance of replicable methods and uses publicly available data (Stubbs 2001: 96). However, in Stubbs words: “the output requires considerable interpretation” (Stubbs 2001: 96). It would be faulty to claim that by using a corpus we are rid of any influence of the researcher on the data. For instance, when investigating collocation, the chosen span, minimum frequencies that the researcher sets, and statistical measures chosen will all influence the results (Granger and Paquot 2008: 41).

Measures that can be taken to minimize the influence of the researcher on the outcome are to use “as much information as possible in exploring collocation, and to take advantage of the different perspectives provided by the use of more than one measure” (Barnbrook 1996: 101). I have attempted to follow Barnbrook in this respect by both looking at collocations in a fixed span, ranked by a statistical measure (MI), and with minimum frequency thresholds, as well as inspecting concordance lines, using KWIC (Keyword in context) views as well as investigating longer stretches of co-text, searching for other spans, using raw frequencies, as well as normalizing figures for comparison, etc. I also use qualitative methods in inspecting concordance lines and extracting interesting patterns.

As regards the statistical measures that are available, these top 5 lists of collocates with *fun* in a span of 5:5 in the BNC are a good illustration. The BNC allows for a choice between different statistical measures, here represented by Log-Likelihood, Mutual Information and raw frequency.

This first list is copied from the BNC without any modification, and shows the elements that most frequently co-occur with *fun* in the corpus. (5:5, ranked by frequency)

	Word	Total number In BNC	As collocate	In number of texts
1	,	5014383	2175	833
2	.	4713133	1781	852
3	the	6041234	1541	709
4	and	2616708	1455	682
5	of	3042376	1231	661

Table 3. Top 5 collocates of *fun* (5:5) ranked by frequency

From this list we do not learn much about the functions and patterns of *fun*. The items on this list are high-frequency items that would probably occur in a frequency list for almost any word.

This next list is ranked by Mutual Information. This is a measure that compares the probability of two words to co-occur and their probability to occur independently of each other¹¹.

	Word	Total number in BNC	As collocate	in number of texts	MI score
1	pokes	43	10	10	9.3429
2	poke	236	22	22	8.0209
3	poked	259	17	15	7.5156
4	poking	227	12	12	7.2038
5	harmless	636	18	16	6.3022

Table 4. Top 5 collocates with *fun* in the BNC (5:5), ranked by MI, min freq 10

From Table 4, we can see that *fun* occurs with a form of the lemma POKE. It is also used with the adjective <harmless>. Looking at the total number of occurrences in the BNC of these collocates (not collocations), it becomes clear that in some cases what is expressed is that POKE very frequently occurs with *fun*. However, that does not necessarily entail that of the total number of instances of *fun* there are many occurrences with POKE, in other words, MI is biased towards the low frequency items that co-occur with *fun*, and against the high frequency words that most instances of *fun* are found with. Thus, the minimum frequency threshold is crucial in getting relevant hits when sorting on MI score.

Table 5 is calculated using Log-Likelihood value:

	Word	Total number In BNC	As collocate	In number of texts	Log-likelihood value
1	great	46527	266	203	977.0482
2	it	1054279	1094	596	905.8315

¹¹ See, e.g. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mutual_information

3	having	34164	206	158 777.0747
4	good	80947	235	176 572.3642
5	much	89805	213	175 444.1365

Table 5. Top 5 collocates of *fun* in the BNC (5:5), ranked by Log-likelihood value, min freq 10

This is the statistical measure that I would prefer to use if I had the possibility, as it takes into consideration the very frequent words that *fun* collocates with and includes them as collocates. However, the only option for statistical measures in COCA¹² is using the MI score. Therefore I have chosen to use this measure in the BNC as well. Nevertheless, I will comment on LL values if I find them particularly interesting.

A limitation of corpus-based investigations is that they can really only give information about *frequencies*. Furthermore, corpora contain no negative evidence, not finding a word or a construction in a corpus cannot lead to conclusions that this word or construction is not used in that language or genre. In Hunston's words:

Corpora cannot be used to determine what is impossible in a language, as they do not offer negative evidence, and they cannot really even be used to determine what is possible, as a corpus may well contain utterances which any speaker of a language would reject as 'incorrect' (...) In Swan's (1994) terms, there is no 'demarcation' between the correct and the incorrect. In place of demarcation, a corpus offers information that a native speaker cannot replicate: an indication of 'central' and 'typical' usage (Hanks 1987: 124-125; Sinclair 1987a: 108; Sinclair 1991: 17) (Hunston 2002: 42)

The issue of lemmatizing is also one that should be taken into consideration. Several authors argue that it is useful to use corpora to investigate individual words forms instead of the more abstract lemma, and much interesting work has been done, see e.g. Newman and Rice (2006). For the purpose of my study, I have chosen to make extensive use of the lemma, mostly for reasons of data load. I have, however, noted where one word form is very dominant.

3.3.1 My procedure

I have used qualitative methods advocated by Hunston (2002) and Sinclair (1999) to uncover patterns when inspecting concordance lines, through the interfaces of the BNC and COCA, as well as the freely available programs PIE and AntConc (see section 3.2). I also use the tagging in the corpora and PIE to identify patterns and types of co-occurrences. I follow up by doing searches for the constructions, and (if the amount of hits allows it) I manually check for correct tagging/the word class that I am looking for. I use raw frequencies when comparing

¹² <http://www.americancorpus.org/>

different constructions in the same corpora, and I calculate percentages and standardize figures in terms of per million words when I compare entities of different size, like the two corpora. I take into consideration that standardized figures can wrongfully emphasize low frequency phenomena in small samples, but I choose to use it for reasons of comparison.

The minimum frequency of occurrence of a pattern is always at least three. If a construction occurs less than three times, it is not considered interesting for this study. I set minimum frequencies higher when dealing with high frequency phenomena, but the minimum frequency of occurrence is never higher than 5 in the BNC and 20 in COCA, except for when dealing with Mutual Information, here I set the minimum frequency to 10.

The Result of Investigation-chapters are introduced by the distribution of *fun* and *funny* in text-types, and the 20 statistically most important collocations (2.2.1) of *fun* and *funny*, in each corpus. The chapters are further organized using the word classes that *fun* and *funny* are found to colligate with (0). The patterns that do not fit into these categories are discussed in the section “Other patterns” at the end of the chapters. Semantic preference (2.2.3), semantic prosody (2.2.4), as well as strength of attraction, positional mobility and distribution in text-types (2.2.5) will be commented on within each section where I find it important.

The chapters also have a summary of findings and comparison of *fun* and *funny*.

4 Results of the investigation of *fun* and *funny* in the British National Corpus

I have searched the British National Corpus (BNC) for data on British English use of *fun* and *funny*. See section 3.2 for details about the corpus.

4.1 Distribution of *fun* and *funny* in the BNC

***Fun*:** In the BNC, there are 4994 occurrences of the word *fun* in 1380 different texts (in a total of 98 313 429 words), this is 50.8 instances per million words (pmw). Distribution in spoken and written section, per million words, is: spoken 51.2, written 47.36.

***Funny*:** There are 4306 occurrences of the word *funny* in the BNC, in 1091 different texts. This is 43.8 instances per million words. Distribution in spoken and written sections is: spoken 160.33 per million words, written 30 per million words.

Table 6 and Figure 1 show the distribution in text type for *fun* and *funny* in the BNC:

<i>Derived text type</i>	<i>fun</i>	<i>funny</i>
Other published written material	88.82	29.01
Unpublished written material	77.01	19.48
Newspapers	76.6	32.62
Fiction and verse	60.08	77.49
Spoken conversation	59.75	318.85
Other spoken material	38.86	51.65
Non-academic prose and biography	31.39	16.63
Academic prose	7.29	4.44

Table 6. Distribution of *fun* and *funny* in text types in the BNC, pmw

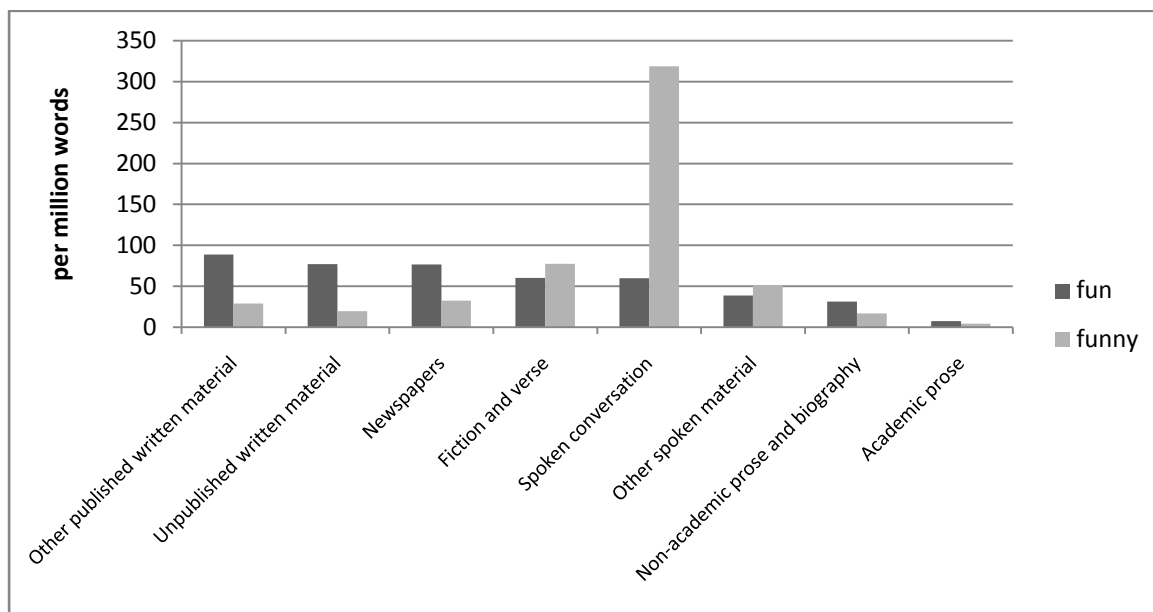


Figure 1. Distribution of *fun* and *funny* in text categories in the BNC, pmw

Fun is more evenly distributed over the text categories, while *funny* has very evident highs and lows. *Funny* is much more frequent in Spoken conversation than in the other categories in frequency per million words, 318.85. *Fun* is most frequent in Other published written material, but also in Unpublished written material and Newspapers.

4.2 Collocations in the BNC

According to my definition of collocations in section 2.2.1, I have generated collocation lists for *fun* and *funny* in the BNC using Mutual Information as statistical measure. Because of how the MI score is calculated I have set the minimum frequency of co-occurrence relatively high, to 10. I have set the cutoff point to 20 to ensure a significant MI score, and thus statistically significant collocations. For more information on MI, see section 3.2.

4.2.1 Collocations with *fun* in the BNC

Table 7 contains the 20 highest ranked collocations with *fun* in the BNC. It is ranked by Mutual information, and the minimum frequency is 10.

	<i>Collocate</i>	<i>Number as collocate</i>	<i>Total number in BNC</i>	<i>MI score</i>
1	pokes	10	43	9.3429
2	poke	22	236	8.0209
3	poked	17	259	7.5156

4	poking	12	227	7.2038
5	harmless	18	636	6.3022
6	spoil	15	617	6.0828
7	fortnight	27	1418	5.73
8	lots	53	4409	5.0665
9	fun	58	4994	5.0168
10	games	57	6083	4.7072
11	laughter	18	2064	4.6035
12	tremendous	14	1966	4.311
13	lively	10	1430	4.2849
14	excitement	17	2495	4.2475
15	having	206	34164	4.0711
16	great	266	46527	3.9943
17	humour	12	2157	3.9549
18	join	40	7259	3.9412
19	expense	13	2688	3.7529
20	enjoying	10	2078	3.7458

Table 7. Top 20 collocates with *fun* in the BNC, span 5:5, ranked by MI, min freq 10

Table 7 tells us that *fun* colligates with the word classes verbs (see 4.3) (POKE, <spoil>, <having>, and <join>), adjectives (see 4.4.1) (<harmless>, <fun>?, <tremendous>, <lively>, <great>) and nouns (see 4.7) (<fortnight>, <fun>?, <games>, <laughter>, <excitement>, <humour>, <expense>, <enjoying>). In addition, <lots> is 8th on this list, which I have reasons to believe is a part of the quantifying determiner “lots of” which occurs frequently with *fun* (see 4.4.2). From looking at this list, a positive semantic prosody can be postulated, and a semantic preference for ‘playing’ and ‘light-heartedness’ or ‘amusement’. However, more negative sounding words also appear on the list, like <spoil>, and <expense>, and the lemma POKE also points to a different meaning of *fun* which does not have such positive connotations.

In the following sections I will explore these concepts in more detail, using the colligations that I have found in the collocation list as my point of departure.

4.2.2 Collocations with *funny* in the BNC

Table 8 shows the top 20 collocates with *funny* in the BNC, ranked by MI score.

<i>Collocate</i>	<i>Number as collocate</i>	<i>Total number in BNC</i>	<i>MI score</i>
anymore	12	276	7.2415
jokes	19	1129	5.8716
noises	14	884	5.7845

funny	54	4306	5.4475
joke	17	2119	4.8029
thing	219	33874	4.4917
sad	18	3310	4.2421
stories	22	4592	4.0592
ha	16	3571	3.9627
laugh	16	3589	3.9554
hat	12	2899	3.8484
sounds	23	5775	3.7927
really	184	46363	3.7876
ai	15	4003	3.7048
sorts	11	2941	3.7021
faces	16	4437	3.6494
cos	58	16297	3.6304
smell	12	3508	3.5733
noise	15	4399	3.5687
bits	11	3275	3.5469

Table 8. Top 20 collocates with *funny* in the BNC, span 5:5, ranked by MI, min freq 10

Like *fun*, *funny* also colligates with verbs (<ai> (which is <ain't>), the following could be verbs or they could be nouns: <laugh>, <sounds>, <smell>), nouns (<jokes>, <joke>, <noises>, <noise>, <thing>, <stories>, <hat>, <sorts>? <Faces>, <bits>), adjectives (<funny>, <sad>) and adverbs (<anymore>, <really>, <cos> (“because”). In addition, it occurs with <ha>, which is typically in a repeated sequence, <ha ha ha>, signaling laughter.

The top collocate is <anymore>. Looking at the concordance lines shows that 11 of 12 instances are <n't> or <not> <funny anymore>. However, I also find that six instances are from the same article and refer to a song by The Smiths “That Joke Isn’t Funny Anymore”.

Another way that some of these collocations can be grouped is using the distinction that is used in the OED between the two senses of *fun*: *funny* ha-ha and *funny* peculiar:

Ha-ha: ha, laugh, joke(s), stories, faces

Peculiar: noise(s), smell, hat?

There is some semantic overlap between the list for *fun* and the list for *funny*, even though there are no identical words. The words <laughter>, <humour> in the list for *fun* are connected to the words <laugh> and <ha> in the list for *funny*. <Joke> and <jokes> that collocate with *funny* are also semantically tied with both <laughter> and <humour>. When it comes to colligations, *fun* does not have any adverbs in the list, and *funny* does not have any determiners. This can probably be explained by the (most central) word class of the words: adjectives (*funny*) are modified by adverbs, nouns (*fun*) are more likely to occur with determiners. However, out of the three adverbs, only <really> can be a premodifier of the adjective *funny*, and there is no apparent reason why <anymore> and <cos> should occur

more with adjectives than with nouns.

For *funny* as well I will use the colligations that I found in the collocation list as a point of departure and to structure my findings.

4.3 Verbs with *fun* and *funny* in the BNC

4.3.1 BE *fun* in the BNC

Fun is frequently used with the verb BE. <BE fun> with no interfering elements gets 564 hits in the BNC (5.75 pmw), 11.29% of the total occurrence of *fun* in the corpus. It is also frequently found in other positions. As BE is such a high-frequency lemma, this is not reflected in the collocations sorted on MI, because of how this is measured (see section 3). However, Log-likelihood reflects the strong relationship better. The form <be> has an LL value of 293.88 which places it high up when calculating a collocation list for *fun* in the BNC. In this section I will investigate the patterns and use of <BE fun>, and ignore interfering elements. The different modifiers that may occur between BE and *fun* will be discussed in sections 4.4 and 4.5.1. In the base/infinitive form <be>, <be fun> is frequently preceded by a modal auxiliary. I will come back to this in section 4.3.3.

Searching for the sequence <BE fun> and ignoring interfering elements also means ignoring some instances of negated *fun*. <BE not fun> occurs 8 times (11 without the verb specified), and <BE n't fun> occurs 6 times (always with BE). I will not look further into negated *fun* here, however, in section 4.4.2 I look into negating *fun* with negator <no>.

(13) It **was not fun** enough for the fans, nor artistic enough for the art loving public (BNC, CKV)

(14) I was exhausted and unhappy and really messed up. Suddenly I realised that I couldn't go on anymore. It just **wasn't fun**. (BNC, CGN)

When searching for <BE fun> I find that more than half of the instances are before a punctuation mark.

Subjects: Functioning as subjects with <BE fun> I find many third person personal pronouns: 11 instances of <he BE fun>, see example (15), 9 of <she BE fun> and 11 of <they BE fun>.

However, the most frequent subject is <it>, I get 154 hits on <it BE fun>. 12 of these are <but it BE fun>, see example (16). Another 12 are <THINK it BE fun>, see example (17).

Following <it BE fun> I often find verbs from the semantic field 'explore': "It BE fun to explore, discover, experiment, find, browse", also in (17), and in the *-ing* form typically

<having>, <living>, and <being>.

I also get 16 hits for <that BE fun> see example (18), and 12 hits for <this BE fun>.

The subject is sometimes this colligational pattern: “n*/gerund BE fun”, see example (19). 9 are instances of a noun denoting an “object BE fun to v*”, with the verb denoting an activity that can be done with the object, 4 instances are with <to use>, see example (20). The noun that occurs the most is <game(s)> (5 instances), see example (21). The noun can also denote an activity or a place that is described as ‘enjoyable’, see example (22). For more information on the nouns that co-occur with fun in the BNC, see section 4.7.1.

- (15) **He was fun with** the children when they were younger, too, telling them stories about life in the countryside, taking them out — ‘go all over the place with him, yes’ — and seeing them to bed: ‘he always give us a piggyback up the stairs to bed. (BNC, AP7)
- (16) My best dive was when we went down to 18 metres the depth limit for novice divers it was even colder **but it was fun** the visibility was also low we had to feel our way back. (BNC, HDA)
- (17) ‘You **think it is fun, discovering** that the only woman in the world you would like to marry suspects you of having a seriously flawed character?’ (BNC, GUE)
- (18) Yeah **that was fun!** (BNC, KDB)
- (19) **Eating and drinking is fun.** Enjoy yourself! (BNC, ECS)
- (20) Helen Barnett tried out Shapemaster Toning Tables at the Inch Loss Body Toning Centre in London. **The tables are fun to use** and after 10 one-hour sessions I did feel slimmer and more enthusiastic about exercise in general,’ she said (BNC, G2F)
- (21) Aimed at 4 to 10 year olds this educational **game is fun** and sure to keep the attention of any young student. (BNC, HAC)
- (22) We want **the park to be fun,**’ said Hayley. (BNC, H07)

The sequence <to be fun> gets 21 hits. The most typical pattern is with a verb meaning ‘intention or ‘obligation’, in addition to future reference: <meant to/supposed to be fun>, and <has (got) be fun> and <going to be fun>

- (23) After all,’ she continued, fixing her smile, forcing herself to look into those eyes that were so deep she felt she could drown in them, ‘life’s too short for moping about and parties are **meant to be fun**, aren’t they?’ (BNC, HGT)

Other patterns: There are 6 instances of <BE fun to be with>, 4 of them have a female subject, see (24). I also get 5 hits for <BE fun as well as>, 4 of them preceded by a modal auxiliary, see example (25). The pattern “BE fun if “person” or personal pronoun” occurs 7 times, see example (26). There are three instances of the pattern <BE fun while it LAST>, see example (27). <BE fun in> gets 7 hits, typically followed by specification of a place, see example (28). <BE fun for> someone gets 15 hits, this combinations is discussed in section 4.4.2.

- (24) Above all, my **mother was fun to be with.** (BNC, H0A)
- (25) Festive food should **be fun as well as** tasty, so pick a few items of specialist kitchen equipment and tableware to add the finishing touches to your yuletide table spread. (BNC, C9F)

- (26) I remember I suggested it might **be fun if** Susan developed a crush on Ian, but they wouldn't allow that either (BNC, F9Y)
- (27) It may well have **been fun while it lasted**, but we might guess by now that the Titfords would not stay long in Spa Fields, any more than they had anywhere else. (BNC, CBJ)
- (28) 'It **was fun in** Bucharest when we covered that two-way mirror. (BNC, HTJ)

4.3.2 BE *funny* in the BNC

<BE funny> (verb directly preceding the adjective) occurs 750 times in the BNC, 7.65 per million words (after manually checking for cases where *funny* premodifies a noun. 8 <funny thing(s)> are omitted, 2 <funny little “noun”>, 1 <creatures>). <BE funny> accounts for 17.42% of the total occurrence of *funny* in the corpus. <BE funny> is more frequent in the BNC than <BE fun> (564 hits, 5.75 per million words). This search does not include negated BE, like in example (29). <BE funny> is frequently negated between the verb and the Subject Predicative, in 73 instances. There are 93 instances of <not funny> without the verb specified. I come back to this in section 4.5.1.

Searching for <BE funny> without allowing for interfering elements also excludes instances where *funny* does not directly follow the verb, e.g. is one of several adjectives like in example (30). Also, in this same example, *funny* is premodified by an adverb. Even if the adjective phrase with *funny* as head had directly followed the form of BE, it would not have been included in my search because of this interfering element. Adverbs premodifying *funny* are discussed in section 4.5.1. However, with all of this in mind, I have chosen to do the search without allowing for this to make sure that I do not include irrelevant hits, and to avoid having to manually weed through a very large amount of concordance lines.

- (29) Mother-in-law jokes **AREN'T funny**. She tends to be seen as bossy and interfering — a favourite target of comedians and a figure of fun on seaside postcards. (BNC, G35)
- (30) Charles Spencer reviews a trio of London plays with themes that **are familiar, compulsive and achingly funny** (BNC, AJ8)

I find that <BE funny> is sometimes preceded by a modal auxiliary. I will come back to this in section 4.3.4.

A little less than half of occurrences is <BE funny> followed by some punctuation mark.

Subjects: The subject of <BE funny> is most frequently <it>, <it BE funny> gets 376 matches. Example (31) seems to be a dialectal use. <BE funny> also frequently has a personal pronoun as subject, see example (32). There are 31 instances of <he BE funny>, 15 of <you BE funny>, 14 of <she BE funny> and 12 of <they BE funny>. In these cases the meaning of *funny* is that the person makes you laugh, is ‘comical’ or ‘amusing’.

With <I> as subject I find 9 hits in the pattern “I’m not being funny”, five of these are followed by <but> (+1 Please don’t think I’m being funny), see example (33). Without specifying the subject, there are 24 instances of <BE funny> directly preceded by a <n’t> or <not> element. All of these have the meaning ‘amusing’. Another pattern with <I> is “It’s funny, I” followed by a story, see example (34). It seems to mean ‘interesting’ or ‘remarkable’. <That BE funny> gets 87 hits, and carries a wide range of meaning, from ‘what a coincidence’, to stating that something is ‘funny ha-ha’, to signaling ‘surprise’ or that something is ‘unexpected’, like in example (35).

Preceding verbs: <To be funny> is frequently found in the pattern “to v* (typically past) to be funny”, these are centrally denoting ‘intention’: <intend, needed, meant, (adjective) supposed>, see example (36). I find the same pattern in the BNC for <BE fun>. I also find 16 instances of <TRY to be funny>, and 13 of these are <trying to be funny>. This pattern is often negated, or discouraged, in a question that is later negated etc., see examples (37) and (38).

- (31) I thought ooh dear me. It were funny. **I thought it were funny** anyway. (BNC, KCX)
- (32) ‘I like him. **He’s funny**. He’s rather good-looking. Does he wear make-up?’ ‘Not to my knowledge.’ (BNC, EDJ)
- (33) And **I’m not being funny but** when Malcolm did it, we would do that almost two or three days after the stock taking if there were odd counts (BNC, JTB)
- (34) **It’s funny, I** didn’t appreciate the fact that I was putting on weight. 1186 I saw myself as thin, and not pregnant at all. (BNC, FU1)
- (35) But I haven’t got a boyfriend.’ ‘Oh, haven’t you? **That’s funny**. From what Faye said on the phone ... I must have got it wrong.’ (BNC, H9H)
- (36) ‘Outlining joke spectacles, you know, around my eyes, from behind. It was **meant to be funny**, you know Gabriel (BNC, CA3)
- (37) ‘**Are you trying to be funny?**’ ‘No, no, honest! I don’t know why I said that (BNC, ACB)
- (38) **Never try to be funny**. If you do, you will make her angry, and when the Headmistress gets angry you had better watch out.’ (BNC, CH4)

Other patterns: I get 15 matches for <What’s funny>, when this is followed by a question mark it seems to mean “why are you laughing, this is not a laughing matter”, see example (39). It is also followed by <about>, and sometimes found in the extended pattern “someone BE funny about something”, “what’s funny about something/someone”. In this pattern it typically means “something ‘interesting’ or ‘remarkable’ about someone, rather than ‘strange’ or ‘peculiar’”, see example (40). Other patterns that carry this same meaning are: <it BE funny> followed by an adjunct of reason, in the pattern “It/which BE funny because/cos X”, like in example (41). A similar patterns is “BE funny (,) but”.

- (39) He looked, and laughed. "**What's funny?**" I snapped. (BNC, FEE)
- (40) **What's funny about** Frank Spencer is that he's a fella. (BNC, HRF)
- (41) **It is funny because** their lives have crossed over to what mine used to be. (BNC, AT1)

The pattern “It BE funny how X” can be extended to: “it’s funny how you X”, see example (42). The pattern “It modal auxiliary be funny if”, is typically found with the modal <would> in the extended pattern “wouldn’t it be funny if”, see example (43). The pattern “BE funny though” occurs 12 times, all in the spoken part of the corpus. The meaning seems to be that it was ‘laughable’, it was ‘funny ha-ha’ even if it was not very ‘good’, see example (44).

The pattern “it BE funny when (something happens)” occurs 8 times, and sometimes seems to mean “it is interesting when” or just as a kind of introduction to what is coming next, see example (45). The extended pattern “It is funny you should v* meaning ‘utter’” expresses that something is a ‘coincidence’, it reminds me of..’, and is used to introduce the discourse, see example (46).

- (42) And **it's funny how** you get used to a thing. You're afraid of doing this and afraid of going into this and afraid of going into that thinking it's not yours. (BNC, HF3)
- (43) He now recalls seeing a painter on his knees in a shop doorway and thinking, **wouldn't it be funny** if I, as a newcomer to this city, misunderstood the situation, and, anxious to please, knelt beside him ... ? (BNC, G0F)
- (44) <pause> It **was funny though** wasn't it? <unclear> just taking them, it was good, it was so funny (BNC, KPG)
- (45) **It's funny when you** work with people how attached you get to them (BNC, CGC)
- (46) **It's funny you should say that,** said Miss Mack's Solicitor, from a resumed recumbent position, rather dreading his appearance as No. 11 in boots too small for him, 'because an uncle by marriage of mine took me once to tea with some cousin of his who had been a county cricketer and this county chap said middle and leg was best because it gave you room to cut.' (BNC, CU0)

(It's) Funny (to think) that (the elements in parenthesis are sometimes omitted) is an extended pattern. Here, the senses of *funny* seem to overlap. In this pattern it seems to suggest that something is both ‘amusing’ and ‘interesting’, but not ‘bad’. This is also used as a kind of introduction.

- (47) **It's funny to think that** only this morning we were trying to persuade poor old Eddy to go off and enjoy himself on a facilities trip to the Persian Gulf ... (BNC, G12)
- (48) **Funny to think that** the elegant cocktail dress, carefully applied make-up and coiffed hair, conceals a roll-on, a boned bra, flesh-coloured wire toupée-taped to the neck and a pouchful of wires, plugs and batteries (BNC, H9Y)
- (49) **Funny that,** when Jack was a student in Sheffield he worked in a fruit store and THEY sold cabbages. (BNC, H9Y)

The phraseological patterns of <BE funny> shed light on the meanings of *funny*. In the OED definition in section 1.1.4 two senses are listed, and the two antithetic expressions ‘funny-peculiar’ and ‘funny-ha-ha’ are introduced. However, this chapter shows that another shade of meaning is frequently interpreted into the examples. This might be said to be a variant of the ‘peculiar’ sense, but it seems softer and weaker, used as introductions suggesting that something is ‘worth attention’, is ‘interesting’, or ‘surprising’. When *funny* is used with this

shade of meaning it lends itself to expressions that do not seem to carry much meaning in the context.

There are no instances of *funny* with the meaning ‘peculiar’ with the connotation ‘in a bad way’ when *funny* is preceded by the lemma BE.

4.3.3 Modal auxiliaries be *fun* in the BNC

Many of the instances of <be fun> in the BNC are preceded by modal auxiliaries. A search for any modal be *fun* in that sequence returns 161 hits, this is almost 30% of all the occurrences of lemma BE directly preceding *fun*. This is an example of *colligation* (see 0), *fun* has a tendency to occur in this grammatical pattern.

I have chosen to limit the search of modal auxiliaries to instances with <be> as this verb can take *fun* as an adjective as well as in nominal functions. This also makes it possible to compare with *funny*.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of <be fun> across the modal auxiliaries. While <can be fun> is the most frequently found, <would> is a very close second.

To extract the relevant constructions I have used PIE to search for <‘all modal auxiliaries’ be fun>. I have excluded cases where *fun* is a premodifier of a noun in a noun phrase that is the S.P. of modal + be, (e.g. *can be a fun place*). Using the PIE search excluded negated modals and phrases with any element between the auxiliary and the main verb, and between the main verb and the adjective/noun *fun*, and there are quite a few of them. I have manually checked for, and included, modals with interfering elements to avoid this issue. However, I have not included cases with elements occurring both between the verbs and the verb and *fun*. This is a choice that I have made, and hopefully, by doing the searches the same way with all the modals, and in COCA as well, this will not affect my results in an unfortunate way.

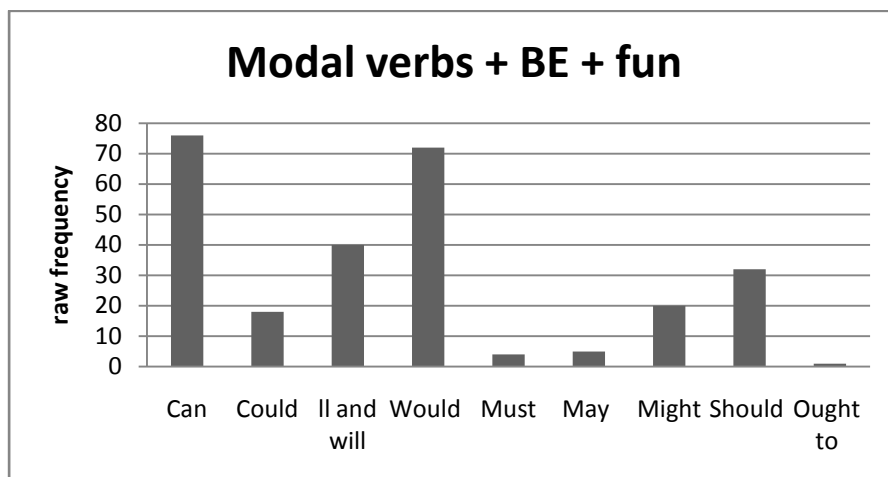


Figure 2. Modal verbs with *be fun* in the BNC, raw frequency

CAN be *fun* total 76 and COULD be *fun* total 18.

<Can be fun> with no interfering elements gets 49 hits in the BNC. The elements <can> and <be fun> are sometimes separated (by <even>, <not only> and <of course>). Occurring between <can be> and <fun> most frequently is 13 instances of <can be great fun>. <can be fun> It also occurs with other determiners/premodifiers, see 4.4. *Fun* with modal auxiliary <can> frequently occurs clause-finally. The subject is often dummy ‘it’ or a noun or gerund meaning an object or an activity (learning, training, patterns, sex, see example (50). I detect two uses of <can be fun>: something that you might think is boring can actually be made fun, highlighted by *even* in the last example: mathematics, exercise, learning, etc., see examples (51) and (52). This use is paralleled by a use of “MAKE *something* fun” in section 4.3.6. The other use is a more neutral presentation, simply stating that something can be fun, without implying that you probably think that it is not, like in example (53).

<Could be fun> frequently clause finally and with one or more elements between <could>, <be> and *fun*: Only 7 instances of the string <could be fun> with no interfering elements. Between <could> and <be fun> I find <even>, <itself> and <in itself>. Between <could be> and <fun> I find adverbs <rather>, <kinda>, and <quite>, see example **¡Error!** **No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**, determiner <such> and the adjective <great>,. When adverbs premodify *fun* it is an adjective.

(50) In short, **learning can be fun** — provided you equip yourself sensibly for the voyage of self-discovery. (BNC, EX5)

(51) Membership **can not only be fun but also useful**. (BNC, J2B)

(52) Such formalities as this are easily taught and **can even be fun to** teach and learn. (BNC, ASY)

(53) Patterns **can be fun** and some people are very adept at mixing them successfully. (BNC, GUB)

(54) ‘Well, we thought it **could be quite fun** if we got one or two really interesting new people like yourself to come along and take an entirely fresh look at the subject. (BNC, G12)

WILL and ‘LL be fun total 40 and WOULD be fun total 72.

I have chosen to treat <‘ll> and <will> together here, that is, the lemma WILL. There are instances of interfering elements also with WILL, notably <WILL be great fun> see example (55), but also <good>, <such> and <more> occur., suggesting that *fun* is typically used as a noun with WILL.

I find that <WILL be fun> is frequently negated. These do not all imply that something *will not be fun*, some of them should rather be interpreted as rhetorical questions, more like cautious statements (more cautious than saying it “will be fun!”). This is especially true in the cases with <won’t that be fun>, see examples (56) and (57). I also find two examples of positive declarative sentence + negative tag questions, <that’ll be fun, won’t it?>, see example (58). These seem to carry a pragmatic function of persuasion. The same can be said for the rhetorical questions above, and for examples (59) and (60) below, emphasized by the use of <come on>.

<Would be fun> typically follows verbs of cognition, e.g. the verbs DECIDE or THINK, in the pattern “THINK it would be fun to do something”, see examples (61) and (62). With <would> interfering elements are frequent, only 46 out of 72 instances have no other elements interfering. Typically, these elements are determiners (<more>, <much>, <no>), but also the adjectival premodifier <good> and the adverb (<kinda>). See further data on determiners and adjectives premodifying *fun* in section 4.4, and adverbs in section 4.5.1. Interestingly, there are no hits on <would be great fun>.

- (55) Sue is sworn to secrecy about what will befall Audrey in the coming weeks. ‘Anything I do with Bryan Mosley, who plays Alf, **will be great fun**,’ she says. (BNC, EFG)
- (56) And it's very hot and not nice for children, so you can stay in England and go to a boarding school like Alex — **won't that be fun?**’ (BNC, APU)
- (57) which this year promises to bring you stories about subjects such as homosexuality and Aids. **Won't that be fun?** (BNC, CBC)
- (58) Carrie nudged him gently and said, ‘**That'll be fun, Nick, won't it?**’ (BNC, EFJ)
- (59) Come on, Janie, we must go now. **It'll be fun, you'll see.** " (BNC, FEE)
- (60) **Come on, it will be fun.** You can view the severed head of St Oliver Plunkett in St Peter's Church.’ (BNC, HGY)
- (61) Things came to a head a few weeks before Christmas, when Mazzin **decided it would be fun** to frogmarch us to and from the bathroom. (BNC, FS0)
- (62) ‘I chose Dame Edna, because she takes the mickey out of fashion. I **thought it would be fun** to do it, she's a man but her own person and very outrageous.’ (BNC, A9T)

MUST be fun total 4.

There are only four hits on <must be fun>, and no hits on interfering elements.

- (63) ‘The real message about Disney,’ Stern continues, ‘is that **building must be fun**. And this is quite appropriate since the company's business is entertainment. (BNC, CAG)

(64) Above all, **campaigning must be fun** for watchers and participants. It should be different, out of the ordinary, exciting. (BNC, ADK)

MAY be *fun* total 5 and MIGHT be *fun* total 20.

With <may be fun> two of five are concordances with interfering elements, see example (67). I detect two patterns “If you like that sort of thing you may enjoy it” in example (66), and “it may be enjoyable, but it will not be good/advisable”, see examples (65) and (67). This last pattern, that we might call “enjoyable, but not good” also occurs without modal auxiliaries.

There are no instances of interfering elements between modal auxiliary <might> and <be fun>. There are 6 instances of *fun* premodified by adverbs <quite> and <rather> (*fun* as adjective), and by determiner <some> (*fun* as noun). The combination <might be fun> is typically followed by a non-finite subordinate clause (to-infinitive or gerund as notional subject), like in example (68), or a full stop. The subject is frequently anticipatory subject <it> or <that> see example (69). The combination is also frequently found with verb of cognition THINK. Furthermore, I find two instances of positive declarative sentence with negative tag question; see example (70).

- (65) It **may be fun**, and on the harder routes it will certainly be physically demanding; **but** it will lack adventure and risk; will remove the judgement and skill required in the placement of protection; will emasculate climbing of its quintessence. (BNC, CG1)
- (66) If you are artistic, it **may be fun** to make any little figures in the shape and clothing of children at the party (BNC, J11)
- (67) This **may be all good fun**, but is it justified when it is at the composer's expense, and does not pay any regard to the evident persistence of the mensural tradition so obvious in the composer's manuscripts? (BNC, J1A)
- (68) They think it **might be fun to have** a boy like Gowie in their class. (BNC, ALH)
- (69) There again, we haven't given the Conservatives a go since the by-election; we could swing back to them, **that might be fun**. (BNC, CAK)
- (70) He was — interesting, and looked as though he knew his way around the world both backwards and forwards, including the inside of a lady's bedroom — not that she was intending to let him inside *her* bedroom, but **it might be fun to indulge in a little flirtation, mightn't it?** (BNC, HGY)

SHOULD be *fun* total 32.

There are 22 instances of <should (*) be fun> (one with comma) in the BNC. There are ten instances of interfering element between <should be> and <fun> (<great>, <such>, <quite>, <easy and>, <challenging and>). The three latter are used with *fun* as an adjective.

17, more than half of the instances have a punctuation mark of some sort after <should be fun>. The subject is typically a noun denoting an activity, object or concept. The meaning seems to be that ‘something *should be fun*/is supposed to be *fun*, but isn't necessarily’, see examples (71) and (72). In other cases <should be fun> is used to express that a (cautious) statement about the future, like in example (73). Note the negative tag question in (74).

- (71) Business should be pleasure and politics **should be fun!** (BNC, ADK)
 (72) ‘After all, cricket is meant to be above all that — playing sport **should be fun** and it certainly isn’t when you are confined to your hotel all the time.’ (BNC, CBG)
 (73) ‘Come on, let’s go and bomb Dresden!’ said Churchill. ‘That **should be fun.**’ (BNC, A2W)
 (74) C: what about going down by the — the Firth of Forth D: that **should be fun shouldn’t it** yes you could (BNC, F9V)

OUGHT TO be *fun* total 1.

<Ought to be fun> is similar in meaning to the last meaning of <should be fun> above, it is a cautious statement about the future.

- (75) Anyway, the debate **ought to be fun** since what is certain is that American audiences, or at least distributors, have at least as much contempt as those here for independent features without bankable stars, car chases and expensive special effects. (BNC, A8F)

4.3.4 Modal auxiliaries be *funny* in the BNC

Funny is not frequently used with modal auxiliaries and <be> compared to *fun*, see Table 9.

Modal auxiliaries	
Can be funny	11
Would be funny	9
Will be funny	6
Should be funny	2
Must be funny	2
Might be funny	1
May be funny	1
Could be funny	0

Table 9. Modal auxiliaries be *funny* in COCA

All of the instances of modal auxiliaries with <be funny> seem to be in the sense ‘funny ha-ha’ or ‘amusing’, except for possibly example (79) with <should>, which could be read with *funny* twice in the ‘funny-peculiar’ sense, or as one with ‘peculiar’ and the second with ‘ha-ha’ sense.

- (76) I didn’t in the beginning but I do now, **she can be funny** although a bit bitchy at times. (BNC, CGM)
 (77) What’s abhorrent one week **will be funny** the next. (BNC, A9T)
 (78) The incident **would be funny** were it not that a similar stunt had been pulled in Kismayu, southern Somalia’s largest port, at the end of March. (BNC, CR7)
 (79) Now why those places **should be funny**, and we have to apologise to all the people who live there, but it does sound **funny**, and they er they just er the trials and tribulations they have when their own rather complex personal lives get mixed up with the play they’re doing. (BNC, KRT)
 (80) While there is nothing funny about this situation, sometimes the result **may be funny.** (BNC, C9R)
 (81) ‘That **might be funny** if it weren’t so utterly ludicrous.’ (BNC, HA7)

As seen in section 4.3.2, *funny* frequently occurs with BE, even more frequently than *fun* does. So what is the cause of this difference in use with modal auxiliaries? It could be a

syntactic difference, connected to a difference between the functions of the word classes adjective and noun. However, *fun* is often used as an adjective with the modal auxiliaries, which renders this explanation unlikely. It is not likely due to a difference in register; the modal auxiliaries are distributed across text categories, but are most common in Spoken conversation, and so is the word *funny*. This leaves me with a theory of a semantic difference, concerning the different natures of *fun* and *funny*.

When looking at the data from BE *funny*, many “empty” or “weak” uses of *funny* appear, patterns where *funny* does not do much more than draw attention the following discourse. In these cases, the evaluative power of *funny* is not strong. Expressions of modality signaling speaker belief, expressions of obligation, permission or necessity seem redundant if the force of the adjective is low. The fact that the few instances I do find of <modal auxiliaries be funny> are all probably used in the sense ‘amusing’ could also be a clue to that this has to do with a semantic factor.

4.3.5 HAVE *fun* (with) in the BNC

<Having> is on the list of top 20 collocates with *fun* in section 4.2.1. This form has a high MI score with *fun*, and a collocational frequency in a span of 5:5 of 206. *Fun* is frequently found as the direct object of the verb HAVE, HAVE *fun* (*with*), and there are 361 instances in the exact pattern <HAVE fun>. This pattern is defined in the OED as “to enjoy (a process)” (see 1.1.2 for reference) This combination is not as clearly a multiword verb as MAKE *fun of* and POKE *fun at* above, but it can often be replaced by a simple verb ENJOY. However, this is not always the case, like in example (82), where it could rather be replaced by e.g. ‘play with’.

<HAVE fun> is sometimes found with one of the modal auxiliaries: there are 8 instances of <can have fun>, 6 instances of <could have fun>, 1 <would have fun>, 3 <will have fun>, and 5 <‘ll have fun>. It is also found with a modifier or determiner between HAVE and fun, see section 4.4.

<HAVE fun> is frequently found followed by a specification of a place to *have fun*, in the pattern “have fun at n*” (example (83), or “HAVE fun on n*” (example (84)) <HAVE fun in the sun> occurs three times, the rhyming effect makes me think it is a fixed phrase, a kind of slogan almost, see example (85). I also get 11 hits for <HAVE fun together>, like in example (86).

I get 4 hits for the pattern “it’s (all) about having fun”, see (87), 9 <just HAVE fun>.

see (88), 5 <LIKE to have fun>, see (89), and 5 <WANT to have fun>.

Moreover, in the pattern “HAVE fun at someone’s expense” it means the same as MAKE *fun of*, see example (90). <Expense> is on the list of top collocates with *fun*, and has an MI value of 3.75.

- (82) She knew women in the show are called the beach blonde bimbos, but she thinks she will **have fun with** her character (BNC, HAF)
- (83) We discuss **having fun** at university. ‘I think it’s *so* important to have fun (BNC, CAG)
- (84) If luxuriating in a country house hotel or **having fun** on a farm or enjoying a weekend by the sea appeals to you, why not get hold of our Where to Stay accommodation guides. (BNC, AYM)
- (85) While the Premier **had fun in the sun**, Labour’s Mr Brown bowled him a bumper by accusing him of REFUSING to act and REFUSING to speak. (BNC, HAF)
- (86) And as a spokeswoman from Relate points out, ‘If you are always rowing, you are using up time you could spend **having fun** together.’ (BNC, ED4)
- (87) For them driving is a relaxing hobby and it’s all about **having fun** ... except that is when the judge is watching ... (BNC, K1R)
- (88) I said something like, well, I was trying to make her feel at ease, oh, something like, we could make a habit of this, and just **have fun**, Lucy. (BNC, A0L)
- (89) ‘I just like to have fun and I like to hang out with people who like to **have fun**. (BNC, CGB)
- (90) He turned to Robert and extended a welcoming hand. *He knows*, thought Robert, *he knows*. *He is having fun at my expense*. (BNC, HR8)

In the OED, <HAVE fun with> is said to be used to mean ‘to have sexual intercourse’. I have not found this meaning in the BNC.

See also the pattern “HAVE + *possessive determiner* + *fun* + with” in section 4.4.2, this combination sometimes carries a different meaning than HAVE *fun* with.

Funny is never directly preceded by a transitive verb, including HAVE, unless it is a premodifier of a noun, because *funny* does not have any nominal function.

4.3.6 Multi-word verbs with *fun* in the BNC

- **MAKE fun of**
- **POKE fun at**

Following the definition of *fun, n.* in OED¹³, *fun* is frequently found in phrases like *to MAKE fun (of)*, *to POKE fun at*, meaning *to ridicule*. Quirk et al. (1985: 1210) give this definition of MAKE *fun of*: “a kind of prepositional verb [...] the direct object forms part of an idiomatic

¹³http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50090878?query_type=word&queryword=fun&first=1&max_to_show=10&sort_type=alpha&result_place=1&search_id=ATJL-Fbex10-744&hilite=50090878 (18.02.2010)

unit with the verb and the preposition”, and also notes that other elements, adjectives and determiners can appear within the sequences, with the result that “the idiomatic bond is weakened” (Quirk et al. 1985: 1158-1160). Nevertheless, I think both MAKE *fun of* and POKE *fun at* should be considered multiword verbs, not least because they are both to some extent semantically non-compositional.

MAKE fun of

In terms of collocations in a 5:5 span, all forms of MAKE have a lower MI score than 3. <Making> is the form with the highest MI score, 2.6. When searching for <MAKE fun> in a sequence, and deleting instances of *fun* as a modifier of a noun, I get 97 hits. In 8 instances it occurs with premodifiers and determiners, <merciless>, <malicious>, <great>, <such>, <elaborate>, <so much>, <some gentle>, <too much>, totaling the frequency of the MWV MAKE *fun of* in the BNC at 105. Out of this total, the percentage of modified *fun* in MAKE *fun of* is only 7.6. I will agree with Quirk et al. (1985) that the MWV occurs with elements interfering, however this is not a frequent use of the MWV MAKE *fun of*. In example (93) MAKE *fun* is used in another sense, more like *have fun*, “create a *fun* atmosphere”.

When searching for the sequence <MAKE fun>, the text categories that are the most important are: Fiction and verse (2.54 pmw) and Spoken conversation (1.42 pmw). The distribution between spoken and written is: Written 1.05 pmw, Spoken 0.77 pmw.

- (91) Apart from **making fun of** Li Peng, the main message of the posters was that reform could not succeed without a sound education system, a view widely supported among intellectuals, especially those in the Democratic Alliance. (BNC, CG0)
- (92) Fred MacMurray was easy-going and a pleasure to work with; Herbert Marshall was, as usual, his British self and a great actor; Edgar Bergen and his dummy **made great fun** of everything they encountered, and it was an experience to see the manipulation and ventriloquism involved in the Bergen-McCarthy act. (BNC, B11)
- (93) But the wish **to make fun and** see her laugh — laugh with her — was too tempting. (BNC, C85)

When checking for the possibility of interfering elements in the MWV I find that MAKE is also used with *fun* in a different construction, meaning to literally turn an activity (that might be conceived as boring) into something ‘enjoyable’. The meaning is similar to that of the constructions with <can be fun>, see section 4.3.1, that you can make anything *fun* if you just do it the right way.

- (94) **make learning FUN!** (BNC, CB8)
- (95) We **make banking fun** for 9 to 13 year olds when they join Cash Club (BNC, GXB)
- (96) Somehow he managed to **make it fun**, the way he made so many things fun, and, now he was either dead or else taken over by some force I could not even begin to understand, there was nothing whatsoever to keep me in the Church. (BNC, HR9)

When allowing for interfering elements between MAKE and *fun*, it is this latter use that crops up the most. The 8 instances of MAKE + modifier + fun only cover 14.3% of the total frequency of the pattern <MAKE ~ fun> (with one or two elements interfering), which is 56. For corpus searches, it is wise to limit oneself to MAKE directly preceding *fun* rather than looking at collocation in a span of e.g. 5:5, when searching for examples of the MWV.

POKE fun at

The collocation list in 4.2.1 has four forms of POKE at the top of the list, which suggests that this verb is central when it comes to the use of *fun* (or rather, that *fun* is central when it comes to the use of POKE...). This includes co-occurrence in any position from -5 to 5. To ensure that I get to the MWV POKE *fun at*, I have done searches for the sequence <POKE fun>, and for POKE before *fun* with interfering elements. The sequence <POKE fun> occurs the most in the text types Newspaper (1.17 pmw) and Fiction and verse (0.62 pmw). The distribution in written and spoken is somewhat surprising, it is significantly more frequent in written texts than in spoken texts in the BNC. (Written 0.53, Spoken 0.19 pmw)

I found 5 instances with premodifiers before *fun*: POKE <gentle> (x2), <clever>, <sly> and <such cruel fun>, totaling at 54 hits of <POKE ~fun> (with no, one, or two elements interfering) in the BNC.

(97) For example, the first issue appearing after I **poked fun at** *The Guardian* for spelling septic as 'sceptic' had an article that spelt aseptic as 'aseptic'. (BNC, B77)

(98) It is a rather uncharacteristic work, scored for the unusual combination of two violins and double bass, which like Mozart's *Musical Joke*, **pokes gentle fun** at badly played dance music (BNC, BMC)

Differences between MAKE *fun of* and POKE *fun at* in the BNC

POKE *fun at* and MAKE *fun of* are regularly listed as synonyms¹⁴. Using the BNC I will explore the differences between the two:

First of all, MAKE *fun of* is the more frequent lexical item. In the BNC it has almost double the frequency, 54 POKE *fun (at)* vs. 105 MAKE *fun (of)*. Secondly, make *fun of* seems to be more frequent in spoken texts. Both MWVs are most frequent in written text, but there is a more significant relative difference between the two categories with POKE *fun at* than with MAKE *fun of*.

Some difference seems to lie in the semantic preference of the multiword verbs. Both MAKE *fun (of)* and POKE *fun (at)* are used within a domain of “culture”: politics, film, art, TV, literature, the press etc. However, MAKE *fun of* has more personal or private uses, and there is a tendency for the one who is being made *fun of* to call it MAKE *fun of*. For instance, I get 14 hits for <MAKE fun of me>, 4 <MAKE fun of my>, and three for <MAKE fun of us>, while a search for <POKE fun at me> returns 1 hit, and the others 0.

- (99) The master was a toffee-nosed southerner, used to take the pi — used to **make fun of our** accents.’ (BNC, ANY)
- (100) The boys at school used to **make fun of me** because I have a crooked spine. (BNC, FR5)
- (101) But for this there was a price to pay: when I wasn't being ignored completely, I was being made fun of, especially in regard to my physical appearance which was frequently compared to that of a twelve-year-old boy. (BNC, CEE)

POKE *fun at* is (in the BNC) employed to describe what a cartoon can do, MAKE *fun of* is not. Also, POKE *fun at* typically involves more people, as both agents and targets of the *fun*.

- (102) Marcos loyalists now poke fun at the Aquino administration's boast that it has built a new stability, arguing it is pretty fragile if it won't allow a dead man home for burial. (BNC, A28)
- (103) Again and again these feminist lexicographers refuse and indeed poke fun at the authoritative pronouncements of mainstream lexicography. (BNC, CGF)
- (104) IWOULD agree that male and female stereotypes portrayed in cartoons are equally abhorrent, were it not for the fact that, whilst one pokes fun at a powerful group in society (men), the other perpetuates the oppression of a powerless group (women). (BNC, A8M)

MAKE *fun of* is used to report a fear or a feeling that you are being ridiculed:

- (105) I watched his profiled face. Was he mad? Was he making fun of me? I tried to make conversation again. (BNC, G13)
- (106) He felt that they were making fun of him, though he could not understand why. (BNC, ACW)
- (107) ‘The others at school keep making fun of me and saying things. (BNC, CF4)

¹⁴ Cf. <http://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/make+fun+of>

As seen in the last example above, MAKE *fun of* seems to have more of a negative semantic prosody, and is used more in the sense ‘bullying’, while POKE seems not to be. However, it is difficult to draw conclusions, as there are relatively few examples of each construction in the BNC (and no negative evidence in corpus linguistics). The most significant difference seems to be that MAKE *fun of* is more commonly used than POKE *fun at*.

Funny does not occur with make or poke in a multiword verb, as it is an adjective

4.3.7 Lexical verbs with *fun* in the BNC, except BE, HAVE, MAKE and POKE

Figure 3 is made up of all lexical verbs that precede *fun* in positions -1 to -3. This entails that I have allowed for up to two interfering elements. I have excluded instances where *fun* is a premodifier of a noun. Minimum frequency was set to 3. If the verb occurs in more than one form I have lemmatized, and I use upper case letters to signal this. Where the verb is written in lower case letters, it occurs only in that exact form. GET and DO are only included in their lexical uses. Identical concordance lines were deleted. <LIKE fun> occurs in a rhyme or poem, with quasi-identical concordance lines. In this case I have only included the first hit.

BE with *fun* and HAVE with *fun* have been excluded as they are considerably more frequent than the other verbs in this search. These verbs are discussed separately in sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.5. I have also excluded MAKE *fun of* and POKE *fun at* for reasons of frequency. In this study they are considered *multiword-verbs*, and these items are discussed separately in section 4.3.6.

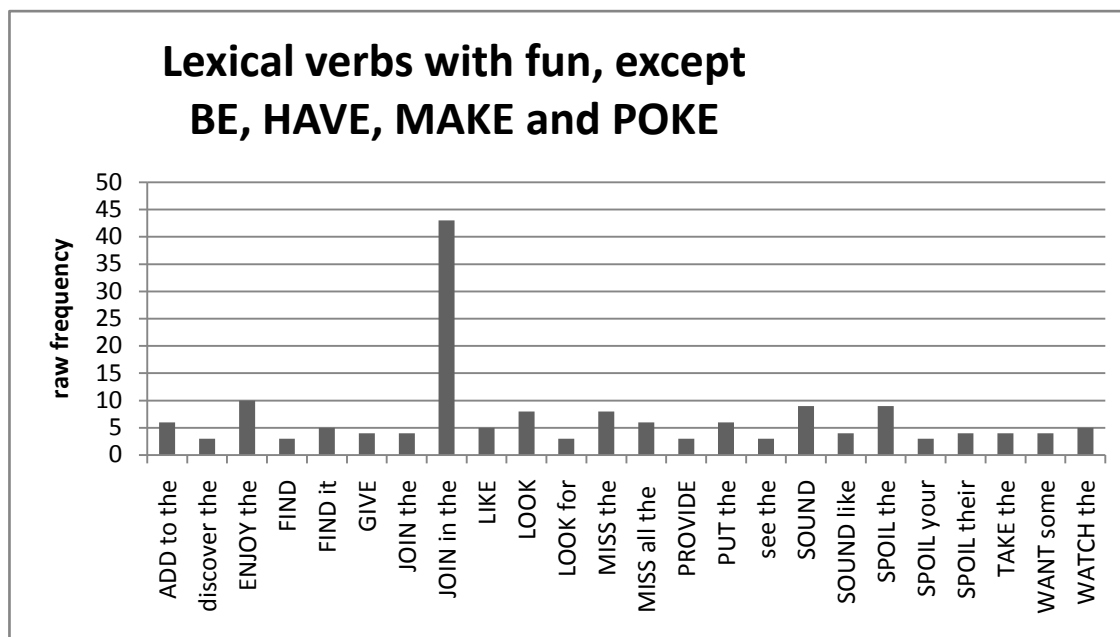


Figure 3. Lexical verbs with *fun* in the BNC, except BE, HAVE, MAKE and POKE, raw frequencies, min freq 3

This figure has one very clear peak. This is the pattern “JOIN in the fun”. This sequence returns 43 hits (which is almost as many as POKE *fun at*), and can thus be considered a typical use of *fun*. In terms of strength of attraction, the lemma JOIN has a quite strong collocational relationship with *fun*. It occurs 17087 times in the corpus, and in a span of 5:5 it occurs 63 times with *fun*. This gives a low percentage of co-occurrence, 0.37 %, and a relatively low MI score, of 3.2249. This is significant, but not especially high. However, the Log-likelihood score is high, 169.6533. It should also be noted that the form <join> is one of the 20 top collocates with *fun*; see section 4.2.1.

In the pattern <JOIN in the fun>, 28 of 43 hits are with the verb in the base form, <join>, and 13 of these are with the infinitive marker. The pattern is typically preceded by a personal pronoun or noun referring to ‘someone who joins in the fun.’

(108) Mums **join in the fun**, and Chris introduces Medau themes into the sessions. (BNC, KA7)

The other lexical verbs that occur with *fun* can be grouped like this:

Copular verbs (other than BE) occurring with *fun* as subject predicative (adjective): LOOK and SOUND. These also occur with insertion of preposition <like> and Noun Phrase (*fun*). <SOUND like fun> and <SOUND fun> seem to me to have the exact same meaning, actually, with <like> it seems more informal than without, even though this is the more “correct” use (*fun* as noun).

- (109) Overall, though, I was left with the desire to dip my toes in the shallow end of home recording; it **looks fun** as well as potentially rewarding (BNC, C9M)
- (110) Don't **that look fun**? [unclear] innit? (BNC, KPE)
- (111) Maisie showed worrying signs of interest in feminism. 'It **sounds fun!**' she said. (BNC, ASS)
- (112) **Sounds like fun**, and they get paid for it! (BNC, G30)

Transitive verbs with *fun* as Direct Object: ADD to, discover, ENJOY, GIVE, FIND, JOIN, JOIN in, LIKE, MISS, PROVIDE, PUT, see, SPOIL, TAKE, WANT and WATCH.

- (113) They were narrowly beaten by a four-nation, eight-man team of elite males in Italy in a spectacle that proved you didn't have to be one of the team to **enjoy the fun**. (BNC, CA1)
- (114) You must be careful to use programs such as this only when you are desperately stuck so they do not **spoil the fun** of adventuring around each level. (BNC, HAC)

Transitive verbs with *fun* as Object Predicative: FIND (<it fun>)

- (115) I like to think they **found it fun** flying, too (BNC, CAU)

I also get hits for <THINK what fun>, <DO for fun>, <KILL for fun>, and <PLAY for fun>. These have been excluded because their relevant collocation is the determiner or preposition before *fun*, rather than the verb. In addition, <THINK what fun> contains a grammatical boundary. The patterns <what fun> and <for fun> are discussed in section 4.8.

- (116) And though that would be a sad time for her, in Glasgow, alone, it would cheer her up to **think what fun** they were having! (BNC, EFJ)
- (117) Nowadays, he says, he just **plays for fun**. (BNC, CBW)

4.3.8 Lexical verbs with *funny*, except BE, in the BNC

Funny occurs with many different verbs. In this section, I will focus on verbs directly preceding *funny*. This is because interfering elements are likely to be premodifiers of *funny*, and these will be treated in section 4.5.1. Lemmatized BE is the most frequent verb collocating with *funny*, see section 4.3.2. Other than BE, verbs collocating with *funny* at -1(1 left) are shown in Figure 4. This figure is made up of lemmatized verbs and <funny> directly following. I found the verbs using lexical verb tags in the BNC and PIE, but then searched for each verb (lemma) separately not to have to trust the tagger, which gives slightly higher numbers for most of the verbs. The minimum frequency of co-occurrence was set to 3. I have not included cases where an element occurs between the verb and *funny*, as these will be treated separately in section 4.5.1. I have also excluded cases where *funny* is a premodifier of a noun in a noun phrase, these cases will be discussed in section 4.7.2. In addition to the verbs included above, I also got hits for MAKE *funny*: 19, but out of these, only three were without head noun. Upon further scrutiny, it becomes clear that one is from the Spoken section of the

corpus, and looking at the context, <funny> should probably be analyzed as a premodifier of the word <picture>. The two others have <funny> as object predicative, and could have been included. However, they do not pass the frequency threshold of three. PLAY *funny* occurs, 7 times, but all of these are with a head noun after *funny*.

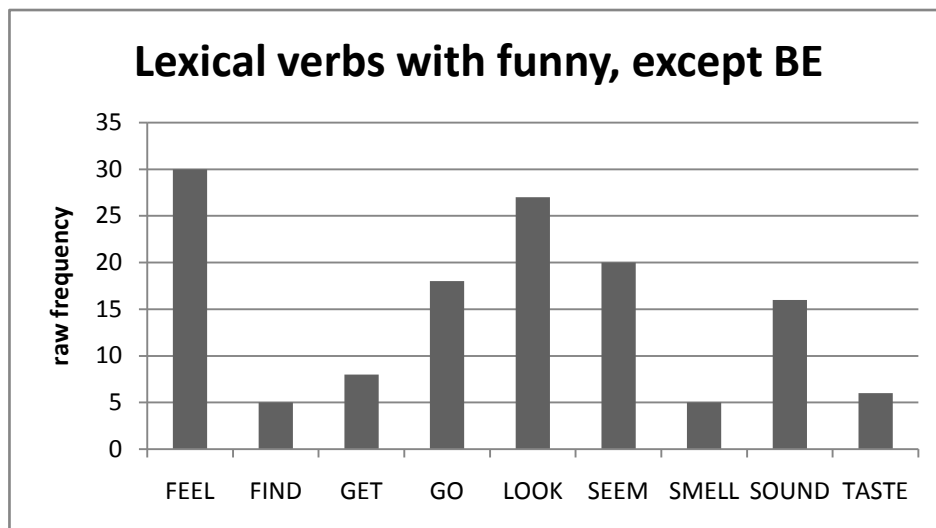


Figure 4. Lexical verbs directly preceding *funny* in the BNC, except BE, raw frequencies, min freq 3

As these are all lexical verbs that directly precede the adjective *funny* in predicative position, they all function as copular verbs with <funny> as subject predicative, except for FIND, which is a transitive verb with <funny> as Object Predicative.

I also found TALK *funny* when searching for any verb, five instances. However, in these cases the verb is not a copular verb and <funny> does not function as a subject predicative, but is an adverb in “adjective form”, and could be written “funnily”. It functions as a manner adjunct in the sentences. The same is the case with other verbs in the list of concordance that I generated to find verbs that are used with *funny*, e.g. SLEEP, SPEAK and ACT.

(118) Rose, for her part, thought that McAllister **talked funny**, and when Sally-Anne had told her that she came from the United States of America she had stared at her as though she had said that she came from the moon. (BNC, HGE)

(119) Leon: No speaking first year language. Unknown speaker: what are you doing over here anyway? Unknown speaker: What? Leon: He can **speak funny**, er, what do you want? (BNC, KPL)

In the OED definition of *funny* (1.1.4), two senses are distinguished. Which sense is intended sometimes has to be inferred from context. However, some verbs seem to signal one or the other meaning. Verbs that signal *funny* meaning ‘peculiar’ as a kind of euphemism for ‘bad’ or at least ‘not good’ are FEEL, GO, TASTE, and SMELL, while <FIND> seems to indicate

‘amusing’.

<FEEL funny> occurs 30 times in the BNC (1 instance of <feel funny things> is omitted). It is typically found in the patterns “makes me/you feel funny” (example (120), or “feel funny about X”, like in example (121).

(120) ‘It must be quite difficult for you,’ Claire said, brushing, brushing, brushing the long black hair. It made me **feel funny** looking at that hair, and I didn't like it. So I didn't hear what Kezia said next. (BNC, A0D)

(121) You're not old. I know that, really, but it's because you're my mother. I **feel funny** about it. I never thought of you as a proper person before. You know, like other people. " (BNC, H0F)

<GO funny> occurs 18 times in the BNC. It signals a ‘funny-peculiar’ meaning of *funny*, and has a semantic preference for BODY PARTS and MACHINES, typically something with a function that “goes wrong” (<eyes>, <knees>, <typewriter>, <machines>, etc).

(122) When machines **went funny** you just oiled them or prodded them or, if nothing else worked, hit them with a hammer (BNC, HTH)

(123) My eyes **go funny** after a bit, so I look at summat else. (BNC, A74)

<TASTE funny> (6 instances) and <SMELL funny> (5 instances) always signal ‘funny-peculiar’, or even ‘bad’ meaning when used as copular verbs with *funny*.

(124) ‘Benjamin, you must not be rude. Daniel is our guest perhaps he would like some more cake.’ Danny O'Dell shook his head, and Ruth prayed that her son would not say with devastating candour: ‘Your cake **tastes funny**’ — then breathed again as he said politely, ‘No more, thank you, Mrs Kleiber. (BNC, FPM)

(125) ‘Her room **smells funny**, like an old jar with something sticky and brown in it you can't tell what it is.’(BNC, G0S)

<FIND funny> (5) seems to indicate “that something is ‘amusing’ or ‘comical’, ‘funny ha-ha’ meaning.

(126) ‘Then Love Begins’ only lives to be heard on some Midwestern FM easy listening station — which you may **find funny** or sad in itself. (BNC, HWX)

(127) Q ‘What's the difference between animal feed and school dinners? A. School dinners come on a plate.’ Is not **found funny** by many pupils because it is not true and not particularly amusing either. (BNC, HAD)

The other copular verbs that occur with *funny* do not seem to indicate the intended meaning of *funny* as strongly. The meaning must be inferred from the context. These are LOOK, SEEM, SOUND and GET.

In the BNC, <LOOK funny> occurs 27 times. The typical patterns are “Don't he/she LOOK funny” and “(it/(they/he)) DO LOOK funny”. The meaning of *funny* is sometimes “ha-ha”, like in example (128), and other times “peculiar”, like in example (129).

- (128) Smaller children and deaf grannies in the congregation twittered, as each year they twittered, like starlings on telegraph wires, urgent and aimless, look there's our Janet, look at our Ron, there, don't he **look funny**, lovely, dignified, daft. (BNC, FET)
- (129) Then she gave a quick, soft laugh as she realized what he was doing. 'You're pulling the black-out curtains, aren't you? It does **look funny**,' she said. (BNC, G1S)

Both <SEEM funny> (20 instances) and <SOUND funny> (16) are typically found in constructions with <it> as subject. 11 of 20 <SEEM funny> and 8 of 16 <SOUND funny> are some variant of "it SEEMS/SOUNDS funny". The meaning is sometimes "ha-ha", like in examples (130) and (132), in both examples it is negated. Other times it means "peculiar", like in examples (131) and (133):

- (130) Then he saw the look on Lucie's face, the long strip of sweat down the centre of his shirt, and realized that he was not enjoying himself, and that Garvey was. It did **not seem funny** after that. (BNC, HTN)
- (131) keep everything to myself. But it, it just **seems funny**, you know! The way she treats me, now. Cos I'm a bit like John, like <pause> happy, you know <pause> (BNC, KDW)
- (132) If it **sounds funny** now, it was not so at the time. (BNC, AE8)
- (133) Stuart: You sound different. <pause> Vera does. Ann: Does she? Stuart: Mm. <pause> She **sounds funny** on the phone. Most odd. (BNC, KB7)

<GET funny>: 8 instances (when 12 instances are omitted: 1 unclear + 11 "get funny looks" etc). Six instances are in the "peculiar" meaning, like in example (134), and only two are "ha-ha", like example (135). Two of eight are found in the pattern "(a person) won't/doesn't want to get funny with us/me", meaning that they should not try to do anything "bad", see example (136). This use is also found with the idiom *funny business*, see section 4.7.2.

- (134) Consequently things only started to **get funny** around four songs in, just as the band began bringing the stops off cleanly and ending in the same places. (BNC, A2U)
- (135) Margaret: But he does **get funny**! Raymond: He's a funny man! (BNC, KDM)
- (136) The man moved closer to Violet, gripping her arm. 'Ye don't want tae **get funny** wie me,' he said. (BNC, BNC)

Figure 5 highlights the difference between *funny*, which is a "full fledged" adjective in the BNC, and *fun*, which is a more peripheral adjective in the BNC. It also highlights the difference between the meanings of these two words when both are used as adjective, as some of these verbs are solely used in the meaning 'funny-peculiar' (see above), and thus not used with *fun*.

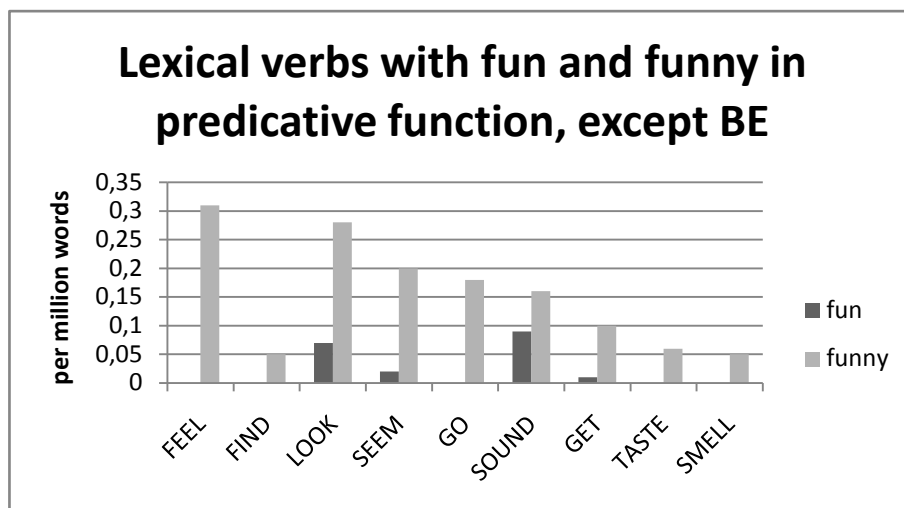


Figure 5. Lexical verbs with *fun* and *funny* in predicative function, except BE in the BNC, frequency pmw

I have included <SEEM fun> and <GO fun> in Figure 5, however, these combinations do not pass the minimum frequency threshold of 3 that I have set. I have included them in the figure for reference, but I will not discuss them further. I have included FIND for *funny*, as *funny* functions as object predicative with this verb. It also occurs directly preceding *fun*, however, in these cases *fun* is a noun functioning as direct object.

<LOOK fun> compared to <LOOK funny>: A situation or an activity can be described as looking *fun*, see example (109), and this is an expectancy rather than stating a fact. A person, object or a state is described as looking *funny*, see examples (128) and (129). The same goes for the difference between <SOUND fun> and <SOUND funny>, situations or activities can sound fun, and are described as such as a kind of future expectance. If something sounds *funny*, it is stated as a fact, the way it sounds is *funny* (or not). It can be a story, joke, anything you tell, and a person can also sound *funny*.

4.4 *Fun* with adjectival premodification and determiners in the BNC

4.4.1 Adjectival premodifiers of *fun*

As seen above, *fun* is frequently found with a premodifier, <good> and <great> seem to be typical examples:

- <good fun> in that exact sequence occurs 172 times in the BNC, 1.75 instances per million words.

- <great fun> in that exact sequence occurs 237 times in the BNC, 2.41 instances per million words. <great> is also found in the collocation list, and has an MI value of 3.99 in a 5:5 span.

- (137) They are really **good fun** to be around, they are just not overindulgent or obsessive,' he says.
(BNC, AT1)
- (138) Well that's **great fun!** (BNC, KCW)

The OED suggests that <(he, it is) good, great fun> is a phrase meaning “a source of much amusement”¹⁵, which seems to be corroborated by the examples above. A search in the BNC for <any pronoun + BE + great fun> yields 62 hits, the majority of these with subject <it>. There are three instances for each of the subjects <he>, <she> and <they>. Searching for <any pronoun BE good fun> yields 40 relevant hits. Like with <great fun>, the majority of the subjects are <it>. There is one instance of <he> being subject, two instances of subject <she>, and three <they>. 1 hit is deleted (<and some of them are good fun pop in their own right>). The pattern <great/good fun> is sometimes followed by <to V*>, i.e. “something/somebody BE great fun to V*”. A search for <great fun to v*> yields 22 hits in the BNC (9.28% of total <great fun>). The verbs that occur in this pattern more than once are: be (with) (4), catch (2), drive (2), use (3), watch (2). A search for <good fun to> followed by any verbs returns 12 hits (6.98%). 6 of these are instances of <good fun to be> followed by <around/with/working beside>. This pattern also occurs in COCA, see section 5.4.1.

Searches for <has great fun> and <has good fun> (returning 0 hits) confirms that these adjectives are usually used with a form of the verb BE, however, I do find some instances of <had great fun>, <had good fun>, as well as <having good fun>, <have great fun> and <have good fun>. This may suggest that the use of <good> and <great> with BE in a established collocation meaning “source of much amusement” has lead to the use of <good> and <great> as modifiers of *fun* in other constructions as well, meaning the same as “had a lot of fun” or *enjoyed*.

- (139) The two dogs had great fun. (BNC, KDN)

¹⁵http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50090878?query_type=word&queryword=fun&first=1&max_to_show=10&sort_type=alpha&result_place=1&search_id=ATJL-Fbex10-744&hilite=50090878 (18.02.2010)

<good fun> is also found premodified (jolly good, pretty good, really good, very good fun). <great fun> is rarely premodified, only 5 times in the BNC. The reason for this might be that <great fun> is in itself more like a superlative, and thus not as gradable as <good fun>.

- (140) It was all jolly good fun as well, of course (BNC, A7Y)
- (141) That's **pretty good fun** actually. (BNC, KPX)
- (142) I didn't want to go to begin with, but it was **really good fun**. (BNC, FU1)
- (143) 'It is **really great fun** and I enjoy every minute of it.' (BNC, ASC)

<great> and <good> are the only adjectives that co-occur with fun more than 20 times in the BNC according to a PIE search. However, there are many more adjectives that occur with *fun* fewer times in the BNC. The adjectives can be divided into three categories:

Amount/quantity, “*Not dangerous*” and *Quality*:

<i>Amount/quantity</i>	<i>Not dangerous</i>	<i>Quality</i>	
enormous	14 harmless	17 great	229
tremendous	14 clean	7 good	167
greatest	4 innocent	7 real	8
endless	3 wholesome	3 best	7
maximum	3 Serious	3 brilliant	5
	Gentle	3 excellent	5
		sheer	5
		wonderful	5
		terrific	4

Table 10. Categories of adjectival premodifiers with *fun* in the BNC, raw frequencies, min freq 3

In the category *Amount/Quantity*, <enormous> and <tremendous> are the most frequent. <Enormous> is typically used with the verb BE and a person as subject followed by <to be with>, like in example (144). <It> is also frequently subject, representing an activity or a situation., like in example (145). This last pattern is typical for <tremendous fun> as well, see example (146).

- (144) Freda was **enormous fun** to be with. (BNC, ED6)
- (145) It would have been **enormous fun**, she thought wistfully, to help work Water Gypsy up and down the canal system (BNC, HHA)
- (146) At the moment we're in the biology lecture theatre and it's **tremendous fun** to be able to come all together like this. (BNC, KRG)

In the category *Not dangerous* <harmless> is the most frequent adjective. It is typically found in the pattern “a bit of harmless fun”. It is often used to say that something is neither ‘harmless’, nor ‘enjoyable’, and should not have been done, see example (147). It is also used more neutrally, meaning ‘fun/enjoyment that does no harm to anyone’, like in example (148).

<Clean fun> is in 6 of 7 instances found in the idiomatic expression <good (,) clean fun>. Its “fixedness” is high as there is no positional mobility. See example (149).. It seems to be compositional, and the meaning is similar to <harmless fun>, but as an opposite to ‘dirty’.

- (147) More recently, there has been a flood of more conventional sexual harassment claims brought by women, including women occupying executive roles in large companies; this is by no means exclusively a problem of women on the factory floor or in the typing pool who have reacted adversely to what their male colleagues and superiors may have tried to excuse as ‘a bit of **harmless fun**’. (BNC, B08)
- (148) It will provide **harmless fun** for millions and give valuable funding to the Arts and sports. (BNC, K52)
- (149) Hard work it was, but good, clean fun.(BNC, FA9)

4.4.2 Determiners with *fun* in the BNC

Table 11 contains the determiners found directly preceding *fun* in the BNC. Instances where *fun* is a premodifier in a noun phrase have been excluded. *Fun* is frequently found specified for *amount* of *fun*. This is typically achieved through the use of quantifying determiners. It is also found with possessive determiners and the determiner <own>, in addition to with the definite article <the> and negator <no>. The use of *fun* in *exclamatives* with determiners <what> and <such> is discussed in section 4.8.

"Open-class quantifiers"	Other quantifying determiners	Possessive determiners	Other determiners
Lot of 103	Much 156	Their 15	The 419
Bit of 91	Some 85	His 10	No 80
Lots of 46	More 40	Your 9	Such 57
Plenty of 11	Any 24	Our 5	What 45
Great deal 10	All 14	My 4	
Loads of 4	A little 10 (less fun 7)		

Table 11. Determiners with *fun* in the BNC, raw frequency, min freq 4

Quantifying determiners

Much and, to a lesser extent, *many* have acquired some nonassertive force (...) with the result that they are rarely used, at least in informal English, without some negative or interrogative implication. (...) there is a preference for open-class quantifiers such as *a great deal (of)(...)* (Quirk et al. 1985: 384, §6.53).

The quote above from Quirk et al. (1985) is confirmed by my findings; almost 50% of the instances I find of <much fun> are negated (72 instances), see example (150). Many of the remaining instances are found in patterns like “how much fun” and “too much fun”, and there are 28 instances of <so much fun> (17.9 %). It is also frequently found in a comparative clause with <as> and <almost> or <just>. This use is discussed in section 4.8.

<More> is a determiner when it is used before a noun and an adverb when it is used before an adjective, see example (151). It is therefore not always possible to determine the word class of <more> when used with *fun*, which can be used as both noun and adjective. I come back to this in section 4.5.1.

<Some fun> is predominantly directly preceded by a form of HAVE, almost 70% of the instances, see example (152). It is also often followed by <with>. <All fun> is frequently negated, in 9 of 14 instances, see example (153). The same is the case for <any fun>, the use of <any> implies non-existence, see example (154). <A little fun> also occurs, see example (155).

- (150) It **can't be much fun** being locked up there. It really sounds like a POW story. (BNC, A6E)
 (151) And this was the day to do it the Women of the North lunch in Harrogate, like the Woman of the Year in London 'only much friendlier and **more fun**' according to a lady who'd been to both. (BNC, K4W)
 (152) But I promise you that I'll have **some fun** on the way. I want to see you on your knees begging for my love before our time is up, and that will be all the satisfaction I need.' (BNC, JY4)
 (153) 'That is **not to say that this is going to be all fun**,' she hastily added. (BNC, CEM)
 (154) 'I like war films,' said Camille. 'English ones with jolly brave chaps. American ones **aren't any fun**.' 'War is horrible,' said Scarlet. (BNC, G1D)
 (155) There is an element of humour in this story as the eleven-year-old girl, brought up by a cynical, unloving father to be arrogant and self-sufficient, is helped by the bracing company of Dick and his holiday companion Hugh Vallens to relax and enjoy a **little fun**. (BNC, EC8)

Open-class quantifiers

I have chosen to use Quirk et al.'s term "Open-class quantifiers" to refer to quantifying expressions with <of>, and treat them like determiners rather than noun phrases:

[A]lthough the quantity nouns *lot*, *deal*, etc look like the head of a noun phrase, there are grounds for arguing that the whole expression (*a lot of*, *a good deal of*, etc) functions as a determiner. Notably, the verb regularly has number concord with the second noun, rather than the first (Quirk et al. 1985: 264, §5.25)

In this corpus, the most frequent open-class quantifiers are <(a) lot of>, <a bit of> and <lots of>. The one mentioned in the quote above about <much>, <a great deal of>, occurs 10 times, and there are also instances of <plenty of fun> and <loads of fun> occurring above the frequency threshold of 4.

- (156) It contains a spring, and the youngsters have **a lot of fun** there in the Orkney summer, They shout and lark about, the way growing children have always done. (BNC, CAR)
 (157) This adds **a bit of fun** to the proceedings, but the same questions crop up repetitively, so it quite easy to cheat by remembering the answers after playing for only a short time. (BNC, HAC)
 (158) You don't need to be a first class embroiderer to create something beautiful and at the same time have **lots of fun**. (BNC, CGW)

Other determiners

Fun is frequently found directly preceded by the definite article: <the fun> (419 instances). This is typically found followed by verbs begins, starts, continues and is described as being over, see examples (159) and (160). Patterns with <the fun> are: 51 instances <all the fun>, 97 <the fun of>, 27 <the fun of it>, 21 <for the fun of it>. The OED lists for <the fun of the thing> as a phrasal usage of fun. This exact phrase gets 0 hits, but <for the fun of it> carries the same meaning, ‘for amusement’. See also <for the sheer fun> in COCA section 5.4.1.

- (159) Then this is **where the fun starts!** (BNC, KD7)
(160) Then onto the bright lights of Las Vegas where the glittering shows, the gambling and **the fun continues** 24 hours a day. (BNC, EET)
(161) Then it was **all the fun of the** Whit Monday Fair. (BNC, BPK)
(162) But when the snow melts in spring this crossing is essential, so it's worth trying just **for the fun of it.** (BNC, AS3)

<no fun (in)> seems to be a quite frequent use of fun. There is also an extended pattern: “it/there BE no fun (in, at all, other elements) v*-ing”, which accounts for 21 of the 80 instances of <no fun>. There are 7 instances of <no fun at all>.

- (163) There is **no fun at all in repeatedly looking** into bright sunlight, straining your eyes and wondering all the time what's happening — because it is almost certain that you will be unable to see as well as you really need to. (BNC, BNY)
(164) You can stay here in the water, if you want.’ ‘Without you? **That's no fun.**’ (BNC, JXT)
(165) It would be no fun killing him. **No more fun than** crushing a bug. (BNC, FRF)
(166) It was **no fun at all working** with an uncooperative and resentful local force. (BNC, AB9)
(167) There's **no fun in looking things** up is there? (BNC, KCE)

“The expressions with *no* imply a judgment [...] made by the speaker/writer; the *not* expressions formulate a neutral, objective statement” (Hasselgård, Johansson and Lysvåg 1998: 381). <not fun> and <n't fun> only occur 17 times in the corpus. Describing something as *fun* is in itself an evaluation or judgment, and this seems to be reinforced by the use of <no> making it sound like a kind of complaint. It is also used meaning ‘not good’ when what is described as ‘no fun’ is not really supposed to be fun:

- (168) I learnt how to recognise a well-built, stable dugout canoe — **it's no fun** capsizing in a fast current with the river bank several hundred metres away. (BNC, B76)
(169) This planet is the task master of the zodiac so your sunny nature is bound to find Saturn's pressures and responsibilities difficult — it is **no fun having so many** rude awakenings about human nature. (BNC, CBC)

Possessed fun

Fun is also frequently found with a **possessive determiner** (but, interestingly, no hits for <her fun> that are not followed by a noun that is the head of an NP). Some of these examples show

fun as something one deserves, and that can be taken away by others, signaled by the verbs SPOIL, DEPRIVE, etc.

- (170) And they would take my pride, my rocket of ambition, **amputate my fun** and geld my laughter, depriving me of colour. (BNC, FS5)
(171) And, after all, though wildlife is important, I **deserve my fun** too. (BNC, AOG)
(172) Then Margaret Thatcher **spoiled their fun** by abolishing the council five years ago (BNC, ABG)

The pattern “HAVE + *possessive determiner* + fun” sometimes seems to imply that someone has ‘used’ or ‘exploited’ someone or something for their own pleasure or enjoyment. It has a negative connotation.

- (173) She burst out, ‘You **had your fun at my expense!** I hope you're satisfied!’ (BNC, JYA)
(174) ‘Let me go home, Roman. **You've had your fun.**’ (BNC, GUE)
(175) He's gone! she thought. **He's had his fun** and now he's run away. I'll never see him again. What will I do? (BNC, CEY)

4.5 *Fun* and *funny* premodified by adverbs in the BNC

4.5.1 *Fun* premodified by adverbs in the BNC

When *fun* is modified by an adverb it is used as an adjective. Some of the determiners and adjectives listed above also function as adverbs before adjectives, and the only way of knowing what function the words fill in every case is by inspecting the concordance lines. And sometimes even when inspecting a concordance line it is impossible to be certain. The annotations in the corpus are not necessarily helpful. This is because the automatic tagger is also “confused” by the fact that *fun* can be both noun and adjective, and it seems that what POS-tag the word receives depends highly on if the modified word is tagged as a noun or an adjective. I have excluded cases where *fun* is premodifying a noun to avoid including cases where an adjective with the same form as an adverb is modifying the noun and not *fun*.

Table 12 contains adverbs that are tagged as adverbs in the BNC, that are likely to be functioning as premodifiers of the adjective *fun*. The ones in the category *Questionable* are words that have the same form as adverbs and determiners. I have chosen to include the ones that are tagged as adverbs, even though I can see from the concordance lines that some are with *fun* in a nominal function.

Adverb modifying fun

Sometimes not adverb

Quite 41	More 148
Really 11	Most 18
Rather 10	Less 6
Kinda 5	Much 5

Table 12. Adverbs modifying *fun* in the BNC, raw frequencies, min freq 3

The adverbs that I find tagged as adverbs and modifying *fun* in the BNC that are not clear cut adverbs are not many: <quite> (41), <rather> (10), and <really> (11), see examples (176), (177) and (178). When searching without tags I also find instances of <kind of fun> (3), and <sort of fun> (3), but in these instances they are noun phrases with <kind> and <sort> as heads. However, <kinda fun> occurs 4 times, see example (179). I also find some “open-class” adverbs, like <slightly fun> and but none that occur more than twice.

In sentences like (180), *fun* is an adjective in the superlative by means of the adverbial modifier <most>, this occurs 18 times, and I do not interpret these occurrences as determiner before noun. *Fun* is also found modified by <more>, but in these cases it is difficult to tell whether it is an adverb forming the comparative degree of the adjective *fun*, which is one interpretation of example (181), or if it is a quantifying determiner modifying the noun *fun*, like in example (182). <Less> can also be either a determiner or an adverb, and occurs 7 times before *fun*, some of which can be interpreted as adverb modifying adjective, see example (183).

- (176) Actually, when it came right down to it, and ignoring the circumstances, crossing swords with him was **quite fun**. Certainly a challenge. (BNC, JY8)
- (177) I thought I would *die* at the start but, actually, once I got into the swing of it all it was **rather fun**.’ (BNC, CEY)
- (178) Sequins can be overlapped too, like scales; it is **really fun** choosing them and building up a picture (BNC, CGV)
- (179) But I was real familiar with his records and so I knew it was gonna be that way; in fact it was really **kinda fun** to have to take a guess at when he was gonna change. (BNC, C9L)
- (180) You meet some of the wildest, wackiest, weirdest, **most fun** people — and at the same time there's some really dark forces at work.’ (BNC, ACP)
- (181) Today I suppose he'd have written variations on Happy Birthday, but this is **more fun**. (BNC, AJV)
- (182) It should only include items which increase tension as in Romeo and Juliet or give rise to **more fun** and happiness as in La Fille Mal Gardée , or enhance the general mood as in A Month in the Country where there is romance in the air and also a general feeling of frustration. (BNC, A12)
- (183) Life without Eleanor was quieter but **less fun**. (BNC, AC3)

4.5.1 *Funny* premodified by adverbs in the BNC

Table 13 contains all the adverbs that I find premodifying *funny* in the BNC. The minimum frequency of co-occurrence is 5, and the adverbs that are most likely to be adverbials or have

other functions than modifiers of *funny* were deleted. I have divided them into “closed-class” adverbs and “open-class” adverbs.

C-class	raw freq	O-class	raw freq
so	247	extremely	7
very	219	wickedly	6
really	123	hilariously	5
quite	111	hysterically	5
a bit	47	particularly	5
as	35	terribly	5
how	24	wildly	5
rather	19	wonderfully	5
dead	16		
pretty	10		
well	8		
more	7		
bloody	8		
real	8		
kind of	7		

Table 13. Adverb modifying *funny* in the BNC, raw frequencies, min freq 5

<So>, <very>, <really> and <quite> are notably more frequent than the rest. Compared to *fun* in the BNC, it is interesting to see that two of three clear cut adverbs that modify *fun* in the BNC are two of the most frequently modifying *funny* as well, <really> and <quite>. However, <rather> is not very frequently found with <funny>. This might be a clue to a register difference between *fun* and *funny* in the BNC. As shown in section 4.1, *funny* is predominantly found in the text type Spoken conversations, while *fun* is more evenly distributed across categories. <rather> on the other hand, is most frequent in academic texts, and least frequent in spoken conversations in the BNC. The use of <rather> also shows a difference between the BNC (BrE) and COCA (AmE), see section 5.5.1.

Searching for the string <so funny> with no tag specified returns 247 hits. This combination seems to usually signal “funny ha-ha” reading of the adjective, but sometimes also “funny-peculiar”, like example (184). One extended pattern that <so funny> occurs in is “what’s so funny about (that)?”, which means ‘ha-ha’, see example (185). This pattern is also found without the intensifier <so>, see section 4.3.2.

<Very funny> returns 219 hits. It is typically used to modify a noun and say that it is ‘entertaining’ or ‘comical’, see example (186). I will come back to *funny* as a premodifier of nouns in section 4.7.2. There are also 9 instances of repeated “very, very funny”, see example

(187). Most frequently, the pattern is “someone/something BE very funny”, see example

(188). Co-occurrence with <very> seems to signal a “ha-ha” meaning of *funny*.

- (184) Gaily nodded, and, bending forward, clicked his fingers at the cat. It rolled over and over several times, preening its paws. ‘Oh, Hastings is spoiled,’ said Dorothea Shottory, returning to the garden, ‘but you are honoured. He can be **so funny** with strangers, even bite them (BNC, AD1)
- (185) ‘What’s **so funny** about a row of gigot chops?’ he asked the two laughing girls outside his window. (BNC, CCM)
- (186) It was two beats before I realised that this was meant to be **a very funny joke** and then I struggled to match his guffaws, adding my own rather reedy piping to his basso mirth. (BNC, FR3)
- (187) But Hegley’s poetry isn’t merely accessible; as the absurdity of the lines builds in counterpoint to the serious manner, it becomes **very, very funny** indeed. (BNC, ABS)
- (188) Brando **is very funny**, but the rest of the film creaks a little. (BNC, ACP)

<Really funny> returns 123 hits when no tag is specified, this combination does not indicate whether *funny* should be interpreted in the “ha-ha” meaning, like in example (190), or the “peculiar” meaning, like in example (189).

<Quite funny> is typically found meaning “Quite amusing as opposed to boring”, see example (191). It is often followed by <really>, <I suppose>, or <actually>, see example (192). It seems to signal a “funny ha-ha” reading of *funny*. *Funny* modified by <a bit> seems to mean that something is ‘wrong’ or ‘off’. In example (193) it is used with the verb GO, the use of this verb with *funny* also signals ‘wrong’, see section 4.3.8.

- (189) I thought she was just standing there twisting the neck of this duck. It made me feel **really funny** seeing that. (BNC, A74)
- (190) He was screaming his head off about the war and the Russians. He was all for sending Gladstone over to the ‘bloody’ Russians.’ He grinned now. ‘It was **really funny** to listen to him. (BNC, CK9)
- (191) Her affection for the Bomb is explained by the fact that it is energy-charged and penis-shaped. All of which is **quite funny** for a bit, but becomes boring because it is obviously such rubbish. (BNC, A2W)
- (192) And she said it was so funny, she said, you’d get the, the so-- the poorer people perhaps would use this shop and erm and yet she said, people I knew in the street erm that were Conservatives dealt at the Co-op, where it was I suppose the best buy and they were saving the divi you know, and we thought it was **quite <pause> funny** really. (BNC, G4T)
- (193) They’ll wait till something **goes a bit funny** in your accounts then they’ll say right, we want to do this. (BNC, KCT)
- (194) I dunno, but there’s summat up with Marie. She’s **been a bit funny** these last couple of days, like summat’s bothering her or summat (BNC, A74)

<Not funny> (93) is not in the PIE list, and might be analyzed as a part of the verb phrase or as an adverbial rather than a modifier of *funny*, but I will treat it here nevertheless. If we include the contracted <n’t> we get a total of 157 instances of *funny* directly preceded by negator <not>. In section 4.3.2, I find that <BE funny> is negated by interfering <not> in 73 instances. *Fun* is not frequently negated by <not> in this corpus, there are only 17 instances of

<not/n't fun>. Interestingly, negation seems to signal that 'funny-haha' meaning is intended. This is not a clue that is given in the OED, nor that I had any hypothesis about.

- (195) 'It's **not funny, Prentice**; poor Verity was nearly in tears. (BNC, G0A)
- (196) Mother-in-law jokes **AREN'T funny** (BNC, G35)
- (197) FUNNY LOOKING, BUT **NOT FUNNY** (BNC, ABS)

4.6 *Funny* as adverb in the BNC

The form <funny> is sometimes used as an adverb. In section 4.3.8 this becomes evident through its use with intransitive verbs like TALK and ACT. <funny> also occurs with postmodifier <enough>. Not all of the 20 hits are adverb uses (disjuncts), but some are.

- (198) One of the people he's conning is Sir Epicure Manhom <pause> who wants a life of ease and luxury and has been giving <pause> the alchemist loads of money in order to tu-- to, to perfect this <unclear> and <pause> funny **enough the** alchemist hasn't managed, hasn't managed to do this, to get the person's money. (BNC, KPV)

The OED mentions an adverb form of funny, *funnily*. Quirk et al. (claim that *funnily* is used to “judge what is said to be strange or unexpected (and [...] frequently followed by enough”., and also claim that this adverb form is especially relevant for British English. They also point to that postmodification by <enough> evaluates “the communication as odd”, and that “*Enough* as a modifier of disjuncts does not so much intensify as draw attention to the meaning of the item”. (Quirk et al. 1985: 622, 8.127 and 8.131, and 1985: 628, and 629 note B).

The form *funnily* occurs 104 times, in the BNC and 97 (98) of them are directly followed by <enough>. The meaning is typically that something is “unexpected”, but it also sometimes seems to just mean “interesting” or “worthy of attention”. However, I also find it meaning something closer to ‘funny ha-ha’ in example (201), and as an adjunct of manner meaning ‘in a funny way’ in example (202):

- (199) His loss was our gain. **Funnily**, this was never explained to us, nor did our neighbour ever question the matter. (BNC, BN3)
- (200) There was LOTS of hype before the final was played, **funnily** enough hardly any reports when Leeds won!! (BNC, J1D)
- (201) ‘**Funnily** enough, Jasper and I once helped a human diabetic out of a hypo with Jasper's stash of sugar lumps!’ (BNC, A17)
- (202) I had no doubts about his musicianship, his talent or his ability to tell a funny story **funnily**. (BNC, H9Y)

4.7 *Fun* and *funny* with nouns in the BNC

4.7.1 Fun with nouns in the BNC

Fun is frequently found premodifying a noun in the BNC. In these cases it can be a noun modifying another noun, or it can be an attributive adjective. This use is probably how *fun* came to be used as an adjective in English, see the definition of *fun* in the OED in section 1.1.2.

Table 14 contains the nouns that are found modified by *fun* with a minimum frequency of 4 in the BNC. They have been divided into semantic categories.

<i>Period of time</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Person</i>	<i>Misc/other</i>
day 70	game 7	pub 5	minister 8	way 8
time 10	activities 5	school 13	runners 5	part 6
days 8	run 47	fair 11		side 5
evenings 8	thing 9	factory 8		factor 6
weekend 6	things 7	house 8		
afternoon 4		palace 6		
fortnight 24		park 6		

Table 14. Nouns modified by *fun* in the BNC, raw frequencies, minimum 4

Most of the nouns in the category *Period of time* are modified by *fun* as an adjective, these are <fun day>, <fun time>, <fun days>; <fun evenings>; <fun weekend> and <fun afternoon>. However, I find cases where it seems more like noun modifying a noun. In example (203), I interpret *fun* as a noun because of the other noun (*work*) also modifying <days>: two noun-noun combinations. In example (204), <day> is modified by two adjectives, <educational> and *fun*.

(203) When he was seven, his mother revealed that the young lives of William and Harry were divided into **Fun Days and Work Days**. (BNC, CBF)

(204) These are **both educational and fun days** and all ages, from primary to junior and senior schools have already booked their places. (BNC, CJ6)

<Fun fortnight> is found 24 times, all in the same newspaper, and seems to be some kind of concept or a series that they have going in that newspaper. *Fun* seems to be a noun modifying a noun.

With the nouns in the category *Activity* *fun* is also mostly interpreted as an adjective, <game>, <activities>, <thing> and <things>. <Thing> and <things> are in this category because they are typically found in the pattern “fun thing(s) to do”, and thus referring to an activity.

<Fun run> (and in plural <fun runs>) is a noun-noun compound with this definition in the OED: “**fun run** orig. *U.S.*, an organized and largely uncompetitive long-distance run, esp. characterized by the mass participation of occasional (often sponsored) runners; also **fun**

runner, one who takes part in a long-distance run for *fun*, rather than competitively; **fun running**” (see section 1.1.2). <Fun runner> is also found in the BNC, in the category *Person*, however, <fun running> is not.

The nouns in the category *Place* mostly take *fun* as a noun as a modifier. <fun school> is a name of a computer game in 12 of 13 instances, <fun factory> seems to be some kind of event, a <fun house>, <fun palace>, <fun fair> and <fun park> are all related to a circus or an amusement park. <Fun pub> seems to be both a type of pub, in which case I interpret *fun* to be a noun, see example (205), and a description of a pub as *fun*, in which case I interpret *fun* as an adjective, see example (206).

- (205) It was the first time I had been able to attend a pub meet at this particular hostelry, and I thought it was very nice, full of young people without being a noisy ‘**fun pub**’ (BNC, EEL)
(206) A **fun pub** with a super-sophisticated sound and lighting system (BNC, ECS)

In the category *Person*, there are only two nouns, <runners> and <minister>. <Fun runners> are people who run in a <fun run>, and the combination is thus a noun-noun compound, see above. <Fun minister> refers to a politician named David Mellor, who is often referred to as “Minister of Fun”. All the hits about him are from the newspaper Daily Mirror.

The nouns in the category *Misc* are typically modified by *fun* as an adjective. Many of these are “empty” words, that receive their meaning from the context. <fun part>, <fun side> and <fun way>. I mostly interpret the function *fun* fills as adjectival, but not in all cases: In example (207), <part> is modified by two nouns, <friends> and <fun>. In example (208), *fun* is an adjective modifying a noun. <Fun factor> is a noun-noun combination, and 5 of 6 instance are from a brochure about summer holidays, the last is from an article about Christmas cracker pulling.

- (207) The **friends and fun part** wasn't so easy. After those years of hard work, she didn't quite know how to be social and high-spirited and careless of the future like so many other girls of her own age (BNC, H9H)
(208) After that comes the **fun part** — designing your extension or moving the furniture. (BNC, HAC)

Other combinations of fun before a noun listed in the OED are <funfest> and <fun-maker> which both get 0 hits in the BNC.

The pattern <n* of fun> is sometimes used similarly as <fun n*>. This can be a way of expressing the same without being accused of using *fun* as an adjective. The nouns that occur

in this pattern at least three times are shown in Table 15. I also find <figure of fun>, <sense of fun> and <idea of fun>, these are all discussed separately in section 4.8

<i>Period of time</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Person</i>
Hours of 10	Festival of 3	House of 3	Minister of 6
Day of 5		Ministry of 4	
Evening of 3			
Night of 3			

Table 15. NOUN of *fun*, raw frequencies, minimum 3

Fun and noun

<fun and games> is mentioned as an important idiomatic expression with *fun*. It is quite frequent in the BNC (34 instances). <games> is on the list of top collocates with *fun* in the BNC, with an MI score of 4.7. Restricted to position +2 it has an MI value of 7.36.

Three of the instances are negated, and one is “hardly my idea of fun and games”, see examples (210) and (211). In at least three instances of <fun and games> refer to sex, see example (213).

<Fun and games> is a fixed lexical item. It has no positional mobility (see 2.2.5), but can be fairly compositional, the meaning being having *fun* and playing games. In some examples the sentence would keep the meaning if only *fun* was used, instead of <fun and games>, see example (209). However, it is also used as a non-compositional lexical item, see e.g. example (212).

- (209) And if you bring the children, they'll be **off enjoying fun and games** with the other youngsters at the Pirates Club (BNC, AMW)
- (210) We had trips in those days that took as long as three months which not many people would undertake now. **It was not all fun and games** (BNC, A6L)
- (211) ‘That was hardly my idea of **fun and games**.’ ‘No, of course not. It must have been creepy for you, going into that empty house and finding something nasty behind the door (BNC, HNJ)
- (212) **THREE** teenage boys were arrested last May for throwing 15-pound landscaping stones off a bridge over the main motorway that runs around Washington. Police suspected that the boys, whose **fun and games** hurt a lot of people, were on drugs. (BNC, ABH)
- (213) With the tub installed in their Simi Valley home the happy couple indulged in regular **fun and games** in it, with never a thought for their high blood pressure. (BNC, BP4)

Other nouns that occur with *fun* immediately followed by <and> (in a noun-noun pair) are shown in Table 16.

<i>Fun and noun</i>	<i>Frequency of occurrence</i>
games	34
laughter	10
excitement	9
enjoyment	4

relaxation	4
companionship	4
fellowship	3
frolics	3
fantasy	3
adventure	3
happiness	3
entertainment	3
kids	3
pleasure	3

Table 16. Fun and noun in the BNC, min freq 3

Most of these collocations have to do with “togetherness” or ‘enjoyment’. They all have positive connotations, further suggesting a (unsurprising) strong positive prosody for fun. Most of the combinations are low frequency, and the choice of a particular word (but not the semantic field), might be said to be governed by the Open-choice principle rather than the Idiom principle (which is definitely in play with <fun and games>, see section 2.1. From this list we can say that there are two types of expressions shown: <fun and games> and <fun and n* meaning ‘togetherness’ or ‘enjoyment’>. <Fun and adventure> occurs twice in the pattern “**sense** of fun and adventure”, and some of the other pairs as well. See section 4.8.

4.7.2 *Funny with nouns in the BNC*

As mentioned in section 1.1.3, *funny* is used as an attributive adjective. A search for <funny> followed by any noun returns 1360 matches. Some of these are not combinations but e.g. the next phrase starts with a noun and there is no punctuation mark. This is especially common in the spoken texts. Table 17 contains combinations that occur three or more times. The ten most frequent nouns are marked in **bold**.

<i>Person</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Thing/Object</i>	<i>Body parts and senses etc</i>	<i>Thought process</i>	<i>Saying</i>	<i>Abstract thing</i>	<i>Misc</i>
bloke 4	farm 16	day 5	hat 8	eyes 3	dream 3	stories 12	colour 6	bit 4
buggers 3	place 10	time 6	hats 4	face 23	feeling 18	story 25	colours 3	bits 9
character 3	places 3	age 3	money 10	faces 13	idea 4	question 5	name 29	business 18
girl 25	world 9	moments 3	pictures 3	neck 5	ideas 10	remarks 3	names 4	ones 7
lot 8				nose 4	mood 10	joke 5	numbers 6	side 59
man 53				look 11	thought 3	line 3	word 6	stuff 11
men 10				looks 12		lines 3	Energy 4	tricks 5
people 10				noise 10			play 3	turns 4
woman 5				noises 9			film 9	way 52
				smell 9			game 4	thing 197
				taste 4			shape 6	things 49

voice 6	bone 6
voices 6	
accent 3	
accents 3	
sense (of humour) 3	

Table 17. Nouns premodified by *funny*, raw frequencies, min freq 3

Compared to *fun*, *funny* is more frequently found in attributive position. I use some of the same categories that I use for *fun*, however, the category *Activity* is not necessary.

The category *Person* is much more important with *funny*, and five categories had to be added, *Thing/Object*, *Body parts and senses*, *Thought process*, *Saying* and *Abstract thing*. The category *Time* is much more important for *fun* than it is for *funny*, here it has 4 types, but they only represent 17 occurrences.

The nouns that occur both with *fun* and *funny* are: <day> (70 *fun* , 5 *funny*), <time> (10 *fun* , 6 *funny*), <game> (7 *fun* , 4 *funny*), <way> (8 *fun* , 52 *funny*), <side> (5 *fun* , 59 *funny*). Most of these nouns have a clear preference for one of the words, this is especially evident with <day> for *fun* and <way> and <side> for *funny*. <Fun day> means something like an ‘enjoyable’ day, while <funny day> means a strange/peculiar day.

The most frequent nouns are in the categories *Person* (<girl> and <man>), *Body parts and sense* (<face>), *Saying* (<story>), *Abstract object* (<name>), and *Misc* (<side>, <way>, <thing> and <things>).

Person. A <funny man> is a man who makes you laugh. It is also used to mean something similar to a comedian, in the OED it is listed (hyphenated) as “a professional jester”. <Funny girl> can also refer to a girl who makes you laugh, or who is a comedian of profession, however, it also frequently refers to a movie with Barbara Streisand.

- (214) Let me tell you he does a lot on television in sitcoms er a lot of films as well, comic actor, **funny man**, who is he? (BNC, KGH)
 (215) I thought he was rather a **funny man** and he thought I was rather a **funny girl**. (BNC, CH8)
 (216) n a number from **Funny Girl** , Barbra Streisand sings ‘As Camille I just feel, I’ve so much to offer. (BNC, C9U)

Body parts and senses. Interestingly, *funny* is found with many nouns that denote a body part a sense, or something that you can sense. <funny face> is frequently found in the pattern “PULL/MAKE a funny face”. It, however, also frequently refer to a musical with Audrey Hepburn and Fred Astaire called *Funny Face*.

- (217) Byron pulled a **funny face** at Mary. (BNC, HGS)

- (218) She looked like a refugee from one of those films that at the time constantly glamorized the Paris left bank — like Audrey Hepburn in **Funny Face** or Juliet Greco in so many roles. (BNC, J0W)

Saying. A <funny story> is a story that makes you laugh.

- (219) ‘It was a jest,’ she protested. ‘A **funny story** to amuse Ranulf. (BNC, BMN)

Abstract object. A <funny name> is found in the pattern “funny name for something” meaning either *funny* ha-ha or that it is unexpected (funny peculiar). Many of the instances refer to a foreign name.

- (220) He was wearing a tea towel all right, but Lawrence was a **funny name** for an Arab and he seemed confused about caravans. (BNC, A6C)
(221) of course they do Pan Yan, what a **funny name**, Pan Yan, I bet its a Chinese bloke that er invented it <pause> Geoffrey what you doing dear? (BNC, KD6)

Misc. The category “Misc” is made up of the nouns that do not fit into the other categories. However, most of them are also to some extent “empty”, multipurpose words, and could easily be substituted by another by each other, or simply <funny>. For instance, <bit> and <bits> could be substituted by <thing>.

<Funny side> is frequently found in the pattern “SEE the funny side of it/something”, meaning to see the humor in the situation, see example (222). This noun is also found with *fun* in the BNC. In those cases it is preceded by verbs like ENJOY and EXPLOIT, it seems to mean “the good side”, “the carefree side of X”. <Funny way> is typically found in the pattern “an ‘unusual or ‘remarkable’ way of v*-ing something” (17 instances), the verb typically meaning ‘utter’, see example (223), it is also used about “doing something in an abnormal way”, see example (224) Also, clause initially, <in a funny way>, could sometimes be substituted by <somehow>, see example (225). When this noun is used with *fun* it is used typically used in the pattern “fun way to v*”, meaning an ‘enjoyable’ way of doing something.

<Funny thing> is the most frequent noun following <funny>. It frequently occurs in the patterns “funny thing about something”, typically in a comment clause functioning as a disjunct adverbial serving as kind of introduction to a story, see example (226), “And/but the funny thing BE” is used similarly, see example (227). <Funny things> seems to be used more literally, that is, about objects, see example (228). It is also with DO “something DO funny things to someone”, see example (229). Another pattern is “funny things BE going on/HAPPEN”, see example (230). <funny things> seems to typically mean “funny-peculiar”

- (222) And then, even while she was making valiant efforts to control herself, because for certain he was going to set about strangling her at any moment, after some seconds of looking at her as if

- staggered, suddenly, and to her amazement, he was seeing the **funny side** of it also — and he was laughing too! (BNC, JY1)
- (223) **Funny way** of writing it, but you ca-- you could write it that way. (BNC, J91)
- (224) But she was breathing very heavily and jerking her legs in a **funny way**, as if something hurt her. (BNC, AT4)
- (225) In a **funny way** I knew I was going to need treatment. (BNC, K5D)
- (226) It's a **funny thing** about mothers and fathers. Even when their own child is the most disgusting little blister you could ever imagine, they still think that he or she is wonderful. (BNC, CH4)
- (227) And the **funny thing** was, instead of being resentful of the changes, everybody seemed happier, seemed to have more sense of purpose, more enthusiasm for giving the guests a good time, instead of having one themselves. (BNC, JY6)
- (228) Hats are **funny things** — you either love them or you hate them. (BNC, A7P)
- (229) Shock does **funny things** to people.' (BNC, HTG)
- (230) Yeah, all sorts of **funny things** can happen, isn't there? (BNC, KB7)

The OED lists some combinations with nouns as usages of <funny>; see section 1.1.4. Some of these occur in the BNC.

<Funny business>, is sometimes used as a non-compositional item which typically carries the meaning “something that you are not supposed to do”, or simply “something strange”. It is also used compositionally, about a business that is *funny*, either strange or that makes you laugh, the <funny stuff> also carries the non-compositional meaning. <Funny bone > is another phrase, which should probably be considered a compound. In the OED it is listed with a hyphen, however, in the BNC it only occurs without the hyphen, and only 6 times. Three of the instances are in the pattern “BANG my funny bone” which fits well with the definition in the OED, “the part of the elbow over which the ulnar nerve passes”.

<Funny farm> occurs 16 times, and is this most frequent noun in the category *place*. It is used to mean “mental hospital”, as listed in the OED, however, 6 of 16 instances are about a record label by the name of Funny Farm.

<Funny money> also occurs, in example (234) in usage (c) in the OED, “financial assets which have been created or amassed by incomprehensible or unscrupulous accounting”.

- (231) No, they sent a big strong farmer's lad down to London with this Jack, to make sure there were no **funny business**.' (BNC, HWN)
- (232) Chasing him, she banged her **funny bone** on the doorpost. (BNC, HH9)
- (233) Although the **Funny Farm** has been operating for just over a year it has had many bands through its doors already including The Proclaimers, The Silencers, Botany 5, Kith 'n Kin, Avalon, Fini Tribe, Jools Holland and Nazareth. (BNC, HP6)
- (234) A few years ago, er, the joint planning structures, and this is before the introduction of care in the community, dealt or came to be seen politically, dealing very much with joint finance and although, important though it, that is, it's what's sometimes called **funny money**, it's money at the side, it didn't deal with mainstream policies, and mainstream budgets. (BNC, J3P)

Items that are listed in the OED, but do not occur in the BNC are: *Funny dope*, *funny column* and *funny paper*, *funny-face* does not occur hyphenated (and is not used as a form of address).

Funny-man hyphenated is only found once. *Funny party* occurs once in the BNC, but in the meaning ‘a good party’, and not in the nautical meaning listed in the OED.

4.8 Other patterns of *fun* and *funny*

Some of the patterns that I find with *fun* do not fit into the word class sections. I will explore these here.

4.8.1 Other patterns of *fun*

For *fun*

In the entry for *fun* in the OED, *for fun* is listed as a usage with the meaning ‘as a joke, sportively, not seriously’. I find 179 instances of <for fun> in BNC, however, some of these are e.g. <looking for fun>, where <for> is rather a part of the verb. It is typically preceded by a specification of something you DO, (<hacking>, <playing>, <building>, <reading>, <running> etc.) The meaning is that you do this for the purpose of achieving ‘amusement’ or ‘enjoyment’ as opposed to for *a reason* (‘necessity’, like in example (235), ‘professionally’ (for money), like in examples (236) and (237), ‘for school’ like in example (238)). This might arguably correspond to “not seriously” in the OED definition, but I do not find it to mean ‘in joke’. Quirk et al. note this difference in meaning of *for* and *in fun* (that the OED does not distinguish)

“He did it *for fun* [‘with the object of getting amusement]

He said it *in fun* [‘jokingly’, ‘in jest’]”. (Quirk et al. 1985: 696, 9.45). Out of 14 instances of <in fun>, only 7 represent the expression <in fun> meaning “jokingly”. This use might be less common than the entries in Quirk et al. and the OED suggest.

- (235) I feel sorry for the little girl and I suggest to the writer that she consoles her daughter by telling her that the vile custom of killing wild **animals for fun** is on the way out, that almost all british people feel as she does, and are determined to end such cruelty, and that she can help to bring about its end by supporting the League Against Cruel Sports and talking about the work they do to her schoolfriends. (BNC, C88)
- (236) I **paint a bit for fun**,’ she said, with a grimace of deprecation for the unsatisfactory results (BNC, H8L)
- (237) Lawn Tennis: Beaten Borg says he's **playing for fun** and the fans (BNC, AKM)
- (238) There is a danger, particularly in the final years of compulsory schooling, that little time is given to promoting **reading for fun** (BNC, ANS)
- (239) He had been promoted to sergeant and sometimes spoke very masterfully to Anne, until she reminded him, half **in fun** and half in earnest, that she was not one of his soldiers. (BNC, G16)

Fun for

The pattern <fun for> someone gets 132 hits in BNC, and many of these instances have one of the categories in Table 18 as the ones the fun is *for*: This use is similar to the use of possessive determiners with *fun* described in section 4.4.2.

<i>Fun for</i>	<i>Raw frequencies</i>
All the (all our/the/the whole) family	18
The kids/children/young	5
Everyone/everybody	11
Personal pronouns (her/herself/him/them/us/you)	20

Table 18. *Fun for* someone in the BNC, raw frequencies

- (240) ONCE YOU'VE got over the severe attack of 'Ooer' s which this band's rather indecent euphemistic name inevitably provokes, Joni's Butterfly reveal themselves (sorry) as perfectly innocent pop **fun for all the family**, with a lyrical undercurrent of sex, drugs, avarice and Satanic goat-molesting. (BNC, CK6)
- (241) This idea would also be splendid for young and old alike, using a black pattern on a white background with really bright colours added and it would be particularly good **fun for children** to wear. (BNC, CK3)

<Family> seems to be an especially important collocate with *fun*, not only after, but also before the node. 26 occur in position -1, and 21 in position +4, and it actually occurs in every slot from -5 to +5. <Family> co-occurs with *fun* 63 times in BNC in a 5:5 span, and has an MI 2.382. See also section 4.7.1.

<Funny for the family> gets 0 hits, and the pattern <funny for>, which gets 16 hits, mostly means *funny* for "a reason" "a period of time". Only six have the meaning discussed above. In terms of collocations, <family> co-occurs only three times with <funny> in the entire corpus, which gives a minus MI value (-1.6903).

Sense of fun

<sense of fun> occurs 56 times in the BNC, 9 of these are in the pattern "sense of fun and n* with positive connotations", like in section 4.7.1: <sense of fun and curiosity>; <sense of fun and fantasy>; <sense of fun and childhood>. The meaning of <sense of fun> seems to be something like 'fun loving', 'knows how to have fun', or 'happy'. It can also mean 'sense of humor', see example (244). It has a semantic preference for 'childhood': <children>, <playing>, etc. However, it can also be used in a similar to <fun and games> above, meaning something like 'up to no good', like in example (249).

- (242) Professor Foot said: 'Laughter and the ability to enjoy a sense **of fun** is taken as a sign of
(243) healthy well-being. (BNC, K3A)

- (244) And he is a man of enormous good humour, with a highly developed **sense of fun** and laughter which many second-hand commentators have failed to understand, or preferred to ignore. (BNC, AOP)
- (245) Its archetypal shape and colour have universal appeal, evoking a **sense of fun and childhood**. (BNC, G34)
- (246) Mosley also lived in a private world where there was leisure and a **sense of fun**. (BNC, EDA)
- (247) The positive aspects of the inner child are a **sense of fun and curiosity** — ‘let’s play and enjoy life’ (BNC, AYK)
- (248) The books are delightfully illustrated and full of activities which appeal irresistibly to children’s intelligence, creativity, and **sense of fun**, from drawing, matching, and discrimination tasks, to following directions and problem-solving. (BNC, CLL)
- (249) All was going well until a passing lad with a **sense of fun** (?) pulled out the plug. (BNC, HU8)

To be full of fun

There are 21 instances of <full of fun> in the BNC. It is typically preceded by a form of BE. Most of the instances are examples of someone being described as being ‘full of fun’, that is, ‘a fun person’, see example **¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.** In other cases, ‘full of fun’ seems to describe something as ‘in joke’ (in fun, see above) (jokingly), like in example (251):

- (250) If you’re outgoing, trendy, intelligent and **full of fun**, get scribbling to me, a guy who’s looking for adventure. (BNC, HSJ)
- (251) ‘Oh, for Gawd’s sake, don’t start on all that crap!’ Mickey’s voice was **full of fun**. ‘I’ve read a few books in my time, and there’s one thing I’ve learned ... there’s a difference between education and being well read.’ (BNC, CR6)

Figure of fun

<Figure of fun> occurs 18 times in the BNC, and is an idiom meaning ‘a laughing stock’, someone that is laughed at. The meaning of fun in this idiom is thus connected to the meaning it has in the MWV’s *MAKE fun of* and *POKE fun at*.

- (252) At a stroke this reduces the marauding husband-kidnapper to an unthreatening **figure of fun**. (BNC, CB8)

Idea of fun

<Idea of fun> occurs 21 times in the BNC, and is an expression ‘what someone thinks is ‘enjoyable’. It is typically negated or questioned. It seems similar to the expression “(not) my cup of tea”.

- (253) Stuck behind a desk all day isn’t my **idea of fun**, Sergei. (BNC, EF1)
- (254) Bouncing around on the end of an elastic rope may not be everyone’s **idea of fun**, but for the 24-year-old from Staindrop, County Durham, it’s a fascination that has turned into a living. (BNC, K51)

What fun!

Another pattern that crops up is *fun* in a sort of exclamation: <such fun> (57) and <what fun> (43). An exclamation mark seem to be implied (and sometimes explicit: 16 of 43 instances of

<what fun> are with an exclamation mark). Quirk et al.(1985: 833) use the category *exclamatives* to refer to this kind of sentence when it is introduced by *what* or *how*. They add that “[e]xactly the same functions are fulfilled (especially in some women’s speech) by the emphatic degree items *such* (as a determiner) and *so* (as an intensifier) in statements and questions” (1985: 834). <how fun> and <so fun> get 0 hits in the BNC, which is probably due to the relatively low frequency of *fun* as an adjective.

- (255) “The only similarity between my real Mum and Penny from the show is their use of the phrase "such fun". If in doubt at a middle class social occasion, "such fun!"” - ¹⁶ (not BNC)
- (256) Before we left, they suggested I returned the next day to undergo a ‘lymphangiogram’ and explained the procedure. It sounded **such fun**, I could hardly wait. (BNC, CA9)
- (257) ‘A doll’s tea party!’ she exclaimed. ‘**What fun!**’ Her voice, however, wavered. (BNC, GW2)

Example (256) is clearly an example of the phrase <such fun> used to express irony. *Fun* seems to be used ironically quite frequently. The phrase “as much fun as” lends itself easily to ironic statements, and there are also some examples of *fun* in quotation marks/inverted commas.

- (258) Others are holding traditional barn dances and parties etc. That will be as much **as fun as** er Sunday school I expect and probably just as well attended. (BNC, HUV)
- (259) Not that this would necessarily matter in itself, but the music they’re producing is dour, grey monotonous and generally about as **much fun** as a dose of the clap and a tenth as infectious. (BNC, CK4)
- (260) FUN for all the family is the biggest lie about any holiday destination or activity. Often it ends up being about **as much fun as** trying to have a quiet drink in a bouncy castle. (BNC, CH1)
- (261) The response of the 1960s and 70s to this failure to capture the essence of the traditional pub was the ruthlessly-applied corporate **image and the proliferation** of ‘fun’ theme-pubs (BNC, AOB)
- (262) The fact that some policewomen carry out both sets of duties allows them to contrast the two types of community relations, with general community relations work being seen as ‘fun’ and juvenile liaison as more demanding and difficult (BNC, A5Y)
- (263) There is, however, one ‘fun’ idea which I intend to prepare now, to give me time to get it finished. (BNC, CK3)
- (264) Any would be magnificent and there is time to knit several of them for ‘specials’ but I haven’t said anything yet about small ‘**fun**’ presents and decorations which are so much a part of Christmas (BNC, CK3)

Examples (263) and (264) do not seem like examples of irony even with the quotation marks. They might be indication that *fun* is not seen as a “serious” word, and that to use it in an article in Machine Knitting Monthly was not entirely “proper” in the early 90’s.

There is one usage listed in the OED that has not been commented on in this chapter, *like fun*. I find only one instances of <like fun> in the meaning given in the OED: ‘energetically, very quickly, vigourously’.

¹⁶ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/comedy/2009/12/miranda-is-such-fun.shtml>

- (265) 'Hang without mercy, hang **like fun**,' recommended Mr Punch, 'and you will check Garotters as effectually as Sepoys.' (BNC, EDE)

4.8.2 Other patterns of *funny*

Funny is also found in a comparative clause in ironic statements, 'as 'amusing' as something bad':

- (266) He's about **as funny** as diptheria .' (BNC, ACV)
(267) Mr Blackadder tolled me this buk is ful of jokes that are about **as funny as** getting your bottom caut in a bacon slicer. (BNC, CHR)
(268) 'Charles Paris's Costard was about **as funny as** an obituary notice' — New Statesman (BNC, H92)

B in the entry for *funny* in the OED is a plural noun, *funnies*. This gets 16 hits, but only three refer to a '(section of the newspaper containing) comic strips', examples (269), (270) and (271). Actually, only one of the examples is an unmarked, natural use of the word, referring to a section of the newspaper and not comic illustrations in general, this is example (271). Other than these three, six examples have <funnies> in a specialized use, possibly invented for a novel, see example (272). The rest of the concordance lines use <funnies> to refer to something *funny*, see example (273) where it seems to mean 'funny episodes'.

- (269) The Comic Art of BIFF Dovecot Art Centre, Stockton, until March 27 SUDDENLY it seems, everyone is into the **funnies**. (BNC, K4P)
(270) Spiralling this type of greeting to new limits is a Warrington firm, which is not afraid to thrill and shock with its specialised range of well-illustrated **funnies**. (BNC, K3X)
(271) 'Friend of yours got a little shot up yesterday, or don't you read the papers?' 'Just the **funnies** (BNC, FAP)
(272) If you create any problems with the funnies, you're on your own.' 'The '**funnies**', sir?' She had never heard the word before. 'Spooks. Spies. Policemen of my generation call them the **funnies**.' (BNC, G15)
(273) The training courses on Venturous usually produced a good crop of "**funnies**" ! 967 Such incidents were not always so funny at the time, though, in retrospect we always had a good laugh. 968 Spontaneous humour from innocent remarks often kept things in perspective. (BNC, H0C)

In B in the OED, also *funniness* and *funnyism* are listed. <Funinness> gets 4 hits in the BNC. The meaning is not clear to me from the examples, but it could mean, like the OED says, "the quality or state of being funny". See example (274). There are no instances of <funnyism> in the BNC.

- (274) It, it is a form of an obsession and it is an excitement and there's a warmth and there's a **funniness** about it and it just wonderful, better being in love than not being in love surely. (BNC, FLB)

Funny-looking is listed in sense 4. In the BNC, <funny-looking> occurs 6 times and <funny-smelling> once. They are typically premodifiers of nouns and the meaning is ‘funny-peculiar’.

(275) These **funny-looking** blokes just turned up on the doorstep with rolls of carpet over their shoulders asking if we wanted to buy them. (BNC, CK4)

4.9 Summary of results of the investigation of *fun* and *funny* in the BNC

In the British National Corpus, the words *fun* and *funny* are almost equally frequent, occurring 4994 and 4306 times respectively. *Funny* is more marked for the informal text category Spoken conversations in the BNC. *Fun*, on the other hand is not as marked for a text category in the BNC, and is more evenly dispersed over categories.

Collocations: The top 20 collocations with *fun* show that *fun* colligates with the word classes verbs, adjectives, nouns, and determiners, while the list for *funny* in the BNC shows that it colligates with verbs, nouns, adjectives and adverbs. Most of the words in the collocation list for *fun* belong to a semantic field of ‘amusement’ and ‘playing’. Some of the collocations for *funny* can be grouped according to the two senses given for funny in the OED in section 1.1.4, ‘funny ha-ha’ and ‘funny peculiar’. Some of the words from the collocation list for *fun* and from the list for *funny* can be grouped together in a semantic domain of ‘humor’ (which is closely related to ‘amusement’ and ‘playing’).

BE: Both *fun* and *funny* are frequently found with BE, but <BE funny> is more frequent in the corpus than <BE fun>. Both are frequently found with <it> as subject. Both *fun* and *funny* with BE are found preceded by words denoting ‘intention’ <to be fun/funny>. The difference in meaning seems to be whether it is intended to be ‘enjoyable’ or ‘humorous’, that is, signaling a ‘funny-ha-ha’ sense of *funny*. Both <BE fun> and <BE funny> take second and third person personal pronouns as subjects, but not first.

<BE fun> is frequently found with a noun or gerund denoting an activity, place or object functioning as subject, a typical pattern is “an object is fun to do something with”. <it BE fun> is frequently followed by a verb denoting ‘experience’. <BE fun> is not frequently negated while <BE funny> is very frequently negated. When <BE funny has> <it> as subject, it is typically followed by a verb, or <because>, <but>, <how>, <when> and <if>. Recurring pattern include “It is funny you should v* meaning ‘utter’” and “(It’s) funny (to think) that X”. These function as introduction to the following discourse. It seems that co-occurrence

with BE rules out the sense ‘funny-peculiar’ with a negative connotation (like a euphemism for ‘bad’). There seems to be another sense that is more prevalent, which might be said to be a variant of the ‘peculiar’ sense, but ‘weaker’ and *funny* in this sense is often used in patterns that function as introductions suggesting that something is ‘worth attention’, is ‘interesting’, or ‘surprising’.

Modal auxiliaries: Both <be fun> and <be funny> are found with modal auxiliaries, however, with <be funny> this is not a frequent use. I propose a semantic reason for this difference, that *funny* frequently has a function which renders it “empty” or low in evaluative force, consequently making it a less likely candidate for expressions of modality.

HAVE fun with: HAVE fun (with) is an idiomatic expression meaning to ‘enjoy’ or ‘play with’. It can also be used in combination with <expense> meaning something similar to *MAKE fun of*. *Funny* is not used with HAVE without being a premodifier of a noun as it has no nominal functions.

Multi-word verbs: *MAKE fun of* and *POKE fun at* are Multi-Word Verbs that occur exclusively with *fun*, meaning ‘to laugh at’ or ‘ridicule’. MAKE is also used with *fun* as O.P., typically meaning to turn a (boring, common, etc.) activity into something ‘enjoyable’ and that way, worthwhile. *Funny* is also used as O.P. with MAKE, but not in the same sense.

Lexical verbs: Lexical verbs preceding *fun* can be grouped into three classes: Copular verbs with *fun* as Subject Predicative, both as adjective and (with preposition <like>) as noun; Transitive verbs with *fun* as Direct Object; and a Complex transitive verb taking *fun* as Object Predicative. *Funny* occurs with Copular verbs with as S.P., and a Complex transitive verb taking *funny* as O.P. Out of these verbs, two co-occur with both *fun* and *funny* more than the minimum frequency of three, the copular verbs LOOK and SOUND. I find that situations and activities can be described as ‘looking’ and ‘sounding’ fun, and this is uttered as a probability or expectation rather than a fact. A person, an object or a state can LOOK or SOUND funny, which is stated as a fact about the qualities of this person, object or state.

Adjectival premodification and determiners: *Fun* is found premodified by adjectives and determiners in the BNC. The most frequent adjectival premodifiers are <great> and <good>. The adjectives that premodify *fun* can be grouped into three categories: *Amount/quantity*, *Not dangerous* and *Quality*. The determiners that occur before *fun* can be grouped into four categories: *Open-class quantifiers*, *Other quantifying determiners*, *Possessive determiners* and *Other determiners*. *Funny* is not found premodified by determiners and adjectives without being a premodifier of a noun.

Adverb premodifiers¹⁷: Both *fun* and *funny* are premodified by adverbs in the BNC. Except for the ambiguous adverbs/determiners I only find four adverbs in premodifying function occurring more than three times with *fun*. The same are found with *funny* as well, in addition to a wide range of other adverbs. These have been divided into two categories, *Closed-class* and *Open-class adverbs*.

I have also included <not> in this section, *funny* is frequently found negated, and when it is it seems to always have the sense ‘funny ha-ha’ (or rather ‘not funny ha-ha’). In the BNC, *fun* is only found 17 times with the negator *not* (*n't*) directly preceding it.

Funny has a double word class membership, it is used as an adverb. I also found 104 instances of the “adverb form” *funnily*.

Premodifying nouns: *Fun* and *funny* are found premodifying nouns as adjectives, and *fun* is also found modifying nouns as a noun. The nouns that directly precede *fun* in the BNC can be grouped into five categories: *Period of time*, *Activity*, *Place*, *Person* and *Misc*. When grouping the nouns that follow *funny*, five categories had to be added, and *Activity* was found redundant. The added categories are: *Object*, *Body parts and senses*, *Thought process*, *Saying*, and *Abstract thing*. Some nouns are typically modified by *fun* as noun, others as adjectives. Others are ambiguous. With *funny*, some nouns are used mostly in the ‘ha-ha’ sense, while others seem to signal the ‘peculiar’ sense. Some combinations have *funny* as a euphemism for ‘bad’, while in other combinations *funny* is not particularly marked for any meaning, it seems to mean something like ‘interesting’.

Other patterns: Both *fun* and *funny* are found in some patterns that are not covered in the other sections. I also look at the usages listed in the OED that I have not already explored in other sections.

In conclusion, the most notable differences between *fun* and *funny* in the BNC concern what can be described using *fun* or *funny*. *Fun* is used with activities, and things you can *do* something with or otherwise ‘enjoy’, while *funny* rather describes the appearance or perception of something. *Funny* does not in general, have the positive semantic prosody that *fun* typically has.

¹⁷ It is also interesting to note that intensifying adverbs <so> and <very> *fun* do not occur in the BNC, while <really> and <quite> occur 10 and 41 times respectively. It would be interesting to look further into the difference between these four adverbs, and why it is acceptable to use two of them with *fun* and the other two not at all. However, this is beyond the scope of the present study.

5 Results of the investigation of the Corpus of Contemporary American English

I have searched the corpus of contemporary American English (COCA) for data on American English use of *fun* and *funny*. See section 3.2 for details about the corpus.

5.1 Distribution of *fun* and *funny* in COCA

Fun: In COCA, there are 36087 occurrences of the word *fun* (2010-02-10). In a total of approximately 400,000,000, this is a frequency of approximately 90 per million words (pmw). This is almost double the frequency of *fun* in the BNC, 50.8 pmw.

Funny: In COCA, there are 19244 occurrences of the word *funny* (2010-06-03). This is a frequency of approximately 47.87 pmw. Tagged as adjective it is the 1802nd most frequent word in COCA.

Table 19 shows the distribution of *fun* and *funny* in text types in COCA.

<i>Text category</i>	<i>Fun, pmw</i>	<i>Fun, raw freq</i>	<i>Funny, pmw</i>	<i>Funny, raw freq</i>
spoken	124.63	10181	73.79	6028
fiction	76.66	6307	83.07	6542
magazine	118.52	9870	37.78	3146
newspaper	96.42	7653	38.3	3040
academic	26.88	2131	5.13	407

Table 19. Distribution of *fun* and *funny* in text types in COCA (2010-02-26).

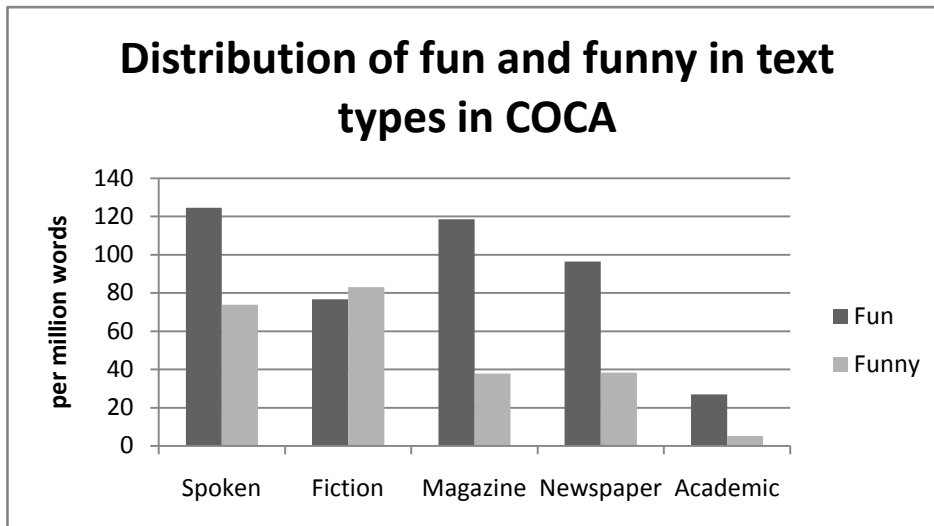


Figure 6. Distribution of *fun* and *funny* in text types in COCA, pmw.

As can be seen from Figure 6, *funny* is most frequent in the Fiction and Spoken categories. Even though the charts are not necessarily comparable because of the differences in division in text types and types of data in the corpora, it should be noted that Spoken conversation and Fiction and Verse are the most frequent categories for *funny* in the BNC. However, in the BNC, the difference between the most frequent (Spoken conversation) and the others is more marked than in COCA. This could be a result of skewing because of data size of the spoken part of the BNC, and also because of the difference in the spoken data in these corpora, see section 3.2.

The distribution of *fun* in BNC is more even than *funny*. However, while the most frequent categories for *fun* in the BNC are written “other” and “unpublished”, in COCA it is most frequent in Spoken and Magazine (There are no unpublished texts in COCA). *Fun* in both the BNC and COCA has Newspapers in third place.

For both words and both corpora, “academic texts” is the category with the lowest frequency. Table 20 and Figure 7 show the distribution of *fun* and *funny* in the four time sections in COCA.

<i>Time sections</i>	<i>fun, pmw</i>	<i>fun, raw freq</i>	<i>funny, pmw</i>	<i>funny, raw freq</i>
1990-1994	67	6923	41.11	4248
1995-1999	93.01	9572	50.06	5152
2000-2004	96.2	9867	48.01	4925
2005-2009	103.94	9725	52.57	4919

Table 20. Distribution of *fun* and *funny* in time sections in COCA (2010-02-26)

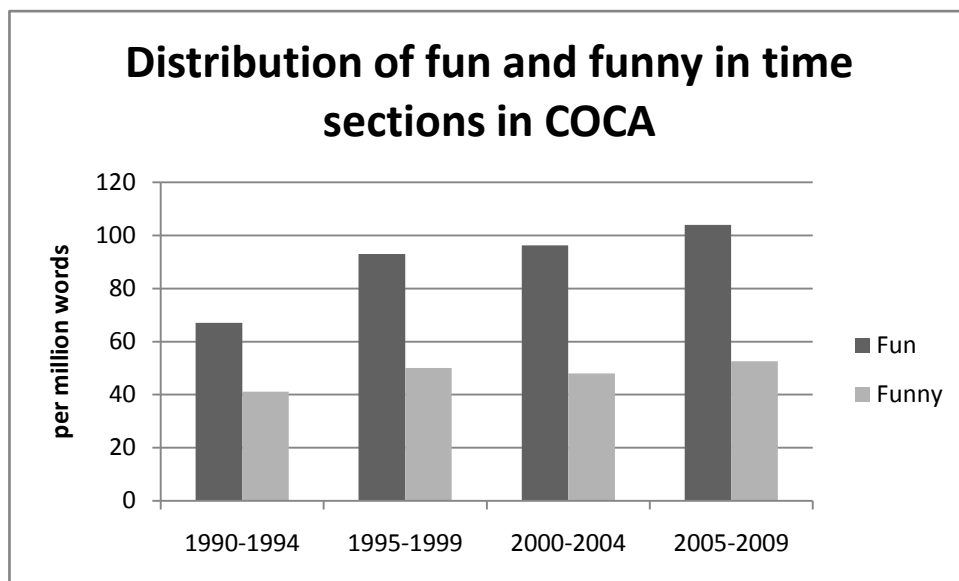


Figure 7. Distribution of *fun* and *funny* in time sections in COCA, pmw.

When it comes to the time sections in COCA, it is interesting to see that while *fun* has a clearly rising curve from 1990 to 2009, *funny* does not. The frequency (per million words) is highest in the last time section here as well, but it is almost as high in the section 1995-1999, and there is overall less variation between the sections than with *fun*.

This cannot be compared to the BNC, as that corpus is not a diachronic one.

5.2 Collocations in COCA

Like in the BNC, I have used COCA to generate top 20 collocation lists for *fun* and *funny*. The collocations occur in a span of 5:5, the minimum frequency is set to 10, and the lists are ranked by Mutual Information (MI).

5.2.1 Collocations with *fun* in COCA

Table 21 contains the top 20 collocates with *fun*, sorted on MI score, minimum frequency 10 (span 5:5). Two elements were deleted as irrelevant; one was blank and did not return concordance lines, the other was <chow>, which together with <fun> is a Chinese dish.

	<i>Collocate</i>	<i>Total no. as collocate</i>	<i>Total in corpus</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>MI-score</i>
1	havin	24	174	13.79	7.26
2	pokes	75	717	10.46	6.87
3	poke	160	1606	9.96	6.80
4	poking	153	1784	8.58	6.58

5	flirty	16	254	6.30	6.13
6	frolic	16	258	6.20	6.11
7	5K	15	245	6.12	6.09
8	poked	98	1924	5.09	5.83
9	blondes	14	322	4.35	5.60
10	spoil	41	1230	3.33	5.22
11	fun	969	36087	2.69	4.90
12	good-natured	15	620	2.42	4.75
13	summertime	23	1051	2.19	4.61
14	having	2242	113139	1.98	4.47
15	enjoyment	46	2449	1.88	4.39
16	enjoyable	32	1765	1.81	4.34
17	wacky	15	838	1.79	4.32
18	wholesome	16	932	1.72	4.26
19	funky	21	1339	1.57	4.13
20	playful	30	1992	1.51	4.07

Table 21. Top 20 collocates with *fun* in COCA, sorted on MI, min freq 10

Compared to the BNC list sorted on MI, the top MI score is lower, but the last ones are higher. Words that are also found in the top 20 MI list for the BNC are marked in **bold**. The top collocate on the COCA list <havin>, is not present in the BNC list. However, it represents a form of HAVE (having), and <having> is also on the COCA list. <Having> is on the BNC list as well, in 15th place. Different forms of POKE are present on both lists. <Spoil> is also on both lists.

Items that are only in COCA and only in the BNC are listed in Table 22.

It is interesting to see that collocations like <fun and games>, <join in the fun> and <great fun>, which are some of the most important patterns with *fun* that I have found in the BNC, are not present on the collocation list in COCA. This could indicate that these patterns are not as important in COCA.

<i>Not in BNC</i>	<i>Not in COCA</i>
flirty	harmless
frolic	fortnight
5K	lots
blondes	games
good-natured	laughter
Summertime	tremendous
enjoyment	lively
enjoyable	excitement
wacky	great
Wholesome	humour
Funky	join
playful	expense
	enjoying

Table 22. Items that are only on one of the collocation lists for *fun*

The concept of *enjoying* is present in both lists, but represented by different forms. In the BNC it is present in the –ing form, <enjoying>; in COCA by the noun <enjoyment> and the adjective <enjoyable>. Other words that seem to belong to the same semantic field of ‘playing’ and ‘enjoying’ are <flirty>, <frolic> and <playful>.

There are many adjectives on the list, <flirty>, <good-natured>, <enjoyable>, <wacky>, <wholesome>, <funky>, and <playful>. Most cases of <flirty> are as an attributive adjective, functioning as a premodifier of a NP together with *fun*, or as a predicative adjective together with *fun*. There are only three instances of <flirty> premodifying the noun *fun*. The collocation has a semantic preference for ‘fashion’ and ‘beauty’, and a register preference for the text category Magazines. It is also worth noting that the collocation does not occur before 1999 in this corpus.

<Wacky> occurs three times as a premodifier of *fun*. The rest of the instances are <wacky> as a premodifier of one NP, and *fun* as a premodifier of another, or they are both premodifiers of the same NP. In other cases, <wacky> is not grammatically connected to *fun*, and there are also instances of <wacky> in the sentence before or after the sentence that contains the word *fun*. This is because COCA calculates collocations over sentence boundaries, while the BNC does not, see section 3.2.1.

<Enjoyable> and *fun* co-occur exclusively as adjectives in COCA. There are no instances of <enjoyable> as a premodifier of *fun*. <Funky> occurs once as a premodifier of *fun* in COCA, in the remaining concordances <fun> and <funky> are premodifiers of a NP or two predicative adjectives coordinated by conjunction <and>. The collocation has a semantic preference for the fields of ‘art’, ‘design’ and ‘fashion’. <Playful> and <fun> also mostly co-occur as two adjectives. This collocation shares the semantic preference of the collocations with <funky> and <flirty>, ‘fashion’, ‘design’, ‘interior’, etc.

- (276) New sun-activated comb-in conditioners laced with peroxide make it easier than ever to achieve **fun, flirty** highlights. (COCA, 2001, Magazine)
- (277) I just love Marni because it's free-spirited, **flirty** and **fun**. (COCA, 2003, Magazine)
- (278) The kids are tucked into bed and you're gearing up for a little flirty fun. (COCA, 2008, Magazine)
- (279) Everybody on board has grown up sailing. It's **enjoyable** and **fun** - and it's a natural feeling. (COCA, 2001, Newspaper)
- (280) The food-filled store anchors the far end of Snider Plaza, a **fun** and **funky** shopping village near Southern Methodist University (COCA, 2003, Magazine)
- (281) In fact, before Ultima II even began the search for a scent to call Head Over Heels, it had come up with the Vargas-like bottle, featuring an upended pair of pink gams and a undulating skirt. " It's **playful**, it's **fun**, it's sexy, " Ultima's Andrea Robinson declares (COCA, 1994, Newspaper)

The presence of these adjectives in the list of top collocates, is a clear indication that *fun* frequently occurs as an adjective in COCA, both attributive and predicative. However, that does not mean that it does not occur as a noun. <Good-natured> functions as a premodifier of *fun* in all but a few instances. The same is the case for <wholesome>. I will come back to the collocation <good-natured fun> and other adjectives functioning as premodifiers of *fun*, including <wholesome>, in section 5.4.1.

The nouns that occur in the COCA list and not in the BNC are <frolic>, <blondes>, <5k>, <summertime>, and <enjoyment>. <Frolic> frequently occurs coordinated with *fun* by <and> and is discussed in section 5.6.1. <5k> seems to be the default distance for a *fun run*, this lexical item is discussed in section 5.6.1. <Summertime> is discussed in connection with the pattern “hot fun in the summertime” in section 5.4.1. It also occurs with *fun* in a noun-noun combination, <summertime fun>. <Enjoyment> is frequently cited in the definitions of *fun* as noun, see section 1.1.2. It is also mentioned in section 5.6.1, as a noun that is coordinated with *fun* by means of conjunction <and>.

The presence of the noun <blondes> in the COCA list is caused by the popular expression *blondes have more fun*. All 14 instances of <blonde> with *fun* in a 5:5 span are in this expression. Interestingly, the exact phrase <blondes have more fun> only has one match in the BNC. <Blondes have> gets three hits, one <blondes have least, brunettes most>, which could have been about *fun*, but is really about hairs on the scalp. The other two, however, are instances of the expression <blondes have more fun>:

- (282) Always boobs have been big business, **blondes have** had more fun, ‘sexuality’ has been top of the agenda and brains have been a distinct disadvantage, as we have tried to emulate the qualities of the famous beauties our men salivate over. (BNC, G2V)

The collocations that occur in both BNC and COCA are all verbs, and will be discussed in separate sections, POKE in section 5.3.5, HAVE in section 5.3.4, and SPOIL in 5.3.6

Like in the BNC, the collocations with *fun* are predominantly positive-sounding. There is thus a reason to postulate a semantic prosody for *fun* in COCA. Only the presence of the lemma POKE and the verb form <spoil> is a reminder of *fun* used to signal something other than ‘amusement’.

5.2.2 Collocations with *funny* in COCA

This table was made by doing a context search in COCA. It is sorted on Mutual Information, and the minimum frequency of co-occurrence was set to 10. The span is 5:5. 4 hits were deleted, 1 empty, and one for Cide. Looking at the concordance lines it becomes clear that Funny Cide is the name of a racing animal (horse?), and it is not relevant for this list. I deleted the entry for <valentine> for the same reason, “My Funny Valentine” is a song title, and the collocation always refers to this song. All 15 hits for <bunnies> are from the same book, and “Funny Bunnies” is the name of a group of girls in this book.

<i>Collocate</i>	<i>No as collocate</i>	<i>Total no in COCA</i>	<i>MI value</i>
1 laugh-out-loud	13	35	9.6
2 ha-ha	32	193	8.44
3 wickedly	28	297	7.62
4 hilariously	14	160	7.52
5 hysterically	34	487	7.19
6 slapstick	12	297	6.4
7 self-deprecating	13	360	6.24
8 funny	624	20200	6.01
9 unintentionally	17	601	5.89
10 irreverent	13	544	5.64
11 anecdotes	19	1052	5.24
12 hilarious	24	1413	5.15
13 tickle	13	771	5.14
14 charming	72	4996	4.91
15 anecdote	12	835	4.91
16 witty	21	1482	4.89
17 heartbreaking	14	1014	4.85
18 jokes	89	6483	4.84
19 insightful	14	1036	4.82
20 kinda	22	1651	4.80

Table 23. Top 20 collocates with *funny* in COCA, sorted on MI, min freq 10

The colligations that Table 23 shows for *funny* are: a verb: <tickle> (always in connection with the compound <funny bone>, see section 5.6.2), (laugh-out-loud?) nouns (<slapstick>, <anecdote>, <anecdotes>, and <jokes>, I will come back to these in section 5.6.2. Adjectives: <self-deprecating>, <funny>, <irreverent>, <hilarious>, <charming>, <witty>, <heartbreaking> and <insightful>. In the following treatment of *funny* these adjectives will not be discussed in their own section, as my focus will be on patterns with *funny*. This list contains many adverbs functioning as modifiers of *funny*. <wickedly>, <hilariously>, <hysterically>, <unintentionally> and <kinda>. Adverbs modifying *funny* will be discussed in section 5.5.2. It is worth noting that the list for *fun* does not include any adverbs, and the only

adverb in premodifying function in the list for *funny* in the BNC is <really>. This tells me that *funny* is more frequently found premodified in COCA than in the BNC, and that it is more frequently found premodified than *fun* as an adjective in COCA.

Another difference that the collocations to some extent highlight has to do with the meaning of the two words. *Fun* collocates with flirty, playful, frolic, summertime, which all seems to entail enjoyment, while *funny* has to do with laugh out loud, slapstick, hilarious, witty, tickle, and jokes, which all seem to imply ‘comedy’. However, at least <flirty> and <charming> must be said to be related.

5.3 Verbs with *fun* and *funny* in COCA

5.3.1 BE *fun* in COCA

In COCA as well as in the BNC, *fun* is found with BE. <BE fun> with no elements interfering gets 5631 hits (14 pmw), which accounts for approximately 15% of the total occurrences of *fun* in this corpus. Compared to the BNC, this is a significantly higher number both in terms of percentage of the total frequency and per million words.

There are also many hits with premodifiers and determiners interfering, I will come back to these in section 5.4. BE fun frequently occurs clause finally. As this lemma is so high-frequency, and occurs more than 5000 times with *fun* in this corpus, I will base my further investigation on a random sample of 1000 concordance lines that I have investigated using AntConc, see section 3.2 for information.

Subjects: Like in the BNC, I find the colligational pattern “n* (“object”) or gerund (denoting activity) BE fun”: cooking, competing, gambling, reading etc. film, game, (sports). Nouns also in plural, games are fun. The most frequent noun occurring before <BE fun> is <game>, 17 hits, see example (283), and <work BE fun>, 10 hits. I also find the pattern “X is fun to do X with”, most notably ten hits on <BE fun to use>, see example (284). Other verbs that crop up in the pattern <BE fun to> are <be> (notably followed by <with>, in the pattern “He/she/it BE fun to be with>,), <have>, <go>, and other common verbs, in addition <drive>, <learn>, <live>, <play>, <read>, and verbs that can be said to pertain to the domain *visibility*:< look>, <see>, and most frequently (150 hits) <watch>. Interestingly, in the BNC, <BE fun to drive> only occurs once, and <BE fun to watch> only occurs three times. Many of these verbs seem to belong to a semantic field of *experience*, which might be postulated as a semantic

preference for the word *fun* in COCA. Many of these are found with anticipatory subject <it>, and the following to-infinitive NP is the notional subject, see example (287). Like in the BNC, <it> is very frequently the subject of <BE fun>, the sequence <it BE fun> occurs more than 2000 times in COCA. 140 of these are in the pattern <but it BE fun>, indicating that something is not “good”, but it is “fun”. <BE fun but> is less frequent in this corpus, 27 hits., see example (288). In example (289), it serves as a justification: it was silly (“bad”), but it was *fun*. I get 80 hits for the pattern <THINK it BE fun>, see example (290).

- (283) The movie-related trivia **game is fun** and allows you to earn dollar-off coupons, but you have to register to participate. (COCA, 2000, Newspaper)
- (284) These vegetables **are fun to use** and have wonderful flavor. (COCA, 1998, Magazine)
- (285) But some might find the rear seatback stiff and overly reclined. And look elsewhere if you want something that **'s fun to drive**.(COCA, 1995, Newspaper)
- (286) What is the logical structure of " Fuck you? " While these topics **were fun to read** and think about, they were also serious examinations of linguistic issues.(COCA, 2006, Academic)
- (287) Pretty cute. Pretty cute. Cute. Thanks. Thanks a lot. Guys, it'll **be fun to watch**, TBS, to see who wins " He's a Lady. " (COCA, 2004, Spoken)
- (288) The powerboat that takes you across the ocean to Cades Reef National Park **is fun but** bumpy, like a huge banana boat. (COCA, 2006, Newspaper)
- (289) Together they tap-danced down the hall and up the stairs. It was silly, she thought; **but it was fun**. And it sure felt good, having her mother back in charge.(COCA, 2009, Academic).
- (290) Yeah, I like music a lot and I play the organ a little bit when I go home, and I play it, like -- mostly every day. I think it's -- still **think it 's fun**. (COCA, 1997, Spoken)

Other subjects that frequently occur are <they BE fun> 85, <He BE fun> occurs 73 times in COCA, while <she BE fun>occurs 48 times. It is not frequently found with <I> (11), <you> (7) or <we> (6) in either corpora (2, 1 and 0 in the BNC).

<that BE fun> occurs more than 400 times in the corpus, predominantly in the spoken section of the corpus. It sometimes occurs in the pattern “n* that is fun to v*”, but mostly “that was fun” or that’s fun” as the complete sentence, as a comment. <This BE fun> occurs 180 times in COCA, and is also used as a complete sentence as a comment. There is a marked difference in the frequencies of <this> and <that> <be fun> between the BNC and COCA. In the BNC these have frequencies close to the frequencies of <he> and <she> as subjects of <BE fun>. In COCA, however, <that BE fun> is 5 times more frequent, and <this BE fun> is more than twice as frequent. This seems to be due to the use of <this BE fun> and <that BE fun> in the spoken section of COCA, as comments uttered frequently during talk shows etc.

- (291) Oh, he's terrific. He's as nice as anybody could be. **He 's fun**. He, to me, was like the best of what you would hope a big brother would be like, telling jokes and playing and very open, and very open and fresh and nice (COCA, 1990, Spoken)
- (292) If someone said something negative about me in the newspapers, I got depressed. If I had a relationship **that was fun** and good and everything was hunky-dory, then I was happy (COCA, 2003, Spoken)

- (293) Well, **that 's fun**. It also was fun to be inducted into the Hollywood Bowl Hall of Fame last summer. (COCA, 2002, Spoken)
- (294) **This is fun**. I'm going to just keep this and finish after the show. (COCA, 1998, Spoken)

Other patterns: <To be fun> is frequently preceded by <going> in the future referring expression *Be going to* 154 times, and there are also instances of the other marginal modals <ought to> and <used to>. Other than that, <to be fun> is typically preceded by a verb denoting ‘intention’: <intended>, <meant>, and most frequently adjective <supposed>. This is paralleled in the BNC, with both *fun* and *funny*. The pattern “BE fun because” gets 59 hits. There are only two occurrences of this pattern with <BE fun> in the BNC, but it is frequent with <BE funny> in the BNC. <BE fun for> is frequent, 226 hits in COCA, I will come back to the pattern “fun for someone” in section. The pattern <be fun if> occurs 23 times, mostly followed by some kind of description of a hypothetical, desired situation. See example (298).

- (295) It's going to be a bit tough, sure, I know that. It's **going to be fun**, too. (COCA, 2009, Newspaper)
- (296) Soon you will know that play dates are supposed **to be fun**. But without the right planning, they can go from delightful to disastrous (COCA, 2009, Spoken)
- (297) It **was fun because** it was a complete surprise for Eleanor. (COCA, 2003, Magazine)
- (298) Wouldn't it **be fun if** we could get as excited about developing young people and their potential as we do about growing profits, you know? (COCA, 1997, Spoken)

<BE fun> is frequently found followed by <and>. Sometimes the coordinated word is a noun, these cases will be discussed in section 5.6.1. In other cases, the next word is an adjective. These cases are discussed in section 5.2.1.

5.3.1 BE *funny* in COCA

Funny is frequently found directly preceded by BE, 4925 occurrences (12 pmw). This is about 25 % of the total of occurrences of *funny* in COCA. I have used a random sample of 1000 concordance lines uploaded into AntConc, see section 3.2, to investigate this combination. Frequencies refer to the entire corpus, not the sample.

I find that *funny* is used with some of the modal auxiliaries and <be>, I will come back to this in section 5.3.3.

Subjects: The subject of <BE funny> is frequently <it>, there are over 2000 instances of <it BE funny> in COCA. This string occurs in many different patterns, which I will return to below. Personal pronouns are frequently found as subjects of <BE funny> in COCA, as well as in the BNC, however, in COCA, also first and second person pronouns are frequent. <he BE funny> occurs 215 times, 96 <she BE funny>, 95 instances of <you BE funny>, <I BE

funny> 52 times, <they BE funny> 91.. <BE funny> also returns 465 instances of <that BE funny> (mostly either first word or in a *that*-clause with THINK (THINK that be funny), and 110 instances of <this BE funny> (also mostly first word or THINK this be funny).

- (299) She liked him, and she liked the way he made her feel. **He was funny**, and unlike a lot of people, he looked into her eyes when she spoke. (COCA, 2008, Fiction)
- (300) What are your three best qualities? " **I 'm funny**, I have lots of different interests, and I'm really open to new ideas. (COCA, 2005, Magazine)
- (301) When I was in the safe house, there was a sergeant, Raul Padilla -- he has the same name as I do. **That was funny**. When I got to the unit, there was another Padilla there. (COCA, 2007, Spoken)
- (302) If you got hit by a truck, Raymo, I guess your ma would say, Well, I have some other kids. About half the class **thought that was funny**. The other half was probably trying to figure out how to get out of my classroom alive. (COCA, 1991, Fiction)
- (303) Roger eventually kept a straight face long enough to get one reaction shot in the can for -- for Mister Pinto. **This is funny**, though. (COCA, 2009, Spoken)

<it BE funny that> occurs 98 times in COCA. In the BNC, I found that the words in this string often occurs in a pattern with the elements "It's funny to think" followed by a *that*-clause. In example (304), the same meaning is found with "they think it is funny that...".

- (304) I was just speaking with some high school students last week. And **they think it 's funny that** we as adults are totally shocked that you just don't videotape everything or use your camera phone to record it or memorialize every event in your life, including parties or sex or whatever it is. (COCA, 2007, Spoken)

<But it BE funny> occurs 50 times in COCA. However, it is not used in the same way that <but it BE fun> is in COCA and the BNC), which is to justify an action by saying that it will be 'enjoyable'. Here, it is not set up against anything, <but it is funny> is used to signal that something is out of the ordinary, or worth attention, see example (305). Taking out <it's funny because> would not change the meaning much: <But when I think of her face..>. Another, similar pattern is <You know, it's funny>. <You know> functions as a comment clause, and in many instances so does <it's funny>. This pattern occurs 162 times in COCA. In the BNC there are two instances of this pattern, both are followed by <but>. In COCA, on the other hand, there is only one instance of this pattern followed by <but>. It is often followed by <because> (like with <but it's funny>). Almost 90% of occurrences are in the spoken section of COCA. <It BE funny because/ , because/ 'cause/, 'cause> gets > 203 hits. These also seem like "empty" uses of *funny*, uses that do not carry much more meaning than drawing attention to what follows. <You know what's funny> gets 32 hits in COCA, and it serves the same function as <You know, it's funny>, introducing something that is considered 'interesting'.

<It BE funny how> occurs 136 times in COCA. Some of the occurrences are preceded by one of the two patterns above (<you know> or <but>), others start with this pattern. It is

frequently followed by <things> or <you>, with generic reference to either animate or inanimate.

<It's funny, I> returns 54 hits in COCA, and is typically followed by a past participle verb (-ed), is often a story/an anecdote. Here, <it's funny> is a comment clause.

<BE funny to v*>occurs 90 times, the most frequent verbs are <see> and <watch>.

This pattern is much more frequent with *fun* than with *funny* in COCA.

- (305) If you'd asked that summer if I loved Yolanda, I would have answered fast that I wasn't the marrying type, like love and marriage go together in answering that question. **But it 's funny**, because when I think of her face rising up like the moon over mine, when I think of her sleeping next to me there in her dark apartment, those cool smooth stones in the bowl beside the bed, something like love comes to mind (COCA, 1992, Fiction)
- (306) **You know, it's funny** but over the years I can always remember you saying: me, my, mine. (BNC, FAB)
- (307) **You know , it was funny** because when we were in Juman, we were like, ' God, well, I don't know if we could ever do this again,' and on the airplane home we were like, ' Well, when are we going back? Garrels: The time is 29 minutes past the hour. (COCA, 1992, Spoken)
- (308) **KING:** Are you a good father? **CARREY:** Yes, you know, **it 's funny , because** the first child you have is always the experiment and you learn what you shouldn't do. (COCA, 2008, Spoken)
- (309) I don't want to butt into Michael's movement here, but that, I think, is really the key. **It 's funny , ' cause** the first word that comes to my mind is " frailty. " And it's not that the music itself is more fragile, it's the same music, but that's what's -- I think, is beautiful about the live arrangement, is that you hear that. They hear that hesitation. You hear the person, you hear how long that hesitation is. And that's what we wanted to bring to this version. (COCA, 1998, Spoken)
- (310) **You know what 's funny?** I was on the street the other day and you know the game ring and run? (COCA, 2009, Spoken)
- (311) " **It 's funny how** things go in cycles as a group, " he said (COCA, 2007, Newspaper)
- (312) Yeah, and I went - **it 's funny , I** went to a concert, a lady took my picture. (COCA, 2007, Spoken)
- (313) What can I say? This is just my work right now, and I see humor in it. **It 's funny to me**, who has never really had an attention span for my own emotions-I would sort of use them for various purposes. (COCA, 1996, Magazine)
- (314) **It 's funny to see** the professional strippers being more chaste than the everyday girl who is so determined to please. (COCA, 2002, Fiction)

Other patterns: THINK is frequently found with <BE funny>. <THINK BE funny> gets 51 hits, "what/which personal pronoun THINK BE funny". <THINK it BE funny> occurs 315 times, 20 of these are negated "DO n't THINK it BE funny", <THINK that BE funny> 71 times and <THINK this BE funny> 47 times. Other than these, a personal pronoun is typically the subject of <BE funny> with THINK. With THINK, <BE funny> seems to always carry the meaning 'amusing', or 'funny ha-ha'.

<BE funny> also occurs in a pattern with TRY, <TRY to be funny> occurs 102 times in COCA. It is typically preceded by a personal pronoun. Also often negated, typically with first person <I> as subject. Other verbs used in this pattern (before <to be funny>) are verbs denoting 'intention' or 'obligation': MEAN, WANT, INTEND, HAVE (GOT) TO, and adjective <supposed>, all pointing towards that being *funny* is something 'desirable' or

‘necessary’. *Funny* always has the meaning ‘amusing’ with these verbs. This pattern is also frequently found with <BE fun> in COCA, and with both <BE fun> and <BE funny> in the BNC.

- (315) I used to watch monkeys at the zoo do that and **think it was funny**. (COCA, 2009, Fiction)
 (316) All right. Anna **thought he was funny**. He was aware of that. (COCA, 1996, Fiction)
 (317) Stacy was on an emotional roller coaster from month to month, and I'm not **trying to be funny** here, but it seemed to go with her menstrual cycle. (COCA, 2007, Spoken)
 (318) Nora pauses, then relates an anecdote, **meant to be funny**, about the time she bought a piece of candy from a beggar outside the Taj Mahal, bit into it out of politeness, and nearly choked while trying to spit it out a few seconds later in the vestibule of the temple. (COCA, 1998, Fiction)
 (319) Without looking up from his phone screen, he said, "Come in," which was **supposed to be funny**. (COCA, 1995, Fiction)

Variants of <what BE funny> occur frequently (230), <What's funny> in the sense that I find in the BNC, meaning “you should not laugh at this” is not the most typical in COCA, however, it does occur. More typically, <what BE funny> is followed by <is> or <about>.

<BE funny if> gets 47 hits in COCA. It is typically found in a pattern with the modal auxiliary <would>, “X would be funny if it weren't/wasn't so X”.

Another extended pattern which seems to be central in the use of *funny* in this corpus is “(It) (BE) funny you (should) mention that/ ask/bring this up/say that. The string <funny you should> gets 77 hits, <funny you> gets 123 hits. The majority is in this pattern. The meaning seems to be ‘what a coincidence’.

- (320) "Ha!" snorted Glume. # " **What 's funny?** " I demanded. (COCA, 2006, Fiction)
 (321) Well, Ill tell you **what is funny** is, I agree with that 100 percent, and yet, during the election season, I know a lot of us who were Bush supporters were not supremely confident that Bush wasn't being hurt by this constant attack (COCA, 2004, Spoken)
 (322) **What 's funny** about Molly is that this mostly young male audience at that screening had grown up watching her films. (COCA, 1997, Magazine)
 (323) Mr. Brown's attempt to excuse the mainstream media for not picking up on the story of the ACORN employees advising an undercover pimp and prostitute on how to secure a loan for starting a brothel would **be funny if** it was not so symptomatic of the mainstream media (COCA, 2009, Newspaper)
 (324) You know it's **funny you say that** because I think one of the best stories (COCA, 2008, Spoken)

When <BE funny> is found with subjects that are persons/personal pronouns or demonstrative pronouns it is used in the sense ‘amusing/makes people laugh’. In COCA as well as in the BNC I find that <BE funny> found in certain phraseological patterns does not evaluate anything as ‘odd’ or ‘amusing’, but is used to mean ‘interesting’ or simply as an introduction to what comes next. With BE, I do not find *funny* in the meaning ‘peculiar’ in a negative sense, or in the meaning that it is ‘bad’ or ‘wrong’.

5.3.2 Modal auxiliaries be *fun* in COCA

Many of the instances of <be fun> above are instances of modal auxiliaries + <be fun>. A search for modal verbs with <be fun> returns 978 hits. This is around 17% of the total <BE fun>, and 2.7% of all the instances of *fun* in COCA.

Figure 8 shows the distribution of modal auxiliaries with <be ~ fun> in COCA. The numbers have been calculated including hits with relevant interfering elements, both between the auxiliary and the main verb (adverbials), and between the main verb and *fun* (determiners, adverb and adjectival premodifiers). However, like in the BNC, I have not included cases where there are elements occurring between both the verbs and <be> and *fun*.

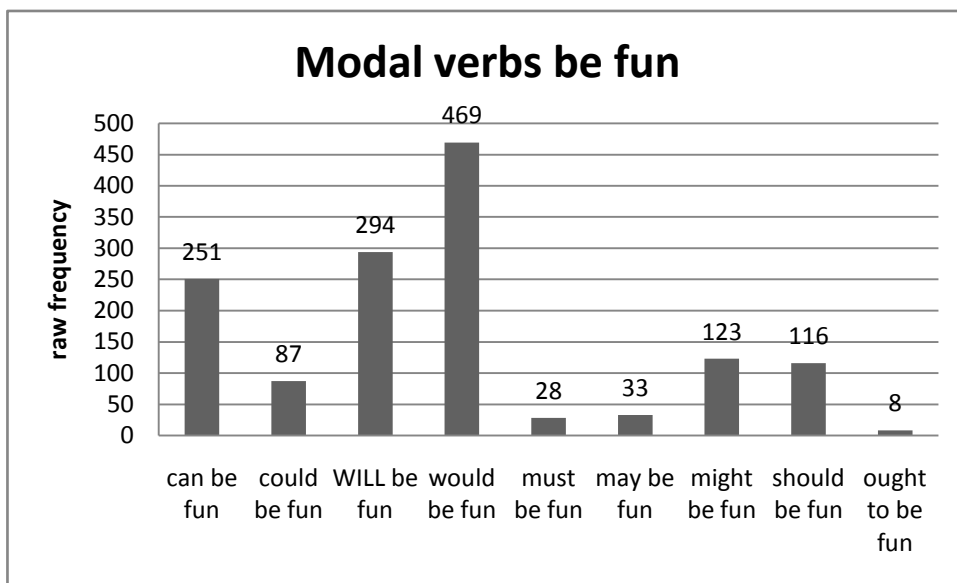


Figure 8. Modal verbs be *fun* in COCA, raw frequency

CAN be *fun* total 251 and COULD be *fun* total 87

<Can (*) be fun> returns 163 hits (8 of them with an (adverbial) element interfering between <can> and <be fun>). This phrase is typically preceded by a noun or a gerund (e.g. establishments/splurging), or preceded by anticipatory subject <it> and followed by infinitive marker <to> and verb. There are 29 instances of an element interfering between <be> and *fun*, the most frequent is adjectival premodifier <great>. There are 58 instances of a determiner or modifier consisting of two or three elements coming in between <be> and <fun>, the most frequent are quantifying determiners <lots of> and <a lot of>. There are also many interfering elements that occur only once. These are probably not interesting in a phraseological perspective, and are more creative, Open Choice Principle governed creations, see section 2.1.

The central meaning is that “something can be fun, but is not advisable/good”.

Another pattern is that activities that are usually described as “not enjoyable” - *can be fun*: unpacking/exercise/business tasks – this seems to imply that there is a culture of thinking that you shouldn’t do anything unless you get something immediate out of it (as well as achieving the goal of the activity, you should always enjoy doing it). This is paralleled by the pattern “MAKE something fun”, see section 5.3.5, I have detected the same use in the BNC as well.

<Could (*) be fun> returns 60 hits, 2 of them are negated <could n’t>, and 1 <could almost>. This phrase also occurs with determiners and modifiers between <could be> and <fun>, 11 consisting of one element (<more>, <such>, <jolly>, <great>), 10 consisting of two elements (<so much>, <any more>, <lots of>, <kind of>), and 6 consisting of three elements (<a lot of>, <a lot more>). This combination is often used like <can be fun>, to suggest that something which doesn’t seem *fun* actually *could be fun* (e.g. *politics* below). In example (331), the use of <could> is an expression of *past* more than a ‘remote’ or distant means of expression.

- (325) not to view a windfall as an excuse to go shopping. Splurging **can be fun**, but that's rarely the best use of your extra cash. " (COCA, 2008, Magazine)
- (326) or a slice of peeled apple. While starting to eat finger foods **can be fun** for your baby, safety is a big concern. (COCA, 2000, Magazine)
- (327) " These mnemonic games **can even be fun** -- like learning to recite Lewis Carroll's nonsense poem " Jabberwocky " -- but it is a knowledge divorced from understanding (COCA, 1994, Academic)
- (328) A Summit of the Eight at the Denver Public Library presents a clear opportunity to teach nonreaders that books **can be great fun** and relevant. (COCA, 1997, Newspaper)
- (329) Mr. PLASKIN: Oh, good, a happy story at last SONYA Yes. Mr. PLASKIN: Well, falling in love can **be fun , ca n't it?** (COCA, 1992, Spoken)
- (330) The issue at stake - slavery and the future of the Union - was deadly serious, but still politics **could be fun**. And American democracy was young and well. (COCA, 2004, Magazine)
- (331) And Cliff **could be fun** -- in those days he could. (COCA, 1996, Fiction)

WILL and ‘LL be fun total 294¹⁸ and WOULD be fun total 469

Like in the BNC, I have chosen to treat <will> and the contracted form <'ll> as one; the use of the lemma WILL refers to both. <WILL (with or without interfering element) be fun> occurs 237 times. Further, there are 57 instances of <WILL be fun> with interfering elements between <be> and <fun>. The most frequently occurring are: <more>, <great>, <lots of>, <the most>, <so much>, <a lot of> and <a lot more>. There are also pragmatic clues like “I assure you it will be fun”, “come on” etc., which makes me conclude that this modal is used with *fun* in the same way in COCA as in the BNC, with the pragmatic function of *persuasion*. I only find one example of a negative tag question after a positive declarative sentence. I

¹⁸ I am surprised by the amount of instances that are from parenting magazines. This might have to do with the make up of the corpus, that there is an overrepresentation of parenting magazines.

found two in the BNC; however, these frequencies are too low to make any generalizations. In the BNC, <WILL be fun> is often negated. In COCA I do not find this tendency, however, the pattern “won’t that be fun” does occur, see example (337). <Will/’ll be fun> is also used to signal excitement, see example (338).

- (332) " Come on, Beck, it **'ll be fun**. Like in college. Remember how we used to go out and scope hot babes together? (COCA, 2008, Fiction)
- (333) Come on! " **I coaxed**. " It'll be **fun**. " " Well, OK, " she said. " If you'll help me. " I knew Chelsea didn't have a chance of winning. (COCA, 2000, Magazine)
- (334) Yeah. You can hang out with us, because we got some segments coming up. It **'ll be fun** to have you here (COCA, 2007, Spoken)
- (335) I'm looking forward to it. I think it **'ll be a lot of fun** to talk to people all over the United States. (COCA, 1999, Spoken)
- (336) " This **will be fun**, won't it, Molly? A whole day of pampering. " (COCA, 2009, Fiction)
- (337) " Tonight we'll go to dinner to a cafeteria. **Wo n't that be fun?** " (COCA, 1991, Fiction)
- (338) I'll do the welcome bar. Oh, **that 'll be fun**. I'm very good at that. Oh, so – perfect (COCA, 2005, Spoken)

There are 291 instances of <would be fun> with no interfering elements in COCA. There are 63 instances with elements between the modal auxiliary and <be> (<not/n't>, <really>, <probably>, <just>, <certainly>, <wouldn't it/that be fun>, typical patterns are “ it/that would be fun” followed by either end of clause or <to> + verb (it/that as anticipatory subjects)) and <wouldn't it/that be fun> (as a rhetorical question)). There are also 115 instances of interfering elements between <be> and <fun>, these are typically <more>, <really>, <great>, <so>, <both>, <very>, <most>, <so much>, <kind of>, <even more>, <much more>, <lots of>., <a lot of> and <a lot more>. These interfering elements show that *fun* is used both as adjective and noun in an expression with the modal auxiliary <would>, because both determiners and adjectives and adverb modifiers are present.

Interestingly, <really> occurs both between <would> and <be fun> (3 instances in COCA) and between <would be> and <fun> (8 instance in COCA) (examples (342) and (343)).

<Would be fun> typically follows first person pronoun <I> and a form of a verb of cognition, THINK, FIGURE, DECIDE and ‘it’ (would be fun), the pattern can be expressed like this : “I thought it would be fun”. It also follows LOOK like it or SEEM like it (would be fun), see examples (344) and (345).

- (339) I thought it **would be a lot of fun**, something to do, it's a different experience (COCA, 1998, Spoken)
- (340) " Would you like to join us? I thought we could soak in the hot tub. **Would n't that be fun?** " (COCA, 2008, Fiction)
- (341) " I just thought it **would be fun** to do homemade rings instead of using the cheesy dried- up onion strings you find on salad bars, " says Landes (COCA, 2008, Newspaper)

- (342) A scripted ending, however unlikely, would pit the Indians against the Giants in the World Series, the thought of which brings a smile to Williams. " Fun, " he says. " That **would really be fun**. " (COCA, 1997, Magazine)
- (343) " I thought it **would be really fun**, and the first day I was there I knew it was the dumbest thing, " Jones recalls. (COCA, 1996, Newspaper)
- (344) I define " fluff " as those activities that were fun for the children to do but when the preservice teacher was asked why the activity was done or what the students learned, he or she had difficulty answering. The common response was, " I thought it was something they would enjoy doing " or " It **looked** like it **would be fun**. " It was apparent to me that little thought had been given to learner outcomes during the planning stage. (COCA, 2004, Academic)
- (345) " I opened the inn because I wanted to invest my money in a business, and this **seemed** like it **would be fun**. " (COCA, 2005, Fiction)

MUST be fun total 28

There are 21 instances <must be fun> in COCA, no hits for interfering elements between the modal auxiliary and <be fun>. There are 7 hits with elements interfering between <must be > and <fun>, these are <really>, <no>, <enormous>, <sort of>,< kind of> and <a lot of>. Tottie (2002: 155-156) claims that there is a difference in the use of the <must> in BrE and AmE in the "logical necessity" sense (example (347)) (as opposed to the obligation sense, like in example (346)). She claims that negated logical necessity is expressed using <must not> in AmE, and using <can't> or <cannot> in BrE. There are only four examples of <must be fun> in the BNC, and furthermore, as discussed in section 3.3, a corpus cannot tell you what is *not* possible in a language. The only thing I can say about the matter based on my findings is that I find negated logical necessity in COCA when searching for *fun*, albeit not in the form <must not> but in the form <must be no fun>, see example (348).

- (346) But for all the hard work, Foster is committed to the notion that learning Latin **must be fun** or it shouldn't be done at all (COCA, 1994, Academic)
- (347) " It **must be fun** to watch him up close. Even if he's playing badly he's fun to watch, because he's in the trees and then hitting amazing shots out of the trees. (COCA, 2007, Magazine)
- (348) In fact, the Ducati reaches 90 mph before the Honda even gets to 60 mph -- about two-and-a-half seconds sooner. That's staggering. So it seems like the Fit **must be no fun** at all, right? We disagree.(COCA, 2009, Magazine)

MAY be fun total 33, and MIGHT be fun 123

There are 26 instances of <may (*) be fun>, 8 of these are negated <may not/never be fun>. There are also 7 instances of an element interfering between <may be> and <fun>. These are <more>/<less>/<egalitarian>, <nothing more>/<no more>/<even more>/<as much fun>. Interestingly, all of the interfering elements with <may be fun> (except <egalitarian>) concern quantity.

Like in the BNC, a 'but' seems to be implied (or explicit) when <may be fun> is used. What is set out as *fun* is shown to be also "not advisable". This is emphasized by 'while' in

(349), and the meaning is much the same in (351). In (350) the meaning seems to be that ‘you should do it even though it may not be fun’.

- (349) While it **may be fun** to chat in real time over the Internet, chat programs such as ICQ and AOL Instant Messenger expose your system to some serious security risks. (COCA, 1998, Magazine)
- (350) It **may not be fun**, but it's less risky and painful than surgery for finding out what's going on inside a patient (COCA, 2005, Magazine)
- (351) There **may be nothing more fun** for actors than experimental exaggeration, especially when filming on a Caribbean island. But there's nothing that makes an audience feel less welcome than not being in on the joke. (COCA, 2003, Magazine)

There are 105 instances of <Might (*) be fun> in COCA. Only six of these are with an element between <might> and <be fun>, these are adverbials. <actually> occurs twice and <even> four times. It is also found 18 times with an element interfering between <<might be> and <fun>: <more>, <great>, <as much>, <kind of>, <sort of>, <a lot of>, <a lot more>, <a little more>.

<Might be fun> is, like <may be fun>, typically used in a pattern meaning “it might be fun, but not good”, like in example (352). In example (353) it seems to mean something like ‘fun but nevertheless useful’. I interpret example (354) to mean ‘he could have been fun if it weren’t for X’. Like in the BNC, <might be fun> is frequently found with THINK, see example (355).

- (352) She could even raid the p34 " Oh, Finagle, " she said, regretfully, after a moment. I t **might be fun?** but it would be guilty fun. (COCA, 1992, Fiction)
- (353) **So while twittering might be fun** and something for adults and teenagers these students say no way it' s for us, too. (COCA, 2009, Spoken)
- (354) Tyson enjoys confounding you here, becoming playful and thoughtful, **a guy who might be fun** to be around if he weren't periodically promising your destruction. (COCA, 2002, Magazine)
- (355) I've heard it a lot and I'm very familiar with it and I thought it **might be fun** to try and see if we could make music that was powerful or that was grungy or that was dramatic without using the screams and the familiar screams of electric instruments. (COCA, 1995, Spoken)

SHOULD be fun total 116

There are 92 instances if <should (*) be fun> in COCA, 3 of these are with an element interfering between <should> and <be fun>. There are also 24 instances of elements interfering between <should be> and <fun>, more than half of these are <a lot of>. Others include <more>, <great>, <risky but>, <the most>, <lots of>, <kind of>, <even more>and <a lot more>. It is used in two meanings, like in the BNC: *supposed to be fun* (see example (356)), or anticipation/cautious statement about the future, like in example (357).

- (356) " Just keep changes and challenges moderate. " This **should be fun**, not traumatic. " (COCA, 2009, Magazine)
- (357) So we're all off to Hawaii this summer, to the Grand Wailea. So that **should be fun**. We'll be right back. (COCA, 2005, Spoken)

OUGHT TO be *fun* total 8

No hits on interfering elements. The meaning seems to be expressing obligation. This is not like in the BNC, but there I only had one instance to investigate.

- (358) " School **ought to be fun** and thinking **ought to be fun**, " said Duff. " (COCA, 1990, Newspaper)
- (359) I think that business **ought to be fun**. I think it ought to be entertaining. ! (COCA, 1997, Spoken)

Most of the modifiers found with modal auxiliaries and *be fun* are determiners and adjectival modifiers, indicating that *fun* is used as/functions as a noun in these cases. However, there are hits for elements that are and some that could be interpreted as adverb modifiers, in which case *fun* would be functioning as an adjective.

In Figure 9 I compare the occurrence of modal auxiliaries with <be fun> in COCA and BNC. The numbers have been standardized into per million words.

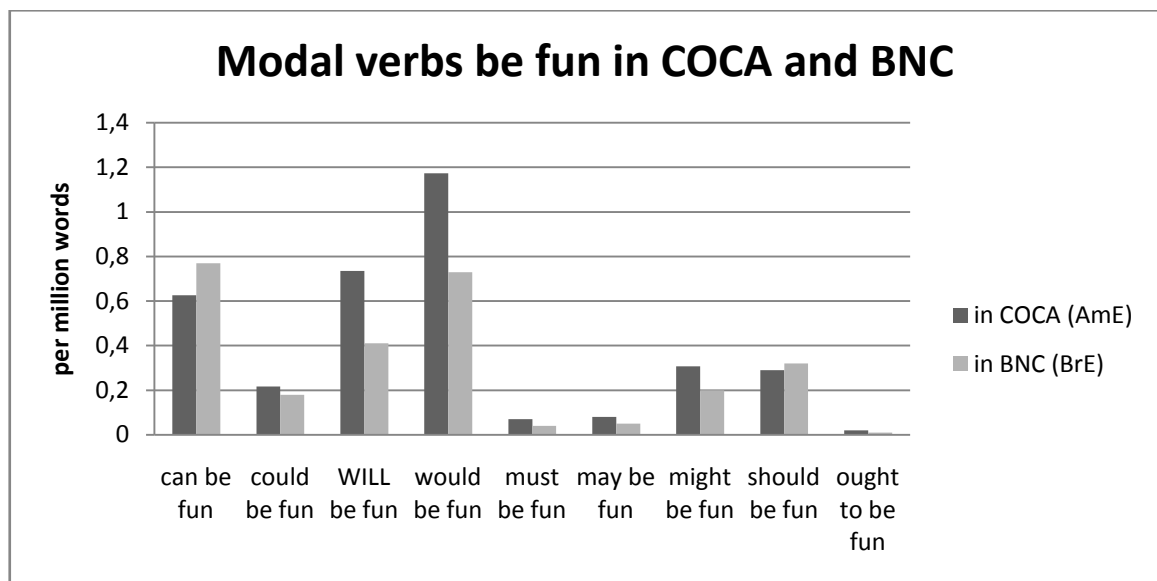


Figure 9. Modals *be fun* in both corpora, frequency per million words

Most notably, <will/'ll> and <would> + <be fun> are considerably more common in COCA than in BNC. It is also interesting to see that while <can> is more common than past/remote <could> in both corpora, past/remote <would> is more frequent than <will/'ll> in both corpora. It would be interesting to find out if this is because of the frequencies of the modals in general or if it is specific to the constructions with *fun*, i.e. if it a collocational/co-

occurrence phenomenon or not. I did a search of COCA for [vm*] (all modals), and picked out the ones that are included above. Then I searched the BNC for all of these tagged as modals (always lemmatized) (ex: {could}_vm0). (relying on the tagging, not manually checking)

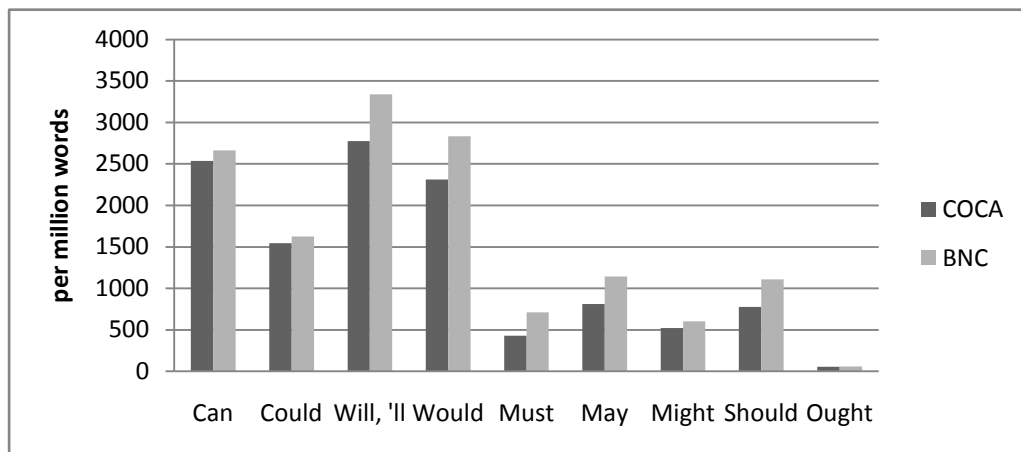


Figure 10. Modal auxiliaries in COCA and the BNC

In Figure 10, <can> is still more frequent in both corpora than <could>, however, the difference between the two modals seems to be smaller. But as I suspected, <will> is more common in both. The most striking difference between the two tables is that in the modal + be *fun* table, COCA has an overall higher (normalized) frequency, while in the table with only modals, BNC has higher (normalized) numbers for every single modal auxiliary. This can probably be explained by the higher frequency of *fun* per million words in COCA than in the BNC. <May> is more common overall than with <be fun> in both corpora (compared to the other modals). Exploring this any further is beyond the scope of this study.

5.3.3 Modal auxiliaries be *funny* in COCA

As opposed to *fun*, *funny* is not frequently found with <be> in the colligational pattern “modal auxiliary be fun”, except for with <would>. The table shows the difference (in raw frequencies) between modal auxiliaries in COCA and the BNC.

	COCA	BNC
Would be funny	84	9
Can be funny	36	11
Could be funny	23	0
Will be funny	11	6

Might be funny	7	1
May be funny	7	1
Should be funny	3	2
Must be funny	1	2

Table 24. Modal auxiliaries be funny in COCA and the BNC

<Would be funny> is typically found in the patterns mentioned in section 5.3.1; “it would be funny if it BE not so X” and “THINK it would be funny”. The low occurrence of modal auxiliaries with <be funny> compared to with <be fun> are in section 4.3.4 postulated to be due to the use of *funny* without much evaluative force. This also makes it less of a candidate for referring to the future. Other than WILL, *BE going to* is frequently used as future expression. The string <going to be fun> occurs 156 times in COCA, while <going to be funny> occurs only 22 times.

- (360) Never mind. KOTB: Yes. GIFFORD: I thought it would be funny. KOTB: She wanted to see the backside, the clean backside. (COCA, 2009, Spoken)
- (361) Intimacy achieved. Let's go have a cold one. **It would be funny if it weren't so painful.** (COCA, 2005, Magazine)

5.3.4 HAVE *fun* (with) in COCA

<havin> is on top of the top 20 collocate list given in section 5.2.1, and <having> is also on the list. In addition, <HAVE fun> is a typical use of *fun* in the BNC, see section 4.3.5, and occurs 4221 times in COCA. This gives me reason to believe that <HAVE fun (with)> is a common expression in AmE as well as in BrE. To investigate this without having to look through all 4000+ examples of HAVE directly preceding *funny*, I have extracted a random sample of 200 concordance lines from COCA, which I have then uploaded to AntConc, see section 3.2 for more information.

Using AntConc I find a semantic preference for children, or rather “kids”: <go on kids, have fun>, <let the kids have fun>, <with other kids having fun>. I also find that it is frequently used with WANT, in the patterns “SUBJECT WANT to have fun” and “*subject* WANT *someone* to have fun”. <WANT to have fun> occurs 130 times in COCA. This same pattern occurs 5 times in the BNC. The pattern “WANT *pronoun* or n* (us/them/people/you etc.) to have fun” occurs 20 times in COCA, 0 in the BNC.

The patterns with specification of *where* to have fun are found in COCA as well as in the BNC. <HAVE fun at NP> occurs around 100 times in COCA. However, some of these are examples of another pattern that is mentioned in section 4.3.5, namely “have fun at someone’s expense” (5 instances), or “have fun at the expense of someone”(5 instances), which has a

similar meaning to that of MAKE fun of. <HAVE fun in the sun> occurs 4 times. <HAVE fun on NP> is found with a noun phrase describing place (the field, the ice, etc.) but also period of time (weekends, Tuesday, etc.) and activities (trip, vacation, campout, etc.). LIKE to have fun gets 65 hits. The pattern <HAVE fun together> gets 68 hits. The pattern “it BE (all, really, not) about having fun” gets 11 hits. The pattern <just HAVE fun> gets a surprising 160 hits, compared to 9 hits in the BNC.

- (362) Not only am I **having fun at the expense of someone** truly offensive, but saving probably hundreds of unknown good citizens from similar dinnertime interruptions. (COCA, 2002, Newspaper)
- (363) So is the moral of the story that you have to hide out in a cave? Absolutely not. You can still **have fun in the sun** if you take our advice on how to score a gorgeous glow safely. (COCA, 2001, Magazine)
- (364) Lilly asked Hanka why all the Jews had to live together in one place, and Hanka said that it was because the Jews didn't want people to **have fun on** Saturday and the Catholics didn't want them to **have fun on** Sunday and if they lived separately everybody could have at least half the weekend (COCA, 2001, Fiction)
- (365) " Jade **likes to have fun**, " said Sanford, who is based in Los Angeles. (COCA, 2009, Newspaper)
- (366) And we have fun, and I think people feel that, you know, that we really **have fun together** and we enjoy doing what we're doing (COCA, 2006, Spoken)
- (367) But one of the coolest things, I think, that anybody can do for me is, as a listener, is kind of make me smile, laugh and stories like... (Sings-expert-from-) Mr-BROOKS: So it's just -- it's all **about having fun**. (COCA, 1995, Spoken)
- (368) And they're in my own age bracket, and I'm having a lot of fun, and I **just have fun** all of the time. (COCA, 1992, Spoken)

Have fun is frequently found with an interfering modifier or determiner. The most frequent are: <some> 561, <so much> 268, <more> 267, and <a little> 175. I will look into determiners and modifiers with *fun* in COCA in section 5.4, and will not look into that aspect here.

<Have fun with it> is a frequent recurring identical string (71 instances in entire COCA, 110 lemmatized HAVE). This pattern does not occur in BNC, and is either an exclusively American English usage, or a newer usage. It seems to imply not taking things too seriously, “going with the flow”. There is an increase in the use of this expression over the time sections in COCA, from 14 in 1990-1994 to 21 in 2005-2009. The actress Anne Hathaway explains how to have *fun* (quite circular), and a golf magazine tells you how it is best to live.

- (369) " You need to feel confident to feel comfortable. " Adds Hathaway: " As long as you **have fun with it**, it's fun. " (COCA, 2008, Magazine)
- (370) Take the family and coach and friends and psychologist. **Have fun with it**. Work hard and relax hard as well (COCA, 2003, Magazine)

<have fun> is found with the modal auxiliaries. Most frequently with <will> and <can>, 74 instances each. <Could have fun> occurs 22 times, <would have fun> occurs 15 times, <should have fun> 13 times, <may have fun> and <must have fun> occur twice each, and <may have fun> occurs only once. As I look extensively into the use of modal auxiliaries with <be fun> in section 5.3.1, I will not comment further on this use here. Like in the BNC, I have not found HAVE *fun with* meaning sexual intercourse in COCA.

(371) Guys **can have fun with** this, too, though. We got something for everyone here. (COCA, 2007, Spoken)

(372) Keep them active with a round of hide-and-seek, a game of kickball, a jump rope challenge, or a tetherball match. They **'ll have fun** and get good exercise too (COCA, 2007, Magazine)

5.3.5 Multi-word verbs with *fun* in COCA

- **MAKE fun of**
- **POKE fun at**

As mentioned in section 4.3.6, the OED lists *make fun of* and *POKE fun at* as common phrases including *fun*, with the meaning “to ridicule”.

MAKE *fun of*

In COCA, MAKE co-occurs with *fun* 3332 times in a 5:5 span. <make> 1448, <making> 743, <made> 731, <makes> 410. All forms have a Mutual Information value below 3, like in the BNC. <making> is the form with the highest MI score, 2.86. This is the same form as in the BNC. Still in a 5:5 span, the text category that has the most collocations of *fun* and MAKE is the category Spoken (12.31 per million words). The category with the least collocations with MAKE is Academic (2.66 per million words). I also find an increase in use from the time slot 1990-1994 (6.47 per million words) to 1995-1999 (8.44 pmw) and slightly increasing until 2005-2009 (9.61 pmw).

In the BNC I found that the Multi-word verb MAKE *fun of* sometimes, but not often, occurs with a modifiers between MAKE and *fun*. In COCA, no modifier of *fun* occurs more than three times in this MWV. The modifiers that occur are: <more> (3), <gentle> (3), <as much> (3), <sort of> (2), <good-natured> (2), <terrible> (2), only once: <wonderful>, <such>, <such great>, <some>, <horrible>, <delicious>, and <bold>. The total MWV <make fun> + with one or two modifying elements is approximately 2110. This means that only

around 1 percent of the instances are with a premodifier.

This is under 4 % of the total <MAKE ~ fun> (one or two elements interfering), i.e. even less than in the BNC (14%). The majority of the other 96% are not instances of the MWV but rather examples of a pattern that I found in BNC as well, MAKE something fun, most frequently using <it> between MAKE and <fun>. Learning is a typical example, and transforming something boring seems to be the central motif. This is also how many of the modals are used with *fun* in COCA; see section 5.3.1.

- (373) These people paid a lot of attention to his ambitious wife, Arianna, and said that she seemed to be in control of Michael's mind, and they **made more fun of** him because she sometimes even showed up to debate his opponents in his place. (COCA, 1999, Magazine)
- (374) Oh, it -- you know, immen -- oh, yes. And -- and she had -- she had -- Pat Nixon had a very playful sense of humor. And whenever you were in a family gathering, why, she was laughing more than anybody and enjoying it and loving it and loved to chide and -- and **make gentle fun of** -- of people and things. (COCA, 1993, Spoken)
- (375) " We want kids to come out and say:' That was fun! says Cindy Daut, the Challenger Center's public relations officer. This is the goal of many good teachers, to **make learning fun** and something students want to keep doing; but it is a goal easier stated than accomplished (COCA, 1991, Newspaper)
- (376) A patented rocking motion **makes exercising fun**, safe and easy. (COCA, 1997, Magazine)

Thus, in COCA as well as in the BNC, it is wiser to exclude interfering elements or searching in a 5:5 span when searching for the MWV MAKE *fun of* in a corpus.

POKE *fun at*

As I have shown in section 5.2.1, POKE is one of the most important collocates with *fun* in a 5:5 span when sorting on MI scores. As opposed to with MAKE, it is not the –ing form that has the highest MI score, but rather the third person singular form <pokes>. Most frequently in Newspaper (1.60 pmw), also frequent in Spoken (1.37 pmw). Magazine (1.03 pmw). Surprisingly, more frequent in Academic (0.64 pmw) than in Fiction (0.53). Around 1 pmw in all 4 time sections, peak in 2000-2004 (1.21 pmw). These searches have been done with POKE as a collocate in a 5:5 span, However, as opposed to with MAKE *fun*, the results are very similar when searching for the sequence <POKE fun>. This means that there are not many instances of interfering elements between POKE and <fun>, and also probably that POKE is mostly or only used with fun in this MWV. The sequence <POKE fun> returns 435 matches.

I find 32 premodifiers with POKE fun at (consisting of one or two elements). None of these are frequently recurring, suggesting that the choice of premodifier is governed by the Open-Choice Principle rather than the Idiom Principle, see section 2.1. However, they can be

grouped into two categories: Some of suggest that *poking fun* can be “light”, or “not maliciously intended”, like <gentle>, <a little>, <good-natured>, <appreciative>, <light-hearted>, <much-needed>. Others suggest darker intentions, <some serious>, <uneasy>, <disturbing> and <irreverent>. In <Darkly, humorous>, <darkly> is an unexpected modifier as it is an adverb. In the MWV POKE *fun at fun* is a noun and is not expected to be modified by an adverb. 32 POKE ~ fun (one or two elements interfering), 467 POKE ~ fun (no, one or two elements interfering) = 6.85 % with modifier.

- (377) And I'm happy to say that in two weeks we'll try to become the worst team to win the Super Bowl, " Giants co-owner Wellington Mara said, **poking gentle fun at** the team's suddenly invisible critics. (COCA, 2001, Newspaper)
- (378) After winning her first pro match, defeating the 110th-ranked ten-year pro Mary Lou Daniels, she calmly took her seat on the podium -- and then **poked a little fun at** the mob of photographers who had converged on her and Daniels when they first entered the stadium. (COCA, 1990, Magazine)
- (379) A crowd-pleaser from beginning to end, the movie manages to **poke darkly humorous fun at** serious social subjects without turning sour. (COCA, 1994, Magazine)

Patterns and differences between MAKE *fun of* and POKE *fun at* in COCA

<POKE fun at himself> gets 30 hits. (ability/able to poke fun at himself). <POKE fun at herself> only gets 7 hits. (willingness/courage to poke fun at herself) . In the BNC, on the other hand, <POKE fun at himself> gets 0 hits and <at herself> 2, while <MAKE fun of himself> gets 1 hit and <of herself> gets 0 hits. MAKE fun of himself gets 22 hits, <of herself> gets 8 hits. These are significantly lower frequency if we take into consideration that the expression MAKE *fun of* is almost five times more frequent than POKE *fun at* in this corpus. MAKE fun of himself is not found in context with ability, willingness, courage, in the same way that POKE fun at himself/herself is, however, <MAKE fun of herself> is found both with willing and not afraid/doesn't mind.

Some people and events are characterized as <easy to make fun of> (15), see example (381). This pattern appears with poke fun at as well: <easy to poke fun at> (5), see example (382). <Easy to make fun of> occurs 3 times in the BNC, 0 with POKE fun at.

<Cartoon> is used as subject of <POKE fun at> in 5 instances, see example (383). In this corpus, MAKE *fun of* is also used about what a cartoon can do, however, 4 of 6 instances are about the same cartoon and taken from the same talk show. It also seems to be used in the sense “not malicious”, see example (385).

Like in the BNC, a frequent use of <MAKE fun of> is to report that someone is making fun of <me> (240 instances) something of mine (<of my NP> 63 instances), or <of

us> (34 instances). In comparison, <POKE fun at me> occurs 11 times, <at my> occurs only twice, and <at us> only once.

- (380) George Bush's droll wit, timing, and ability to **poke fun at himself** for having been criticized about spending too much time pursuing sports made the statement seem very funny when he proposed it. (COCA, 1990, Magazine).
- (381) From the old Esther Williams water ballets to the wide smiles and sequined swimsuits of Olympics past, it's **easy to make fun of** girls who wear nose clips and slick their hair back with Knox gelatin. (COCA, 2000, Spoken)
- (382) In some ways, it was **easy to poke fun at** their marriage, when she looked at him in rapt adoration while she repeated his set speech, or when they waved at each other over television. (COCA, 2004, Spoken)
- (383) the team argues that it is not the image of any actual person or tribe. Furthermore, the Cleveland Indian organization emphatically refers to Wahoo " as a caricature rather than a cartoon because of the implication that a **cartoon** might be meant to **poke fun**. " (COCA, 2008, Academic)
- (384) Well, tonight, there is a brand-new raging weight debate over that disgusting Fox **cartoon making fun** of Jessica Simpson for her weight. (COCA, 2009, Spoken)
- (385) The siblings laughed and continued to **poke fun** at each other until they reached their preferred pizza parlor (COCA, 2008, Fiction)
- (386) People who treated me as a what inevitably followed one of two paths: either they romanticized me (and my exotic cultural background), or they **made fun of me** with racial slurs and taunts, almost none of which actually applied to me. (COCA, 2008, Magazine)

Like in the BNC, these multiword verbs do not occur with *funny* without *funny* being a premodifier of a noun because it does not have any nominal functions.

5.3.6 Lexical verbs with *fun*, except BE, HAVE, MAKE and POKE in COCA

Figure 11 includes lexical verbs co-occurring with *fun* in positions -3 to -1. I have not included HAVE, BE, MAKE, or POKE, as these have very much higher frequencies, and are discussed in detail in section 5.3.5. I have also excluded verbs where *fun* predominantly or only functions as a premodifier of a noun, and the number for the verbs that are included have been corrected not to include cases of *fun* as premodifier. When all the concordance lines refer to a name (cooking up fun), the verb has been excluded. Because of the size of the corpus (400 000 000 words +) I have decided to go with a minimum frequency of 15 for this figure.

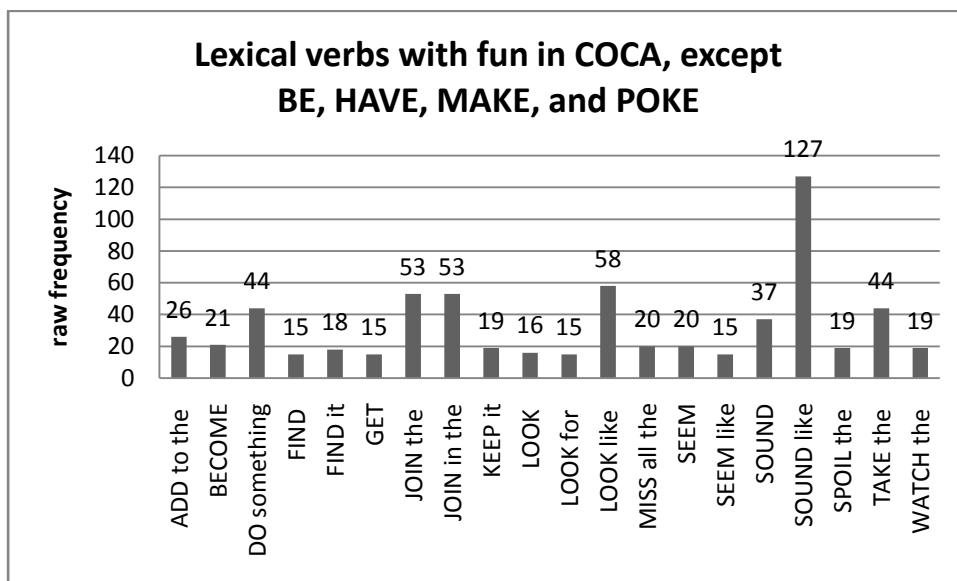


Figure 11. Lemmatized lexical verbs with *fun*, except BE, HAVE, MAKE and POKE, raw frequency, min 15

There seems to be a dividing line between the verbs that occur 40 times or more, and less than 40. The verbs that occur more than 40 times are: DO something, JOIN the, JOIN in the, LOOK like and TAKE the.

In this corpus, as well as in the BNC, the verbs that occur with *fun* can be divided into three classes, copular verbs with *fun* as SP, transitive verbs with *fun* as DO and complex transitive verbs with *fun* as OP.

Copular verbs with *fun* as Subject Predicative. In these cases, *fun* is an adjective. These verbs also occur with insertion of preposition <like> and NP (*fun* as noun). Compared to the BNC, there are more co-occurrences of *fun* with copular verbs (without <like>) in COCA. This supports my hypothesis that *fun* is more frequently employed as an adjective in COCA. One finding that supports this is that <SEEM fun> is more common than <SEEM like fun> in COCA. <BECOME fun> is also more frequent in COCA, and all three items are more frequent in COCA than in BNC. However, this is not the case for all the copular verbs. <LOOK fun> is relatively more frequent in BNC (when frequencies are standardized). <SOUND fun> is equally (relatively) frequent in both corpora, while <SOUND like fun> is markedly more frequent in COCA. This might seem to counter my claim about *fun* as an adjective; however, I believe that this can be explained by the perceived informality of copular verbs with <like> and NP (or sentence). COCA, the newest of the corpora, would naturally contain more instances of informal language if we consider the increasing colloquialization of English. These differences are illustrated in Figure 12. <GET> is also

typically a copular verb with *fun* in COCA, although there are instances of it being used as a D.O.

- (387) When a youngster can work on an assignment at home and transfer the material to the school by way of a disk or through an e-mail address, learning **becomes fun** and exciting. (COCA, 1997, Magazine)
- (388) We'd have to turn the company upside down to make it happen, but that's when things **get fun**. (COCA, 1998, Magazine)
- (389) It **sounds like fun** depending on who the celebs are. I could think of a few names (COCA, 2007, Magazine)
- (390) "A Me collage! It **sounded fun** to Judy, but she didn't say so. "We don't have to draw a map of our family, then?" asked Jessica Finch. (COCA, 2002, Fiction)
- (391) But Fletcher, who's obviously never seen Deliverance, thought it **looked like fun**. (COCA, 1998, Magazine)
- (392) Stocks learning centers with activities matched to student learning styles, abilities and interests. Based on pre-assessments, kids work at centers focused on areas in which they struggle, such as verb tense or grammar, but also those that **look fun** or interesting (COCA, 2005, Newspaper)
- (393) The idea of writing this journal **seemed like fun**, until I remembered that constructing actual sentences might be a challenge (COCA, 2004, Spoken)
- (394) I looked forward to the season, which starts in January. I'd never been a teacher's aide, but it **seemed fun**. (COCA, 2006, Fiction)

Transitive verbs with *fun* as Direct Object. <ADD to the fun>, <JOIN (in) the fun>, <LOOK for>, <MISS all the fun>, <SPOIL the fun>, <TAKE the fun> and <WATCH the fun>. They are typically found in the text categories Fiction and Magazine.

- (395) Simple activities are arranged according to season, and sidebars of lively trivia **add to the fun**. (COCA, 1994, Magazine)
- (396) Closer to home, Mike Kenn, a former Atlanta Falcons offensive tackle who has no political experience, hopes to **join the fun**. (COCA, 1997, Newspaper)
- (397) On October 31, young men roamed the countryside **looking for fun**, and on November 1, farmers would arise to find wagons on barn roofs, front gates hanging from trees, and cows in neighbors' pastures. (COCA, 2001, Magazine)
- (398) Nick and Thomas could probably talk theater until they were blue in the face, leaving Janet to either join in and abandon Tina, or make boring tennis or girl-talk with Tina and **miss all the fun**. (COCA, 1991, Fiction)
- (399) Throughout the 1940s, Moses tried to **spoil the fun**, banning everything from bicycling to digging holes on Coney's beach. (COCA, 1996, Magazine)
- (400) Doesn't that **take the fun** out of it? McGarvie says no, it helps build anticipation (COCA, 1999, Magazine)
- (401) Then they would sit back and **watch the fun**. (COCA, 2000, Magazine)

Complex transitive verbs with *fun* as OP: <DO something fun>, <FIND fun>, <FIND it fun>, <KEEP it fun>.

- (402) The answer might be for men first to **do something fun** or educational with their children on the weekends, and afterward take a nap. (COCA, 2002, Magazine)
- (403) When looking at responses from the post-practicum interviews words used to describe the physical education experience were "enjoyable", "beneficial", "giving good instructions", and "creating opportunities that the students will **find fun** and continue in the activity" (COCA; 2006, Academic)
- (404) It takes a certain kind of person to **find it fun** to tinker with a telephone. (COCA, 2007, Newspaper)

(405) " I'm telling you, " I warn her grimly. " Keep it light, **keep it fun**, and run like hell if you start getting all swoony and birds start singing when you kiss. " (COCA, 2001, Newspaper)

Like in the BNC, I get hits for verbs + the pattern <for fun>. This pattern will be discussed in section 5.7.

For comparison of the two corpora, Figure 12 shows lexical verbs with *fun* in BNC and COCA. The verbs occur in the positions -3 to -1. In this figure I have combined Figure 3 (from the BNC) and Figure 11 (from COCA). Co-occurrences that appear in one corpus but not the other because of the minimum frequency settings are included in this figure. In other words, there is no minimum frequency set for the items in this figure, but I have only included items that occur in BNC or COCA above the minimum frequency threshold. I have excluded BE, HAVE, MAKE and POKE because of their high frequency of co-occurrence with *fun*, which would obscure the difference between the remaining verbs. All verbs are lemmatized.

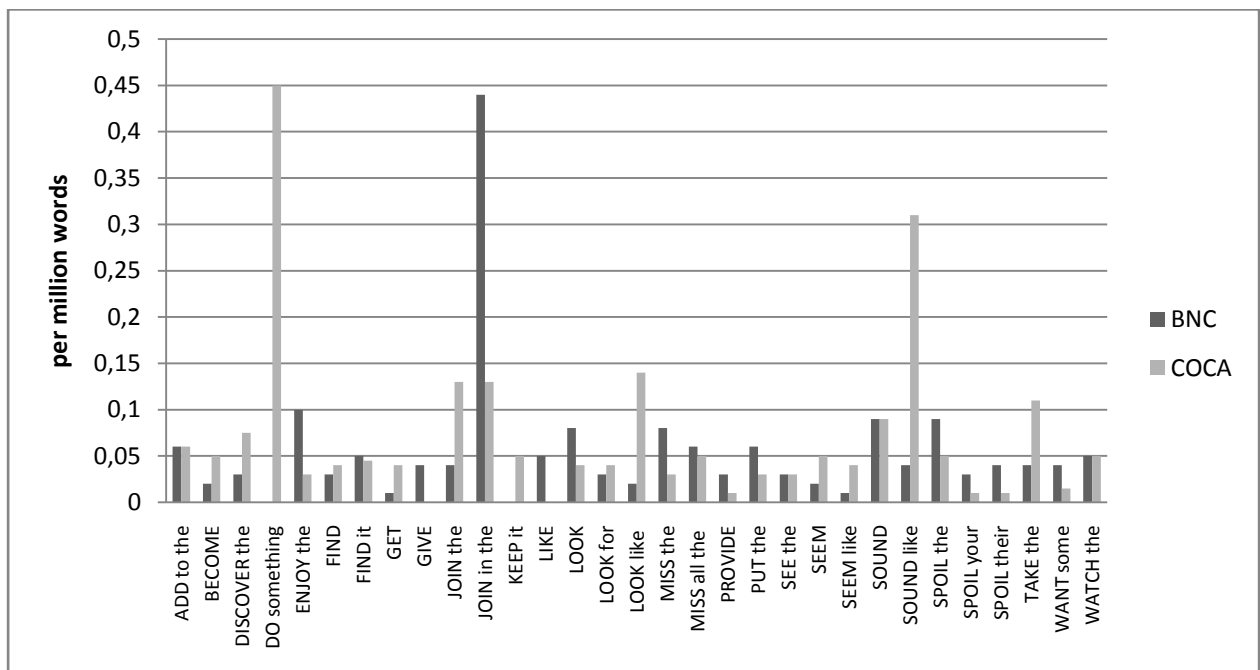


Figure 12. Lexical verbs with *fun* in the BNC and COCA, except BE, HAVE, MAKE, POKE, frequency per million words

The differences and similarities between the copular verbs with *fun* have been discussed above. However, there are also other differences between the two corpora. <Join (in) the fun> is an important collocation in both BNC and COCA. In COCA, however, <join the fun> and <join in the fun> have the same frequency (both 53), while in the BNC almost all of the examples are <JOIN IN the fun> (4 join the fun, 43 join in the). <Enjoy the fun> is a much more frequent expression in the BNC than in COCA, and also other transitive verbs are more

frequently found with fun in the BNC than in COCA, GIVE, LIKE, MISS, PUT, SPOIL and WANT. Verbs that are markedly more frequent in COCA than in the BNC are (except for the copular verbs) BECOME, DISCOVER, DO (something), JOIN (the), KEEP (it), and TAKE (the). <WATCH the fun>, <SEE the fun> and <ADD to the fun> are equally frequent in the two corpora (as well as copular <SOUND fun>).

5.3.7 Lexical verbs with *funny*, except BE, in COCA

The following figure was made by searching for any lemma with *funny* directly following it in COCA. Since this corpus is more than four times bigger than the BNC, I set the minimum frequency of co-occurrence higher, to 15. These searches include comparative and superlative forms of *funny*, <funnier> and <funniest>.

In COCA, as well as in the BNC, the lemma that co-occurs with *funny* the most is BE (4925, not manually checked). Therefore, it has been excluded from this figure, and is treated separately below.

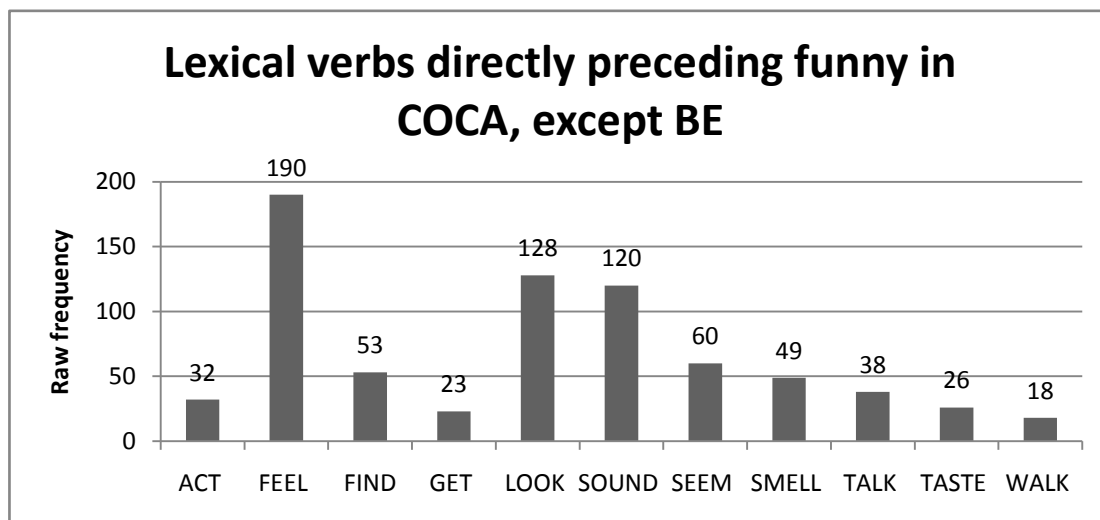


Figure 13. Lexical verbs directly preceding *funny* in COCA, except BE, raw frequency, min freq 15

I have excluded 70 hits for <MAKE funny>, 37 hits for <HAVE funny>, 32 hits for <DO funny> (mostly things), and 30 hits for <SAY funny> (mostly things), 28 hits for <TELL funny> (mostly stories, some jokes), and 15 hits for <WEAR funny>. *Funny* is always a premodifier of a noun with these verbs, they are transitive verbs and *funny* has no nominal functions. Cases where *funny* is a premodifier of a noun will be treated in section 5.6.2. I have also excluded hits where *funny* is a premodifier of a noun (notably, from GET I excluded 16 of 39) from the numbers quoted in the figure.

I have included 4 verbs that do not function as copular verbs with *funny* as subject predicative. With TALK, ACT and WALK, *funny* is an adverb functioning as an adverbial of manner. I have also included FIND; with this verb *funny* functions as Object Predicative.

<FEEL funny> returns 190 hits, in COCA sometimes carries the meaning “humorous”, and other times (the majority) “peculiar” or even “not well”. One clue seems to be that if it means “humorous”, it has a personal pronoun as subject (I), and is not followed by <because> or <about> or any explanation of what “feel funny”. When it means “peculiar” or “sick” etc. the subject is often a body part.

- (406) Readers often share their appreciation of the book's humor, which reinforces the point that not only do you not have to be feeling creative to write successfully, but you also don't have to be **feeling funny** to write humor. (COCA, 2009, Academic)
- (407) Rachel's stomach **feels funny**. " Can I have an egg? " " An egg? What kind of egg? Don't you want a hamburger? " Rachel shakes her head. She starts to cry. (COCA, 2006, Fiction)
- (408) My chest **feels funny**. I feel all achy. Maybe I'm coming down with something. (COCA, 1996, Magazine)

<LOOK funny> occurs 128 times in COCA. The subject is predominantly a personal pronoun. From inspecting the concordance lines, it seems that <LOOK funny> has a preference for the “peculiar” meaning of *funny*. This is the meaning that I can interpret into most of the concordance lines. However, it is very difficult to rule out a more *humorous* meaning. This is illustrated by example (410), where it has to be clarified what the interlocutor means by saying <you look funny>. In several cases it does not really change the meaning whether we think of it as “ha-ha” or “peculiar”.

- (409) I've been made fun of in gym. Because I **look funny** when I run, I've heard. (COCA, 2002, Academic)
- (410) CHARLIE: Hey!... Are you all right? You **look funny**. KATE: Funny ha ha or funny odd? CHARLIE: Both. (COCA, 2001, Fiction)

<SOUND funny> occurs 120 times in COCA. Most of these seem to mean ‘funny peculiar’, however, ‘a comical meaning can be read into some of the examples. In (411) it has ‘ha-ha’ meaning, and in (412) and (413) the ‘peculiar’ meaning is more likely.

- (411) The gathering laughed. " It **sounds funny**, but it's really detrimental to me. I'm really sick and really weak. " (COCA, 2009, Newspaper)
- (412) Because Wanakee models as well as runs a company, she says that in general she's just too busy to eat. " It **sounds funny**, but it's true. When I can, I go to salad bars, " she says (COCA, 1997, Magazine)
- (413) " Hello? " // " Anni? Is that you? " // " Yeah. " // " You **sound funny**. " (COCA, 2008, Fiction)

A search for <SEEM funny> returns 60 hits. It typically collocates with <joke>, also in a wider span than 5:5. A pattern that crops up is “it seems funny, but it really wasn’t”. In these

cases it carries the “ha-ha” meaning of *funny*. However, in other concordance lines, the “peculiar” meaning is the more likely interpretation, like in example (416).

- (414) Don't get me wrong, I enjoy laughing or a joke, even games, but deception has never **seemed funny** to me. (COCA, 2001, Fiction)
(415) No. It may seem funny at this point, but at the time, it's useful to remember that there was a very uncertain situation in Poland at that time. (COCA, 2001, Spoken)
(416) " **Seems funny** for the bar to close and us not to go up the stairs to bed, " Maudy said (COCA, 1997, Fiction)

<SMELL funny> returns 49 hits in COCA. It has semantic preference for a person, something in a house, or food. It is also used metaphorically, see example (418). The meaning seems to be that something smells *bad*, or when used metaphorically that something is *not right*, or just *bad*. <TASTE funny> gets 26 hits in COCA. It has semantic preference for food and drink, and the meaning is the same as with SMELL, it tastes *bad*.

- (417) " Just saying hello to Mrs. Lincoln. " " You mean Mrs. Stinkin'? " " Now, don't you ever say that except in our house, honey. Daddy was just kidding when he made up that name for her. It's not nice. "" But she does **smell funny**, though. " " Old people have a different smell to them, that's all. " (COCA, 2001, Fiction)
(418) Democratic Whip Harry Reid offered to step aside and allow Jeffords to chair the Environment and Public Works Committee if the Democrats took over the Senate. Republicans think the whole thing smells funny. (COCA, 2001, Spoken)
(419) Aunt Miriam served us powdered milk. It was the first time I had drunk it, and I didn't like the taste. " It **tastes funny**, " I said, surprised. (COCA, 1991, Fiction)

<GET funny> gets 23 hits, after weeding out the irrelevant examples. The meaning is typically “ha-ha”, and used in the meaning ‘become someone who makes people laugh’. Sometimes the meaning is “peculiar”, in these cases, GET is used in much the same way as GO with *funny* in the BNC, see section 4.3.8. In COCA, <GO funny> only gets 7 relevant hits, and is thus not included here.

- (420) And that's how you got funny? " the interviewer asked. # " No, " Crystal said, " I took a pill. (COCA, 1992, Newspaper)
(421) A fever of it's unbearable -- it's unbelievable it's so bad. Her eyes get funny. (COCA, 1991, Fiction)

The lexical verbs that occur with both *fun* and *funny* are <FIND>, <GET>, <LOOK>, <SOUND>, and <SEEM>. Like in the BNC, <LOOK>, <SOUND> and <SEEM fun> mean that something is *expected* to be ‘enjoyable’ or ‘entertaining’, while the same verbs with *funny* describes something as ‘strange’, ‘amusing’, ‘bad’ or ‘wrong’. The choice of verb also carries more meaning, whereas with *fun*, one copular verb could often be substituted by the other.

5.4 *Fun* with adjectival premodification and determiners in COCA

5.4.1 Adjectival premodifiers of *fun* in COCA

Fun is frequently premodified by adjectives in COCA as well. The table below shows all adjectives that occur directly preceding *fun* with a frequency of co-occurrence of minimum 10. I have removed the instances where *fun* is a premodifier in a noun phrase. I have tried to divide these adjectives into the categories that I used for the adjectival premodifiers in BNC, section 4.4.1, but <outdoor> does not seem to fit. I have chosen to make the category *Other*, and because there was only one adjective that fit into the category *Amount*, I have deleted that category and included the adjective in *Other*.

<i>Not dangerous</i>	<i>Quality</i>	<i>Other</i>
clean 52	great 371	outdoor 20
plain 35	good 147	big 26
harmless 22	real 90	
gentle 13	serious 58	
good-natured 12	pure 31	
innocent 11	sheer 24	
	hot 11	
	best 11	

Table 25. Adjectives premodifying *fun* in COCA, raw frequencies of co-occurrence, min 10

I will look into the two most frequent adjectival premodifiers <good> and <great> in detail, and give some examples of the rest.

In BNC, *fun* co-occurring with the adjectives <great> and <good> are typical collocations. In COCA, <good fun> gets 147 hits. <Great fun>, on the other hand, gets 371 hits. Much like in BNC, this is around double the frequency of <good fun>. However, it should be mentioned that COCA is more than four times larger than the BNC, which entails that both <good fun> and <great fun> are comparatively less frequent in COCA (0.37 pmw and 0.93) and than in the BNC (1.75 pmw and 2.41 pmw).

<Great> is found premodifying *fun* with different verbs; however, it is most frequently found with BE, 214 times in COCA. <BE great fun> seems to mean the same in COCA as in BNC, “a source of much amusement” or simply “amusing” – which would be translating it with an adjective. This seems to be more acceptable in COCA .

In COCA, as well as in the BNC, the pattern <great fun to v*> is a frequent 4-gram. The most frequent one in COCA is <great fun to watch> (12 hits).

(422) Well, you -- well you guys **are great fun to watch** and also **great fun to talk to**. (COCA, 2004, Spoken)

As example (422) shows, this pattern also extends to other verbs following <great fun>. A search for the pattern in COCA (<great fun to [v*]>) yields 60 relevant hits (16.17 % of total <great fun>), 51 of these are with the lemma BE directly preceding the phrase, and the rest have BE in an earlier position or BE is elliptical, see example (423). 1 instance is deleted because I cannot be certain that it represents the pattern (<great fun to be sure>). In COCA, <good fun to v*> is much less frequent than <great fun to v*>, and only returns 5 hits (3.4% of total <good fun>). 4 of these have the lemma BE preceding the pattern.

Somebody/something BE <good/great fun to v*> also occurs in the BNC, see section 4.4.1. In BNC, the frequency difference between <good fun> and <great fun> is less significant in this extended pattern, however, it does also there occur relatively fewer times in this pattern with <good> than with <great>.

(423) David and Jason delight in rummaging through all the pieces and have no trouble putting them together. **Great fun to stack, crash and restack.**

(424) Its engine makes the Civic **great fun to drive**, but the EX is simply too expensive at \$15,075. (COCA, 1992, Magazine)

(425) Played at high key and great brio (ph) by Gary Oldman, and it was **great fun to work with** him at that. (COCA, 1997, Spoken)

(426) On the brighter side, I had always thought it would be **great fun to be** a volunteer in their phone bank during a campaign, to sit up there doing something so worthwhile as hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of people, looked on. (COCA, 2007, Fiction).

Many are in the extended pattern <in good fun> (36) and <all in good fun> (28). This is not the same pattern as in the BNC, where I find that <good> and <great> + fun typically occurs in the pattern he/it + *be* <good/great fun>, a phrase meaning “a source of much amusements” according to the OED, see section 4.4.1.

<all in good fun> on the other hand, has more to do with the expression ‘in fun’: in the OED defined as “as a joke, sportively, not seriously”. Looking at the concordances, this seems to be a good definition also for <all in good fun>:

(427) **All in good fun?** Ms. SALVATORE That was their defense, it was silly. If you saw the depictions that they hung up about him, that they tried to claim were **all in good fun**, you would know, as the jury did... (COCA, 1999, Spoken).

(428) It is taken for granted that the children may be nervous for the performance, or afraid of Nikolaus, and mothers speculate about how their child will manage, but " it's **all in good fun** " and " it won't hurt them any, " they will say. (COCA, 1993, Academic)

This next example seems to carry much the same meaning, even without the <in> before <good fun>. It could, however, also carry a similar meaning to “a source of much amusement”. We might say that the dividing lines between <for fun>, <in fun>, <have fun> and <be fun> are sometimes quite blurred.

- (429) I laugh merrily, like all of this is just **good fun**. I do this for Inga, my last little gift to her. (COCA, 2007, Fiction)

Not dangerous: When *fun* is premodified by <gentle> it is almost in connection with the multi word verbs that I discussed above, POKE *fun at* and , less frequently, MAKE *fun of* . Only two of 13 are not a part of that pattern. 1 is <gentle fun and games> and the other <enjoy the gentle fun of>. <Good-natured fun> is another example of a collocation that typically occurs with the constructions POKE *fun at* and MAKE *fun of*. It is also used with <have fun with> in the meaning POKE *fun at*. This adjective is on the top collocates list in section 5.2.1.

- (430) His appeal wasn't so different from that of another beloved American, Will Rogers-the drawling, folksy comedian who always spoke for the common man as he poked **gentle fun** at new-fangled, highfalutin ways. (COCA, 1997, Magazine)
- (431) Alex and Julie were both eager volunteers in the show and proved to be good sports as the magician had a little **good-natured fun** at their expense. (COCA, 2002, Magazine)

Of the 52 instances of <clean fun>, only four are without <good> preceding the collocation. I found the same in BNC. See example (432). Of 32 <plain fun>, only two are not instances of <just plain fun>, see example (433), and there is one instance of <good plain fun>. This collocation seems to carry the same meaning as <good, clean fun>.

- (432) Making a blind can be a fair amount of work, but it's good, **clean fun** compared to the pick and shovel horror of digging a goose gunning pit. (COCA, 1992, Magazine)
- (433) On the contrary, BCM trips typically are challenging for everyone, but also filled with extraordinary moments of sharing, hope, and just **plain fun**. (COCA, 2000, Magazine)

<harmless fun> is typically found in constructions with a semantic prosody of *insecurity* or *doubt*. This is signaled by <may seem like>, <who considered it>, <who see it as>, <regarded as>, and also <so-called harmless fun>, etc. <Innocent fun> is used in much the same way, and typically in a pattern of *is it innocent or is it “bad”?*

- (434) " Though they may seem like **harmless fun**, balloon launches (also called releases) can end up harming some kinds of wildlife. (COCA, 1999, Fiction)
- (435) When he went to the White House in 1993 as one of the youngest American Presidents ever, Clinton attracted a flock of aides and interns just out of college: males who regarded mild flirtation as **harmless fun**, females who seemed to enjoy the attention. (COCA, 1998, Magazine)
- (436) Is it **innocent fun** or too close to the edge? (COCA, 1992, Magazine)
- (437) The big question, I guess, John, is is it **innocent fun** or it is dangerous? I don't know. (COCA, 1991, Spoken)

- (438) With blogs and sites like myspace.com, they seem like **innocent fun** to millions of teens across the country. But what they say or what they show online could come back to haunt them. (COCA; 2006, Spoken)
- (439) Ever since Prof. Anita Hill accused Supreme Court Nominee Clarence Thomas of lewd and overbearing conduct toward her, the country has been trying to determine a dividing line between **innocent fun** and genuine pain (COCA, 1991, Spoken)

Quality: <real fun> is typically found followed by a verb that means ‘begin’: will come, begins, starts, kicks in, may just be starting etc., see example (440). When it is used before fun and a noun it is another example of an adverb in adjective form (could have been written <really>), but there are only around ten examples of this in the corpus. <Serious fun> is an interesting collocation, as one of the defining qualities of *fun* is that it is *not serious*. Actually, 25 hits are about the same festival called “Serious Fun”, (in the New York Times), but the remaining 33 are not, see example (441). <Pure fun> is used as the opposite of something that has ‘a purpose’, for ‘amusement’, see example (442). <Sheer fun> is found in the pattern <for the sheer fun of it>: this pattern carries a similar meaning to one of the phrasal usages that OED gives of fun: *for the fun of the thing* meaning ‘for amusement’, see example (443). <Hot fun> - all variations of <hot fun in the summertime>, mostly about a song, but also used as an expression, exemplified by the tweak of the expression in example (444). <best fun> is typically found in the pattern “best fun you will ever have” or “best fun I ever had”, see example (445).

- (440) But my favorite part is when a contestant lands on a WHOOPS! That's when the **real fun** begins (COCA, 2003, Fiction)
- (441) " The Incredible Hulk " may not qualify as a whiz-bang yippee thrill ride, but it gets the job done, with deep sincerity and respect for its source material: It's fun but it's **serious fun**.(COCA, 2008, Newspaper)
- (442) The After Dark 3.0 screen-saver software program offers over 30 different motifs that will take over your monitor after several minutes of keyboard inactivity. Some are just **pure fun**, but several, such as " Fish Pro, " can provide a downright relaxing 10-minute break. (COCA, 1995, Magazine)
- (443) Then there are the stunt hackers. Basically these are small-time hoods who crash and occasionally trash supposedly secure computer networks for the **sheer fun** of it. (COCA, 1992, Magazine)
- (444) It's time to lose your winter blues and find some hot fun in the wintertime. (COCA, 1999, Magazine)
- (445) We lost sleep, I lost a three-year dean's list streak, we nearly went insane, and it was still some of the **best fun** I ever had in my life (COCA, 1995, Magazine)

Other: <outdoor fun> - is the only classifying adjective on the list. The combination has a semantic preference for things to do with SUMMER (kayak, summer, sun, family, swimming, camping, grill), see example (446). <Big fun> is the only combination in COCA that addresses the amount of fun. It is typically used in a kind of pun, often in combination with <little>, like in example (447), or <small>. It is also used simply to state that something is a lot of fun, like in example (448).

- (446) These sites offer lots of history-and lots of **outdoor fun**. Hiking, biking, boating, birdwatching, fishing, swimming, wildlife tours and camping are just a few of the activities you can explore. (COCA, 1997, Magazine)
- (447) Little places, **big fun**. (COCA, 1992, Magazine)
- (448) KING: All right, what are you going to do with that? Mr. COSBY: What? With his money?
KING: Yeah. Mr. COSBY: Ooooh! Well, if it's his money, I'll have **big fun** with it (COCA, 1991, Spoken)

5.4.2 Determiners with *fun* in COCA

Table 26 contains all determiners that are found directly preceding *fun* in COCA. The minimum frequency was set to ten. Some of these elements can function both as determiners before a noun, and as adverb modifiers before an adjective. I have therefore chosen to use the tag “determiner” in my searches in COCA for these ambiguous elements. However, as can be seen from the table, I have included some of the frequencies without tags for comparison. I have reason to believe that many of these tags are faulty; however, I will be content with showing that these determiners frequently occur with *fun* without being able to give an exact number. I have also included determiners that did not appear on the tagged list of determiners in COCA, but that I find in the BNC, or have other reasons to believe that occur with *fun*.

"Open-class quantifiers"	Other quantifying determiners	Possessive determiners	Other determiners
Lot of fun 1585	Much fun 1756	Their fun 55	The fun 2413
Lots of fun 185	Some fun 743	Your fun 45	No fun 406
Bit of fun 78	More fun 378 (1604 no tag)	My fun 37	What fun 144
Loads of fun 31	Any fun 156	His fun 30	
Deal of fun 25	Such fun 92	Our fun 21	
Tons of fun 24	All fun 96	Her fun 11	
Amount of fun 20	Enough fun 25	Own fun 15 (not poss, but always with)	
Plenty of fun 20	Less fun 10 (55 no tag)		
Ton of fun 13	Most fun 10 (341 no tag)		
	Little fun 245		

Table 26. Determiners with *fun* in COCA, raw frequency, min freq 10

The determiners that are used with *fun* in COCA are typically specifying *amount of fun* (same as BNC). The differences between BNC and COCA are not many, but COCA has two open-class quantifiers that are not found in BNC, <tons of> and <ton of>. These determiners do, however, occur frequently in the BNC as determiners of other nouns, 105 instances of <ton of>, and 642 of <tons of>. The reason why they do not occur with *fun* in BNC might thus have more to do with the size of the corpus and the frequency of *fun* rather than a difference between British and American English.

Open-class quantifiers that I find in the BNC and not in COCA are <bundle of fun>,

<pile of fun> and <sack-loads of fun>. These are, however, not high frequency (between 1 and 3). I also found other open-class quantifiers in COCA, <bunch of fun>, <buckets of fun>, <barrel of fun>, <gallons of fun>, <half-ton of fun>, <vanload of fun>, <handful of fun>, <bags of fun>. These should probably not be treated as collocations with fun, but rather as a testimony to how “open” and productive this type of quantifying determiners is. Employing phraseology theory, these are likely to be a result of the Open-Choice Principle.

Interestingly, there is 1 instance of <heap of fun> in COCA. Here, the phrase is used to mock the way the British way of speaking English. Indeed there is one hit for <heap of fun> in BNC, but only 1! So what the speaker in the example below uses as a stereotypically British phrase might actually not be very typical at all.

- (449) " A heap! " he mocked. " Let's us-all go on down t' Coney Island fer a **heap of fun!** " (COCA, 1992, Fiction)
 (450) Mudlarks' garden a **heap of fun** (BNC, K4C)

I will explore the most frequent determiner collocations in more detail.

<The fun> occurs 2413 times in COCA. It is typically followed by a form of BE (often followed by “over”, “just starting”, “just beginning”, etc.) or the verbs START or BEGIN. I find the same pattern in the BNC. Using a 500 random concordance line sample uploaded into AntConc, I find some recurring patterns: “just for the fun of it”, which I find a variant of in section 5.4.1 with <sheer>, “half the fun”, “take the fun out of”, “that’s/it’s (all) part of the fun”, and “all the fun”. All of these are more common in categories Magazine, Fiction or Newspaper, and not very frequent in the Spoken category. I also find the lexical verb combination <join in the fun>, which is discussed in section 5.3.6.

- (451) Who knows how many potential psychos he turned loose, **just for the fun of it...**? (COCA, 1991, Fiction)
 (452) Lora Brody, author of Bread Machine Baking: Perfect Every Time (William Morrow, 1993), agrees that experimentation is **half the fun** of owning a bread machine. (COCA, 1994, Magazine)
 (453) Bicycling editors used it liberally when abrasion threatened to **take the fun out of** riding during a 700-mile week. (COCA, 1997, Magazine)
 (454) What it didn't say was that these were rope stairs and railings. It's all **part of the fun**, but be forewarned. (COCA, 2006, Newspaper)
 (455) Aryn Kyle's debut delivers **all the fun of** the books about horses that you loved as a kid -- but with the added weight and seriousness of a novel for grown-ups. (COCA, 2007, Magazine)

<Much fun> is also frequent in COCA. To explore the use of <much fun> I generated a sample of 1000 from COCA and uploaded it into AntConc (see section 3 for details). This gives me the possibility of sorting the concordance lines in COCA, which makes it easier to discover patterns.

I find that <much fun> is frequently preceded by as, in the extended patterns <as much

fun as>, <just as much fun>, <not/n't nearly as much fun>, <about as much fun as> (14 in COCA). These are typically employed to say that something is as much fun as “something scary/bad/boring”, i.e. to express that it is *not* fun. There also seems to be a semantic preference for things related to autopsies, I find several examples, see examples (456) and (457). <much fun> is also frequently found negated “not (~) much fun”, “no (all) that much fun”, see example (458). Negated <this much fun> typically means that it was a lot of fun, and could be said to mean the same as e.g. <so much fun>, see examples (459) and (460). <how much fun> is typically found with verbs of mental processes: <forgot/forgotten>, <remember>, <imagined>, <realize>, <tell>, <know>, <think (-ing)>, <understand>, see example (461). Out of 10 instances of <very much fun>, 8 are negated very much fun, see example (462).

- (456) Having dinner with me was **about as much fun as** attending an autopsy, because I recited the calorie count and fat content of every dish. (COCA, 1996, Magazine)
- (457) The New York Times screams, 'It's **about as much fun as** sitting in on an autopsy,' while the Milwaukee Journal/Sentinel declares, 'It sputters before it splatters, leaving the sleeping audience anxious to saw logs.' (COCA, 2003, Spoken)
- (458) I am making banana bread and it's **not much fun** without you here to enjoy a slice of it. (COCA, 2001, Fiction)
- (459) Learning has never been **this much fun!** is the claim on Disney's new Follow The Reader"; (COCA, 1992, Magazine)
- (460) Created from pollution, smog, and waste, the amorphous Shmoo spews burning goop at Our Hero and sizzles his skin. Ecology was never **this much fun** again. (COCA, 1998, Magazine).
- (461) " Something about Shan kept us from understanding **how much fun** he really was, or could be, " I agreed. (COCA, 2006, Fiction)
- (462) Wars **aren't very much fun**. We were all losing our relatives, our boyfriends, our husbands, our brothers.(COCA, 2002, Spoken)

There are 771 instances of <so much fun> in COCA. This is typically preceded by BE or HAVE (BE directly preceding <so much fun>: 346), (HAVE directly preceding <so much fun>: 268) One pattern that I find is <it BE (was) just so much fun>, 23 instances, see example (463). Another is “HAVE so much fun together”, 15 instances, see example (464). <too much fun> gets 164 hits in COCA. The verb is typically HAVE, but also BE, see examples (465) and (466).

- (463) I was watching myself look like an idiot on the 18th green... and I don't really care. **It was just so much fun**, so exciting, " gushed Mickelson (COCA, 2004, Newspaper)
- (464) We went and sat on these big steps and we were **having so much fun together**. We only had a couple of dollars in our pocket. (COCA, 1994, Spoken)
- (465) " They were probably a little restless because there hasn't been baseball here the last two weeks. I don't think there's such a thing as **too much fun**.(COCA, 1998, Newspaper)
- (466) We have recently begun to jokingly remark that if we'd known how much fun grandparents were, we'd have taught them first. Music making is simply **too much fun** to be left only to the younger kids.(COCA, 1997, Academic)

The reason that I have chosen to use <lot of fun> as search term instead of <a lot of fun> is that there is sometimes another element between a and lot, typically <whole>, but also <awful>, <helluva> etc. <lot of fun> is used with both BE and HAVE. An AntConc search shows me that it is frequently preceded by <it BE>. Other patterns are <a lot of fun doing>, and <a lot of fun together>, and <a lot of fun, but>, followed by a clarification that it was indeed not, see example (469). This use is paralleled in section 5.4.1 with the adjectives <innocent> and <harmless>.

- (467) I have a **lot of fun doing** it, or I wouldn't do it anymore. (COCA, 1997, Spoken)
 (468) : Ah, we're going to miss him not being around at carnival time because we always had a **lot of fun together**. We raised a lot of heck and had a lot of fun (COCA; 2006, Spoken)
 (469) At first, I thought it was a **lot of fun, but** now I know it's horrible and unsafe, " (COCA, 1996, Newspaper)

An AntConc search of 200 random concordance lines of <some fun> shows me that this combination is almost exclusively used with the verb HAVE. I detect two patterns: "HAVE some fun with (it)", and "WANT to have some fun".

- (470) But when youre going to start over life, you start over with new identity, pick something, you know, and **have some fun** with it, and try not to screw up again. (COCA, 2005, Spoken)
 (471) Now, you know, if you **want to have some fun**, go to Google and type in MySpace and lawsuits, and see some of the stuff that's going on around this. (COCA, 2007, Spoken)

<No fun> occurs frequently in COCA as well as in the BNC. In the BNC I find the pattern "it/there be no fun (in/at all) v*-ing". In COCA, there are not many examples of the pattern "BE no fun in", (11 instances) and not many of those are with a verb in the -ing form. There are no instances of <BE no fun at all v*-ing>. However, I do find <BE no fun v*-ing> (36), without <in> or other elements before the verb in the -ing form. 35 of these are <it BE no fun v*-ing>. I also find a usage of <no fun> with the modal auxiliary <must>, see section 5.3.2.

- (472) It's no fun talking to people -- and I've called a lot of them and talked to them -- it **is no fun talking** to people who feel this badly about something you've done that they're thinking of breaking what is in some cases a 30- or 40-year relationship with you as a reader (COCA, 2004, Spoken)

<More fun> frequently occurs in COCA, and <more> is one of the determiners that can also be used as an adverb before an adjective. It is used with both BE and HAVE. It is also frequently found preceded by another determiner or adverbial, <a little>, <a lot>, <much>, <no>, and <even>. It is typically found followed by <than>, and <to verb> frequently BE, DRIVE, PLAY, WATCH; all can be included in the semantic domain EXPERIENCE. This is true for *fun* in this corpus; see section 5.3.1. Another pattern is "more fun for someone"; I will come back to this below. <More fun> is sometimes followed by <in> and a specification of a

PLACE. It also occurs in the pattern “would have been more fun if “, which also occurs without <more>, see section 5.3.1.

- (473) " If you compare that to the careers that other people have, what people do in law, medicine, business... maybe we're having **a little more fun** than it looks like we're having, " he said (COCA, 1995, Newspaper)
- (474) No, you'll have **more fun in** the cutting room with this one, believe me. (COCA, 1999, Spoken)

Possessing *fun* in COCA

In COCA, as well as in the BNC, *fun* is frequently found with a possessive determiner, indicating that *fun* is something that one can ‘have’ or ‘own’. In the BNC I find that in combination with a possessive determiner, *fun* is often found described as something that one ‘has a right to’ or ‘deserve’s, and that can be taken away by others. In this corpus this notion is typically expressed using the verbs LET and HAVE, “let them have their fun”. I also find SPOIL, DEPRIVE OF and RUIN.

- (475) Let the kids have **their fun**, " was the guiding principle. (COCA, 2009, Fiction)
- (476) Too young to understand that these ladies were not to be deprived of **their fun**. (COCA, 1991, Fiction)
- (477) If too many quickies are spoiling **your fun**, but you're not prepared to use Robyn's straight-up approach, try this: (COCA, 1998, Magazine)

In the pattern “HAVE *poss det* fun” (most typically <your>, and an implied (or explicit) “with me”), the meaning sometimes takes a negative connotation, and seems to suggest that someone has exploited someone else, see example (478). The same is found in the BNC. It is also found without a negative connotation, when it does not imply *with another person*. In example (479), <have your fun> could be substituted by <have fun> or <enjoy>.

- (478) Nathan snapped. " You **had your fun**. You had your show. Let me go. " (COCA, 2008, Fiction)
- (479) " But who'll look after the cave? " he asked. " I will, of course! You go **have your fun**. " " But what'll you do? Don't you want to celebrate, too? (COCA, 1993, Fiction)

Funny does not occur with adjectival premodification or determiners, because it is an adjective.

5.5 *Fun* and *funny* premodified by adverbs in COCA

5.5.1 *Fun* premodified by adverbs in COCA

Fun is frequently found with adverbs in COCA. In the table I have included adverbs that directly precede *fun* and that are likely to be modifiers of the adjective *fun* in the sentence, with a minimum frequency of 10. I have deleted adverbs that are likely to function as adverbials rather than modifiers, and words that are more likely to be determiners than adverbial premodifiers with *fun*.

<i>Adverb modifying fun</i>	<i>Sometimes not adverb</i>
Really 445	More 1226
So 119	Most 331
Very 107	Kind of 269
As 89	Less 45
Pretty 34	Much 43
Quite 29	Sort of 32
Especially 17	
Kinda 12	
Downright 11	

Table 27. Adverbs modifying *fun* in COCA, raw frequency, min freq 10

The adverbs modifying *fun* more than 100 times are: <more>, <really>, <most>, <kind of>, <so> and <very>.

<More fun> is discussed 5.4.2.

More than 65% of occurrences of <really fun> are in the spoken section of COCA, see example (480). It is also much more frequent in the last time section (2005-2009), and has increased in every time section. There are 19 instances of repeated <really, really fun>, see example (481).

<Most fun> is tagged as an adverb 331 times in COCA. However, many of these are with HAVE, which makes me interpret *fun* as an NP functioning as a direct object with the transitive verb HAVE, and <most> as a quantifying determiner. However, it does occur with BE, in these cases it can be interpreted as an adverb, see example (482). <Very fun> occurs 108 times, predominantly in spoken section. There is an increase in frequency from 1990 to 2000, however, it is stable from 2000 to 2009.

(480) Definitely. I think the game is very engaging, it's **really fun**. (COCA, 2008, Spoken)

- (481) " It was the least glamorous role and **really , really fun**, " says Jessica. (COCA, 2007, Magazine)
- (482) The last time, about 10 years ago, was the **most fun**. We were sharing a dressing room, and this friend of mine fired up a joint (COCA, 2008, Magazine)
- (483) She loves giving away free stuff to people. It's very campy, it's **very fun**, so she could be in the running. (COCA, 2007, Spoken)
- (484) My cousin celebrated his marriage to a remarkably large-breasted girl in a New Jersey firehouse, and that was **very fun**. My reserved and unsociable mother drank cheap wine and danced recklessly to " Love Shack. " (COCA, 2007, Academic).

<So fun> occurs 119 times in COCA. It occurs mostly in the spoken section, but also in Magazine and Newspaper. There is a steady increase in frequency from 1990 to 2009, the biggest jump is between 1995-1999(0.17 pmw) to 2000-2004 (0.43 pmw). Interestingly, 13 of 119 instances are from the talk show *Oprah*.

- (485) " This has just been **so fun** and exciting, " Banks said. " (COCA, 2009, Newspaper)
- (486) Man, I remember this when I was a kid. Ms-POST: It' s **so fun** and it' s so easy, Matt. (COCA, 2008, Spoken)
- (487) ' It was **so fun**. It's the same as forcing my friends in the neighborhood to do the same things - when you're six.' (COCA, 1991, Magazine)

This combination definitely has some stigma attached to it, which might not be surprising considering that there seems to be an increase in use since the 1990s. Paul Brian's *Common Errors in English Usage* is a website devoted to errors, and has this to say about using <so fun>: "Strictly a young person's usage: "That party was so fun!" If you don't want to be perceived as a gum-chewing airhead, say "so much fun.""¹⁹

UrbanDictionary.com also has an entry for <so fun>:

"Illiterate slang for "so much fun". Use this and people will think you're 10 years old."²⁰

Lorenz (1999) claims that being emphatic and using intensifiers (like *so*) is strongly connected to self-expression, and "signals personal commitment as well as truth and value judgments" (Lorenz 1999: 24). Intensifiers can be used as "shibboleths", functioning as in-group markers, often for a generation of teenagers. "Such items either disappear or become mainstream usage" (Lorenz 1999: 24-25). This might be what is happening with <so fun>, and with *fun* as a regular, central adjective. It seems to be going from being teen-language to being adopted into mainstream language.

Compared to the BNC, which has less evidence of uses of *fun* as adjective, I only find *fun* modified by adverbs <really>, <quite>, <rather>, <most> and <kinda>, in addition to the

¹⁹ <http://www.wsu.edu/~brians/errors/sofun.html>

²⁰ <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=so+fun>

words <more>, <most>, <much> and <less> that can also be determiners. Interestingly, <rather fun> is not frequent enough in COCA to appear on this list, however, it does occur. A reason for this difference might be in the distribution of the adverb <rather> in the two corpora. <Rather> is used predominantly in Academic texts in COCA (more than twice as much than in Spoken, Fiction and Newspaper, and almost twice as much in Magazine), and *fun* is not frequent in Academic texts. In the BNC as well, <rather> is more frequent in Academic texts, however, it is also used frequently in other text types and the divide is not as sharp as in COCA.

5.5.2 *Funny* premodified by adverbs in COCA

Table 28 shows all adverbs tagged as adverbs that premodify *funny* in COCA, with a minimum frequency of 20. As COCA is a very large corpus I have to some extent relied on the tagging to get these numbers. Some of these are questionable, e.g. *little* can be both adverb and adjective, and both types are included in the hits for <little> as adverb before *funny*. In addition, *funny* premodified by <little> is sometimes used as an adverb in a sentence. I have weeded out hits that are not adverbs with these questionable words.

<i>C-class</i>	<i>raw frequency</i>	<i>O-class</i>	<i>raw frequency</i>
Very	1140	Hysterically	34
So	855	Wickedly	27
Really	331	Extremely	24
Kind of	264		
Pretty	218		
As	166		
How	104		
Quite	57		
Little	53		
Real	47		
Too	45		
Sort of	44		
More	22		
Bit	21		

Table 28. Adverbs modifying *funny*, raw frequencies, min freq 20

<Very funny> is typically found in the spoken and fiction categories in COCA. It is frequently found modifying a noun, see section 5.6.2. It seems to signal ‘funny ha-ha’ meaning, and is seldom negated; I only get 21 hits on <not very funny>, this is less than 2%. However, in some concordance lines it seems to be used ironically see example (489). Like in

the BNC, it occurs repeated, <very, very funny> gets 58 hits. See example (490).

<So funny> is also typically found in the spoken and fiction categories. 161 hits are in the pattern <it BE so funny>, and around 100 hits are in the pattern <you/he/they/she> BE so funny>. The meaning is always funny ha-ha, it seems.

<Really funny> is typically found with <That's>, in a comment. This is particularly frequent in the spoken section of the corpus. It is also found before nouns, and being said about a person. The same goes for <pretty funny>.

- (488) Some of it is **very funny**. Some of it is very poignant. (COCA, 2008, Spoken)
(489) "What's up, Bob?" asks Dave. "**Very funny**," replies Bob, as the cart skids to a halt on the pine-straw. (COCA, 2008, Magazine)
(490) this stuff that makes a movie fun to watch get lost, and that's not the case with "A Bug's Life," which is just really **very, very funny**, and has so many jokes, and has such a wonderful anarchic spirit that almost demands that you see it about two or three times. (COCA, 1999, Spoken)
(491) Everyone knows what a talented director and writer and the script is **so funny**. (COCA, 2008, Spoken)
(492) Malcolm, **you're so funny**. She continues to laugh. (COCA, 1992, Fiction)
(493) (Soundbite-of-laugh Mr. DUNNE: So I have a different image of Howdy. GROSS: That's **really funny**. (COCA, 2009, Spoken)
(494) That's **pretty funny**. We're hanging out with Uma Thurman, talking about her new movie, "My Super Ex-Girlfriend," (COCA, 2006, Spoken)

There are also four adverbs on the list of top collocates with *funny* in section 5.2.2. Two of these are on this list: <hysterically> and <wickedly> (And two are not: < hilariously> and <unintentionally>)

<Hysterically funny> was most frequent in the time sections 1995-1999 and 2000-2004. <wickedly funny> is mostly found in Newspaper, and it is frequently premodifying a noun.

- (495) The film is "Bulworth." And even though I'm in it, put that aside, it is a **hysterically funny**, terrific movie. (COCA, 1998, Spoken)
(496) "Losers: Real Men Don't Become President Anymore" by Michael Lewis (Knopf, \$ 25). A **wickedly funny** account of the 1996 presidential campaign and our politics. (COCA, 1997, Newspaper)

Like in the BNC, <Not> is not on the list of adverbs that I have generated through COCA. However, for this study, I will include it in this section. <Not> occurs 442 times in COCA, and <n't> 263, totaling the occurrence of negator <not> directly preceding *funny* at 705. Like in the BNC, when *funny* is negated it means 'funny ha-ha'.

- (497) If the audience laughs, you're funny; when they don't laugh, you're **not funny** (COCA, 1990, Spoken)
(498) Sarah would have gotten the joke. "Um," he said, painfully aware of Johnny Carson's dictum that it is **n't funny** if you have to explain it, (COCA, 2006, Fiction)

Although I have not inspected every concordance line, I have the impression that when *funny* is premodified by an adverb in COCA it means ‘funny ha-ha’. In the BNC it seems that some adverbs signal ‘funny ha-ha’ meaning, while others are neutral and do not influence the meaning of *funny*, see section 4.5.1.

5.5.3 *Funny* as adverb in COCA

As seen in the BNC and in section 5.3.7, *funny* also has a double word class membership. It is sometimes used as an adverb with intransitive verbs. I found that with TALK, ACT and WALK, *funny* is an adverb functioning as an adverbial of manner. It always means “funny-peculiar”, that the manner in which something is done is “not normal”.

- (499) " Tm not a geek. " " Like hell you're not. You **talk funny**, like you're chewing marbles. You got an accent. What are you, English or something? " (COCA, 2007, Fiction)
 (500) " Well, I don't understand what's got into you. You know, Lindsay, you started **acting funny** even before the move. (COCA, 1995, Fiction)
 (501) She was **walking funny**. She was not able to stand on her feet as well. She was just wobbly (COCA, 2007, Spoken)

The form *funnily*, which is listed in the OED as the adverb form of *funny*, occurs 34 times, in 24 of these concordance lines *funnily* is directly followed by <enough>. In the spoken section, all instances are followed by <enough>. In the BNC, this form is much more frequent than in COCA, in terms of per million words, it occurs 1.06 in the BNC, and only 0.08 in COCA. The meaning seems to be that something is ‘interesting’ or ‘remarkable’, suggesting that there is a difference in meaning between the adverbs *funny* and *funnily*.

- (502) And **funnily** enough, the earthworm happened to be Charles Darwin's kind of favorite species. (COCA, 2009, Spoken)

5.6 *Fun* and *funny* with nouns in COCA

5.6.1 *Fun* with nouns in COCA

Table 29 shows nouns that directly follow *fun* in COCA with a minimum frequency of 20. They have been placed into the same categories as *fun* + noun in the BNC. There are, however, some differences. I have marked the nouns that are not in the table for *fun* + noun in the BNC in **bold**.

<i>Period of time</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Person</i>	<i>Misc/Other</i>
-----------------------	-----------------	--------------	---------------	-------------------

Time 88	things (because of do) 154	House 93	Guy 44	Part 167
Day 73	Stuff 150	Place 71	Person 22	thing (not many do) 132
Times 44	Activities 50			Way 104
Night 49	Activity 29			Ways 36
Ride (expression) 32	Run 57			Factor 70
	game 26			Fact 49
	Job 25			Facts 41
				show ? 28
				experience? 26

Table 29. Nouns premodified by *fun* in COCA, minimum frequency 20

Period of time: With <**fun time**>, *fun* is typically an adjective, but there are also some instances that I read as nouns. Patterns are “HAVE a fun time”, “BE a fun time”, “look for a fun time”. When I interpret <fun time> to be a noun-noun combination it shows a semantic preference for contexts of parent and child (kid and daddy, children and families, father and daughter, etc.), see example (503)

- (503) PHOTO: Trudy Robertson enjoys some **fun time** with Tenci, Kristi, and Joanne. (COCA, 1991, Magazine)

In the combination <**fun times**>, *fun* is used as an adjective. The NP is found with verbs of mental processes: <think of>, <remember,> and in patterns signaling nostalgia: “recall the fun times we/you/they had”, <memories>, “like the old fun times,” “we used to have fun times together”, also used as a synonym to *good times*, or sometimes together with the expression with <good times>.

<**fun day**> also typically employs *fun* as an adjective. Verbs that are used with this NP are HAVE a fun day, BE a fun day, SPEND a fun day. It has a semantic preference for “action” activities (skiing, fishing, golf, boating, playing, etc.). Of the noun uses of fun, 10 instances are <family fun day>, see example (505).

- (504) " But after a **fun day** of skiing, you got ta get in the truck and drive 20 hours. (COCA, 2004, Magazine)
(505) Now, Kylie, there's no excuse why not to be with your family. This is family **fun day**, isn't it? (COCA, 2006, Fiction, actually horror movie I think)

In <**fun night**>, *fun* is typically adjective, however, there seems to be a tendency (in both UK and US, or at least BNC and COCA) to name events Family Fun something, see example (506)

- (506) KIDS/FAMILY: Enjoy some free fun with the kids at Family **Fun Night**. The Gallery at South DeKalb hosts this special evening of activities including music, arts and crafts and storytelling. (COCA, 2008, Newspaper)

The noun phrase <**fun ride**> can have a literal/compositional meaning, to have fun while riding e.g. a bicycle (this is the domain that is most frequent in COCA), see example (507), or about a ride (at an amusement park) that is *fun*. But it can also describe an eventful, (with ups and downs) time in your life, period of time, (typically when talking about sports?) as in examples (509), and (510) (from the reality show *The Bachelorette*), kind of like the “ride of life”. It is also used about making movies in this corpus, that the movie making was a <fun ride>.

- (507) The kids who enjoyed the original Sting-Ray that you have over there are now parents. They wanted a **fun ride** for their kids, enjoying the fun and freedom that Schwinn has always offered. We wanted to provide that to a totally new generation (COCA, 2004, Spoken)
- (508) The zippy power-train, light steering and diminutive size made it our favorite for squirting through traffic and fitting in those " compact " parking spots. It was a **fun ride** through the canyons, too. (COCA, 2007, Magazine)
- (509) The truth is, whoever is winning, I love. But I tend to lean toward the Sox. It was a **fun ride** last year. (COCA, 2006, Newspaper)
- (510) It has been hard but it's been a very **fun ride**. I'm very anxiously awaiting Wednesday night when I'll be able to actually watch a show with him and Thursday when I can actually shout his name from the rooftops. (COCA, 2003, Spoken)

Activity: <**fun things**> is typically found with the verb DO (79 of 154), which entails that the *fun* things in question are not objects but activities, and thus placing it in the activity category. One pattern is “Do fun things together” (not exact phrase, but that meaning) 8 instances, WE + fun things= 14, which points to the same use, <fun things> is frequently something done or had with someone else. It is also found with EXPLORE, OBSERVE, BUY.

- (511) Michele came from a small town, not a wealthy family or anything like that and then here's this man that kind of sweeps you off your feet and you travel and you go to Hawaii and you do **fun things**, and life could be pretty rosy, you know. (COCA, 2008, Spoken)
- (512) So, at the beach it was just building sand castles and running in the water and burying daddy in the sand and just doing all those **fun things** you like to do at the beach and he did that, you know. (COCA, 2002, Spoken)

<**fun stuff**> has a very high MI score 8.51. <fun stuff> is frequently used in the same sense as <fun things> above, meaning a fun activity, something *fun* that you can do (DO: 31 of 152). <**fun activity**> (29) is used in much the same way as <fun thing>, <fun things> and <fun stuff>, and typically about what parents should do with their children. The same goes for <**fun activities**> (50/49, fun adj), 23 in Magazine section, about parents and their children (parenting) (Today'sParent, ChildDigest, Psych Today, etc.).

- (513) TOOLONG) has more than 250 interactive exhibits indoors and the Gravity Bike and other **fun stuff** outdoors on the Riverwalk. (COCA, 2007, Newspaper)
- (514) But this rhyme did not originate as a **fun activity** for kids. (COCA, 1996, Magazine)

- (515) Look for this logo (above) in our pages to direct you to Parenting.com, where you'll find everything from **fun activities** and mom-tested products to great printables like our childproofing checklists. (COCA, 2006, Magazine)

<**fun run**> occurs in COCA as well. It has an MI score of 5.89. In the OED this compound is described as originally from the US (see section 1.1.2), however it occurs quite a bit more in the BNC than in COCA (47, 0.48 per million words in the BNC, and only 0.14 per million words in COCA). 45 of 57 instances are in Newspaper, and there is an increase over time. This combination is likely to be the reason why <5k> appears on the top list of top collocates in this corpus, see section 5.2.1.

- (516) RUNNING: Knights on the Run 5K and one-mile **fun run** will be 8 a.m. Oct. 10 at Westridge Elementary School, (COCA, 2009, Newspaper)

<**fun game**>: fun is an adjective. The game in question is found to be golf, tennis, baseball, etc., but more typically it is board games or child's play. <**fun job**> (25, fun adj) it BE a fun job.

Place: <**fun house**> fun is a noun in a compound. 7(8) of 93 are instances of <fun house mirror(s)>. A fun house is a "ride" in an amusement park (<fun park> 6 instances in the BNC), typically with mirrors which distort your image etc.) see also "fun house grin" where <fun house> is a NN compound modifying another noun (like *fun* house mirrors).

- (517) Take a moment to reflect on the work of Jeff Koons. His steel sculptures act like **fun house mirrors** and yet here they are perched atop that temple of high art, New Yorks Metropolitan Museum. (COCA, 2009, Spoken)
- (518) It catches. I alternate my gaze between the growing flame and my demented **fun house** grin reflected in the belly of my teakettle (COCA, 2009, Fiction)
- (519) Spooktacular Halloween Event: Putt Putt **Fun House** invites ghosts and goblins of every age for trick-or-treating (COCA, 2008, Newspaper)

<**fun place**> (71, fun typically adj) 9 instances of <fun place to work>. Also fun to place to visit, see, explore, (a fun place to hang out), play, stop, shop, ski, (EXPERIENCE)

Person: <**fun guy**>: *fun* is always adjective. This description is typically used about actors, sports pros, comedians etc, but there is also evidence for a semantic preference of presidents, senators and other politicians. ("fun + president" in 9-9 gives 99 hits, but a lot is make *fun* of the president). <**fun person**>: *fun* is adjective. The subject is typically a personal pronoun and the verb BE. "she/he / I BE a fun person (to be around).

- (520) Word around campus was Obama liked to drive fast and was a **fun guy**, says Kang, recalling the fundraising auction he passed up while attending the University of Chicago Law School. (COCA, 2009, Newspaper)
- (521) So who is Scooter Libby? # " Scooter was always a **fun guy**, always ready for a game of touch football or a hand of bridge, " recalled Jackson Hogen (COCA, 2005, Newspaper)
- (522) And she told me that the **president** was really a **fun** guy and how delighted she was to be with him.
- (523) Viewers see the intelligence and craftsmanship and ability to express himself and think, ' that person is just like me, he seems like a **fun person** to be around,' " he says. (COCA, 2007, Newspaper)

Misc: <fun thing>: *fun* is an adjective. There are 17 instances of <most fun thing>, extended pattern "isn't that the most fun thing?" There are 14 instances of <the fun thing about> someone or something. <Funny thing> occurs 891 times in COCA, and approx 121 times with <about>. There seems to be an overlap in the use of *fun* and *funny* here, see section 5.6.2. This is possibly worth exploring, however, I do not have the time or the space to explore it in this study.

- (524) Isn't that like the most **fun thing**? It is a totally **fun thing**. Go to Nieman Marcus and they'll pay. (COCA, 2008, Spoken)
- (525) Well, the **fun thing** about her is she said when she was quoted about this article, she said, " Look, I'm very, very busy (COCA, 2009, Spoken)

<**fun part**> has *fun* as an adjective. The meaning seems to be "the fun part as opposed to the other not so fun parts". <**fun way**> (*fun* is adjective) frequently refers to a way of *doing* something, there are 77 instances directly followed by infinitive marker <to> and activity verb: LEARN, SPEND, TEACH, INTRODUCE, EARN, EXPAND, EXERCISE, TRAVEL, FISH, CREATE, EXPERIENCE all occur more than once. <fun way> is represented in all text sections, but more in magazine. Increase from 1990 to 2009 (in every time section). <**fun ways**> 28 of 36 times in the magazine section, and more than double in 2005-2009 time section. This construction is also typically used about a way of doing something, typically in a magazine giving you tips about how to do things you should do, but "in (a) fun way(s)". Also frequently used about physical exercise: "fun ways to shed pounds/burn calories/incorporate physical activity into their lifestyles", etc. This seems to me to be a feature of a culture. There is always a "fun" way of doing what you have to do. It is difficult to compare this finding to the BNC because of amount and types of texts.

<**fun factor**> has a high MI value: 8.1. This is typically a noun-noun combination. 30 of 70 instances are from a magazine called "Bicycling", which apparently rates trips etc on "sweat factor" and "fun factor".

- (526) The ride, now in it's ninth year, benefits the Chicagoland Bicycle Federation. Cost: \$20 or \$25 day of event. Into: 312/42-PEDAL (IL). Sweat factor: 2 **Fun factor**: 4 (COCA, 1997, Magazine)

- (527) Monterey 214 FS. **Fun Factor**: Sleek and stylish, it's cut out for wakeboarding, skiing and tubing, although the Sun Island sunpad and wraparound lounges are for more sedentary activities. (COCA, 2005, Magazine)

<**fun fact**> is ambiguous in whether it should be read as a “fact that is fun” or as a type of fact. It is typically used as a headline on its own, and it is sometimes premodified, like <BARTENDER FUN FACT>, or <Stony Island fun fact>. There is only one instance of an element interfering between <fun> and <fact>. This means that the lexical item does not have positional mobility, which suggests that it is on the more fixed and frozen end of idiomatic expressions. The central meaning is presenting information about someone or something that is ‘random’ or ‘not important’ but ‘interesting’. See also <**fun facts**> (41, MI 7.86), whoever, this combination allows for other nouns to interfere between <fun> and <facts> suggesting that it is less fixed.

- (528) * **Fun fact**: Her eyes are two different colors. Left is blue, right is greenish-brown. " I was born with it. It's a defect in the chromosome. (COCA, 2002, Newspaper)

- (529) OK, here's another **fun fact** I read. They bury their dead.(COCA, 1997, Spoken)

<**fun show**> (28) (fun adj) tv or theater described as *fun*, enjoyable, entertaining. Much more used in spoken than in other sections, evenly spread over time. <**fun experience**> (26) (fun adj).

The OED list some combinations of *fun* before a noun that have not yet been commented in this corpus: <fun fair> occurs 11 times in COCA, and is used in the meaning listed in the OED, ‘amusement park’, <funfest>, which gets 1 hit in COCA, and <fun-maker> that gets 0 hits in COCA. Neither of these can be said to be typical of the use of *fun* in COCA.

Fun and noun

<Fun and games> occurs 169 times in COCA, 65 are “negated”: “not all/not just/no/hardly/no more/more than just”.

In COCA as well as in the BNC, this lexical item has no positional mobility, but it seems that the meaning of this item is usually more compositional in COCA than in the BNC. In most of the examples of the collocation, the topic is games, playing, sport, etc

- (530) And we're really big on Scrabble. " But it's not all **fun and games** in the Cruise household. The kids, who have tutors, are homeschooled. (COCA, 2006, Magazine)

- (531) That leaves a little less room for **fun and games**. It's not that mothers don't play with their kids (COCA, 1998, Magazine)

Other nouns that occur coordinated with *fun* in the sequence <fun and n*> with a minimum frequency of 10 are shown in Table 30.

<i>Fun and noun</i>	<i>Frequency of occurrence</i>
fun and games	169
fun and profit	31
fun and excitement	27
fun and enjoyment	18
fun and fitness	15
fun and adventure	13
fun and learning	13
fun and frolic	12

Table 30. *Fun and noun* in COCA, raw frequencies, min freq 10

These combinations are not high frequency (except for <fun and games>) which might suggest that they are more random combinations, governed by the Open Choice Principle, see section 2.1.. However, several of these nouns occur in this pattern in the BNC as well, <enjoyment>, <excitement> and <adventure>. In the BNC, I find a semantic preference for ‘togetherness’ that is not found in COCA. However, the semantic preference for ‘enjoyment’ can still be postulated. In COCA, there are also three words that do not carry this meaning, <profit>, <fitness> and <learning>. The concordance lines for <fun and profit> reveal that this combination is typically used in titles as an idiomatic expression. Example (532) seems fairly compositional: ‘he did it for fun and he did it for profit’. In example (533), it seems to be used more as a fixed expression, or “slogan”.

(532) My greatgrandfather distilled corn all his days, for **fun and profit**, and took the glistening bitumen more or less for granted, firing his still with it and burning it for heat in the winter. (COCA, 1993, Fiction)

(533) He is the Apple Fellow at Apple Computers in Cupertino, and he's the author of " How To Drive Your Competition Crazy: Creating Disruption for **Fun and Profit**, " published last year by Hyperion. (COCA, 1997, Spoken).

<frolic> is on the list of top collocates with fun in COCA in section 5.2.1. When it is used in the pattern <fun and frolic> it means much the same as that of <fun and games>, it seems that the two expressions are interchangeable. However, <fun and frolic> is not marked for the semantic field of ‘games’ the way <fun and games> is in COCA. The meaning is ‘not serious’.

(534) The Naked Truth about the Chippendales. It wasn't all **fun and frolic**. There's lots of sex involved with the customers, as we've heard. Steroid use, cocaine use, and at least one terrible homicide, the death of Nick Denoia, the -- I guess principal choreographer. (COCA, 1993, Spoken)

No instances of <n* of fun> occur more than 15 times in COCA.

5.6.2 Funny with nouns in COCA

Table 31 contains all the nouns that are premodified by *funny* in COCA, with a minimum frequency of 15. The categories are the same as for *funny* modifying nouns in the BNC.

<i>Person</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Thing/ Object</i>	<i>Body parts and senses etc</i>	<i>Thought process</i>	<i>Saying</i>	<i>Abstract thing</i>	<i>Misc</i>
Guy 145	Place 29	Moments 33	Car 59	Look 100	Feeling 95	Story 164	Name 69	Thing 935
Man 99	Farm 23	Moment 23	Hats 28	Face 64	Idea 23	Stories 102	Money 52	Way 230
Girl 78	Scene 22		Papers 31	Faces 54		Joke 40	Movie 44	Things 162
People 67			Book 27	Looks 25		Word 29	Names 25	Business 84
Boy 28			Pages 21	Accent 23		Lines 24	show? 24	Stuff 84
Person 17			Hat 16	Noises 22		Line 20	Movies 18	Bone 71
Men 17			Bunnies 15	Noise 15		Jokes 17	Video 15	Part 54
Woman 17						Question 15		Side 28
Kid 15								Angle 19

Table 31. Nouns premodified by *funny* in COCA, raw frequencies, min freq 15

The ten most frequent nouns that are premodified by *funny* in COCA are in the categories *Person*, *Body parts and senses*, *Thought process*, *Misc*, and *Saying*.

The same categories are used in the BNC and COCA, and the nouns that occur with *funny* are similar in the two corpora. However, in the category *Body Parts and senses* in COCA, there is only one body part, <face> (and <faces>). In the BNC, there are also <eyes>, <neck> and <nose>. The *Persons* category has some different types, this is probably due to well attested vocabulary differences in British English and American English, e.g., <bloke> in the BNC and <guy> in COCA. The category *Thought processes* has more types in the BNC than in COCA.

Among the most frequent in the BNC are four nouns that are not among the top ten most frequent in COCA, however, they are all in the table: <girl>, <face>, <side>, <name>.

Person. The category *person* has two of the most frequent nouns premodified by *funny*. <Funny guy> is most frequent in the Spoken category in COCA. It is often premodified by an adverb, notably <very> (20 instances). The meaning is “funny ha-ha”, a person is described as someone who makes you laugh. With *fun* the same noun is used to mean a “guy who is fun-loving, likes to have fun”.

<Funny man> is used to describe someone as a man who makes you laugh, like in example (536). It is, however, also used as an idiom, meaning “comedian” or “someone who

always makes jokes”, see example (537). This usage is found in the OED, but hyphenated, see section 1.1.4. <Funny-man> hyphenated does not occur in COCA.

- (535) Carlin is a **very funny guy**. A really funny guy, but he's also, um -- he's not a comedian that constantly makes -- tries to make you laugh in real life. (COCA, 2004, Spoken)
- (536) And the one thing that amazed me about him, other than the fact that he was the most extraordinarily kind and **funny man**, a very **funny man**... (COCA, 1997, Spoken)
- (537) The race against time briefly allows JET an opportunity to talk to the awardwinning **funny man** about life, marriage and his new movie. (COCA, 2007, Spoken)

Body parts and senses. <Funny look> is markedly more frequent in the text category Fiction in COCA, it accounts for 77% of the instances. It is typically used to describe how a character looks at someone, in the pattern “GAVE someone a funny look”, see example (538). It is also found describing how someone looks, in the pattern “(with) a funny look on *singular personal possessive determiner* face”, see example (539), or “HAVE a funny look on *singular personal possessive determiner* face”, like in example (540). It occurs almost exclusively in the narrator parts and not in quoted speech. It means a strange/peculiar facial expression or looking at someone in a strange/peculiar manner.

- (538) She **gave him a funny look**, and said, " Where who are? " (COCA, 1998, Fiction)
- (539) A second later our oldest, 8-year-old Sam, appeared in the doorway **with a funny look on his face**. (COCA, 2006, Fiction)
- (540) He started for the street, then stopped. Rob wanted him gone. Billie **had a funny look on her face**. Of pain, of love. (COCA, 1991, Fiction)

Thought process. <Funny feeling> is also most frequent in the text category Fiction in COCA. It typically seems to mean a *bad* or *worrying* feeling, like in example (541). However, it is also used with a positive connotation, which is made very evident in example (542) by the adjective <wonderful>.

- (541) I don't think I can wait and longer Else, " he said. " I've decided I want to get married right away. " Else was very puzzled and thought Lars was acting strangely. She had a **funny feeling** about the whole thing - and so did her dog. The dog began to bark and bark. (COCA, 1993, Fiction)
- (542) She felt as if she were floating in an eerie gray limitless universe. Her stomach had that wonderful **funny feeling** of falling. (COCA, 2001, Fiction)

Saying. <Funny story> is most frequent in the text categories Spoken and Fiction, they account for over 70% of instances. 28 instances are in the pattern “TELL someone a/this/the funny story”, 11 are “tell you a funny story”. Interestingly, <funny stories> is not very frequent in the Spoken category of COCA. 65% of instances are in Fiction and Magazine sections. It is also typically found preceded by TELL (34% of instances).

- (543) I've got to **tell you a funny story**. I just want to do this in a hurry, Sidney Marie. You know, my wife and I tried to get pregnant for something like four or five years. Finally, we are going to have a little daughter. (COCA, 1992, Spoken)
- (544) " My dad was, mostly, sort of easy-going. He liked telling us **funny stories**. " (COCA, 1998, Fiction)

Misc. The category *misc* has four of the most frequent nouns premodified by *funny*: <thing>, <way>, <things>, and <business>.

<The funny thing BE> is used to draw attention to what follows, *this* is the point, not necessarily meaning that what follows is “funny ha-ha” or “funny peculiar”, see example (545). It is also found in the pattern “(a) funny thing happened”, which seems to have the same function, emphasizing what comes next, see example (546). However, many examples are instances of reference to a Broadway play called “A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum”.

In section 5.6.1, I find that <fun thing> is frequently used with <about>. <Funny thing> is found with <about> in approximately 12% of instances. The meaning is typically the same as with BE and HAPPEN, to draw attention to the following statement, and not really to emphasize it as “funny”, see example (547).

The plural <funny things> is typically used with more “meaning”, more “literally” in COCA than <funny thing>. In example (548), it means doing something that makes you laugh at something. When it is used with HAPPEN, it typically means that something strange HAPPEN, like in example (549). <SAY funny things> is another pattern (19 instances), it can mean either that someone says something humorous or something strange. In example (550), it means things that make someone laugh. In the same example <about> follows <funny things>. <funny things about> occurs 9 times, under 6% of occurrences of <funny things>. It is sometimes used as a kind of introduction, like <funny thing>, see example (545)-(547), and other times, like in example (550), meaning something *funny* (ha-ha) about something.

- (545) Guys loved the free tickets. So he didn't add much to the conversation, but the **funny thing** was, whenever he did speak, all the other dads buttoned. (COCA, 2009, Fiction)
- (546) But a **funny thing happened** after the Beeb's blunder. The great mixup made Guy Goma a celebrity in the British press, and so now he gets interviewed on television as if he really were an expert on, well, just about everything (COCA, 2006, Spoken)
- (547) The **funny thing about** good highlights? They can be really expensive (they start at \$225 at Hershberger's), and chances are, no one will notice them except you. Instead, everyone will ask if you lost weight, got Botox or went to the Caribbean. (COCA, 2005, Magazine)
- (548) He was always doing **funny things** with language, mangling words, making up crazy expressions, being deliberately provocative, saying schedule as if it were pronounced " shek-a-dool " and then daring you to correct him. (COCA, 2009, Fiction)
- (549) Usually, abductees are returned to the same place they were originally, but **funny things happen**. Their shirts or pajamas may be put back on inside out, or they may be placed down in a different place from where they started out (COCA, 1993, Academic)

- (550) Bill Maher's late-night program, "Politically Incorrect," was canceled over the summer, but he is still politically incorrect, **saying** very intentionally provocative and **funny things about** the state of our country. (COCA, 2002, Spoken)

<Funny way> is least frequent in the last time section in COCA. It is sometimes used as a comment clause (an adverbial disjunct). It seems to function as a hedge or a qualifying expression, and is not necessarily pointing to something humorous or strange, see example (551). It is also used describe a manner of doing something or being, typically <saying> and <showing (it)>, the pattern "a funny way of v*-ing" occurs 49 times in COCA.

- (551) And I also think we've gone, in a **funny way**, far too far on the issue of sexual harassment. (COCA, 1993, Spoken)
(552) Yes, but if the markets are worried about it, Sal, they have a **funny way of** showing it (COCA, 2002, Spoken)

<Funny business> is listed in the definition of *funny* in the OED, see section 1.1.4. It most frequently occurs in Fiction, and in the time section 1995-1999. It is typically negated, often in the sequence <no funny business>, uttered as an order, see example (553). This is a fixed expression, and does not necessarily refer to business at all. The meaning is more likely to be that the person addressed should "not try to do anything that they are not supposed to", or something "bad". It is also used to say that a business is *funny* ("strange", "remarkable") probably alluding to the expression, see example (554). In the OED definition it is listed under the 'ha-ha' sense of *funny*. From the corpus evidence it seems that it would be more appropriate to list it under sense 2, 'funny-peculiar'.

- (553) "I'll phone him," said Alice, "and tell him what you need and no **funny business**." (COCA, 1992, Fiction)
(554) "Politics is a **funny business**, Robert. Sometimes when you've lost the battle, you've actually won the war." (COCA, 1992, Fiction)

In the list of top 20 collocations with *funny* in section 5.2.2, there are four nouns. One of these is in Table 31, <jokes>. Three of the nouns are not in the table, as they do not surpass the minimum frequency threshold of 15 as nouns premodified by *funny*. These are <anecdote>, <anecdotes> and <slapstick>. <Slapstick> is not found modified by *funny*.

<Funny jokes> is also typically found with the verb TELL, see example (555). <Funny anecdote> and <funny anecdotes> on the other hand, are typically found without a verb meaning 'utter', see example (556).

- (555) "I'd tell the truth and say I didn't like my mother running away all the time and that my father sometimes scared me with his temper, but that he cooked all my meals and played catch with me in the backyard and, at night, over an open fire, we'd roast marshmallows, and he'd tell some **funny jokes**" (COCA, 1991, Fiction)

- (556) " Just anything to keep me going, " he'd say, laughing, for even then he had not lost his laughter, and there were those, mostly women, who were impressed by his faded charms, his **funny anecdotes** about his university days, about his classmates who were now big shots in government. (COCA, 2004, Spoken)

In the definition of *funny* in the OED (see section 1.1.4), many combinations are given as usages. In COCA, the ones that occur (but are not in Table 31) are:

<Funny column> occurs four times in COCA, all in the spoken section. It does not seem like an idiom, but rather a column is described as ‘making you laugh’, see example (557). <funny paper> is not found; however, <funny papers> gets 31 hits. Some of these are papers described as being ‘funny ha-ha’, and other instances are examples of the idiom described in the OED, “a (section of a) newspaper containing humorous matter or illustration”. Example (558) seems to suggest that this usage might be going out of the language.

<Funny money> is used to describe “dirty” money, money that has not been accounted for, and ‘counterfeit’ money, like in the BNC and the OED. I do not find it to mean “a ridiculously large amount of money”.

- (557) And Gail Collins had another **funny column** saying that Rick Lazio looked like those characters in " Star Trek " who come on for the first few minutes, and you know they're going to be vaporized by the first commercial. (COCA, 2000, Spoken)
- (558) Against my face, his whiskery cheeks felt exactly as they had in the days when I would climb into his bed on a Sunday morning and he would read to me from what we used to call the **funny papers**. (COCA, 2001, Fiction)

<Funny-bone> occurs 6 times. Three of these describe “that part of the elbow over which the ulnar nerve passes”, or “the peculiar sensation experienced when it is struck”, like in example (559). The three remaining seem to take the idiom and use it metaphorically or playing with it, using it to mean e.g. a sense of humor, like in example (560). <Bone> is one the list of top collocations with *funny* in COCA, see section 1.1.4. <Funny bone> without the hyphen occurs 71 times in COCA, and is more typically used about “the bone where your sense of humor is” rather than “that part of the elbow”. It is found with TICKLE in about 25% of the instances, see example (561). Interestingly, this is a turn from the ‘funny-peculiar’ sense given in the OED, to a ‘funny ha-ha’ meaning.

<Funny-face> with hyphen does not occur, however, <funny face> without hyphen does. There is at least one instance of it being used as a “form of address” (see definition in OED, section 1.1.4), but the typical uses in COCA are reference to the movie “Funny Face”, like in example (562), and <MAKE a funny face>, like in example (563). In the BNC, this second usage is also common with the verb PULL, in COCA, on the other hand, this idiom

only occurs once with PULL.

<Funny farm> is described as slang for a mental hospital in the OED. In the text category Fiction the idiom is used exclusively in this meaning, see example (564). However, in the text category Newspaper, it refers to a comedy club called “Funny Farm Comedy Club”, see example (565), and to a movie called “Funny Farm”.

- (559) The swing fell, and the chain smacked her ankle in its horrible **funny-bone** place. (COCA, 2001, Fiction)
- (560) But try to find your **funny-bone**, and have a couple beers (COCA, 2006, Fiction)
- (561) Now it's the athletes' turn to try to **tickle your funny bone**. (COCA, 2007, Magazine)
- (562) By 1957, the celebrity photographer was such a celebrity himself that Fred Astaire re-created him as Dick Avery in the film " **Funny Face**. " Audrey Hepburn was an unwilling model (COCA, 2002, Spoken)
- (563) Sam was hanging upside-down from a hemlock branch and making a **funny face**. (COCA, 2004, Fiction)
- (564) It is not a loony bin. It is not a nuthouse or a **funny farm**. It's not even an insane asylum. (COCA, 1995, Fiction)
- (565) Gail Tassell, founder and CEO of Atlanta-based advertising firm Acuity, has appeared at The Punch-line Comedy Club in The Balconies shopping center and the **Funny Farm** in Roswell, Ga (COCA, 2003, Newspaper)

There are some combinations that are listed that do not occur in COCA. These are: *funny dope*, *funny paper*, *funny-face* (but *funny face* occurs without hyphen) and *funny party*.

5.7 Other patterns with *fun* and *funny* in COCA

5.7.1 Other patterns of *fun*

For fun

Like in the BNC, *fun* is often found in the expression <for fun>. This search string returns over 1000 instances in COCA. However, not all represent expression that is listed in the OED. This means ‘doing something because you like it’, ‘for amusement’ as opposed to ‘for a purpose’. It is typically found in the pattern <just for fun>, further emphasizing that ‘entertainment’, ‘enjoyment’ is the only purpose.

- (566) I can't remember the last time I read a book **just for fun**. (COCA, 2007, Newspaper)

Fun for

Like in the BNC, I have found many examples of something being described as <fun for> someone in COCA, the string <fun for> returns more than 800 hits. It is typically followed by a personal pronoun; <my> is the most frequent with 115 instances. In the BNC, “fun for (all) the family” is an important pattern, this occurs in COCA as well, but not very frequently. In

terms of collocation, <family> has an MI score of 2.50 in the COCA, and it occurs both before and after the node, but more before the node. The combination has a preference for the text types magazine and newspaper. Compared to the BNC, the category “personal pronouns” is very much more dominating in COCA compared to the BNC.

<i>Fun for</i>	<i>raw frequency</i>	<i>(in the BNC, raw freq)</i>
personal pronouns	282	20
(the) kids/children	59	5
The (whole/all/entire) family	24	18
Everyone/everybody	21	11

Table 32. *Fun for* in COCA, raw frequencies

- (567) Well, I think this program is **fun for the whole family**. (COCA, 2001, Spoken)
 (568) The whole process was great **fun for me**: I pretended I was talking with Hemingway as I painted, and it was as if he-with his colorful, creative personality-was giving me liberties with the painting (COCA, 2008, Magazine)
 (569) Take a photo on the first day of nursery school and add to it every year on a poster. It will be **fun for the kids** to see how they've grown. (COCA, 1996, Magazine)

<Sense>, <idea>, <figure> and <full> of fun

All three of these expressions are more frequent in the BNC, but they also occur in COCA.

<Sense of fun> occurs in COCA 69 times. This item is typically found in these patterns “her/his sense of fun”, “a/the (adjectival premodifier) sense of fun”, “have a sense of fun”. The extended pattern <with a sense of fun> seems to mean something similar to sense of humor in this corpus.

- (570) Of handling the situation, Samantha's mother, Annabel Astor, remarks, " Samantha has an ability to cope, without fuss, with the disappointments and pains of life while maintaining a great **sense of fun**." Adds Bonham Carter, " She is so modest and drily funny. (COCA, 2007, Magazine)
 (571) What you didn't see much was his humor and his **sense of fun**. (COCA, 2005, Spoken)
 (572) It's not a joke to either one of us. No. I -- I'm very serious about this. This is for life. We're -- we're doing it with a sense of humor and with a **sense of fun**, so that's why I think people may be saying that. (COCA, 1998, Spoken)

<Idea of fun> occurs 58 times in COCA. I detect two patterns: “possessive determiner idea of fun (*be v-*ing*) (his, her, my, our, genitive s, their, your, whose)” and “negated poss. dot idea of fun”. Furthermore, <idea of fun> is frequently used about something is not traditionally thought of as *fun*. The meaning isn't that it should be *fun*, it is used to say something like: ‘if you would rather do something else...’

- (573) Then young Deco went off to do some serious hell raising. One example of Junior's **idea of fun** was hanging out with his two friends, Basil Sweeney and Ray Baron, two bozos of subnormal intelligence. (COCA, 2009, Fiction)

- (574) If dealing with wire isn't your **idea of fun**, rig up a few medium-action conventional outfits with super braid line made from Spectra or Dynamo. (COCA, 2006, Magazine).

<Figure of fun> occurs 16 times. Like in the BNC, this is connected to the expressions *MAKE fun of* and *POKE fun at*, and means a 'laughing stock', someone that you 'make fun of' and laugh at. This is illustrated perfectly in example (575).

- (575) Hermetically sealed inside her own self-regard, it would have been inconceivable to her (literally unimaginable) that she had become a **figure of fun**, that we were all sitting around waiting for her to say something self-congratulatory or Pharisaical so we could then repeat what she'd said out loud and laugh about it the next time she went to the bathroom. (COCA, 2004, Fiction)

<Full of fun> occurs 41 times in COCA. It seems to sometimes overlap with the senses of *funny*, see example (576). The central meaning, however, is that someone is a fun, happy person, see example (577).

- (576) I enjoyed their company from the first day. They were **full of fun** and were delightfully irreverent about everything. (COCA, 2005, Fiction)
- (577) Well, I think my definition of beauty is someone who's reasonably outgoing, **full of fun**, laughter. Just someone who shows caring and true sensitivity. (COCA, 2000, Spoken)

What fun!

There are 119 hits of <what fun> in COCA used emphatically as an *exclamative* (see section 4.8.1). While all but two instances in the BNC of the sequence <what fun> are in this use, there are around 25 instances of <what fun> that are not exclamatives in COCA. There are also 94 instances of <such fun> as an exclamative. These frequencies are also relatively lower compared to the BNC. This might be due to the fact that *fun* in COCA is also used in the same function with <so> and (less frequently) <how>, that do not occur in the BNC. However, the exclamative that is most typically used with an exclamation point is <what fun>, in COCA as well as the BNC.

- (578) " A dragon! " Princess Katie said. Her eyes were shining. " **What fun!** " (COCA, 2007, Fiction)
- (579) It was **such fun**, riding a roller coaster (COCA, 1992, Fiction)
- (580) it's taken me three years, but I'll be watching myself after the show. **So fun**. I get the biggest kick out of myself. (COCA, 2004, Spoken)
- (581) You have an eight-year-old? **How fun**. Oh, she would have so much fun with this. (COCA, 1998, Spoken)

Like fun

This phrasal usage listed in the OED is not found in COCA. However, it is found in another special use, in a sort of swearing.

- (582) " Then your time. Nonie, I have to give you something for all your sewing. " " **Like fun you will.** You came all the way to Ringling and got me, so you're out the cost of your gas, let's just? (COCA, 1993, Fiction)

5.7.2 Other patterns of *funny*

In the OED, *funny* as a plural noun has an entry, *funnies*. This is defined as "Comic illustrations, etc." The definition is similar to that of *funny paper* (sense 1b), which I find occurring in the plural in COCA, but not in the BNC. <Funnies> occurs 243 times in COCA. 173 of these are references to a segment called "The Sunday Funnies" on a Sunday morning talk show called "This week", see example (583). The rest of the instances are about the section with comic strips in the newspaper, referred to by the OED, see example (584).

- (583) We will be right back with " The Roundtable " and " **The Sunday Funnies.** " ANNOUNCER: " This Week " with George Stephanopoulos from the Newseum in Washington, DC will continue in a moment after this from our ABC stations.. (COCA, 2009, Spoken)
- (584) I waited about five minutes and went back. # " Can I have the **funnies?** " I asked. Pa went through the paper like each sheet was a thousand dollars. When he gave me the **funnies**, I said, " Thanks. " (COCA, 1995, Fiction)

Two other usages listed in the OED under B are *funniness* and *funnyism*. <Funniness> occurs 14 times in COCA. The text category with the most hits is interestingly Academic, however, they are only four hits, and three of them are quasi-identical. It is used about a quality of someone or something, describing it as 'funny ha-ha'. <Funnyism> does not occur in COCA, nor in the BNC.

- (585) Samples of original humor creations or performances by the children from this pool were then evaluated by the investigator and at least one other adult evaluator using criteria of **funniness**, originality, exemplary performance, and above-grade level expectations (See Figure 3) (COCA, 1991, Academic)
- (586) Sellers goes to the deep core of what's funny, " says Mr. Allen. " His **funniness** was the **funniness** of genius. (COCA, 2000, Newspaper)

Funny-looking is listed in sense 4, it occurs 100 times, and is typically a premodifier of a noun. Other combinations of this kind that occur more than once are <funny-sounding> (10), <funny-smelling> (3) and <funny-talking> (3). In the BNC, <funny-looking> occurs 6 times. The meaning is 'funny-peculiar'.

- (587) We entered a nearby room on the same floor. The men with us had **funny-looking** wrinkles in their jackets. (COCA, 2004, Magazine)

5.7.3 *Fun* as an inflectional adjective – *fun funner funnest*

Funniest stretch of a noun: to Kraft salad dressing, which hyped its creaming ranch with cheese and announced: "Your salads are even funner." Fun is acceptable as an adjective, because it seems like an attributive noun in "Writing ad copy is a fun job," but raising the stakes to funner should be resisted because it invites confusion with funnier. (Handing out the annual Bloopies is, of course, the funnest of all.)²¹

This quote from The New York Times from 1995 demonstrates the resistance towards accepting *fun* as an adjective, and in particular one with the inflectional endings *-er* and *-est*. Searching for these forms in the BNC returns 0 matches. However, searching in COCA returns 21 hits for <funner> and 29 for <funnest>. These are not very high frequencies, however, they are not low enough to be dismissed as coincidences. It should also be noted that, like with *funny* (see section 1.1.3), the superlative is more frequent than the comparative form.

Figure 14 shows that <funnest> occurs in Spoken, Magazine and Newspaper text types. It does not occur in the categories Fiction and Academic. Interestingly, <funner> occurs in all the categories, and the Fiction category is where <funner> is most frequent. I find this difference in register between <funner> and <funnest> somewhat puzzling. Fiction might be said to represent more formal language than Newspaper and Magazine, especially because both of the latter have interviews, which share some characteristics with the Spoken category. However, Fiction often contains dialogue, which at least simulates informal language. As both <funner> and <funnest> are expected to be examples of informal, spoken language, I would expect them to readily lend themselves to spontaneous speech like interviews, which they both do, and if any of them were common enough to occur in Fiction, that they both would. This might just be due to the low frequency of both forms and thus a coincidence, or it might be an interesting question for further research. If it is, it highlights a point made by Newman and Rice (2006) in a presentation called "A radical Radical Construction Grammar Approach". This approach is "inflection-specific" and "lemma-skeptic". It isn't necessarily so that if you know something about one form (e.g. the positive or the comparative), that this will generalize to another inflected form (e.g. the superlative), or vice versa.

²¹ <http://www.nytimes.com/1995/06/18/magazine/on-language-the-bloopie-awards.html>

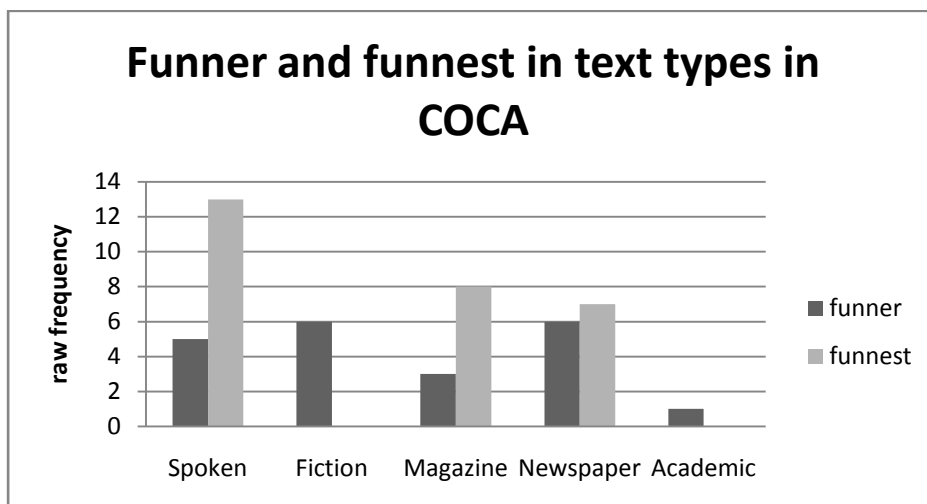


Figure 14. <funner> and <funnest> in text types in COCA

Figure 15 shows that both <funner> and <funnest> are more frequent in the time sections 1995-1999 and 2000-2004 than in the other time groupings. The two endpoints have the least instances, 1990-1994 and 2005-2009. As a matter of fact, <funner> does not occur at all in the first time section in COCA, 1990-1994. As there are relatively few examples of this form I will not draw any conclusions from this, but this finding, together with the fact that this form does not appear in the BNC does suggest that the use of <funner> (and <funnest>) is a more recent phenomenon. Furthermore, the fact that both forms go down in frequency from the time section 2000-2004 to 2005-2009 suggests that the use of these forms might have been a turn of the millennium rebellion, and that it now might be going out of use.

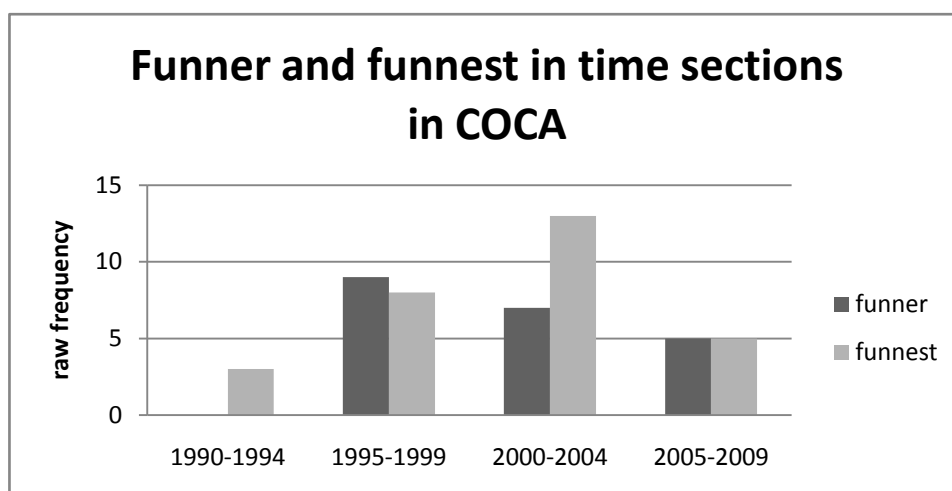


Figure 15. <funner> and <funnest> in time sections in COCA

UrbanDictionary.com (a dictionary of slang) has two entries for <funner>²². These can show us some attitudes towards the use of this form (and probably <funnest> as well):

“1. Funner: The dumb person's way of saying 'more fun'”

This first entry clearly marks the use as “substandard” and not accepted. However, the second entry (ranked by how they are rated in terms of *love/hate*) is more accepting of the phenomenon:

“2. Funner : Something that is more fun than something else. Comes from the word fun, but it's for lazy people who don't want to say more fun”

Some of the hits for <funner> in COCA are examples of child or teen language, i.e. ”errors”. I do not find the same for <funnest> in COCA.

(588) (Speaker is a middle school student) For example, one male student stated, " Like when we play football and stuff, it's funner with the other guys cause they run harder and the girls just stand around and talk to each other. " (COCA, 2002, Academic)

(589) (Speaker is Elizabeth Smart, around 18 in 2006) I mean it's not because I'm like scared or worried or anything. I just -- it's just funner (sic) when there's another person with you.(COCA, 2006, Spoken)

As mentioned above, some of the hits for <funner> in COCA are from fiction. This might be used to show that a fictional character is e.g. ”dumb person”, if we follow the definition in the dictionary above. Because of the nature of COCA (see section 3.2), I do not have access to more than a couple of lines of co-text, which makes it difficult to say anything conclusive about this. The example I give below is from a novel called *Ghost*, the character seems to be a killer. Note the swearing in the first sentence.

(590) Neighborhoods with speed bumps that were a real bitch to hang on through. The route appeared to be planned and he started wondering if he was really dealing with a group of Mexes. The snatch looked professional, to his trained eye, and the egress also looked professional. Which either made it a group of long term serial rapists, even **funner** to kill, or... something else. (COCA, 2006, Fiction).

However, I also find examples of unmarked uses of <funner> in COCA. For instance, even ”serious policy-minded journalists” say it:

(591) LOWRY: It's definitely easier and **funner** to talk about it, there's no doubt about it. And we have seen kind of a melding together of the political and the tabloid culture when it comes to the media. So I think Joe's exactly right about that KURTZ And doesn't this cause you great anguish as a serious policy-minded journalist? LOWRY: Yes, I'd prefer to focus on issues. (COCA, 2000, Spoken)

²² <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=funner>

There are also unmarked uses of <funnest> in COCA. In example (592), the claim made in the quote in the beginning of this section is illustrated. Here, <funnest> is confused with <funniest>. The two following examples are of written use of <funnest> in a newspaper and a magazine.

- (592) SEIGEL: I feel really great. This is the **funnest** thing I've ever done. Mr-TAVERNA: What, you think I'm funny or the funny is what? SEIGEL: No, the **funnest** thing. The most fun thing I've ever done. Mr-TAVERNA: All right. CHADWICK: So just how much fun is that? (COCA, 2003, Spoken)
- (593) Use the kookiest, prettiest, **funnest**, most interesting or elegant cocktail glasses you can find - dip rims in fruit juice and then into colored sugar (COCA, 2004, Newspaper)
- (594) It's not the **funnest** way to get herpes, but yes. It is possible to contract the disease by sharing a glass or bottle with someone who has an outbreak on his lip. (COCA, 1999, Magazine)

Is the use of <funner> and <funnest> an American English phenomenon? My corpus searches suggest this, but this might be explained simply by the difference in time period (and size) between the two corpora. A Google search for <funner> specified to “.co.uk” sites does not really resolve this issue. Many hits are from a place that makes mugs, t-shirts, etc, with funny texts on them. Another hit, from the London Evening Standard, has the word in quotes, and is referring to an American English (“substandard”) use: The headline is: “Post-crisis bankin' just got a whole lot 'funner’”²³

- (595) Meanwhile, from Wichita, Kansas, comes the yee-haw of Redneck Bank, "where bankin's funner", an extreme reaction by the reputable Bank of the Wichitas to public hostility to banks.

However, after weeding out all of the hits from cafepress.co.uk, the company that makes mugs, t-shirts, etc., I do find examples of “serious” use of the comparative morphologically inflected form of the adjective *fun*:

One is the subject of a thread in a forum (by [dlaughton](#), from Peterborough UK), discussing a BBC story about a man and a goat:

- (596) Sometimes Truth is funner than Fiction²⁴

A comment to another BBC story about what new words should be included in a new dictionary (the person making the comment is from the US, though, and it cannot be taken as evidence for usage in the UK):

²³ <http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/standard-business/article-23706169-post-crisis-bankin-just-got-a-whole-lot-funner.do>, 11.06.09, Broughton, P.D

²⁴ http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/talking_point/4103003.stm (20.12.2004)

(597) Funner. Everybody uses it, but it still hasn't become a real word. Can they just make funner a word? Well, they should. *Jordan, Wisconsin*²⁵

In a review of an iPhone game from pocketgamer.co.uk²⁶, I find this example:

(598) *Resident Evil: Degeneration* has the making of something much funner, though more than a tune up of the controls and upgrade system is needed to get it there.

In the comments under the article one reader, David, comments on the use of <funner> in the review, saying, “Funner is not a word in the dictionary Tracy please read it”. Another reader, LBG, comments on this comment: “Does it really Matter? It gets the point across, and we all make small mistakes like this.(...)”. This is interesting because it shows that presumably young users also reject this use as erroneous. It should be added that looking at the information on the review writer reveals that he is not British English even though he writes for a “.co.uk” site, he is in fact from the USA.

<Funnest> gives more results in Google. However, many are from reviews, like above, and a large portion of the rest is from forums, but they do seem to be British forums where British people discuss what is the *funnest something*. Often it is not possible to obtain more information about the writer. There are also some hits for articles, notably one from careerbuilder.co.uk entitled “Funnest Places to Work?”²⁷ Searching for the author confirms that he is British.

In conclusion, using *fun* as an inflectional adjective is not a very frequent phenomenon. It is not difficult to find examples on the Internet, but the very large corpus COCA, the forms <funner and <funnest> only occur 0.05 and 0.07 times per million words respectively. However, as I have shown about, these forms are in use in Spoken language without being marked as ‘wrong’, ‘irony’ or ‘child language’, and there are also examples of unmarked use in the text types Magazine and Newspaper.

5.8 Summary of results of investigation of *fun* and *funny* in COCA.

²⁵ http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/talking_point/4103003.stm

²⁶ [http://www.pocketgamer.co.uk/r/iPhone/Resident+Evil%3A+Degeneration+\(iPhone\)/review.asp?c=13224&srch=iphone](http://www.pocketgamer.co.uk/r/iPhone/Resident+Evil%3A+Degeneration+(iPhone)/review.asp?c=13224&srch=iphone) (13.05.09)

²⁷ <http://www.careerbuilder.co.uk/Article/CB-143-Job-Search-Funnest-Places-to-Work?ArticleID=143&cbRecursionCnt=1&cbsid=653457309ef54195ad58ae09f2b2bf39-336765293-w4-6>

In COCA, *fun* has almost double the frequency of *funny*., and there are differences in the distribution in text types. *Funny* is most frequent in the category Fiction, closely followed by Spoken. *Fun* is most frequent in Spoken, closely followed by Magazine. It is also frequently found in Newspapers. Fiction is the only text type where *funny* is more frequent than *fun*.

In the time sections in COCA, *fun* has a clearly rising curve, while *funny* does not. *Fun* is more frequent in all the time sections than *funny*.

Collocations: The adjectives and nouns co-occurring with *fun* all have positive connotations. They seem to belong to a semantic field of ‘playing’ and ‘amusement’. With *funny*, there is no such positive semantic prosody. Many collocates are in the semantic field of ‘comedy’, and a few have negative connotations. There are also positive sounding words on the list, and these might be said to belong to a semantic field of ‘amusement’ together with some of the words for *fun*.

BE:BE co-occurs with both *fun* (15%) and *funny* (25%) in COCA. Both <BE fun> and <BE funny> frequently occur clause finally, and they both typically take <it> as subject. They are both frequently preceded by <but>, in the patterns <but it BE fun> and <but it BE funny>. However, while <but it BE fun> is typically a part of a pattern “justifying” something that is not “good” by stating that it is *fun*, <but it BE funny> is used to signal that what follows is something worth attention or something ‘remarkable’

Both *fun* and *funny* are frequently found in the pattern “THINK it BE fun/funny”., and they are also both found with elements denoting ‘intention’.

Both <BE fun> and <BE funny> can take a personal pronoun as subject, however, this is much more frequent with <BE funny>. <BE funny> takes first and second person pronouns <I> and <you> as subjects, while <BE fun> seldom does. <BE fun> is often found with a noun denoting an object or a gerund denoting an activity as subject, while <BE funny> is not. Another difference is that when followed by <if>, <BE funny if> is found in the pattern “X would be funny if it weren’t/wasn’t so X”, while <BE fun if> is typically followed by description of a desired, hypothetical situation.

<BE funny to v*> is frequently a visibility verb: SEE and WATCH, however this pattern is more frequent with <BE fun> (also LOOK).

<BE funny> is often found with the discourse item <you know>. The pattern <You know, it’s funny> seems to form an introduction to the following discourse, and so does <You know what’s funny>. The meaning of <it BE funny> is left almost as “empty” as <you know>.

Modal auxiliaries: <be fun> is frequently found with the modal auxiliaries, while <be funny> is not very frequently found with modal auxiliaries, except for with <would>. Both <would be funny> and <would be fun> are frequently preceded by personal pronoun <I> and a verb of cognition (typically THINK).

Lexical verbs: *Fun* co-occurs with many different lexical verbs, these are divided into the three categories: copular verbs, transitive verbs and complex transitive verbs. Occurrence as SP with copular verbs without preposition <like> and as OP shows that *fun* is frequently used as adjective in COCA.

Funny is found with copular verbs, one complex transitive verb and some transitive verbs. When it co-occurs with transitive verbs it is an adverb.

The lexical verbs that occur with both *fun* and *funny* are <FIND>, <GET>, <LOOK>, <SOUND>, and <SEEM>. Like in the BNC, <LOOK>, <SOUND> and <SEEM fun> mean that something is expected to be ‘enjoyable’ or ‘entertaining’, while the same verbs with *funny* describes something as ‘strange’, ‘comical’, ‘bad’ or ‘wrong’. The choice of verb is more important and contributes to the meaning of *funny*, whereas with *fun* one copular verb can often be substituted by the other.

MAKE *fun of* and POKE *fun at*: *Fun* is found in the multi-word verbs MAKE *fun of* and POKE *fun at*. It is also found in a construction with MAKE meaning to ‘make something fun that is not originally’. *Funny* is not found in these MWVs.

HAVE *fun with*: Have fun with is a typical use of fun, and typically means ‘to enjoy’. It is also found in the meaning ‘to ridicule’, ‘HAVE fun at someone’s expense’. <HAVE fun together>, <just HAVE fun> and <HAVE fun with it> are recurring patterns. *Funny* is not found with the transitive verb HAVE without being a premodifier of a noun because it has no nominal functions.

Adjectival premodification and determiners: *fun* is found premodified by adjectives, these can be divided into three categories: *Not dangerous*, *Quality* and *Other*. The most frequent are <great> and <good>.

The determiners that occur with *fun* in COCA are grouped in terms of *Open-class quantifiers*, *Other quantifying determiners*, *Possessive determiners* and *Other determiners*. *Funny* is not premodified by adjectives and determiners, as it has no nominal functions.

Adverb premodifiers: The adverbs <really>, <kind of>, <so> and <very> are typically used to premodify both *fun* and *funny*. The use seems to be similar, and the difference in meaning resides in whether something is described as ‘enjoyable’ or

‘comical’/‘amusing’. However, their patterns are different, <so funny> typically has a personal pronoun as subject, while <so fun> typically has <it/this/ that> as subject. <Really, pretty and very funny> are frequently found in a comment in the spoken section of the corpus. <Really> and <very fun> are also marked for the spoken section of COCA. <very fun> is typically negated. <so fun> occurs most in spoken, but also frequently in Magazine and Newspaper. There is an increase in use of <so fun> between every time section.

Funny is more frequently premodified by an adverb than *fun*, and also by a greater variety of adverbs. When *funny* is premodified by an adverb in COCA, it seems to always carry the meaning ‘amusing’ or ‘funny ha-ha’. *Funny* is also used as an adverb in COCA.

Nouns: Both *fun* and *funny* frequently modify nouns. The nouns that are premodified by *fun* are grouped into the categories *Period of time*, *Activity*, *Place*, *Person* and *Misc*. *Period of time*, *Activity* and *Misc* are the most important categories, *Person* and *Place* have only two nouns each. The nouns that occur with *funny* are grouped into more categories, *Person*, *Place*, *Time*, *Thing*, *Body parts and senses*, *Thought process*, *Saying*, *Abstract thing* and *Misc*. *Place*, *Time* and *Thought process* are the categories with the least types of nouns.

In COCA, *fun* is frequently found with adjectival functions, which makes for fruitful comparison to *funny*. The phraseological patterns of *fun* show that it is typically used to describe an activity or an object that you can do something with, in addition to describing ‘ways’ of doing something or experiencing something. “Empty” words like <things> and <stuff> are used with *fun* to denote an activity. The phraseological patterns of *funny* show that it is used to describe a story or something else that someone ‘utters’, physical appearance, sensory experiences, states and people. A quantitative illustration of this is occurrence in the pattern <fun/funny to do>: <fun to do> occurs 152 times in COCA. <funny to do> occurs three times. Another general difference between the two words in COCA is that *funny* is frequently used as an introduction, to emphasize what comes after it, rather than describing something as ‘comical’ or ‘peculiar’, but rather as ‘remarkable’ or ‘interesting’.

6 Summary and concluding remarks

6.1 Comparison between the BNC and COCA

Fun

Collocations: The collocation lists for *fun* do not share many words, only the verbs POKE, HAVE and SPOIL. The same word classes are found, and the general semantic field seems to be shared. A common semantic preference for ‘playing’ and ‘amusement’ is suggested. These words also suggest that *fun* typically has positive semantic prosody. However, in both lists I find the words POKE and SPOIL, and in the BNC list <expense>, which remind us that *fun* is not always used in a positive sense.

BE fun: Frequently found in both the BNC and COCA, but more frequently in COCA (14 pmw, 15% of total *fun* in COCA, 5.75 pmw, 11.29% of total *fun* in the BNC). Many of the patterns are the same in both corpora: “Object (noun) or activity (gerund) BE fun (to do X with (use))”, <game BE fun>. In both the BNC and COCA, third person personal pronouns can readily be subjects of <BE fun>, while this is not frequently found with first and second person. <It> is frequently the subject of <BE fun> in both corpora, often in the patterns <THINK it be fun> and <but it be fun>. <to be fun> is typically preceded by something signaling ‘intention’ or ‘obligation’, <meant to/supposed to be fun> and <HAVE (got) to be fun>, in addition to future expression <going to be fun>, in both corpora. The patterns <BE fun to be with> and <be fun if> also occur in both corpora.

There is a marked difference in the frequencies of <this BE fun> and <that BE fun>. In the BNC these are used about as much as the personal pronouns mentioned above. In COCA, on the other hand, <this BE fun> is used twice as much as the personal pronouns, and <that BE fun> is used 5 times more frequently. This seems to be due to the use of these combinations as complete sentences as comments during talk shows etc.

In the BNC the pattern “BE fun to ‘explore’” is more evident, the same verbs occur in this pattern in COCA, but with low frequencies, so that compared to the corpus size it is more frequent in the BNC. In COCA, the same pattern is frequently found with verbs of ‘visibility’, most frequently WATCH. <BE fun to WATCH does occur in the BNC, but only one time, compared to 150 times in COCA. The pattern <BE fun because> is frequent in COCA, and not in the BNC.

Modal verbs with *be fun*: <Can be fun> in both the BNC and COCA typically means

‘something not fun can be made fun’, and in COCA, <could be fun> is also used in this meaning. In COCA, <can be fun>, <may be fun> and <might be fun> are found to mean ‘even if you might like it/find it amusing, it is not good/advisable. In the BNC, this pattern is only found with <may>. <Might be fun> is in both corpora typically found with THINK. <should be fun> is in both corpora used to express two things: ‘it is supposed to be fun’, and ‘I believe it might be fun’. In the BNC, <WILL be fun> is frequently negated (rhetorically), but not in COCA. In both corpora it is used with the pragmatic function of persuading someone to do something by assuring them it ‘will be entertaining/enjoyable’. In both corpora <would be fun> is typically preceded a verb of cognition, like THINK and DECIDE. <must be fun> is found with negated logical necessity in COCA, Tottie (2002) claims that this is a typically AmE use. In the BNC I do not find it, but on the other hand, there are only 4 hits on <must be fun> in the BNC.

In both the BNC and COCA, *fun* is premodified by adjectives and determiners, and adverbs, meaning that in combination with a modal auxiliary and BE, *fun* is perceived sometimes as an adjective and other times as a noun.

In terms of standardized frequencies, <WILL be fun> and <would be fun> are more common in COCA than in the BNC. <can be fun> and <should be fun> are the only combinations that are more frequent in the BNC than in COCA. <would be fun> is more frequent than <will be fun> in both corpora. Looking at the frequencies of modals in general in the corpora, I find that <will> is more frequent than <would> when it is used without fun.

HAVE fun: In both corpora, <HAVE fun> is used in the patterns “HAVE fun in/at/on a place” (in COCA also periods of time and activities), <LIKE to have fun>, <HAVE fun together>, and “it BE (all, really, not) about having fun”. “have fun at someone’s expense” also occurs in both corpora. Also occurring in the BNC, but markedly more in COCA are: <WANT to have fun> and <Just HAVE fun>. “want someone to have fun” occurs 0 times in the BNC, and so does the 4-gram <have fun with it>, which is frequent in COCA.

Poke fun at and make fun of: These have been defined as multi-word verbs in this study. <MAKE fun of> does not frequently take a modifier between MAKE and *fun* in either corpora, 1% in COCA and 7% in the BNC. <POKE fun at> is relatively more frequently found with a premodifier of *fun*. In COCA, compared to the BNC, both <POKE fun at> and <MAKE fun of> are more often followed by <himself> or <herself>, and especially <POKE fun at> is found in this pattern in COCA. In both BNC and COCA, MAKE fun of is typically used to report a fear of being ridiculed.

In both the BNC and COCA, *fun* is found as an O.P. in the pattern “MAKE something fun”, implying that anything can be made ‘enjoyable’..

Lexical verbs with *fun*: Lexical verbs that are found with *fun* in both corpora are divided into copular, transitive and complex transitive.

Compared to the BNC, there are more co-occurrences of *fun* with copular verbs (without <like>) in COCA. This supports my hypothesis that *fun* is more frequently employed as an adjective in COCA. One finding that supports this is that <SEEM fun> is more common than <SEEM like fun> in COCA. <BECOME fun> is also more frequent in COCA, and all three items are more frequent in COCA than in BNC. However, this is not the case for all the copular verbs. <LOOK fun> is relatively more frequent in BNC (when frequencies are standardized). <SOUND fun> is equally (relatively) frequent in both corpora, while <SOUND like fun> is markedly more frequent in COCA.

<Join (in) the fun> is an important collocation in both BNC and COCA. In COCA, however, <join the fun> and <join in the fun> have the same frequency (both 53), while in the BNC almost all of the examples are <JOIN IN the fun> (4 join the fun, 43 join in the). <Enjoy the fun> is a much more frequent expression in the BNC than in COCA, and also other transitive verbs are more frequently found with fun in the BNC than in COCA, GIVE, LIKE, MISS, PUT, SPOIL and WANT. Verbs that are markedly more frequent in COCA than in the BNC are (except for the copular verbs) BECOME, DISCOVER, DO (something), JOIN (the), KEEP (it), and TAKE (the). <WATCH the fun>, <SEE the fun> and <ADD to the fun> are equally frequent in the two corpora. (as well as copular <SOUND fun>).

Adjective premodifiers and determiners: In both corpora *fun* is frequently premodified by <great> and <good>. However, this is (about three times) more frequent in the BNC than in COCA. In both corpora, adjectives evaluating the *Quality of fun*, and evaluating the fun as *Not dangerous* are most typical. In the BNC there are also quite a few adjectives evaluating amount or quantity of fun, while in COCA, there is only one adjective that has to do with this, <big>. In COCA, one adjective is classifying rather than evaluating, <outdoor>. In both corpora I find the idiom <good clean fun>.

The determiners found with *fun* are in both corpora divided into *Open-class quantifiers*, *Other quantifying determiners*, *Possessive determiners* and *Other determiners*. Most of the determiners are the same in both corpora, but there are some exceptions. <Ton of fun> is not on the list for the BNC. Open-class quantifiers seem to be a very productive class of determiners, I find many different types, but few tokens of each.

COCA also has more possessive determiners than the BNC. This is probably due to the difference in corpus size and the minimum frequencies not being correctly adjusted. In both corpora the expressions with possessive determiners are often found with verbs like SPOIL and DEPRIVE, signaling that “someone’s” fun is something they deserve. In both COCA and the BNC, “HAVE your fun” can have a negative connotation and mean to exploit someone for their own amusement.

<Much fun> is typically negated in both corpora, and also found in the pattern “just/almost as much fun as”, expressing irony in both corpora. <How much fun> is typically preceded by a verb of mental process, FORGET, REMEMBER, THINK in COCA. The same is not found in the BNC. More than 40% of instances of <much fun> in COCA are <so much fun>. In the BNC it is found in almost 18% of instances. <Some fun> is predominantly used with HAVE in both corpora. <No fun> is frequent in both corpora, and is typically found in the pattern “BE no fun v*-ing”. In the BNC, this pattern is also used with <in> before the verb in the *-ing* form; this is not frequent in COCA. In both corpora utterances with <no> seem like complaints.

Adverb premodifiers: There are more adverbs premodifying *fun* in COCA, both in terms of types and tokens. In the BNC, <quite>, <rather>, <really> and <kinda> occur, in addition to <more>, <most>, <much> and <less>, which can be adverbs or determiners. In COCA, all of these occur, but <quite> is not very frequent, and <rather fun> is not frequent enough to pass the frequency threshold in COCA. I suggest that the reason might be in the distribution of <rather> in these corpora. In COCA, <rather> is marked for academic texts, while *fun* is not. In The BNC, <rather> is more spread out over text-types, is more frequent in academic texts here as well, but the division is not as sharp as in COCA.

<So> is the second most frequent adverb modifying <fun> in COCA; this combination is regarded as “substandard” and seems not to be widely accepted. It has a jump in frequency between the time categories 1995-1999 to 2000-2004. I propose that the increase in use might be a sign that *fun* as a central adjective is coming more and more into mainstream usage in American English.

Nouns with *fun*: The nouns that are premodified by *fun* can be grouped into the same categories in the BNC and COCA, but many of the specific collocates are different here as well. In both COCA and the BNC the same nouns can take *fun* as an adjectival modifier and as a noun modifier. The category *Place* has more types in the BNC. They typically take *fun* as a noun modifier. In the category *Person* in the BNC *fun* is used as a noun, while in COCA the

two nouns in this category take *fun* as an adjective. In the activity-category, fun is typically an adjective in both corpora, except for in the compound <fun run>. This is more frequent in the BNC and COCA, which is surprising considering that it is listed in the OED as an originally American English concept. In Both the BNC and COCA, <fun things> is typically used about something you do rather than describing <objects>. This is true for <thing> as well in the BNC, while in COCA <fun thing> seems to be used more as a comment about a situation, or as a kind of introduction to a story, “the fun thing about someone or something”. <fun fact> seems to be a typically American English idiomatic usage. The central meaning is presenting information about someone or something that is ‘random’ or ‘not important’ but ‘interesting’.

The competing construction to a noun-noun combination, noun + of-phrase, <noun of fun> occurs in the BNC, with some of the same category nouns. This use is not frequent in COCA. A minister named David Mellor is omnipresent in the BNC when nouns are discussed, he is the referent of “fun minister”, “minister of fun”, and is of course also the minister in the “Ministry of fun”. In COCA as well, referral to presidents, senators and other politicians is frequent with *fun*, however, these are positive descriptions (“fun guy”) and something tells me that being called “the minister of fun” is not..

In both corpora, *fun* is found combined with and other noun by means of <and>. <Fun and games> is the most typical combination of this kind in both corpora, and about as frequent in both corpora. In COCA it is negated in about 40% of instances, while in the BNC less than 10% are negated. It is a lexical item with no positional mobility. The meaning of the expression is found to be more compositional in COCA than in the BNC, different types of ‘games’ are typically the topic of the discourse. Other nouns occurring in the same pattern are all found to have a positive connotation in the BNC. Two expressions are proposed: <fun and games> (and <fun and frolic(s)>), and <fun and noun meaning ‘togetherness’ or ‘enjoyment’>. In COCA, the nouns meaning ‘togetherness’ are replaced by three nouns without the same positive connotation. The most frequent of these, <fun and profit>, is typically used as a fixed expression in titles of books, etc.

Other patterns: <fun for> is typically followed by a phrase containing <family> in the BNC, or a personal pronoun, in COCA, the personal pronoun version is much more typical.

<Sense of fun> and <idea of fun> are frequent expressions in both corpora.

Using <what fun> and <such> fun as exclamation is more frequent in the BNC than

in COCA, possibly because in COCA <how> and <so> are also used with *fun* in this way.

The inflected comparative and superlative forms of *fun*, *funner* and *funnest* are found in COCA, but not in the BNC.

Using the tags in the corpora allows me to quantitatively compare to some extent the extension of use of *fun* as an adjective in these corpora. In COCA, *fun* is tagged as a regular noun in 14.03% of the total instances of the word, and as an adjective in 13.81. If we add to these the instances of *fun* with ambiguity tags with noun as the most likely to the noun percentage, and with the ambiguity tags with adjective as most likely to the adjective percentage, *fun* tagged as a noun accounts for 52.54% of occurrences and *fun* tagged as an adjective accounts for 47.25% of the total occurrences of *fun* in COCA.

In the BNC on the other hand, *fun* is tagged as a regular noun in 40% of the total occurrence, and as an adjective in 22.32% of occurrences. Adding ambiguity tags brings the percentage of *fun* tagged as a noun to 66.91%, and tagged as an adjective to 32.99%.

While this comparison is based on automatic taggers that I *know* are not 100% reliable, I believe that it illustrates what I have found by investigating the phraseology of *fun*: that *fun* is used as an adjective in both BNC and COCA, and that it is more frequently used as an adjective in COCA.

Funny

The frequency of *funny* is similar in the two corpora (COCA 47.87 BNC 43.8 pmw). Like in the BNC, *funny* is most frequent in spoken and fiction, this is the same in COCA, however, *funny* is more marked for the spoken category in the BNC than in COCA.

Collocations: In the BNC, the collocates are mostly nouns, and in COCA there are also many adverbs that are premodifiers of *funny*. In COCA, the semantic preference for ‘comedy’ is evident, there are no words on the list that indicates the ‘funny peculiar’ sense of the word *funny*. In the BNC the words seem to vary more, and at least <smell> and <noise/noises> suggest the ‘peculiar’ meaning of the word. In COCA there are more words with negative connotation than in the BNC.

BE *funny*: <BE funny> is more frequent in COCA (12 pmw, 25% of occurrences of *funny*) than in the BNC (7.65 PMW, 17.42 of occurrences of *funny*). In both corpora the subject is typically <it> (more than 50% in both). In both corpora the string occurs with 2nd and 3rd person pronouns, and in COCA it also occurs with 1st person <I> . However, <I> is found as subject of <BE funny> in a negated pattern in the BNC, “I’m not being funny (but), which is

not frequent in COCA. In both corpora <BE funny> is found preceded by TRY, which is often negated or discouraged, and verb meaning ‘intend’. “It’s funny you should verb meaning ‘utter’” is also a recurrent phrase in both corpora. The extended pattern “you know (,) it/what’s funny” is found in COCA. This serves as a kind of introduction to what comes next, without evaluating it as especially ‘humorous’ or ‘peculiar’. In the BNC, there are also many patterns that have this function, e.g.. <it BE funny because>, and <it BE funny how>.

Modal auxiliaries with *funny*: *funny* is not frequently found with a modal auxiliary in either corpora. In COCA, <would be funny> is the most frequent, followed by <can> and <could>. In the BNC, <can be funny> is most frequent, followed by <would> and <WILL>. In both corpora *funny* seems to have the meaning ‘ha-ha’ when it is used with a modal auxiliary and <be>.

Lexical verbs with *funny*: The verbs that signal ‘funny peculiar’ meaning (and often ‘bad’, ‘sick’ etc.) in the BNC are FEEL, GO, TASTE, and SMELL. In COCA, TASTE and SMELL are the only verbs that rule out the ‘funny ha-ha’ interpretation. In the BNC and COCA, LOOK, SEEM, SOUND and GET can go either way. In COCA, FEEL can also be used in both meanings. GO funny does not occur above the minimum frequency threshold in COCA, but GET funny is sometimes used in the same way.

Adverb premodifiers: <so>, <very>, <really> and <quite> are the most typically used to modify *funny* in the BNC. In COCA, <very> and <so> are much more frequent than the rest. *Funny* is more frequently premodified in COCA than in the BNC. When *funny* is premodified by an adverb in COCA it seems to mean ‘funny ha-ha’. In the BNC it seems that some adverbs signal ‘funny ha-ha’ meaning, while others are “neutral”. Negation seems to indicate funny ha-ha meaning in both corpora. The lists of adverbs shows vocabulary that seems to be typically BrE : <dead funny> and <well funny> occur 0 times in COCA, and <bloody funny> occurs three times, all in Fiction. <Too>, <little> and <sort of> all occur less than five times in the BNC, and are thus probably more typical of American English phraseology with *funny*.

Nouns with *funny*: The nouns that are modified by *funny* are grouped into 9 categories. *Person, Place, Time, Object, Body parts and senses, Thought process, Saying, Abstract thing*. The category Time is the one with the least tokens in both corpora, and in COCA this category only has <moment> and <moments>. To “have a “funny” time” is evidently not a typical use of *funny* in either corpora. In the category *Body Parts and senses* in COCA there is only one body part, <face> (and <faces>). In the BNC, there are also <eyes>,

<neck> and <nose>. In COCA, more objects are described as *funny* than in the BNC. In the BNC there are more nouns in the category Thought process.

Other patterns: The idioms listed in the OED: <Funny farm> occurs in both corpora, and is used in the meaning ‘mental hospital’ listed in the OED. However, in the BNC it also refers to a record label, and in COCA to a comedy club.

<Funny business> is used in the same two ways in COCA and the BNC, in semantically non-compositional idiom defined in the OED, typically uttered as an order to not do something you should not do, and to describe a concrete ‘business’, ‘line of work’ etc., as ‘strange’ or ‘interesting’. I question the decision of the OED to have this usage under the ha-ha sense of *funny*. <Funny bone> is typically found without the hyphen in both corpora, (0 with hyphen in the BNC, 6 in COCA). In the BNC the central meaning is the one in the OED, signaled by the use of the verb BANG. In COCA, 25% of instances are with the verb TICKLE, using the expression not only figuratively, but passing it from the ‘peculiar’ sense to the ‘ha-ha’ sense. It seems to be used to represent the bone in your body where your sense of humor lies, rather than that place the elbow that hurts in a strange (and bad) way when you bang it.

In COCA <funny papers> is found in the meaning given in the OED, the section of the diary with comic illustrations. It does not occur in the BNC in the plural nor in the singular. *Funny dope* does not occur in either corpus. *Funny column* occurs 4 times in COCA, it does not seem connected to “comic illustrations”. *Funny-face* does not occur hyphenated (and in the BNC it is never used as a form of address. In COCA I find one example of it used as a form of address. *Funny-man* hyphenated is only found once in the BNC and 0 in COCA. *Funny party* occurs once in the BNC, but in the meaning ‘a good party’, and not in the nautical meaning listed in the OED. There are 0 instances of <funny party> in COCA

The comparison of *funny* in the BNC and COCA does not show many differences in the use of the word. There are some differences in collocations and patterns, and in what verbs signal what meaning. It seems that in general, in COCA, the ‘ha-ha’ meaning is more used. There are also some differences in frequency, notably in premodification. Some idioms are used differently, notably *funny bone*.

6.2 Comparison of *fun* and *funny*

Fun and *funny* are very close in meaning, but they do not mean the same thing. This is shown through their phraseological patterns. The surface differences can be observed by their colligations. The conclusion is that *fun* has nominal functions, while *funny* does not. *Funny* is a central adjective, *fun* is not in the BNC. *Funny* has adverbial functions, *fun* does (arguably²⁸) not.

The semantic differences that I have found are (summed up) that *fun* evaluates something or someone as ‘enjoyable’ and ‘entertaining’, but also occurs in the multi-word verbs *make fun of* and *poke fun at* meaning ‘to ridicule’. With HAVE it can also mean to ‘exploit someone’. It is used to evaluate activities and situations, and to some extent persons. It is something that you deserve and that can be taken away. Some patterns also suggest that ‘anything can be *fun* (if you do it the right way’. It has a general semantic preference for children, family, playing games, and experiences. It is used to express hopes and expectancies about a future situation or activity, both with modal expressions and in other patterns. When a person is described as *fun* it typically means that they are ‘enjoyable to be around’ or ‘someone who likes to have a good time, fun-loving’.

That something is evaluated as *funny* can have many different shades of meaning. I propose a continuum: ‘something or someone is describes as making you laugh,’ or ‘amusing’, ‘something is worth attention’, or ‘interesting’, ‘remarkable’, ‘something is unexpected/surprising’, ‘something or someone is strange’, ‘something is suspicious/not right’ ending in a euphemism for ‘bad’, ‘wrong’ or ‘sick’.

Funny can also be used to mean both that something ‘makes you laugh’ and is ‘strange’ at the same time. It is typically used to describe physical appearance, sensory perception, utterances, person, and state. When it describes a person it typically means that they ‘make you laugh’ or that they are ‘strange’. Compared to *fun*, it is not frequently used in expressions of modality. This entails that *funny* is not typically used to express speaker’s belief or conviction, or expression of readiness, obligation, ability or permission. It is proposed that this could be due to the ‘middle section’ of the continuum above, where *funny* has little evaluative force, and typically just draws attention to what follows, but it is also evidence that *funny* is used to state something as a fact about someone or something.

²⁸There is some discussion on the internet as to whether *funly* is making its way into mainstream usage, see e.g. Language Log: <http://itre.cis.upenn.edu/~myl/language-log/archives/003256.html>

Which meaning is intended is in many ways determined by the phraseological pattern that it is used in. Negation surprisingly indicates the ‘comical’ end of the continuum. So do most of the adverb premodifiers, at least in COCA. The copular verbs GO, TASTE, and SMELL all signal that the meaning is somewhere between ‘strange’ and ‘bad’.

The part of the continuum that I have called ‘worth attention’ is reserved for instances where *funny* is found in a phraseological pattern which is used as an introduction to what follows, rather than evaluating anything. This use is signaled by BE and the subject is typically <it>. A prototypical pattern for this use is “You know, it’s funny”. It is also used in this way with the “empty”, multipurpose nouns in the category *Misc*, e.g. in a comment clause <in a funny way>. What follows is highlighted, but it is not evaluated much, perhaps giving it the shade of meaning ‘interesting’. Altenberg (1998: 113) finds recurring ‘frames’ in his corpus material, “thematic elements in pre-subject position”, and mentions <you know> as a discourse item that typically occurs in a frame. The function of frames is that “they act as routinized sentence or clause openers in interactive speech” (Altenberg 1998: 112). From the corpus evidence, it seems that <it’s funny> found in extended phraseological patterns, prototypically with <you know>, forms a frame for the rest of the discourse.

When inspecting corpus lines and exploring the two corpora, I found that both *fun* and *funny* are used in names, and I have the impression that this is a more typical trait of *funny* than of *fun*. I have, however, not investigated this matter extensively or quantitatively, and cannot make any conclusions in this respect. *Funny* is often found in song titles, play titles, and movie titles, while *fun* is found to name events, typically with a noun that denotes *period of time*.

6.3 Concluding remarks

In this study I had four goals: I wanted to map out the use of *fun* in American English and British English. I wanted to map out the use of *funny* in American and British English. And I wanted to compare the use of *fun* and *funny* in American and British English.

My research questions were:

- What are the main patterns of usage of *fun*?
 - Is *fun* used as an adjective?
- What are the main patterns of usage of *funny*?
- Are there differences in the use of *fun* and *funny* in British and American English?

The patterns of usage of *fun* and *funny* have been thoroughly mapped out and make up the main section of this paper. A comparison of *fun* and *funny* is given in section 0. A comparison of findings in the BNC and COCA is given in section 6.1.

The most important finding in terms of differences between the two corpora, concerns the use of *fun* as adjective. The phraseological patterns of this word show that the use of *fun* as an adjective is more frequent and “blatant” in the American corpus than in the British one. Going back to Quirk et al.’s criteria for adjectives, *fun* meets all the criteria in COCA. It is even found compared inflectionally (<funner> and <funnest>). In the BNC only two criteria are met fully, it freely occurs in both attributive and predicative position. I do find that it is compared by means of adverbs <more> and <most>, however, these instances can be argued to be *fun* as a noun compared by determiners <more> and <most>. In COCA, *fun* is found modified by many different adverbs, and, following Quirk et al., also by <very>. *Fun* is found modified by some adverbs in the BNC, but not by the adverb <very>. Using the tag sets in the BNC and COCA, I find that in COCA *fun* is tagged as a noun in 52.54% of the total occurrences, and in 47.25% it is tagged as an adjective. In the BNC on the other hand, *fun* is tagged as a noun in 66.91% of occurrences, and tagged as an adjective in only 32.99%.

However, in terms of generalizing these findings to the “real world” of British English and American English, which of course is what I wish to do, the corpora that I have chosen do not really equip me to make these generalizations. The differences that I do find can be simply due to the fact that the BNC has texts compiled in the early 1990s and COCA has texts from 1990 to today. Some of the evidence that is found in this latter corpus suggests that there has been development in the use of *fun* as an adjective, see, e.g. section 5.5.1 on the use of <so fun>. This could indicate that *fun* as a central adjective is increasingly being adopted into mainstream language, and I do not have any evidence to say that this could not just as well be happening in British English at the same time. However, the differences that I have found here could be tested on a new corpus of British English, if this becomes available.

The total frequencies of *fun* and *funny* are quite different in COCA and the BNC. *Fun* is much more frequent in COCA, while *funny* is approximately equally frequent per million words. The fact that *fun* is such a frequent word in COCA cannot be fully explained through this project. It could possibly be explained by the text types in COCA, that these texts are more prone to using the word *fun*, or it could be explained by cultural factors, that American English is more focused on the culture of having fun²⁹. The scope of my project does not

²⁹ See Bednarek and Bublitz (2007) for an interesting article that relates phraseology and culture and the

allow me to investigate these areas. However, it might also be postulated that the extensive use of *fun* as an adjective is some reason for the difference. As I have shown, the use of *fun* as an adjective does not solely occur in syntactic environments where it could be either noun or adjective. It also occurs as Subject and Object Predicative. I have also shown that it is still very frequently used with nominal function. This suggests that *fun* is keeping its frequencies as a noun and adding to it all the occurrences in adjectival functions, ending up with a higher total frequency.

My superordinate issues for this study were:

- Is submitting two similar words to a phraseology-guided, data-driven corpus investigation a fruitful way to compare and contrast the use of two similar words?
- Is using large-scale, balanced corpora fruitful for this kind of language research?

The answer to the first question is yes. Using a data-driven phraseological approach I have uncovered patterns of usage, functions, shades of meaning and register preferences.

Separating the meaning of *fun* and *funny* is a question of denotation, but as I have shown in this study, it is also deeply connected to their patterns and collocations. Using phraseology has given insight into the diverse uses of *funny* and how it is conveyed through context and patterns what meaning is intended. It has also allowed me to explore the use of *fun*, both as a noun and an adjective, in a variety of patterns both recorded in the OED and not.

The second question should also be answered by positively. Compared to, for instance, using a dictionary to learn something about how these words are used, I believe that I have given ample evidence that there is more to the meanings of *fun* and *funny* than has been recorded in the OED. Moreover, I have shown that many of the combinations and usages listed in that particular dictionary are no longer current.

However, there are some features of phraseology that I have not investigated as much as I would have liked. The concepts of semantic preference and semantic prosody could have been explored in more detail if I had not used such large corpora, or rather, if the words that I wanted to investigate had not been so highly frequent. Thus the BNC has been easier to explore in more detail both qualitatively and quantitatively because of the lower number of concordance lines returned. It has been more plausible to manually check frequencies, and extract all (or most) of the instances of a certain pattern. COCA often returns matches in the

hundreds and even thousands, and it is also very restricted in how you can manipulate the concordance lines that are returned for a search. However, because the searches return fewer hits in the BNC, it is more difficult to draw conclusions or make inferences about usage. An equally frequent pattern that returns 3 hits in the BNC would return 14-15 hits in COCA. This is much more difficult to dismiss as a coincidence, and furthermore, having more hits makes it more feasible to say something about occurrence in text type. COCA is more balanced in text types than the BNC is, and this sometimes results in peaking in smaller text-types in per million word counts in the BNC. For the purpose of my study it has not been easy to compare these two corpora, however, I have done this as best I could. I also believe that by combining the two I have been able to find more patterns and make more generalizations than if I had only used one of these corpora.

6.4 Suggestions for further research

The differences that I have found between the patterns and uses of *fun* and *funny* in the two corpora cannot be used as evidence for current differences between American English and British English, because the BNC is a corpus that represents “the late twentieth century”. When a large scale, balanced, corpus of British English of the “early twenty-first century” becomes available, it would be interesting to see if these differences are really specific to American English or if they were just newer uses.

Because of the scope of this study I have limited myself to investigate *fun* and *funny* in British and American English. However, investigating the patterns and use of *fun* and *funny* in other varieties may also be fruitful.

Looking at translations of *fun* and *funny* into other languages and how *fun* and *funny* are employed to translate from other languages in a parallel corpus can also shed light on the differences in patterns and use of the two words.

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