Committed to Crime

*A Corpus-based Study of the Semantic Prosodies
of Separate Meanings within Lexical Items*

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II

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IV

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to investigate to what extent the separate meanings of a lexical unit can affect its semantic prosody. Semantic prosody has become an established concept within the field of corpus linguistics, but in previous research preformed, lexical items have predominantly been treated as monosemous. This thesis challenges the traditional view of semantic prosody and aims to display that, in certain cases, homonymy needs to be taken into account to establish semantic prosody of lexical items.

To accomplish this, a corpus study is performed of the verb lemmas CAUSE, COMMIT, and HAPPEN, where each meaning is analysed after Sinclair's model of determining extended units, drawing on material gathered from the British National Corpus, to answer the research question: *To what extent is a word's meaning decisive for the semantic prosody of lexical units?* Further, this thesis has four underlying hypotheses, namely (1) Specific lexical meanings of items can be triggering factors and should be taken into account when determining semantic prosody, (2) in certain cases, it might be more precise to treat these meanings as homonyms with separate semantic prosodies, (3) the hidden quality of semantic prosody might in part be attributed to the different prosodies of the separate meanings of the same lexical item, and (4) for certain specific meanings within a lexical item found to have a particular semantic prosody, it might be more precise to ascribe a positive or negative connotational meaning.

The results of the study performed demonstrate that separate meanings of the same lexical item can differ markedly in terms of prosody, and that this difference is apparent in the distinctly separate collocational and colligational patterns, as well as in their semantic preference and environment they occur in.

Finally, this thesis discusses debated aspects of the concept of semantic prosody, in addition to investigating how the findings from the study can contribute to the general discussion of semantic prosody, and argues that there are individual differences, both between the lemmas studied and within the lemmas.

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List of Abbreviations

BNC   British National Corpus

CED   *Cambridge English Dictionary*

CIDE   *Cambridge International Dictionary of English*

ENPC   English-Norwegian Parallel Corpus

OALD   *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*

OED   *Oxford English Dictionary*

POS   Part of Speech

1   Introduction

1.1   Background

The aim of this thesis is to investigate to what extent the separate meanings of a lexical unit can affect its semantic prosody. This particular aspect has not previously been subject to extensive research, and remains a partially unexplored feature of the concept, in the sense that lexical units arguably tend to be treated as monosemous in studies of semantic prosody. Examples can be found in Sinclair (1987, 1991), Stubbs (1995, 2002), and Partington (1998, 2004a). There are, however, a few significant exceptions. Bublitz (1996) demonstrated that the prosody of a lexical unit can vary between its meanings, and the notion was more recently brought to attention by Stewart (2010), but in both instances, this was not the primary area of focus. The topic is therefore worth exploring further, and deserves a study specifically designed to investigate it, as it could potentially have a significant impact on the semantic prosody of lexical units, as well as making a contribution to the existing literature. Thus, this thesis argues that lexical items in certain cases should rather be treated as homonymous. Additionally, doing so might help explaining certain debated aspects of the concept of semantic prosody, an example being the "hidden quality".

1.2   Semantic Prosody

Semantic prosody is a relatively recent concept, and was first formulated by Sinclair (1987, 1991), but the term itself was first introduced by Louw (1993). It is associated with neo-Firthian corpus linguistics, connecting grammar to meaning, and central to this is the famous quote by Firth: "You shall know a word by the company it keeps!" (Firth 1957: 11), a play on the Aesopian proverb stating that "a man is known by the company he keeps".

Semantic prosody can be viewed in relation to connotative meaning, but while this latter concept deals with how some lexical items appear to have obvious inherent positive or negative meaning, semantic prosody usually deals with a more hidden evaluative meaning, where certain seemingly neutral words tend to attract particularly negative or positive contexts (Partington 2004a: 131-132; Stewart 2010: 14). Often, this is exemplified through verbs and prepositional verbs, famous examples being CAUSE, COMMIT and SET IN, which all have been argued to have a negative semantic prosody (Stewart 2010, 32-33). To

elaborate, SET IN arguably has a neutral meaning of "begin" but its subject is typically negative, giving it a "hidden quality" of a negative nature, as in example (1).

(1) In fact the rot *set in* 15 years ago when Dr Coggan asked for a meeting with Jim (BNC: CBC 13032)

The concept has, however, received criticism by, among others, Whitsitt (2005) and Stewart (2010), and there are aspects where a consensus does not exist, examples being its scope, register-specificity, the significance of the hidden quality, its relation to connotational meaning, the role of semantic transfer, and whether or not it should be viewed as binary distinction between *good* and *bad* (Stubbs 1995, 1996, 2002, 2013; Hoey 1997; Partington 1998, 2004a; Hunston 2002, 2007; Whitsitt 2005; Xiao and McEnery 2006, Morley and Partington 2009; Philip 2009; Stewart 2010).

1.3 Aim and Scope

In addition to the abovementioned, there is one aspect that has been somewhat overlooked in relation to semantic prosody, namely the significance of separate meanings of lexical items. This thesis aims to investigate this arguably neglected area, working from the hypothesis that specific lexical meanings of items can be triggering factors and should be taken into account when determining semantic prosody. Bublitz (1996) does to a certain extent discuss this, and exemplifies how the separate meanings of the verb COMMIT appears to differ in terms of semantic prosody. To elaborate, he argues that the verb has two main meanings, one as a synonym of *perpetrate* and another as "*to commit someone or yourself to something*" (Bublitz 1996: 22), where the former meaning, illustrated in example (2), has a clear negative semantic prosody which is not present in the latter, in example (3).

(2) It was held that he *committed* an offence under section 14 (BNC: H7U 1599)
(3) both Waterstones and Harrods were now *committed* to a long and successful relationship (BNC: E9Y 248)

This thesis will build on Bublitz' work and explore his ideas further with a more pronounced focus on this particular aspect. The main research question can thus be formulated as follows: *To what extent is a word's meaning decisive for the semantic prosody of lexical units?*

An answer to this research question is sought through a corpus study of the separate meanings of the verb lemmas CAUSE, COMMIT and HAPPEN, which have all previously been

ascribed a negative semantic prosody (Sinclair 1991, 1992; Stubbs 1995, 2002; Bublitz 1996; Partington 1998, 2004a; Morley and Partington 2009). The study will be based on a random sample of 300 instances of each lemma gathered from the British National Corpus (BNC), where each instance first will be sorted in terms of meaning, and each meaning will in turn be analysed after Sinclair's (1991, 111-112, 1996a, 1996b, 1998) model for determining semantic prosody of extended units of meaning, as outlined by Stubbs (2002). This will entail an analysis of collocation, colligation, and semantic preference before arriving at semantic prosody (see section 2.4). Further, the investigation is based on the hypotheses:

1. Specific lexical meanings of items can be triggering factors and should be taken into account when determining semantic prosody.
2. In certain cases, it might be more precise to treat these meanings as homonyms with separate semantic prosodies.
3. The hidden quality of semantic prosody might in part be attributed to the different prosodies of the separate meanings of the same lexical item.
4. For certain specific meanings within a lexical unit found to have a particular semantic prosody, it might be more precise to ascribe a positive or negative connotational meaning.

In this thesis, the term *lexical unit* refers to an extended unit of meaning, as defined by Sinclair (1991, 1996a, 1998), which will be outlined in section 2.4, while the term *lexical item* refers to "the core" of an extended unit of meaning. The latter of these still differs from a *word*, in that an orthographic word can be "recognized as a string of characters lying between spaces" (Sinclair 1998: 131), while a lexical item is not necessarily restricted by word boundaries, an example being SET IN from Sinclair (1987, 1991).

1.4   Outline of the Thesis

In Chapter 2, an overview of the theoretical framework used will be presented, where the concept of semantic prosody will be outlined, and its debated aspects will be discussed with a focus on scope, register-specificity, hidden quality, relation to connotation, semantic transfer, and a binary distinction. In addition to this, previous research on the three verb lemmas will be discussed.

The method and the material used in the study will be outlined in Chapter 3, in addition to the operationalisations used to define and to categorise the separate meanings of the lemmas.

Further, the results of the study will be presented in Chapter 4, which will be divided into three main parts, each representing one of the three verb lemmas: COMMIT (4.1), CAUSE (4.2), and HAPPEN (4.3).

In Chapter 5, the results of the previous chapter will be analysed and discussed in light of the previous research and theoretical framework previously outlined in the study.

Finally, in Chapter 6, the research question will be revisited and conclusions will be drawn on the basis of the previous chapters, and suggestions for further study will be made.

2   Theory and Literature Review

This chapter aims to give a representative overview of the currently available literature on semantic prosody, and to discuss the issues connected to this term and its relation to connotational meaning. In addition, it also discusses previous research performed on the more specific topics this thesis wishes to explore, thus functioning as a foundation for the corpus studies carried out in this thesis (Chapter 4).

2.1   Introduction

Louw claims to have been introduced to the term in 1988 by Sinclair through "personal communication" (Louw 1993: 158), and that Sinclair was "applying the term 'prosody' in the same sense that Firth (in Palmer 1966:40) used the word to refer to phonological colouring which was capable of transcending segmental boundaries" (Louw 1993: 158).

     The concept's genesis can be said to be Sinclair's exploration of "how carefully the language is patterned" (Sinclair 1987: 150) through his examination of the recurring negative contexts the aforementioned lexical item SET IN finds itself in (Sinclair 1987, 1991). To do so, he studied 2,320 instances of the lemma SET in the Birmingham Collection of English Texts (now The Bank of English), a 7.3-million-word corpus, as well as the 90 instances of SET IN within the same corpus. What he discovered was that the "most striking feature of this phrasal verb is the nature of the subjects" (Sinclair 1991: 75), which he argues generally "refer to unpleasant states of affairs" (ibid: 75). By examining the collocates of SET IN, he found that very few could be categorised as neutral in meaning, while the majority of the vocabulary had a negative meaning, like for example *rot*, *bitterness*, and *anarchy* (ibid: 75).

2.2   Definitions of Semantic Prosody and the Idiom Principle

There are multiple definitions of semantic prosody, as will be discussed below, but the one offered by Louw (1993), building on Sinclair (1987, 1991) is as follows: "A consistent aura of meaning with which a form is imbued by its collocates is referred to in this paper as semantic prosody" (Louw 1993: 157). This can also be considered to be a definition that fits the ideas presented by Sinclair, who did not formulate a concrete definition of the concept. As Hunston

(2002) points out, Sinclair's (and by extension Louw's) theory presupposed three key features of language one must accept for the concept of semantic prosody to hold water. These are:

- There is no distinction between patterns and meaning;
- Language has two principles of organisation: the idiom principle and the open-choice principle;
- There is no distinction between lexis and grammar

<div align="right">(Hunston 2002: 138)</div>

To elaborate, it can be worthwhile considering the second point, which revolves around two of Sinclair's own terms that constitute, in his opinion, the two different understandings of the organisation of language. In the open-choice principle, there is a one-to-one relationship between words and meaning, where "each of them represents a separate choice" (Sinclair 1991: 175) for the language user. In the idiom principle, on the other hand, this is not the case. Sinclair states that "The principle of idiom is that a language user has available to him or her a larger number of semi-preconstructed phrases that constitute single choices, even though they might appear to be analysable into segments" (ibid: 110). Thus, the boundaries of meaning are not limited to single words, but can be expressed through longer, "prefabricated", strings available to the language user (Erman and Warren 2000: 31-32). This principle of language is in line with Sinclair and Louw's understanding of semantic prosody, where a particular meaning is created by a lexical item through interaction with its collocates.

Further, Sinclair argues that the boundaries between words are often artificial and should not affect how we understand what constitutes meaning. He exemplifies this through the fixed phrase *of course*, which he claims is a "simultaneous choice of two words" (Sinclair 1991: 110) to the language user, rather than two separate entities, and says that "This phrase operates effectively as a single word, and the word space, which is structurally bogus, may disappear in time, as we see in *maybe*, *anyway*, and *another*" (ibid: 110). In other words, there is not a direct relationship between single words and meaning, and it makes sense to look at larger lexical units when dealing with this issue.

To return to Hunston (2002) and definitions of semantic prosody, she defines it in relation to connotative meaning, a relationship that will be explored in greater detail in section 2.8. Hunston, summarising previous definitions, says that it "usually refers to a word that is typically used in a particular environment, such that the word takes on connotations from that

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environment" (Hunston 2002: 141), a definition that can be said to be in accordance with Louws's (1993). Similarly, Partington (2004a) also sees it in relation to connotative meaning, and says that it "describes the same kind of evaluate meaning but spread over a unit of language which potentially goes well beyond the single orthographic word and is much less evident to the naked eye" (Partington 2004a: 131-132). Here, the more hidden meaning is emphasised and described as one of the main aspects of the semantic prosody.

The definitions presented here can be said to predominantly harmonise, but there are some differences worth addressing. Whitsitt (2005) points out that Partington's view of semantic prosody as almost a synonym of connotation breaks with both Louw's and Sinclair's. In addition to this, there is not complete agreement in how the two pioneers view the concept either. Louw (1993) emphasises semantic transfer as a key element of semantic prosody, which is not the case with Sinclair (1996a), who rather highlights its pragmatic function. Whitsitt also argues that it is a sign of illness that Stubbs, who was instrumental in the development of semantic prosody (Stubbs 1995, 1996a), later moved away from the term, and the concept to a certain extent, in favour of his new term "discourse prosody" (Stubbs 2002: 65-66) because it no longer suited what he was discussing, interestingly enough without re-evaluating it, according to Whitsitt (2005: 283-286).

In addition to these challenges in defining the term, there are some other main areas of disagreement, which will be explored below, namely that of semantic transfer, where meaning is located, and that of the relationship between connotation and semantic prosody.

2.3 Semantic Transfer

As mentioned, and as Hunston (2007: 250) calls attention to, the idea of semantic transfer is a much debated concept in semantic prosody, and refers to how lexical items that co-occur frequently with particularly positive or negative words over time will eventually adopt evaluative meaning from these collocates (Stewart 2010: 42). This idea was not born with semantic prosody, but rather builds on the work of other linguists. Louw (1993) mentions Bréal (1897) and his term "contagion" as an important predecessor to semantic transfer, which describes a process where recurring linguistic patterns "contaminate" words with negative meaning, like the Latin word "persona", where its recurring co-occurrence with the

negative particle *ne* in French has given it a negative meaning (Louw 1993: 159).

Another metaphor for this notion of semantic transfer comes from Louw (1993) himself, who uses the verb "colouring" to describe semantic transfer, and compares it to "phonological colouring which was capable of transcending segmental boundaries" (Louw 1993: 158). His argument is that the recurring collocates of particular lexical sets "are capable of colouring it, so it can no longer be seen in isolation from its semantic prosody" (ibid: 159), in the same way that phonemes are imbued by adjacent phonemes, his example being the nasal quality the vowels in *Amen* receive from the neighbouring consonants *m* and *n* (ibid: 158-159). Similarly, Xiao and McEnery (2006) also use the metaphor *colouring*, while Sinclair (1996a) compares the semantic transfer to liquids, where negative lexical items "pour" over meaning to neutral containers in close proximity (Sinclair 1996a: 115).

Hunston (2007) refers to semantic transfer as a "dilemma", and summarises the two sides of the argument. She says that, on the one hand, if one were to believe that meaning only exists in context "It seems illogical to say, therefore, that a word or phrase can carry its meaning across from one context to another", and, on the other hand, that "resonances of intertextuality are difficult to deny", even if meaning cannot be carried over to a text from another text (Hunston 2007: 266).

In much the same way, but leaning more heavily on the former of the two sides of Hunston's dilemma, Whitsitt (2005) argues that semantic transfer is one of the main challenges with semantic prosody, and criticises it on two accounts. Firstly, he claims that there are some issues with the methodology and the research behind some of the examples of semantic transfer in semantic prosody, in the sense that the evidence is lacking. He uses the examples *set in* from Sinclair (1987, 1991) and *cause* from Stubbs (1995), and argues that it might be wrong to assume that these lexical items at one point in time may have been neutral, since the evidence to support this assumption is lacking, and furthermore, since early evidence of their use in negative contexts actually exists (Whitsitt 2005: 296). Secondly, he says that it is impossible to argue for the change of a word's meaning over time based on a synchronically designed corpus, since it is diachronic development (ibid: 292). He summarises this in what he calls "the difference between what it means to *look a word over*, or *look at a word*." (ibid: 293), and goes on to argue, somewhat facetiously, "that the concept of semantic prosody was made possible because of the refusal to *look up a word"* (ibid: 293).

To illustrate the process of semantic transfer, Sinclair (1991, 1996a, 1996b, 1998) developed a model of extended lexical units that demonstrates the relations and mechanisms that are in play when lexical items are "coloured" by the company they keep, which will be outlined and discussed in the following section.

2.4   Sinclair's Model for Extended Lexical Units

Stubbs (2002) builds on Sinclair (1991: 111-112, 1996a, 1996b, 1998) and elaborates on his model of extended units of meaning in corpus linguistics, which consists of the following elements, in addition to the core:

1. Collocation
2. Colligation
3. Semantic preference
4. Discourse (semantic) prosody   (Stubbs 2002: 87-88)

It can be worth elaborating on the first three. Collocation refers to the "relation between a word and individual word-forms which co-occur frequently with it" (Lindquist 2013: 57). Stubbs points out that this is a "purely lexical relation" (Stubbs 2002: 64), meaning that it concerns itself exclusively with frequency, and that syntax is irrelevant in this instance. Sinclair sets a parameter for the proximity of this relationship, and argues that it refers to "the co-occurrence of words with no more than four intervening words" (Sinclair 1992: 141), which Stubbs does not do to the same extent, although he does operate within a span of 4:4 (Stubbs 2002: 89). As an example, Sinclair argues in his study of the core *naked eye* that it frequently collocates with the lexical items *see*(*n*) and (*in*)*visible* (Sinclair 1996b: 31-32).

Colligation is somewhat similar to collocation, but while the former operates on an lexical level (Stubbs 2013: 24), the latter refers to "the co-occurrence of grammatical phenomena", as in "a member of a grammatical class – say a word class – with a word or phrase" (Sinclair 1998: 142). Thus, unlike collocation, it deals with "a pairing of lexis and grammar" (Stubbs 2002: 65). To continue with the Sinclarian example, his study found that *naked eye* is generally preceded by the following pattern: preposition + article, as in "just visible *to the naked eye*" (Sinclair 1996b: 32)

Sinclair claims that the categories "are related to each other in increasing abstraction" (Sinclair 1998: 142), and semantic preference can perhaps be seen more in relation to

semantic prosody than the two former relations, since it deals with semantic environment and not grammatical categories or exclusively lexical forms. It refers to "the relation, not between individual words, but between a lemma or word-form and a set of semantically related words" (Stubbs 2002: 65), and like semantic prosody, manual analysis is needed to determine it, and it can be necessary to use a larger span than with collocation and colligation to extract the information needed (Sinclair 1996b: 33). More generally, semantic preference deals with the recurring semantic contexts a lexical item can occur in, and Sinclair defines it as "the restriction of regular co-occurrence to items which share a semantic feature, for example that they are all about, say, sport or suffering" (Sinclair 1998: 142). He exemplifies this in his previously mentioned study of *naked eye*, which he argues has a semantic preference of "visibility", based on the evidence gathered from the Bank of English, attested through words such as *detect*, *spot*, *appear*, *evident*, *obvious* and *undetectable*, in addition to *see*(*n*) and (*in*)*visible*, in the immediate context of *naked eye* (Sinclair 1996b: 31-33).

The object of the relations is to complement each other and can be said to function as a 4-step model to determine an extended unit of meaning, building up to its semantic prosody. Sinclair defines the process as follows:

> The speaker/writer selects a prosody of difficulty applied to a semantic preference of visibility. The semantic preference controls the collocational and colligational patterns, and is divided into verbs, typically *see*, and adjectives, typically *visible*. With *see*, etc., there is a strong colligation with modals – particularly *can*, *could*, in the expression of difficulty – and with the preposition *with* to link with the final segment. With *visible*, etc., the pattern of collocation is principally with degree adverbs, and the negative morpheme *in-*; the following preposition is *to*. The final component of the item is the *core*, the almost invariable phrase *the naked eye*. (Sinclair 1996b: 34)

Stubbs points out that the "distinction between semantic preference and discourse prosody is not entirely clear-cut" (Stubbs 2002: 66), but explains the difference between the two as follows: "Semantic preference concerns propositional content. It has to do with sense and reference: what the text is about. Semantic prosody concerns speech act force: the speaker's communicative purpose" (Stubbs 2013: 25). Thus, in his view, the line is drawn between semantics on one hand, with emphasis on the text, and intent on the other, with emphasis on the writer or speaker.

Partington, however, outlines the distinction in a different manner. He argues that "semantic preference is a "narrower" phenomenon – relating the node item to another item from a particular semantic set – than prosody which can affect wider stretches of the text" (Partington 2004a: 151). Therefore, in his view, one could argue that the semantic preference

of a lexical item is more directly related to its collocates, while its semantic prosody deals with a more general attitudinal meaning expressed over a larger span. To use one of Partington's own examples, *utterly* can be said to have a negative semantic prosody but a semantic preference of "absence" or "change". For the former, this relates to the lexical item frequently occurring in negative contexts, and for the latter, this relates to it usually expressing an "absence of quality", regularly co-occurring with collocates like *helpless*, *useless*, *unable* and *forgotten*, or a "change of state", regularly co-occurring with collocates like *changed* or *different*, in addition to *failed*, *ruined* and *destroyed*, which correlates to both (Partington 2004a: 147).

McEnery and Hardie's perspective on the two concepts corresponds with Partington's (as well as Stubbs'), but they highlight the binary nature of semantic prosody and non-binarity of semantic preference to a larger extent than Partington does: "whereas a semantic preference may be in favour of any definable semantic field, a semantic prosody is always either for positive evaluation or for negative evaluation" (McEnery and Hardie 2012: 137).

2.5   Binary or Non-Binary

There are also some further issues worth discussing related to semantic prosody, in addition to those already outlined above. One of them relates to how the evaluative meaning is categorised, a point which still remains unsolved. Again, Hunston (2007) compares Partington's handling of the issue to Sinclair's, which offers some differences. Partington believes there to be a binary distinction between positive and negative attitudinal meaning, i.e. *positive* or *negative* semantic prosody, but also considers it to be gradable, in the sense that some are more positive or negative than others. Sinclair, on the other hand, has a similar starting point, but later moves away from it. In his early discussion of SET IN (Sinclair 1987, 1991), he sees its meaning in terms of positive and negative, but in later work he struggles to define a specific categorisation, but rather says that all units of meaning have semantic prosody, but they differ in explicitness (Hunston 2007: 250). In his study of *naked eye*, he expresses a non-binary understanding of semantic prosody, in that he categorises it as "difficulty" for this unit of meaning (Sinclair 1996b: 33). Similarly, but perhaps more directly, Hoey says that "we need to broaden the category a little" (Hoey 1997: 5) when referring to Louw, and argues for more specific prosodies. His example being "occupations" as semantic prosody for the phrase *train as a* (ibid: 5).

Morley and Partington also discuss this, and propose "the adoption of a two-term Linnaean-style binomial notation in describing prosodies" (Morley and Partington 2009: 141), where a binary distinction of *good* and *bad* is used, but with sub-categories. For example, in the case of *naked eye* the semantic prosody could be categorised as [bad: difficulty] (ibid: 141).

In the present thesis, the corpus studies will operate with a binary distinction between a "positive" and a "negative" semantic prosody, while a broader categorisation of semantic properties will be reserved for semantic preference. To continue with the previous example, *naked eye* could, within this understanding, be categorised as having a bad semantic prosody and a semantic preference for "visibility" (Sinclair 1996b: 33).

2.6 The Hidden Quality

It can be argued that it is contradictory that the evaluative meaning of semantic prosody is hidden, yet at the same time highlighted. Stewart (2010) discusses this:

> However, there is a theoretical drawback, which is that in many works on the subject the hidden quality of semantic prosody is presented *as part of its definition*, as one of its central features. Indeed a glance through the definitions/explanations of semantic prosody reported in Chapter 1 would suggest that if the meaning in question is not concealed in some way, then it cannot be classified as a prosody. (Stewart 2010: 39-49)

He argues that it is unclear from the literature if all lexical units are subject to semantic prosody, or only those where the meaning is hidden, and that, if the latter is the case, then the requirement of apparent concealment in itself can be viewed as an issue. He also goes on to say that the argument is circular. Why is semantic prosody hidden? Because if it was not, it would not be semantic prosody. As he points out, this logic is arguably not airtight (Stewart 2010: 40).

Philip, however, presents another perspective and claims that "semantic prosody is present, or tangible, in different concentrations depending on how great the need is for word meaning to be supplemented by pragmatic meaning in language-based communication" (Philip 2009: 13). Her view is that semantic prosody always is an inherent quality of lexical items, but that it varies in degree. She goes on to say that:

> The subtleties of semantic prosody and the difficulties to be found in its identification and labelling are exacerbated by the fact that it is not expressed by reiterated word forms, but by the recurrent presence of particular nuances which emerge from a wide variety of wordings. (Philip 2009: 14)

She argues, unlike Stewart (2010), that the "hiddenness" of semantic prosody is not a requirement, but rather that its visibility is dependent on the lexical item's interaction with collocates and colligates. Because of this, it might be difficult to observe with the naked eye, as it were, but as "idiomaticity increases and semantic analysis becomes more difficult, the semantic prosody assumes greater importance" (Philip 2009: 13).

2.7 Scope

There is also no consensus regarding to the scope of semantic prosody, or to be more precise, whether or not semantic prosody resides in single words or extended units of meaning. Usually, the literature points in the direction of the latter of the two, but there are some inconsistencies, not only from linguist to linguist, but also within the framework of the single theorist (Stewart 2010: 56).

Hunston (2002) places the idea of meaning in semantic prosody in a more general phraseological context, building on Sinclair and corresponding to his idiom principle, and argues that "The semantic prosody of a lexical item is a consequence of the more general observation that meaning can be said to belong to whole phrases rather than to single words" (Hunston 2002: 142), in line with Sinclair's theory of extended units of meaning (Sinclair 1996b: 24-30).

Stubbs' (2002) view is similar, and like Hunston, he builds on Sinclair and claims that the meaning in semantic prosody resides in a unit larger than the individual word. For instance, he assigns prosodies to whole phrases like *flavour of the month* and *cosy little relationship*, which contrasts to the prosodies of the single words *flavour* and *cosy*, and argues that these examples "confirm the semantic status of extended lexical units" (Stubbs 2002: 105). Further, he can also be said to broaden the scope of collocation, and claims that a 4:4 search span is not necessarily enough to pick up "very diverse lexical collocates", since they might be "embedded in longer sequences" (ibid: 106). However, he is arguably not clear about either how large a collocational span should be, or how larges an extended unit of meaning might be.

This opinion can also be found in Bublitz (1996), who, among other things, analyses

Stubbs' (1995) exploration of the semantic prosody of *cause*. He too claims that "meaning resides not in a single word, but in several words", and that "it encompasses not only conceptual but also collocational meaning" (Bublitz 1996: 11). Also, like Stubbs, he argues that a span of 4:4, a "usual measure of proximity" (ibid: 5) that he attributes to Jones and Sinclair (1973: 21), might be too limited since the majority of what one is looking for "consists of structurally complex collocates or else of (usually anaphoric) pronouns" (Bublitz 1996: 16).

Xiao and McEnery (2006), on the other hand, have a different perspective. They argue that one of the main differences between semantic preference and semantic prosody is where meaning is located, and says that "Semantic preference can be viewed as a feature of the collocates while semantic prosody is a feature of the node word" (Xiao and McEnery 2006: 107). However, they also argue that meaning is created by the interaction between the lexical item and its collocates, but their exact relationship is somewhat unsettled, which they express thusly:

> It might be argued that the negative (or less frequently positive) semantic prosody that belongs to an item is the result of the interplay between the item and its collocates. On the one hand, the item does not appear to have an affective meaning until it is in the context of its typical collocates. On the other hand, if a word has typical collocates with an affective meaning, it may take on that affective meaning even when used with atypical collocates. (Xiao and McEnery 2006: 106-107)

So, in their view, this almost resembles a "chicken-and-egg situation", in the sense that affective meaning is created by the colouring of a lexical items by recurring collocates, but at the same time un-recurring collocates can be coloured with affective meaning by a lexical item (ibid: 106-107).

Also Partington's (1998, 2004a) treatment of the scope of semantic prosody offers an ambiguous answer to a certain extent. He claims that semantic prosody "is not contained in a single item, but is expressed by that item in association with others, with its collocates" (Partington 1998: 66), which he exemplifies through COMMIT, a lexical item that he finds to frequently co-occur "with items of an unpleasant nature" (ibid: 66). However, as Hunston (2007) points out, he is not consistent in this view, and she compares Partington's to Sinclair's (1996b, 1998) analysis, which is arguably less self-contradictory. She says that:

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Both take as their starting point the individual word (e.g. *budge* or *brook* for Sinclair, *happen* or *sheer* for Partington), and both stress the fact that meaning belongs to a unit that is larger than the word. Partington's discussion, however, prioritises semantic prosody as the property of a word, and as a feature that distinguishes near-synonyms, whereas Sinclair stresses that the word is only the core of a longer sequence of co-occurring items comprising a 'unit of meaning' of which semantic prosody is one of the identifying features. (Hunston 2007: 250)

So, while Sinclair's view on this point can be said to harmonise with his idiom principle, Partington's perhaps both does and does not. One can also draw parallels between this inconsistency and Louw's (2000) inability to separate between connotation and semantic prosody in terms of where meaning is located (Louw 2000: 58) (which will be further discussed in the next section), something Whitsitt (2005) criticises heavily (Whitsitt 2005: 285).

2.8 Semantic Prosody and Connotational Meaning

Semantic prosody is usually seen in relation to connotation (Stewart 2010: 26-27), but the nature of the relationship between the two is not universally agreed upon, and one could argue that this is partly due to the issue of defining connotation itself. A general definition of the term is given by Crystal (2008), who defines it as "the emotional associations (personal or communal) which are suggested by, or are part of the meaning of, a LINGUISTIC UNIT, especially a LEXICAL ITEM" (Crystal 2008: 102). To elaborate on this broad definition, one could turn to Partington (1998), who divides connotation into three categories, namely (1) *social* or *situational* connotations, (2) *cultural* connotations, and (3) *expressive* connotations, and describes semantic prosody as a "particularly subtle and interesting aspect" of the latter of the three categories (Partington 1998: 65-66).

Similarly, Hunston (2002) says that semantic prosody "accounts for 'connotation'", but does not seem to clearly distinguish between the terms (Stewart 2010: 27). Her view is that "a word carries a meaning in addition to its 'real' meaning. The connotation is usually one of evaluation, that is, the semantic prosody is usually negative, or, less frequently, positive" (Hunston 2002: 142).

Like Hunston and Partington, Stubbs (2002) does not seems to distinguish between the two terms semantic prosody and connotational meaning, and places them together when discussing "The distinction between inherent, propositional meaning and connotational meaning (or discourse prosody)" (Stubbs 2002: 106).

The terms are clearly connected, and often almost used synonymously, but finding the exact unambiguous boundaries between the two seems to be difficult. Stewart (2010) tries to describe a difference between connotation and semantic prosody in the following way, based on Louw (2000): "connotation is construed as a form of schematic knowledge", while, "semantic prosody is more attendant upon co-occurrence factors, and is more functional or attitudinal in nature than connotation" (Stewart 2010: 28). In this sense, there is a distinction, where the previously mentioned more "hidden quality" of semantic prosody can be said to be central. However, he points out the inconsistency in the literature regarding semantic prosody and connotation, especially concerning whether they can be viewed as second-order meaning or not, i.e. if they constitute an additional aspect to a lexical item's central meaning which is dependent on the speaker and/or listeners relation to said lexical item (ibid: 29-30). Partington (1998: 66; 2004a: 154) argues that expressive connotation is not second-order, and uses the examples *pig-headed*, *venerable* and *callow*, whose primary purposes are to express their evaluative meaning. He also alludes to semantic prosody being more peripheral, because corpus data is needed to highlight its "subtle" aspect (Partington 1998: 66). Yet, this view is not compatible with Sinclair, to whom semantic prosody is "absolutely central to the unit of meaning and indeed represents the initial functional choice linking the meaning to the purpose" (Stewart 2010: 30). What he means by this is that the positive or negative evaluative meaning conveyed by the language user is a result of a conscious decision when selecting the lexical unit.

The inability to distinguish between the two is also one of Whitsitt's (2005) main objections to the concept of semantic prosody, and says that, as a result of this, "both terms, in drifting towards each other, have drifted away from certain specific defining traits" (Whitsitt 2005: 286). He also criticises Louw, who emphasises the importance of keeping semantic prosody and connotation apart (Louw 2000: 50), for not managing to accomplish this himself, for example in not clearly specifying a difference between the two in where meaning is located, which Whitsitt argues should be an important distinction. In his opinion, meaning in connotation should be located within a word, while meaning in semantic prosody should reside in a larger unit, spread across multiple words. If this is not the case, both the terms "lose a certain semantic specificity. Semantic prosody is simply connotation spread over several words, and connotation is semantic prosody that no longer shows how the process of

semantic transfer takes place" (Whitsitt 2005: 285). This last point can be said to be an issue exemplified in Partington's discussion of the semantic prosody of *commit*: "The unfavourable connotation can be seen to reside not simply in the word *commit* but over a unit consisting of *commit* and its collocate (*offences*, *serious crime*, *foul*, etc.)" (Partington 1998: 67). Here, semantic prosody corresponds to connotation spread over several lexical items.

2.9   Register-Specificity

Yet another issue relates to whether semantic prosody is register-specific or not. To explore this, however, it is necessary to first define register. This thesis follows the *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (Biber et al 2006), which defines it "in non-linguistic terms, with respect to situational characteristics such as mode, interactiveness, domain, communicative purpose, and topic" (ibid: 15). In a broad sense, the *Longman Grammar* categorises texts into four main registers, namely conversation, fiction, news, and academic prose. However, registers are not fixed to this level and can be more specialised and specific. For example, novels can be said to be a register within fiction, and further, historical novels can be a sub-register within novels.

The reasoning behind this process of categorising texts into registers is that "the situational characteristics that define registers have direct functional correlates, and, as a result, there are usually important differences in the use of grammatical features among registers" (ibid: 15). As an example, there are distinct characteristics of spoken texts that separate them from written texts. The texts of the register conversation tend to be more "local" than those from written registers, since the speakers of these texts often share the same local and social dialect. Written texts like academic prose, on the other hand, tend to more "global", in that they are written for "an international audience with relatively little influence from the national dialect of the author" (ibid: 16). In addition, "conversation is characterized grammatically by a frequent use of the first person pronouns *I* and *we* (referring to the speaker) and the second person pronoun *you* (referring directly to the listener)" (ibid: 15). This pattern is markedly different from texts in the news register, where these personal pronouns are generally used much less frequently, because the texts are not directed at one specific reader and are usually written in the third person, often without an acknowledged author.

Registers can also be characterised in terms of audience, which in turn colours the

language used. Fiction, for example, can be said to be generally written for a wide audience, while academic prose is more often written for a narrower audience. Similarly, the communicative purpose varies from register to register, and has an effect on the language used in the respective texts. News and academic prose usually aim to inform, while fiction aims to entertain (ibid: 15-17).

The question whether semantic prosody is register-specific deals with the extent to which the particular negative or positive attitudinal meaning connected to an extended unit of meaning is dependent on the register it resides in. Xiao and McEnery (2006) claim that "the link between semantic prosody and text type has largely been overlooked in previous research" (Xiao and McEnery 2006: 114). They use the example of the semantic prosody of CAUSE in different text categories to illustrate their point, which occurs more frequently in a neutral than a negative sense in academic prose, which differs from its overall pattern (ibid: 114-116). This point is also made by Hunston, who says that "it would be possible to suggest that this verb loses its association with negative evaluation when it occurs in 'scientific' registers" (Hunston 2007: 263), and that "the attitudinal meaning associated with CAUSE applies only when the 'caused entity' concerns animate beings, their activities and goals" (ibid: 263). Thus, it is possible to argue that text category is decisive for semantic prosody and must be taken into account. However, Hunston does not go as far as this. She argues that "rather than suggesting that register can make attitudinal meaning appear or disappear we might argue that particular registers select one lexical phenomenon more frequently than another" (ibid: 263). In other words, text categories can be viewed as a reinforcing force, but perhaps not decisive for semantic prosody.

Partington (2004a, 2004b) also discusses this and compares the use of the different paradigms of the lemma HAPPEN in newspaper and academic texts, and claims that "*happened*, at least in academic texts, has a bad semantic prosody" (Partington 2004a: 136). Another relevant point he makes, although it appears not to be the case for HAPPEN based on his studies, is that lexical items in newspaper texts are more likely to appear in negative contexts, since newspapers "have a tendency to refer drastic and tragic events to their readership" (ibid: 134). However, it is worth noting that this is not necessarily a universal truth, and will probably vary somewhat from different types of newspaper texts to other within the register.

Relevant research has also been done in regard to whether or not semantic prosody is register-specific. Using a corpus consisting of project proposals that had been submitted to the European Union's PHARE Program (the PP Corpus), Tribble (2000) performed a corpus study of the semantic prosody of the lexical item *experience* by comparing its use in this corpus with the definitions given by the *Cobuild* dictionary and its use in the spoken part of the British National Corpus (BNC), following Hoey's (1997) example of a non-binary understanding of the concept. He found that there was a discernible difference in its usage in this particular "exemplar genre", and he created an alternative definition based on its apparent meaning in this context: "Experience is a form of professional capital which can be used to warrant opinions or recommendations and establish the authority of one consulting or management agency over and above that of others" (Tribble 2000: 87).

An interesting aspect of his treatment of semantic prosody is that he makes a distinction between a *global* and a *local semantic prosody* (ibid: 86), meaning that he claims that lexical units can have a particular semantic prosody in one context that does not necessarily correspond with its overall use. In the case of *experience*, he explains it as follows: "What I have found interesting in the case of *experience* is that there do appear to be identifiable differences between the meanings with which *experience* is associated in PP and its meaning in a general population of texts" (ibid: 86).

A similar corpus study was performed by Begagić (2013), who compared the usage of the different word forms of the lemma MAKE SENSE in the newspaper and academic register of the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) in terms of semantic preference and semantic prosody, with a binary understanding of the latter concept. She found that their usage in the specific registers was markedly different, and concludes by arguing:

> The word forms *make sense* and *making sense* occur more frequently in a negative environment than the other two word forms, whereas *makes sense* and *made sense* occur more frequently in a positive environment. Therefor it cannot be stated that the collocation *make sense* has an overall negative prosody. (Begagić 2013: 413)

Like Tribble (2000), she claims that semantic prosody can be register-specific, and that since the evaluative meaning can vary to such a large extent from context to context, it would not necessarily be precise to assign lexical unit a universal semantic prosody, but rather view the different forms as cores of separate extended units of meaning.

In connection to this, it is worth mentioning Hoey (2004), who discusses this and makes a relevant point in relation to his theory of priming, which is somewhat related to

semantic prosody, and according to him an inherent quality of all lexical items. With this term, he means that "as a word is acquired through encounters with it in speech and writing, it is loaded with the cumulative effects of those encounters such that it is part of our knowledge of the word" (Hoey 2004: 23). He argues that both grammatical and collocational priming is "context specific", and that it is "subject to change" (ibid: 23-24), both diachronically and from register to register.

2.10 Previous Studies of the Semantic Prosody of the Lemmas COMMIT, CAUSE, and HAPPEN

Bublitz (1996) discusses issues connected to determining semantic prosody, which will be exemplified through three of the lemmas he deals with, namely COMMIT, CAUSE and HAPPEN, and in this manner, Bublitz' study lays a foundation for the research conducted in this thesis. In his article, he discusses the overlapping relationship between connotation and semantic prosody and gives the following definition for the latter concept:

> Of course, *semantic* prosody refers to *negative* or *positive semantic colouring* of two (or possibly more) components, i.e. of node (e.g. *utterly*) and collocate (e.g. *meaningless*). The node itself is then habitually associated with its semantic prosody, which is based on a semantically consistent set of collocates. Thus, meaning resides not in a single word, but in several words. Furthermore, it encompasses not only conceptual but also collocational meaning. This accords with Firth's idea that meaning is regularly dispersed in context. (Bublitz 1996: 11)

However, he still treats semantic prosody and connotation as separate concepts, something the subsequent study will aim to examine in more detail. The three particular lemmas were selected in this thesis for several reasons. Firstly, they are all verbs, which might make them more easily comparable than if they belonged to different word classes. Secondly, they are all lexical items consisting of single words, which make them more suitable to compare with lexical definitions than lexical items consisting of several words. Thirdly, they have all been discussed in multiple previous sources, which have laid a foundation to build upon further.

In addition to this, they can be said to represent three different degrees of "hidden" evaluative connotation, i.e. semantic prosody, as conveyed by Morley and Partington (2009: 151) in the form of a cline (reproduced below) where COMMIT expresses the clearest negative evaluative meaning, while HAPPEN expresses the least clear. This is illustrated by the circle in Figure 1.
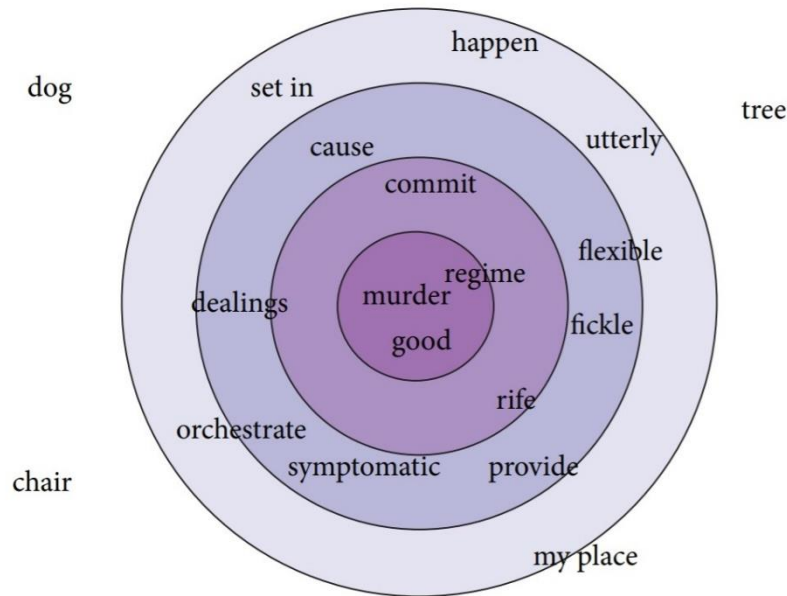
Figure 2.1: Visual representation of evaluative meaning, gathered from Morley and Partington (2009: 151).

In the figure, the connotational meaning becomes clearer as it approaches the centre of the circle. Thus, *murder* has clear negative meanings while *tree* has no apparent evaluative meaning, and the three verbs *happen*, *cause* and *commit* exemplify the nuances between these termini of the spectrum.

Ellis and Frey also discuss the three lemmas, and argue that "there are no defining aspects of the meaning of *cause*, *commit*, *or happen* which entail that they will take negative rather than positive objects" (Ellis and Frey 2009: 474), a claim that to a certain extent will be challenged in this thesis. However, Ellis and Frey performed a study from a psycholinguistic perspective exploring the relationship between conceptual meaning and semantic prosody, where people were asked to categorise certain lexical items that have previously been assigned a semantic prosody (among them HAPPEN, CAUSE, and COMMIT) as positive or negative. Interestingly, what they found was that "the 'aura of meaning' imbued upon words by their collocates is usually in accord with their conceptual meaning – people usually evaluate words of positive semantic prosody as pleasant, and words of negative semantic prosody to be unpleasant" (Ellis and Frey 2009: 493), i.e. much in the same manner that connotational meaning is apparent to language users, which deviates from McEnery and Hardie's view that the "key difference from the traditional notion of connotation is that the semantic prosodies are not necessarily accessible to intuition" (McEnery and Hardie 2012: 136).

2.10.1 COMMIT

Partington (1998) uses COMMIT as a clear example of a lexical unit with an unfavourable semantic prosody, partly because of his claim that the "unfavourable connotation can be seen to reside not simply in the word *commit* but over a unit consisting of *commit* and its collocates (*offence*, *serious crime*, *foul* etc)" (Partington 1998: 66-67). Similarly, Stubbs (2002) uses the lemma to argue for a phraseological understanding of language, exemplified through how recurrent collocates create "extended units of meaning" (Stubbs 2002: 63). In the case of COMMIT, he claims that it "has a strong tendency to co-occur with one small set of semantically related words", and mentions the examples "adultery, atrocities, hara-kiri, offence, sin" (ibid: 64), based on evidence gathered from the Cobuild Collocations on CD-ROM from 1995.

When discussing this lemma, Bublitz (1996) points out that previous research has somewhat overlooked its different lexical definitions, and that it would perhaps be wrong to assign one particular prosody to the lemma as a whole. He argues that it has two definitions, the first being synonymous with "perpetrate", which he claims has a negative semantic prosody, and the second being synonymous with "bind", which he claims has a neutral or perhaps even slightly positive semantic prosody (Bublitz 1996: 22). These definitions correspond to the ones given by the online *Cambridge English Dictionary* (CED) and *Lexico*, which overlap to a large extent, but it is also possible to add a third meaning, namely to "transfer something to (a state or place where it can be kept or preserved" (*Lexico*), or rather "to send someone officially to prison or hospital" (CED).

These meanings (especially the first two) are so different that it is perhaps possible to claim that they should not be treated as one word, but perhaps rather as homonyms. This argument can also be supported by cross-linguistic analysis of the translation of the verb. Ebeling (2014) compares the semantic prosody of COMMIT and its Norwegian equivalents based on the texts of the English-Norwegian Parallel Corpus (ENPC+), and finds that the separate definitions correspond to different Norwegian items, as well as some instances where the verb does not have a corresponding Norwegian one. This does not, however, include the reflexive meaning (synonymous with "bind") which has been omitted from Ebeling's study. In most of the occurrences (40 out of 53), COMMIT is translated to BEGÅ (synonymous with "perpetrate"), and to examine whether the semantic prosody of the verb is similar in the two languages, the 33 occurrences of BEGÅ in Norwegian original texts were analysed, which

showed that it occurred in negative contexts in 32 of the 33 instances (Ebeling 2014: 167-170). Thus, it would then be inaccurate to impose the negative meaning of this particular equivalent of COMMIT in Norwegian on the other lexical items that correspond to the verb, which might speak in favour of treating the different meanings of COMMIT as homonyms in English rather than the core of one lexical unit.

2.10.2 CAUSE

Stubbs (1995) explores the semantic prosody of CAUSE, and claims that it "is overwhelmingly used in contexts where cause and effect are unpleasant" (Stubbs 1995: 3), and when revisiting this particular lemma, he comes to the same conclusion after looking at counter examples (Stubbs 2002: 45-49). He also argues that the dictionary definitions given of the verb do not adhere to its use. He conveys that "the Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary, the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English and Collins English Dictionary all give a neutral definition such as "a cause is something which produces an effect"" (Stubbs 1995: 3), which does not represent its use in predominantly negative contexts. Further, he claims that the lemma is near the stage of having a negative connotation out of context, but is not yet at a point where it is "ungrammatical to collocate CAUSE with explicitly positive words" (ibid: 20).

Since the time of the publication of Stubbs' article, it would appear that the lexical definition of CAUSE has changed somewhat, and it is now described as having a primarily negative meaning. The online *Cambridge English Dictionary* and *Lexico* define it, almost identically, as "to make something happen, especially something bad" (CED) and "make (something, especially something bad) happen" (*Lexico*), respectively. This also corresponds with *Collins English Dictionary*, and the definition given by the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English Online* is the exact same as the one given by the online *Cambridge English Dictionary*. It is unclear whether this is due to a recent development of semantic transfer in the case of CAUSE, or if it can be attributed to previous weakness in lexicography, but it is at least possible to conclude that, based on this, the negative aspect of the lexical item's meaning at least seems to be viewed as less "hidden" than earlier. This change in definition can perhaps also be attributed to the development of a more extensive and precise use of corpus linguistic methods in lexicography from its advent in the 1980s and onwards (Atkins and Rundell 2008: 53-58; Lindquist 2013: 51-52). For example, both Oxford University Press and

Cambridge University Press use their own corpora for lexicographic purposes, namely the Oxford English Corpus and the Cambridge English Corpus. [1]

In Bublitz' (1996) discussion of this lemma, he speaks in favour of a diachronic change taking place, and argues that there might be development of "a tendency of *cause* to collocate exclusively with words marked for negativity" (Bublitz 1996: 14), and that it might even be reasonable to examine CAUSE in light of connotation rather than semantic prosody, but that this requires more research (ibid: 14).

In addition to this, there are also multiple examples of studies of CAUSE from a contrastive perspective. Berber Sardinha (2000) compared the usage of the verb CAUSE in the British National Corpus to that of its Portuguese equivalent CAUSAR in a 32-million-word corpus of contemporary spoken and written Brazilian Portuguese, and found that the two have a similar semantic prosody (Berber Sardinha 2000: 97-98).

Further, Xiao and McEnery (2006) performed a study of what they termed "CAUSE-words", where they compared the semantic prosody of the near synonyms CAUSE, AROUSE, LEAD *to*, RESULT *in/from*, GIVE *rise to*, and BRING *about* and their Chinese equivalents. They found that the lexical units in this group differ markedly in English, in the sense that CAUSE has a clear negative semantic prosody, while BRING *about* appears to have a more neutral semantic prosody, and that the lexical units in the corresponding Chinese group differ to an even greater extent (Xiao and McEnery 2006: 117).

Another corpus study of CAUSE relevant to this context was performed by Dam-Jensen and Zethsen (2007). They examined the lemma in a contrastive context by analysing the use of the Danish equivalents of CAUSE, namely FORÅRSAGE ("cause") and MEDFØRE ("cause", "lead to", "imply") in the 28 million-word Korpus 2000, consisting exclusively of written texts in Danish. They found that the former had an exclusively negative semantic prosody while the latter did not (Dam-Jensen and Zethsen 2007: 1617-1619).

Similarly, Ebeling (2013) analysed the semantic prosody of the Norwegian equivalents of CAUSE, based on its usage in the *English-Norwegian Parallel Corpus* (ENPC), and found that CAUSE as a verb is most frequently translated as *få (x til å)* ("get (x to)"), FORÅRSAKE ("cause", "bring about"), and FØRE TIL ("lead to"). Like Dam-Jensen and Zethsen (2007),

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[1] Oxford University Press and corpora: https://languages.oup.com/our-story/corpus, and Cambridge University and corpora: https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/

she found that FORÅRSAKE shares a similar negative semantic prosody as CAUSE, but also claims that this verb might be "subject to translationese in the EPNC material", because although "there are no occurrences of *forårsake* in the non-fiction original texts, it occurs 25 times in the translated non-fictional text, 14 of which are translations of *cause*" (Ebeling 2013). Because of this, she claims that FØRE TIL, which appears to have a negative semantic prosody, is "the closest Norwegian equivalent in terms of semantic prosody" (ibid), while *få (x til å)*, which appears to have a more neutral semantic prosody, is the "most commonly used correspondence in translation" (ibid).

Defining Separate Meanings of CAUSE

CAUSE as a verb is defined as only having one meaning in all the aforementioned dictionaries. However, the contrastive studies by Dam-Jensen and Zetsen (2007) and Ebeling (2013) on the respective Danish and Norwegian equivalents of CAUSE as a verb, has shown that it corresponds to more than one lexical item in both languages. Based on this, it can be worth exploring if there is a possibility of dividing the lemma into separate meanings in English as well, and to examine whether these convey different evaluative meanings, somewhat similar to Xiao and McEnery's (2006) study of the semantic prosody of the near synonyms in the CAUSE group. In both Norwegian and Danish, CAUSE has an equivalent which corresponds with the English LEAD TO, in addition to the arguably more direct counterpart FORÅRSAKE (FORÅRSAGE in Danish), which Ebeling argues corresponds with both CAUSE and BRING ABOUT. To cross-reference this with current lexicographical evidence, the online *Cambridge English Dictionary, Lexico, Longman Dictionary,* and *Collins English Dictionary* all list LEAD TO and BRING ABOUT as synonyms of CAUSE. Thus, one meaning of the lemma CAUSE can be operationalised as being synonymous with "lead to", as in (4) below, and one meaning can be operationalised as being synonymous with "bring about", as in (5) below:

(4) both of which *cause* an increase in the division of labour (BNC: A6S 888)

(5) But we don't want to *cause* a fuss, now, do we? (BNC: A0D 869)

Johns (1997) offers two further distinctions. The first is that "*lead to* is not used with a human subject, and does not appear in the passive", and the second is that "*lead to* is less direct than *cause*, implying a series of steps between cause and effect" (Johns 1997). Example (6) and (7) below exemplify these distinctions:

(6) He makes mistakes and *causes* havoc (BNC: A05 1624)

(7) The HIV virus can *cause* AIDS (BNC: CH5 1161)

In (6), the causer is animate, and therefore CAUSE cannot be replaced by LEAD TO, while in (7) the causer is inanimate, and it is possible to replace CAUSE with LEAD TO. Further, the relationship between cause and effect is more direct in (6), making it more suitable to be replaced by BRING ABOUT, while more steps are implied between cause and effect in (7), making it more suitable to be replaced by LEAD TO.

However, this does not account for all instances of CAUSE, as (8) below exemplifies:

(8) small changes in the budget constraint can *cause* the chosen number of hours to jump from one segment of the constraint to another (BNC: HWH 1781)

In (8), CAUSE cannot be replaced by either LEAD TO or BRING ABOUT, and thus, there is a need for another method of operationalising a distinction between the lemma in this use and the former two. One can recognise the syntactical pattern it occurs in (CAUSE + noun phrase + infinitive-clause) as corresponding to the Norwegian *få (x til å)* ("get (x to)"). Ebeling (2013) argues that when this pattern is translated from Norwegian to English, MAKE is usually used rather than CAUSE, and the two verbs are also listed as synonyms in all the aforementioned dictionaries. Thus, a third meaning of CAUSE can be operationalised as being synonymous with "make", although it is worth mentioning that replacing CAUSE with MAKE does require removing the infinitive marker in the infinitive clause, e.g. "small changes can *make* the chosen number of hours jump..".

2.10.3 HAPPEN

Sinclair (1991: 112, 1992: 18) uses HAPPEN as one of his examples of lexical units with negative semantic prosody, and claims that it usually occurs in negative contexts, but does not provide evidence for his claims. Partington (1998), however, explores *happen* in greater detail and says about its general use that it "is frequently found to stand for an action/event or series of action/events which are recounted in some other part of the text" (Partington 1998: 101-102), and goes on to argue that it can be used both anaphorically and cataphorically. In the former use it is often used as a signal referring to an event that has been conveyed earlier in the text, and is recurrently preceded by *this*, and to a less extent *that*. For example:

(9) Jewish women then shot all the men on board the truck. This *happened* on the road between Um Al-Farajh and Acre (BNC: ANU 666)

In the cataphoric use, it introduces "some action/event about to be recounted, often in pre-constructed phrases such as *it often happens that*, *as so often happens*:" (Partington 1998: 102), as well as in rhetorical questions, often preceded by *what*, usually before the author explains exactly what transpires, for example:

(10)   *What happened* in the 1980s was a temporary aberration from what has always been the real position of the Labour Party (BNC: A2F 61)

Similarly, it has a comparable cataphroic function when *what happens* occurs in an indirect structure (Partington 1998: 102).

Bublitz explores HAPPEN in even greater detail than Sinclair and Partington, and finds a number of complicating factors,[2] which he summarises in four main points. The first relates to proximity, in that a large span is needed to identify the semantic profile, which makes the "standardised" 4:4 span too narrow. What he found was that the grammatical subject often was located outside of this span, and when it was not, it was "a semantically unspecific pronoun (*it*, *that*), an anaphoric or general noun" (Bublitz 1996: 15).

The second issue relates to directionality, in that the collocation usually precedes rather than follows the node word (or *core* in Sinclair's terms). This does not necessarily speak against a particular semantic prosody for the lexical unit in and of itself, but should be taken into consideration when investigating its use on the basis of a corpus.

The third issue relates to the "Structural complexity of the collocate" (ibid: 15), meaning that "single word collocates which display a positive or negative semantic prosody" are difficult to locate, and often reside outside of a considerable span. Often, the collocates are anaphoric pronouns, like *it*, where the reference is located much earlier in the text.

The fourth issue relates to how different lexical meanings of the item can affect the material, in the sense that their prosodies might be different. According to Bublitz, HAPPEN has essentially two meanings, namely a *by-chance-meaning*, where "Someone who *happens* to do something does it as a result of chance. E.G *If you happen to see Jane, ask her [...]*" (ibid: 18), and an *occurrence-meaning*, where something "Occurs or is done without being planned" (ibid: 19), which corresponds to the definitions given by the online *Cambridge English Dictionary* and *Lexico*. Based on his findings, Bublitz concludes that there is no

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[2] These complications are not limited to this lemma and are relevant to the other verb lemmas discussed as well.

evidence of negative semantic prosody in the former of the two meanings, and only some in the latter (ibid: 20-21).

2.11 Summary

Drawing on the literature discussed in this chapter the current study will look into the challenging aspects of semantic prosody in addition to the primary aim, to investigate to what extent separate meanings affect a lexical unit's semantic prosody. More specifically, these challenging aspects relate to if it can be viewed as a binary distinction, the hidden quality, its scope, its relation to connotational meaning, and register-specificity. As mentioned in Chapter 1, this will be done through corpus studies in Chapter 4 of the three verb lemmas COMMIT, CAUSE, and HAPPEN, that have all been assigned a negative semantic prosody by several linguists, as outlined above. The parameters of which will be defined in the next chapter.

3 Material and Method

This chapter outlines the material and methods used in this thesis, as well as the specific operationalisations created for the corpus study performed in Chapter 4. Firstly, the material, i.e. the British National Corpus (BNC) will be presented, in addition to an overview of the texts within the corpus. Secondly, the method will be presented and the relevance to the research question will be made clear. Thirdly, a detailed outline of the method used in the corpus study will be given. Fourthly, the lemmas will be split into separate meanings based on current lexicography, in addition to a comparison of lexicography contemporary to the texts of the BNC, to investigate possible time lag between the definitions.

3.1 Material

3.1.1 The British National Corpus

The main source of primary data is the British National Corpus (BNC), through BNCWeb (CQP), which is a 100 million word monolingual corpus comprising both spoken (10 %) and written (90 %) texts in British English from the late 20th century.[3] It is a general corpus, rather than a specific corpus, meaning that it is "not limited to any particular subject field, genre or register" (Burnard 2015), and intends "to be representative and balanced for a language as a whole" (Gries 2017: 9), which in this case is the British variety of English.

The corpus is also annotated, in that it is "encoded according to the Guidelines of the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI)" (Burnard 2015), and features specific linguistic information, like lemmatisation and part-of-speech (POS) tagging (Gries 2017: 10). This simplifies the process of retrieving information for the user, but does not come without difficulties. The annotation is predominantly done automatically, with an estimated accuracy rate of over 90%, but still leaves a substantial margin of error, where the automatic taggers for example are unable to identify word classes for specific lexical items (Hunston 2002: 79-83). One can also claim that this process makes annotated corpora less objective than raw corpora, in the sense that it has to make choices where there is not universal consensus among linguists (Gries 2017: 10).

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[3] http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/

The BNC is also a synchronic corpus, and can be said to provide "a snapshot of a language/variety at one particular point in time" (Gries 2017: 11), in this case British English in the late 20th century. This contrasts with diachronic corpora, where the objective is to represent how a language or variety develops over time (ibid: 11). This might have an effect on the material as well, since the language change that may have taken place since the early 1990s, when the BNC was compiled, is not evident in the corpus.

It also falls under the category of static corpora, since it has a fixed size, unlike dynamic corpora, where new material is added and the corpus is continually extended (ibid: 11).

A successor to the BNC, titled British National Corpus 2014 (BNC2014) is under development. The spoken part has already been launched, but the written part is due sometime in 2020, but the exact date is still unknown.[4] There are several reasons why the spoken BNC2014 is not being used as material in this thesis. Firstly, it is more limited in size than the BNC (approximately 11.5 million words). Secondly, it consists of recordings of conversations and does not feature the same types of registers wished to be examined here. Thirdly, the literature and previous research referred to here are predominantly based on written texts. In addition, since the better part of the secondary literature explored in this dissertation was published in the 1990s, the original BNC is arguably more suitable to explore lexical items previously researched by e.g. Sinclair (1987; 1991; 1996a; 1996b; 1998), Louw (1993), Stubbs (1995, 2002), Bublitz (1996), Partington (1998; 2004a) among others, because it represents the contemporary language discussed, and in doing so, arguably renders the possible diachronic change that has taken place since that time a dead issue.

3.1.2 The Texts in the BNC

To elaborate on the domain of the written part of the BNC, it is made up by 75% non-fiction and 25% fiction texts (Lindquist 2013: 16). The classification used for designing the corpus and selecting the texts are presented in the table below.

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[4] http://cass.lancs.ac.uk/bnc2014/

Table 3.1: Distribution of texts in the BNC over text domain[5]

Percentage of material	Text domain
60 %	Books
25 %	Periodicals (newspapers etc.)
5-10 %	Other kinds of miscellaneous published material (brochures, advertising leaflets, etc)
5-10 %	Unpublished written material (personal letters and diaries, essays and memoranda, etc.)
< 5 %	Material written to be spoken (political speeches, play texts, broadcast scripts, etc.)

Initially, the corpus was intended to only contain texts published from 1975 and onwards, but some exceptions were made for imaginative texts because of their cultural significance and influence on the language, the earliest of which were published in 1964.[3]

Several classification features were also added to "make sure that there should be an appropriate level of variation within each criterion",[3] including the texts' topic, information on the author and the target group, the writing level and the sample size.[3] For this last point, it is worth mentioning that the BNC has included comparatively long text samples, many between 40,000 and 50,000 words (Lindquist 2013: 16).

Apart from the factors already mentioned, it is also worth keeping in mind that as a result of its corpus design, the BNC is generally more representative of written than spoken language, as well as of non-fiction material rather than of fiction. Further, the conclusions made based on the findings this corpus produces are primarily relevant for British English, since all its texts are gathered from this variety of the language.

3.2 Method

This section outlines the steps taken to answer the research questions below, which will be approached through the corpus study performed in Chapter 4.

- To what extent is a word's meaning decisive for the semantic prosody of lexical units?

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[5] http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/corpus/creating.xml

To answer this question, a corpus study of three verb lemmas that have previously been claimed to have a specific semantic prosody, namely COMMIT, CAUSE, and HAPPEN will be performed drawing on material from the British National Corpus. The starting point for this study is the individual definitions of the verb lemmas from the online dictionary *Lexico* (the collaboration project between Oxford University Press and Dictionary.com) and the online *Cambridge English Dictionary* (see sections 2.10.1 and 10.2.3), as well as the additional operalisation method for CAUSE outlined in Section 2.10.2. The dictionaries have been chosen because they both represent British English, they both represent trusted publishing houses, and they are both corpus-based, as outlined in section 2.10.2.

Using the aforementioned structure outlined by Stubbs (2002: 64-65) for determining semantic prosody (see section 2.4), collocation and colligation will be explored to find recurring patterns in the overall use of the lemmas, before semantic preference and semantic prosody will be determined. For the two former categories, the BNC's annotation will simplify the process, while for the two latter categories, manual analysis of concordance lines will be necessary for the further analysis. This will entail examining 300 random instances, which will first be categorised in terms of dictionary definition, then in terms of semantic preference and potential semantic prosody.

The object of this study is to investigate to what extent the claimed semantic prosody of certain lexical units can be attributed to each of its separate meanings. As mentioned in section 2.10.1, previous research has to some extent partly overlooked the homonymous quality of certain words when assigning a semantic prosody, and it might be more constructive to treat the individual meanings as separate units with separate semantic prosodies.

3.2.1 Detailed Outline of the Method Used

To create the sample for this corpus study, the search strings {happen/V}, {cause/V} and {commit/V} will be used in the BNC to find the lemmas as verbs in the corpus. A random sample of 300 of each will be extracted, and these instances will in turn be sorted in terms of separate meanings. An overview of said meanings is presented in section 3.2.2. The first step after this will be to examine collocation, and as a starting point, a top-20 list of the most frequent collocates for each lemma in its general use will be created, based on all occurrences of the lemmas in the BNC. The reason for this is twofold. Firstly, because of the size of the BNC, this will give a representative picture of the collocational environment each lemma

most frequently occurs in. Secondly, by then examining the distribution of collocates across the separate meanings, it will indicate if the most frequent collocates for the lemma in its general use are distributed evenly over the separate meanings, or if the concentration is higher in particular meanings. To do so, the top-20 lists will be cross-referenced with the random sample to investigate where they most frequently occur.

There are multiple methods of measuring collocation, but in this thesis, log-likelihood will be used when compiling the top-20 lists. It is a statistical measure which can be viewed as "a compromise between absolute frequency and the z-score" (Lindquist 2013: 77), where the former sort collocates on frequency alone, while the latter "adjusts for the general frequencies of the words involved in a potential collocation and shows how much more frequent the collocation of a word with the node word is than one would expect from their general frequencies" (McEnery, McEnery and Xiao 2006: 215). For absolute frequency, a weakness can be that lexical items like function words or punctuation can dominate as collocates, because they generally appear more frequently than for instance lexical nouns or adjectives, even though they do not necessarily offer significant information about the lexical units explored. For the z-score, a weakness can be that the collocates displayed through this measure are not representative enough for the overall use, in the sense that relatively "rare" collocates can achieve a high z-score value. Because of this, log-likelihood has been said to lead "to considerably improved statistical results", partly because it "allows comparisons to be made between the significance of the occurrences of both rare and common features" (McEnery, McEnery and Xiao 2006: 217). Figure 3.1 displays a screenshot of how log-likelihood is presented in the BNCweb interface, where the collocates of the lexical item *black pudding* are shown.

There are 136 different types in your collocation database for "[word = "black" %c] [word = "pudding" %c]". (Your query "[word = "black" %c] [word = "pudding" %c]" returned 30 matches in 21 different texts)

No.	Word	Total No. in whole BNC	As collocate	In No. of texts	Log-likelihood value
1	sausages	461	4	4	60.1052
2	sausage	504	4	3	59.1604
3	fried	405	2	2	27.675
4	bacon	1402	2	2	22.7461
5	breakfast	4219	2	2	18.314
6	eat	7259	2	2	16.1513
7	english	22867	2	2	11.658

Figure 3.1: Exemplification of log-likelihood in the BNC

However, the parameters will vary somewhat for the lemmas when creating the top-20 lists. Both COMMT and CAUSE are transitive verbs, and one would expect the most frequent evaluative lexical collocates to succeed the lemmas as noun phrases functioning as direct objects. Still, they can also occur in the passive voice, and here it is natural to presume that the collocates precede the lemma. In addition, one would also expect the collocates to be close in proximity, but it also important to account for structures where the lemma and the collocates are separated by articles, prepositions or other function words, and thus the "benchmark" span 4 left to 4 right (4L-4R) will be used for both lemmas.

Yet, as Bublitz argues, "not all collocations can be captured within such as narrow span" (Bublitz 1996: 14), which is exemplified by (11):

(11) the 'real' and serious *crimes* are those which are typically *committed* by this group (BNC: B17 660)

Here, *crimes* is outside of a 4L-4R span, but is still in a direct relationship with the node. Because of this, the span will to a certain extent be broadened when manually analysing the most frequent collocates' distribution over the separate meanings, to include instances such as this.

Further, as outlined by Bublitz (1996) in section 2.10.3, the evaluative collocates of HAPPEN usually precedes the lemma, and because of their structural complexity, often reside outside of a 4L-4R span. Thus, it would perhaps make sense to limit the span to the left of the node. However, HAPPEN is used both anaphorically and cataphorically, so it might not be fruitful to eliminate the collocates of the lemma when it is used in the latter sense. Therefore, the span 10L-10R will be used when compiling the top-20 lists for HAPPEN, and similar considerations as with COMMIT and CAUSE will be taken when analysing the distribution of these collocates over the separate meanings of the lemma.

In addition to this, to examine if any collocational tendencies emerge from the random sample alone, the concordance lines gathered from the BNC will be analysed through AntConc (Anthony 2019a), which will entail converting the concordances into plain-text files. AntConc is a freeware, corpus linguistic tool that permits the user to analyse any text sample in this format. It has a variety of functions, such as displaying the concordance lines in a keyword in context (KWIC) format and allowing for collocate searches, and is therefore well suited for the purposes of this corpus study (Anthony 2019b). Because the instances of the lemmas are already sorted in terms of meanings, there is no need for POS-tagging, and the advanced search for multiple items will be used to trigger all the paradigms of the verb

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lemmas. For example, the advanced search for COMMIT will include the following: *commit*, *commits*, *committed*, *committing*. To find collocational tendencies, the same search spans for the lemmas as in the BNC search will be used, with a criterion of minimum recurrence of two. Further, both the list according to "log-likelihood" and the list according to "frequency" will be examined, as well as the individual concordance lines.

The second step will be to examine colligation. The instances in the BNC are not tagged for separate meanings, therefore, this will be primarily be done through a manual analysis of the syntactical environment in which the separate meanings occur on the basis of the random sample. The primary focus area will also here be inside a span of 4L-4R, however, as with collocation, this will be broadened in certain cases in the manual analysis where noteworthy patterns extend beyond this span, an example being CAUSE in Meaning 3 (see section 3.2.2), which to a large extent is defined in syntactical terms (CAUSE + noun phrase + infinitive clause). Here one might expect the infinitive clause to occasionally reside outside of a 4L-4R span, when the noun phrase consists of multiple lexical items, as in (12) below:

(12)   light which has been reflected from it impinges on my retina and *causes* trains of nerve impulses *to travel along the visual pathways* (BNC: A0T 1265)

The third step will be to examine semantic preference, and to do so, a manual analysis of the concordance lines of 300 random instances of each lemma will be performed. This will entail to first sort the verbs into the separate lexical meanings, and then to analyse the semantic environment the respective meanings occur in. This will vary somewhat from lemma to lemma, in the sense that CAUSE only has one lexical meaning, but will be assigned separate meanings based on lexico-grammatical features, i.e. meaning in terms of synonyms and syntax, HAPPEN will be divided into two, and COMMIT into three, based on their lexicographic definitions and the evidence from previous research outlined in sections 2.10.1-2.10.3.

The fourth step will be to be to examine the lexical meanings in the context of semantic prosody, and to categorise them as negative, neutral or positive, to determine if they differ from meaning to meaning. This will, like in the previous step, entail analysing the semantic environment and categorising the instances in terms of the meaning categories they belong to, as well as drawing on the use of the recurring collocates and colligational patterns in the separate meanings.

3.2.2 Categorisation of the Separate Meanings of the Verb Lemmas

The separate meanings of the verb lemmas will in this thesis be understood according to the following definitions, based on the ones offered by the relevant literature in sections 2.10.1, 2.10.2, and 2.10.3 in addition to the definitions outlined by *Lexico* and the online *Cambridge English Dictionary*. In these, CAUSE as a verb only has one definition. However, in this thesis, the lemma will be separated into three meanings, as outlined in section 2.10.2.

COMMIT
Meaning 1: "Perpetrate or carry out (a mistake, crime, or immoral act)" (*Lexico*)
(13)   Seven men, all from Bristol, admitted conspiracy to *commit* arson (BNC: CEN 4834)
Meaning 2: "To promise or give your loyalty, time, or money to a particular principle, person, or plan of action" (CED)
(14)   Britain was indeed *committed* to entering a free and open European market in 1992 (BNC: A66 1534)
Meaning 3: "Transfer something to (a state or place where it can be kept or preserved)" (*Lexico*); "To send someone officially to [for example] prison or hospital" (CED)
(15)   The plaintiff was arrested in the courtroom, *committed* to prison, and then executed (BNC: J78 1387)

CAUSE
"Make (something, especially something bad) happen" (*Lexico*)
Meaning 1: Synonymous with "lead to" ("if an action of event leads to something, it causes that thing to happen or exist" (CED))
(16)   All types of drugs may *cause* mental handicap if taken during pregnancy (BNC: ANA 130)
Meaning 2: Synonymous with "bring about" ("to cause something to happen" (*Lexico*))
(17)   He makes mistakes and *causes* havoc (BNC: A05 1624)
Meaning 3: Synonymous with "make" ("to cause something" (CED))
(18)   A reduction of ozone would also *cause* more ultraviolet and visible radiation to reach the ground (BNC: GU5 496)

HAPPEN
Meaning 1: "Take place; occur" (*Lexico*)
(19)   Cantona has been making things *happen* for us since he arrived here (BNC: HJ3 2371)
Meaning 2: "To do or be by chance" (CED)
(20)   On a good day you might *happen* to come across a man taking his dog for exercise (BNC: ADR 901)

Since the BNC contains texts from the late 20th century and the online dictionaries are continuously updated, the possibility of a certain degree of time lag between them must be considered. To do so, the definitions outlined above will be compared with dictionaries that are more contemporary with the texts of the BNC, namely the complete second edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) from 1989, the fifth edition of the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (OALD) from 1995 and the first edition of the *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* (CIDE) from 1995 (later editions have been published under the name *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (CALD).

Interestingly, the definitions given by these can be said to overlap to a large extent for all three verb lemmas, although the OED mentions several obscure archaic forms in addition to those outlined above; these will not be expanded on due to their arguably limited relevance. For COMMIT, all three meanings are listed in the three dictionaries (with several additional archaic forms in the OED), and a negative quality is highlighted in Meaning 1 and 3, but not in Meaning 2. For this meaning, the definitions imply a more positive quality, and in the examples offered, the lemma generally occurs in positive or neutral contexts (OED 1989: 559-560; CIDE 1995: 270; OALD 1995: 228).

The three dictionaries also define CAUSE in a similar fashion, but the CIDE is the only one that specifically mentions a negative aspect: "the reason why something, esp. something bad, happens" (CIDE 1995: 206). However, even though the OED and the OALD do not highlight a negative aspect, nearly all the examples given in both the dictionaries feature the lexical item in a negative context. For the OED, these are gathered from historic texts, like "His moder .. *at cawsed moche sorowe" from Chev. Assigne 39 (circa 1430), "That .. oftentimes causeth heresyes & errours" from *Pilgrim Perf* (1526), and "A Drecnh of Wine .. the Patient's Death did cause" from Dryden (1697). This is not the case with the OALD, but the usage of the lexical item can be said to be similar, like in the examples "smoking can cause lung cancer", "What caused the explosion?", and "The cold weather caused the plants to die (OALD 1995: 177).

The situation is also quite similar with HAPPEN, where the definition of Meaning 1 above correlates with the ones given in all the dictionaries. No negative aspect is highlighted here either, but the historic examples given by the OED are predominantly negative, like "The greatest evil that can happen in this life" from Hobbes' *Leviath* (1651), "There happened between these Two Men a Dispute about a Matter of Love" from Steel's *Tatler* (1709), and "I will .. arrange that in the event of anything happening to us or to you, that your son shall be

suitably provided for" from Rider Haggard's *K. Solomon's Mines* (1885). The same can also be said of the examples from the CIDE (1995: 645). The usage expressed in the examples of the OALD is, however, less unambiguously negative (OALD 1995: 541).

This can be seen in relation to Whitsitt's point of refusing to "look up a word" (Whitistt 2005: 293), and his argument that one of the main issues with the theory of semantic transfer is that the historical evidence of it actually happening is often lacking (ibid: 296). It is also possible to claim that the correlation between the dictionaries suggests that the time lag between the BNC and the modern dictionaries is not decisive for the usage of the lemmas. Further, the historic examples given in the OED suggest that the negative aspects of CAUSE and HAPPEN in Meaning 1 are not due to a recent development that can be attributed to semantic transfer, and that the neutral definitions they have been given are primarily due to weaknesses in lexicography, perhaps especially in the case of CAUSE.

4   Corpus Study: Analysis and Results

This chapter conveys the results of the corpus study outlined in section 3.2.1 and presents an analysis of the usage of the three verb lemmas COMMIT, CAUSE, and HAPPEN, in particular following Bublitz' (1996) discussion of said verbs, but with a more pronounced emphasis on the significance of the separate meanings of these lemmas in relation to semantic prosody (see section 2.10). As described in the previous chapters, the primary material for the case studies consists of a random sample of 300 instances of each lemma within the BNC, and the study will make us of Sinclair's (1991, 1996a, 1996b, 1998) model of determining extended units of meaning in corpus linguistics, as outlined by Stubbs (2002), discussed in section 2.4.

In the study, the neutral term *evaluative meaning* will be used when discussing inherently positive or negative meanings expressed by the lemmas' collocates. Additionally, the term *meaning category*, following Xiao and McEnery (2006), will be used when categorising the instances of the lemmas in the random samples in terms of the evaluative context they occur in (i.e. negative, positive, or neutral), to represent the semantic prosodies of the separate units of meaning.

4.1 COMMIT

The lemma COMMIT as a verb occurs 6,635 times in the BNC with a normalised frequency of 67.49 instances per million words. For an indication of the general use of the lemma in this corpus, a list of the 20 most frequent collocates was made, giving a general overview of its collocations (presented in Table 4.1.1), where a span of 4L-4R was used and the collocates were sorted in terms of log-likelihood value (see section 3.2.1). Because of their limited relevance to evaluative meaning, the infinitive marker and preposition *to* is removed, as well as the grammatical verbs *are* and *had*, in addition to the pronoun *who*. In addition, a point worth making is that it is not possible to sort the collocates as lemmas, i.e. only specific forms appear in the list, so one has to take into consideration that if this were possible, the list might have been slightly different.

Table 4.1.1: Lexical Collocates of COMMIT in the BNC within a span of 4L-4R

Rank	Collocate	Raw collocate frequency	Log-likelihood value
1	Offence	419	3862.9234
2	Suicide	316	3237.0125
3	Crimes	243	2242.6599
4	Crime	272	1907.818
5	Offences	156	1268.0667
6	Themselves	252	1131.0927
7	Murder	132	791.5401
8	Himself	188	656.8025
9	Itself	156	554.8155
10	Atrocities	46	476.972
11	Government	196	430.9881
12	Acts	70	358.1306
13	Fully	81	336.1654
14	Trial	72	326.9761
15	Ourselves	63	314.2828
16	Act	106	271.1225
17	Breach	49	252.0249
18	Adultery	27	238.9319
19	Yourself	67	233.7145
20	Murders	31	231.2246

Of the 20 collocates in Table 4.1.1, 14 can function as nouns, and of those, *offence(s)*, *suicide*, *atrocities*, *government*, and *adultery* can only function as nouns. It is natural to assume that the remaining eight, namely *crime(s)*, *murder(s)*, *act(s)*, *trial*, and *breach* also act as nouns rather than verbs in this context, since they occur in close proximity to the transitive verb lemma COMMIT. It should also be noted that all of these nouns, with the exception of *government*, *act*, and perhaps *trial*, can be said to have an inherently negative evaluative meaning. Among the remaining six collocates, the five pronouns *themselves*, *himself*, *itself*, *ourselves*, and *yourself* appear, as well as the adverb *fully*. Based on this, one can argue that COMMIT frequently collocates with nouns expressing a negative evaluative meaning and personal pronouns which are perhaps associated with a more neutral evaluative meaning. Still, this only allows one to draw conclusions for the lemma in general, without regard for the individual meanings.

4.1.1 Collocation

To investigate how these are distributed over the separate meanings of the lemma within the random sample of 300, the instances first had to be categorised in terms of said meanings. The results of this are presented in Table 4.1.2 below:

Table 4.1.2: Distribution of COMMIT according to Meaning

Meaning	Number of occurrences	Percentage
Meaning 1: "Perpetrate or carry out (a mistake, crime, or immoral act)" (*Lexico*)	115	38.3 %
Meaning 2: "To promise or give your loyalty, time, or money to a particular principle" (CED)	175	58.3 %
Meaning 3: "Transfer something to (a state or place where it can be kept or preserved)" (*Lexico*); "To send someone officially to [for example] prison or hospital" (CED)	10	3.3 %

COMMIT in Meaning 2 occurs most frequently in the random sample, followed by Meaning 1, while Meaning 3 occurs least frequently by a considerable margin. It is also worth adding that the line between Meaning 2 and 3 is less clear-cut than between these and Meaning 1. In categorising the separate meanings, the line is drawn when someone is sent to a public institution, which in this context includes being sent to trial, court, prison and a sanatorium for alcoholics, exemplified in (21) below:

> (21)   the defendant, who had been *committed for trial* to the Crown Court on bail, was arrested for breach of a condition of his bail (BNC: FBU 6)

Table 4.1.3 shows how the collocates are distributed across the meanings, and subsequently in what type of semantic environment they occur in within the meanings. In the table, nouns in singular and plural form are counted as one. In addition, the occurrences of *act(s)* (functioning as noun) is divided into two meanings, because of their markedly different denotations. The first (referred to here as Meaning A) is understood as "a thing done; a deed" (*Lexico*), as in:

> (22)   Britain awaits judgement in respect of *acts committed* in Northern Ireland in 1971 (BNC: A69 929)

The second (referred to here as Meaning B) is understood as "a law or formal decision made by parliament or other group of people who make the laws for their country" (CED), as in:

> (23)   Thus the Single European *Act commits* the signatory countries to the objective of monetary union (BNC: HXL 109)

Instances of other meanings of *act* as a noun, for example "one of the main parts of a play or opera" (CED), do not occur within the random sample.

To examine the semantic environment the collocates occur in, the meanings themselves are also divided into a system of positive, negative and neutral according to evaluative meaning of collocates in Table 4.1.3.

Table 4.1.3: Distribution of Top-20 BNC Collocates across the Separate Meanings of COMMIT

Collocate	Total no. of occurrence	In Meaning 1			In Meaning 2			In Meaning 3		
		Neg	Pos	Neu	Neg	Pos	Neu	Neg	Pos	Neu
Offence(s)	33	32	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Crime(s)	29	29	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Government	20	3	-	-	-	8	9	-	-	-
Himself	16	1	-	-	2	4	8	1	-	-
Suicide	13	13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Themselves	10	2	-	-	-	6	2	-	-	-
Act(s) (Meaning A)	9	8	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Atrocities	7	7	-	-	-	-		-	-	-
Itself	6	1	-	-	2	1	2	-	-	-
Ourselves	6	-	-	-	-	2	4	-	-	-
Fully	5	-	-	-	-	3	2	-	-	-
Murder(s)/ murdering	5	4	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Trial	5	-	-	-	-	1	-	4	-	-
Act (Meaning B)	4	1	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	-
Breach	4	3	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Yourself	3	1	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-
Adultery	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	**176**	**106**	**0**	**0**	**4**	**27**	**30**	**9**	**0**	**0**

As is visible from Table 4.1.3, all of the 20 most frequent collocates of COMMIT as a verb occur in the random sample of 300 (cf. Table 4.1.1), accounting for 176 instances in the sample. One can also argue that there is a clear pattern in the distribution of said collocates, where nouns predominantly co-occur with COMMIT in Meaning 1, and personal pronouns predominantly co-occur with COMMIT in Meaning 2. However, there are some exceptions. *Government* most frequently occurs in close proximity to Meaning 2, while *trial* most frequently occurs in close proximity to COMMIT in Meaning 3. Further, *act* in Meaning B co-occurs most frequently with COMMIT in Meaning 2, but can otherwise be said to be quite evenly distributed over all three meanings of the lemma.

There is also quite a clear pattern in terms of the evaluative meaning expressed, in the sense that COMMIT in Meaning 1 and 3 exclusively co-occurs with negative collocates, while the situation is less clear-cut in Meaning 2. Here, the collocates usually occur in either positive or neutral environments with some exceptions, namely *itself* and *himself* which both feature twice in a negative environment.

On the basis of this, one can argue that the collocations are semantically more fixed for COMMIT in Meaning 1 than in Meaning 2 for two main reasons. Firstly, the collocates co-occur with the lemma much more frequently here, even though there are more instances of COMMIT in Meaning 2 in the random sample. Secondly, with the exception of *act(s)* (both

meanings), the collocates that predominantly appear in the company of Meaning 1, namely *offence(s)*, *crime(s)*, *suicide, atrocities*, *murder(s)/murdering*, *breach*, *adultery*, do not just appear in negative contexts, but can also be described as having an inherently negative evaluative meaning. The collocates that predominantly co-occur with COMMIT in Meaning 2, however, namely *government*, *himself*, *themselves*, *fully*, *itself*, *ourselves*, *Act* (Meaning B), *yourself*, can all be described as having a neutral evaluative meaning. For Meaning 3, one can argue that the collocation appears to be more fixed in the case of *trial*, which is the only collocate with more than one instances in this particular meaning (all of which in negative contexts), because it appears in four out of the only ten instances of this meaning in the random sample of 300.

For an exemplification of the usage of the individual collocates within the separate meanings; see Table 4.1.4 Here, the collocates are sorted by the meaning they most frequently occur in, as well as by the evaluative meaning they predominantly express.

Table 4.1.4 Exemplification of Predominant Use of COMMIT's most Frequent Collocates Sorted by Meanings

Meaning 1: "Perpetrate or carry out (a mistake, crime, or immoral act)" (*Lexico*)		
Collocate	**Predominant evaluative meaning**	**Example**
Offence(s)	Negative	"The *offences* are alleged to have been *committed* outside her home in Oxford on Sunday" (BNC: CBF 11907)
Crime(s)	Negative	"a man who has *committed* any of those *crimes* would have an incentive to kill the victim" (BNC: K5D 1354)
Suicide	Negative	"I mean my poor Neil tried to *commit suicide* in nineteen eighty nine" (BNC: KBF 3490)
Act(s)	Negative	"A profane woman, on whom he had *committed* profane *acts*" (BNC: CBN 1807)
Atrocities	Negative	"The conflict was peculiarly bloody with both sides responsible for *committing atrocities*" (BNC: EDP 952)
Murder(s)/murdering	Negative	"Since *murder*, assault, and theft are *committed* by working-class men, corporate executives see their own virtue reflected in the guilt of those beneath them" (BNC: CHL 838)
Breach	Negative	"a tenant should have little fear from a forfeiture clause unless it is seriously in financial difficulties or has *committed* a serious *breach* of covenant which cannot be rectified" (BNC: J79 404)
Adultery	Negative	"the married to *commit* what the world calls *adultery*" (BNC: BP4 715)
Meaning 2: "To promise or give your loyalty, time, or money to a particular principle" (CED)		
Collocate	**Predominant evaluative meaning**	**Example**
Government	Neutral/positive	**"**The Government is also *committed* to new road safety measures" (BNC: AK9 1416)
Himself	Neutral	"he found *himself committed* by Sir Alfred to building a Le Mans car powered by Rover" (BNC: 16X 1227)
Themselves	Positive	"Indian politicians to use the general election of May and June to *commit themselves* to ending seven years of "rampant human rights abuses" (BNC: HL7 1014)
Fully	Positive	"*fully committed* to cutting the use of fossil fuel by 20 per cent" (BNC: HKR 3038)
Itself	Neither	"The party *committed itself* to the defence of "democracy, national identify and sovereignty" (BNC: HLH 904)
Ourselves	Neutral	"We have never *committed ourselves* to meeting it, not matter how high the rate" (BNC: HHX 8646)
Act	Neither	"As a public-trust authority with central government funds *committed* to it through the Harbour *Act*, it needed a private bill" (BNC: A6L 576)
Yourself	Neither	"*Commit yourself* fully to participate in such activities" (BNC: EB1 1581
Meaning 3: "Transfer something to (a state or place where it can be kept or preserved)" (*Lexico*); "To send someone officially to [for example] prison or hospital" (CED)		
Collocate	**Predominant evaluative meaning**	**Example**
Trial	Negative	"A man charged with murdering his wife more than twenty years ago has been *committed* for *trial*" (BNC: K1P 1448)

In Table 4.1.4, most of the collocates have been ascribed a predominant evaluative meaning, but there are some exceptions, namely *itself*, *yourself*, *Act* (Meaning B), and *government*. The first three have been categorised as *neither*, because they are all quite evenly distributed between negative, positive, and neutral contexts, and thus cannot be said to primarily appear in one. *Itself* occurs thrice in negative contexts, once in a positive context, and twice in a neutral context, *Act* occurs twice in negative contexts, and once in both positive and neutral contexts, while *yourself* appears once in each type of context. Still, it should also be mentioned that because of the relatively low frequency of these collocates, the significance of the information they offer is somewhat limited. The same argument can also be used for *adultery*, which only occurs once, but this collocate is ascribed a predominant negative evaluative meaning because of its clear inherent negative meaning. However, the situation with *government* can be said to be different from that of *itself*, *yourself*, and *Act*, because even though it does not chiefly express one predominant evaluative meaning, but is rather evenly distributed between positive and neutral contexts, it occurs much more infrequently in negative contexts, and in Meaning 2 (where it most frequently collocates), it does not feature at all. Thus, it is categorised as neutral/positive.

There are only two collocates that have been categorised as positive, namely *themselves* and *fully*. The former can be described as being less clear-cut so than the latter, since it features in negative, positive, and neutral contexts, and is slightly more evenly distributed than *fully*. Still, in Meaning 2, where it most frequently appears, it has markedly more instances in positive than in neutral contexts, and does not appear in negative contexts. The usage of *themselves* is also markedly different in the two meanings. In Meaning 2, it exclusively succeeds the lemma directly and is again directly followed by a prepositional phrase, while in Meaning 1, it is not receiving COMMIT, but rather other verbs, and can thus be described as a more "accidental" collocate. Because of this, it is categorised as a positive collocate in meaning 2. *Fully*, however, only appears in Meaning 2, and does not appear in negative contexts, and in all of the instances it functions as an adverb modifying the verb lemma COMMIT.

Still, even though these collocates have been categorised as positive, they cannot be ascribed an inherently positive evaluative meaning. The first unambiguously positive collocate of COMMIT in the whole BNC regardless of meaning within a span of 4L-4R is *improving*, which is the 77th most frequent collocate (including function words), with a log-

likelihood value of 76.4546. In all of the 20 instances, it occurs in Meaning 2 and in positive contexts. Three of these also appear in the random sample, one being (24) below:

(24)   Services are *committed* to *improving* the environment and protecting health and property (BNC: HBG 310)

The collocational patterns based on the random sample alone, and which was extracted using AntConc, show very similar tendencies, where most of the frequent collocates of all three meanings of the lemma correlate with those from the BNC top-20 list (as presented in Table 4.1.1). Still, some additional collocates from these particular concordance lines can be mentioned. For Meaning 1, one could add *rape* and *robbery* (both appearing twice as collocates) as well as *alleged* (appears thrice) to the list. The former two can be said to have an inherently negative evaluative meaning, as in (25) below, while one might expect the latter to appear in negative contexts, as in (26) below:

(25)   D has chosen to *commit rape, robbery*, or another serious offence (BNC: ACJ 143)

(26)   a special war crimes squad is being set up to investigate *alleged* atrocities *committed* by Nazis living in Britain (BNC: KRT 689)

For Meaning 2, the patterns based on the sample are also remarkably similar to those based on the whole BNC, but here it is possible to add *Labour* (seven instances) and *party* (six instances) to the list, occurring together in five of the instances, and can both be categorised as neutral collocates:

(27)   The *Labour party* is not *committed* to any specific increase in health service expenditure (BNC: HHV 5962)

Although there are a limited number of instances of the lemma in Meaning 3, there appears to be some additional recurrent collocates worth mentioning, namely *prison* and *court*, which both appear twice in the span of 4L-4R, exemplified by (28) and (29) below. In addition, the latter collocate occurs four times outside of this span. In all the instances, the collocates also occur in negative contexts.

(28)   He was eventually arrested and *committed* to the Crown *Court* (BNC: FBJ 1140)

(29)   The judge found the defendants to have been in breach of the injunction and *committed* each to *prison* for four months (BNC: CB 46)

4.1.2 Colligation

The next step was to examine typical colligations to investigate possible recurring syntactic patterns surrounding the individual meanings of the verb lemma COMMIT, which was performed through an analysis of the random sample of 300. From the collocational evidence (Table 4.1.3), it is clear that nouns predominantly co-occur with COMMIT in Meaning 1, while personal pronouns predominantly co-occur with COMMIT in Meaning 2. In the sample, a clear pattern emerges, where COMMIT in Meaning 2 and 3 are much more commonly directly succeeded by a prepositional phrase than the lemma in Meaning 1. In Meaning 2, the lemma is followed by a preposition in 105 of the 175 instances (60 %), and of those 105 occurrences, the preposition in question is *to* in 95 of the instances, as in example (30) below:

> (30) Hugh was already *committed to* the marathon trip when he heard that the special care school had been burgled and had lost a vital computer and software (BNC: K2D 383)

In the remaining ten instances, the prepositions following the lemma are *by*, *in*, and *at*.

Similarly, in Meaning 3, the lemma is directly succeeded by a preposition in 80 % of the instances, as in example (31):

> (31) Classic Cinemas Ltd were *committed for* trial at the Old Bailey to determine whether the film itself was grossly indecent (BNC: BNE 324)

Still, it should be stressed that the material is somewhat limited, in the sense that there are only 10 occurrences of the lemma in this meaning in the sample.

The pattern for COMMIT in Meaning 1 is, however, markedly different. Here, the lemma is directly succeeded by a preposition in 34 out of the 115 instances (29.6 %), which is substantially less frequent than in Meaning 2 and 3. (32) below exemplifies this pattern:

> (32) A Truth Commission was established to investigate selected acts of violence *committed by* both sides since 1980 (BNC: CFG 375)

It is, however, most frequently succeeded by a noun phrase, 70 out of 115 (60.8 %), as in example (33) below, where the noun phrase consists of an article, an adjective, and a noun:

> (33) In Birmingham, Alabama you could be banished from the city for being seen talking to a Communist, which was held to be *committing a public nuisance* (BNC: ACS 910)

In the remaining instances, 11 out of 115 (9.6 %), the lemma in Meaning 1 is followed by either punctuation or a conjunction, and is used in the passive voice, as in (34) or the closely related non-finite past participle, as in (35) below:

(34)   the offence of driving without reasonable consideration may still be *committed.* (BNC: CE2 144)

(35)   the Home Office has collected its own crime figures through the British crime survey, which attempts to gauge the total number of crimes *committed rather* than those notified to the police (BNC: HHX 10391)

4.1.3 Semantic Preference

Stubbs (2002) discusses the semantic preference of COMMIT, and describes it as:

> One type of collocational pattern, then, is a strong probabilistic syntagmatic relation between a word and a small set of words, which themselves share a semantic feature. With COMMIT, the unit is the combination of the lemma, plus a noun phrase containing an abstract noun, which can in turn be characterized by a semantic descriptor such as "crimes and/or behaviour which is socially disapproved of".
> (Stubbs 2002: 64)

This definition can be said to fit the lemma in Meaning 1, because the instances in the random sample as well as the most frequent collocates are predominantly connected to crime or unsocial behaviour, namely *offence(s)*, *crime(s)*, *suicide*, *acts (*Meaning A), *atrocities*, *murder(s)/murdering*, *breach*, *adultery*, *robbery*, and *rape*, as one perhaps also would expect from *perpetrate*.

Still, this description does not fit COMMIT in all its uses, and it is especially not applicable to Meaning 2. Among the instances of this particular meaning in the random sample, it is perhaps somewhat surprising that there are only three examples of COMMIT referring to a relationship, as shown below in (36), (37), and (38):

(36)   Now he was alone he did not mind *committing* himself (BNC: AT4 1864)

(37)   I am *committed* to my partner (BNC: BND 861)

(38)   I was a port in the storm of a marriage to which, fundamentally, he was totally *committed* (BNC: CB8 1149)

The majority of the instances refer to a political entity, like a politician, a political party, a branch of government, a country, or another type of organisation that, to make use of the definition, promises to give their loyalty, time, or money to a particular principle, person, or plan of action, as in examples (39) and (40).

(39)   Aung San Suu Kyi remains courageously *committed* to the principles of
            freedom and democracy (BNC: K5D 5300)

(40)   All AEA Management is *committed* to regular communication with staff
            throughout this exercise (BNC: HAU 379)

In addition, within the sample, this meaning is shown to frequently co-occur with collocates such as *Government, Act* (Meaning B), *Labour,* and *party*, all of which are connected to the political system. Thus, one could argue that COMMIT in Meaning 2 has a sematic preference of organisations, companies, and perhaps especially political entities setting goals, promising to deliver on a plan of action, or pledging defend a principle, or perhaps simply a semantic preference of being devoted to someone or something.

The semantic preference of Meaning 3 can be described as being somewhat connected to that of Meaning 1, in the sense that it deals with crime or unsocial behaviour. However, it is more specifically related to the judiciary system, in that all of the instances refer to someone being sent by law to court, prison, trial or a sanatorium (in one instance). Because of this, one can argue that COMMIT in Meaning 3 has a semantic preference of someone being sent to a government institution by law as a result of crime or antisocial behaviour, or simply a semantic preference of (law-enforcing) institutions in the legal system.

4.1.4 Semantic Prosody

Issues in Categorisation of the Semantic Prosody of COMMIT

When categorising the occurrences of COMMIT in a system of negative, positive and neutral semantic prosody, there are some difficulties worth acknowledging. As discussed in section 2.5, there are different views on how to define semantic prosody, where some, such as Hoey (1997), argue for broader, more specific categories, and others, like Morley and Partington (2009), operate with a more gradable binary distinction. In this thesis, the choice has been made to classify the occurrences of the lemmas in question as either *positive*, *negative* or *neutral*, because this is arguably best suited for the corpus studies performed. Still, one has to acknowledge that there does exist a spectrum within the broad categories *positive* and *negative*, i.e. that certain things are more *positive* or more *negative* than others, and that a choice has to be made by when categorising. Example (41) and 42) from the sample exemplify this distinction.

50

(41)   Upstairs in a 200-capacity room, more monstrosities are being *committed* to the soul of rockn'n'roll (BNC: CHA 4416)

(42)   It formally accepted part of the moral responsibility for atrocities *committed* by the German people during the Second World War (BNC: HL1 3372)

Example (31) can be said to have a much clearer negative evaluative meaning than the former. However, to *committing monstrosities to the soul of rock'n'roll* is still negative, and will be categorised as such, even though the events *caused* in this instance are certainly less devastating than the *atrocities committed by the German people during the Second World War*. The challenge arises when the evaluative meaning of the specific occurrence is even less evident, and one has to decide where to draw the line between what is negative, neutral, and positive. Manual analysis is a human process, and it is therefore necessary to take into consideration that there might be a certain margin of error, in that individuals might interpret the same concordance lines differently.

Similarly, how one understands the evaluative meaning of some particular instances might depend on one's personal political, religious or ideological views. When the type of attitudinal meaning being expressed depends on the reader's political persuasion, for example regarding "austerity" or "Marxism", the cases are categorised as neutral, as in (43) below:

(43)   the Thatcher government in the early 1980s was *committed* to a tight control of money supply and set targets for the broad monetary base M0 (BNC: J15 1822)

However, if the subject matter discussed can be regarded as being universally positive or negative, for example "equality" or "racism", then the individual cases are categorised as either positive or negative depending on the meaning expressed. (44) below exemplifies this:

(44)   the leaders *committed* themselves to respecting "human rights and fundamental freedoms" (BNC: HL9 513)

Example (44) is categorised as positive, because both "human rights" and "fundamental freedoms" are considered to be universally positive, and therefore, committing oneself to respecting these, must also be so.

Certain occurrences can also be difficult to categorise when background information within a particular field outside of the reader's comprehension is required to understand the significance of what is being described. The example in (45) (also gathered from the random sample) is used to exemplify this:

(45)   If the medium of issue is magnetic then the indefinite maintenance of bit-perfect records *commits* us to an active program of periodic renewal and integrity checking (BNC: J0V 1506)

This instance of COMMIT occurs within the text domain *Informative: Applied science*, and to understand and categorise what is being expressed here, one needs a certain degree of previous knowledge within the filed. This occurrence, as well as similar cases, is categorised as neutral in this study.

In relation to this, it is also worth discussing negated cases, like the example (46) below gathered from the corpus:

(46)   are not already *committing* an offence (BNC: HHX 7007)

This offers a challenge in that one has to make a choice whether to view this as an expression of positive or a negative evaluative meaning. On the one hand, to *not commit an offence* is not *bad*, but on the other, what the phrase is expressing is *not* doing something *bad*. Therefore, this, as well as similar occurrences, is categorised as negative. Similarly, potential examples where a positive phrase is negated will be categorised as positive.

Semantic Prosody of the Separate Meanings of COMMIT

The final step in this study was to determine the semantic prosody of the separate meanings of the lemma COMMIT, and to do so, the individual instances in the random sample were categorised into the meaning categories negative, positive, and neutral through manual analysis of the concordance lines based on the evaluative meaning they contribute. The result of this analysis is shown in Table 4.1.5 below:

Table 4.1.5: Distribution of Separate Meanings of COMMIT across Meaning Categories

Meaning 1: "Perpetrate or carry out (a mistake, crime, or immoral act)" (*Lexico*)		
Meaning Category	**Number of occurrences**	**Percentage**
Negative	115	100 %
Positive	0	0 %
Neutral	0	0 %
Meaning 2: "To promise or give your loyalty, time, or money to a particular principle" (CED)		
Meaning Category	**Number of Occurrences**	**Percentage**
Negative	10	5.7%
Positive	81	46.3 %
Neutral	84	48 %
Meaning 3: "Transfer something to (a state or place where it can be kept or preserved)" (*Lexico*); "To send someone officially to [for example] prison or hospital" (CED)		
Meaning Category	**Number of Occurrences**	**Percentage**
Negative	10	100 %
Positive	0	0 %
Neutral	0	0 %

Based on the evidence from the random sample (Table 4.1.5), it is clear that there are significant differences between the separate meanings of the lemma COMMIT in terms of the meaning categories they occur in. COMMIT in Meaning 1 occurs exclusively in negative contexts. This also complies with the collocational evidence for this meaning, which is also overwhelmingly negative (Table 4.1.4.). On the basis of this, one can claim that the lemma in this meaning has a clear negative semantic prosody, exemplified by (47) below:

> (47)   Glouchestershire police say southern parts of the country are being plagued by
>   gangs from Bristol who use high powered cars to *commit* crime
>   (BNC: K1U 2384)

The situation is somewhat similar with Meaning 3, which also occurs exclusively in negative contexts. However, the sample only contains ten instances of the lemma in this meaning, which makes the material less representative for its general use than for Meaning 1. Because of this, the collocational evidence is not as substantial as that of Meaning 1 either. However, there are multiple examples of negative collocates despite the low frequency of this meaning, which suggests a pattern of co-occurring with lexical items conveying a negative evaluative meaning. Thus, based on the somewhat limited available material, one can claim that

COMMIT in Meaning 3 appears to have negative semantic prosody, exemplified by (48) below:

> (48)   The judge found the defendants to have been in breach of the injunction and *committed* each to prison for four months (BNC: FCB 46)

COMMIT in Meaning 2 is markedly different from Meaning 1 and 3 in terms of collocation, colligation, semantic preference, and which meaning categories it most frequently occurs in. In the random sample, it has very few instances in negative contexts, but is quite evenly distributed between positive and neutral contexts. In addition, as discussed, there are certain challenges related to the categorisation of the individual occurrences. Because the evaluative meaning expressed in several of the individual instances in random sample are dependent on the readers personal opinions and beliefs, in that they often deal with politics, they have been categorised as neutral. However, the collocational evidence for the lemma in this particular meaning points in the same direction as the individual concordance lines from the sample, in the sense that they appear to convey either a neutral or positive evaluative meaning. Still, because of the evenness of the distribution between these meaning categories, one cannot conclude that there is a particular semantic prosody for this meaning of the lemma on the basis of the available material, but it is possible to claim that COMMIT in Meaning 2 most frequently occurs in neutral or positive contexts, as in (49) and (50) below, where the former exemplifies a neutral context and the latter exemplifies a positive context:

> (49)   Jaques Delors, the resent of the EC commission, would not *commit* Britain to adopt a European currency until the House of Commons wanted to (BNC: ABG 1848)

> (50)   he *committed* himself to promoting democracy (BNC: HLM 341)

4.2 CAUSE

CAUSE as a verb occurs 20,250 times in the BNC with a normalised frequency of 205.97 instances per million words. For a general overview of its collocation, a top-20 list of the most frequent collocates of this lemma within the corpus was made (presented in Table 4.2.1). Like in the similar list created for COMMIT (section 4.1.), the span 4L-4R was used and the collocates were sorted in terms of log-likelihood value (see section 3.2.1). The function words *by*, *which*, and *to*, as well as the modal verbs *can* and *may* have been removed from the list because of their arguably limited relevance to evaluative meaning as understood here.

Table 4.2.1: Lexical Collocates of CAUSE in the BNC within a span of 4L-4R

Rank	Collocate	Raw collocate frequency	Log-likelihood value
1	Damage	1172	8723.0011
2	Problems	1046	5002.883
3	Harm	331	2316.0237
4	Injury	282	1609.0064
5	Trouble	329	1551.4936
6	Bodily	172	1381.943
7	Death	375	1277.7575
8	Distress	169	1186.6759
9	Concern	258	1019.0038
10	Severe	191	944.9703
11	Pain	215	931.8796
12	Disruption	124	921.9172
13	Loss	249	914.267
14	Confusion	161	897.3469
15	Grievous	95	886.9335
16	Difficulties	193	809.3422
17	Serious	227	771.6945
18	Deaths	130	707.7397
19	Disease	190	692.8116
20	Pollution	146	674.5967

Of the 20 collocates in Table 4.2.1, 16 can function as nouns, and of those, ten (*problems*, *injury*, *death*, *deaths, disruption*, *loss*, *confusion*, *difficulties*, *disease*, and *pollution*) can only function as nouns. For the remaining six (*damage*, *harm*, *trouble*, *distress*, *concern*, *pain*), it is natural to assume that they also do so in this context, since they occur in close proximity to the verb CAUSE; all 16 nouns also have an evidently negative evaluative meaning. Of the last four collocates, three are adjectives, namely *severe*, *grievous*, and *serious*, while the last collocation - *bodily* - can occur as both and adjective and an adverb. In this context, all can be assumed to act together with a noun that usually has a negative evaluative meaning, as in:

(51)   A footballer has denied *causing grievous bodily harm* after another player's jaw was broken in a match (BNC: K97 11009)

(52)   Acid rain from the burning oil wells of Kuwait could *cause severe environmental damage* to the Himalayan mountains and the valleys of Jammu (BNC: J2W 554)

One can also add that apart from the function words that were removed, no non-negative collocates appear on the list. The first unambiguously positive collocate of CAUSE within this span, *amusement*, appears on the list as late as rank 283 (including function words), with a log-likelihood value of 56.855. Higher up on the list there are, however, examples of more

ambiguously positive collocates, like *great* as number 57, with a log-likelihood value of 322.1431, and *sensation* as number 61, with a log likelihood value 301.8286. Still, these can occur as both positive and negative collocates, a telling example of the latter being *the Great War*. By looking at the concordance lines of the first 50 instances of *great*, it is clear that the adjective predominantly modifies nouns with negative evaluative meaning, which is the case in 46 out of 50 instances, as in:

(53)　　　　Israel, when they are made God's holy people, has *caused great difficulty* for Jewish religious feminists (BNC: ACL 198)

In the remaining four instances, it modifies a noun with a positive evaluative meaning, and, in two of these occurrences, this noun happens to be *amusement*, as in:

(54)　　　　An incident at the fair in 1920 always *caused* the family *great amusement* (BNC: B22 1361)

The situation is, however, different with *sensation*, which can be viewed as a positive collocate to a larger extent, in the sense that it occurs in positive contexts in 34 out of the 50 first instances, as in:

(55)　　　　The little Third Division side *caused a sensation* at Anfield a fortnight ago by storming into a 3-0 lead in the first leg of their Coca-Cola Cup tie (BNC: CH3 7487)

In the remaining 16 instances, it occurs as a neutral collocate 6 times, and as a negative collocate 10 times, as in the following example:

(56)　　　　her heart still pounding in her chest and a tightening *sensation* in her throat *causing* her to gulp (BNC: EA5 2371)

On the basis of the observations above it is reasonable to argue that CAUSE as a verb frequently collocates with nouns with a negative connotational meaning in the BNC. Still, this primarily applies to the lemma in general.

4.2.1   Collocation

To investigate how these are distributed over the separate meanings of CAUSE within the random sample of 300, the instances first had to be categorised in terms of said meanings, as presented in Table 4.2.2 below. However, eight of the instances within the sample were wrongly tagged and have been removed. Four of these were nouns from written texts, as in

(57) below, and the remaining four were abbreviations of the conjunction *because* from spoken texts, as in (58) below:

(57) And I have no doubt they have set that *cause* back further than they ever know (BNC: A8K 1164)

(58) You know what I mean, *cause* you know (BNC: KP3 2752)

The remaining 292 instances have been sorted into three meanings, as outlined in sections 2.10.2 and 3.2.2.

Table 4.2.2: Distribution of CAUSE according to meaning

Meaning	Number of occurrences	Percentage
Meaning 1: Synonymous with "lead to"	106	36.3 %
Meaning 2: Synonymous with "bring about"	151	51.7 %
Meaning 3: Synonymous with "make"	35	12 %

Meaning 2 appears to be the most common use of the lemma, followed by Meaning 1, while Meaning 3 occurs most infrequently in the sample. The borders between the meanings can in certain instances be somewhat inexplicit (see section 2.10.2), but the line is drawn for Meaning 1 when there is an inanimate causer and when the relationship between cause and effect is more gradual, as in (59) below, for Meaning 2 when there is an animate causer and a more direct relation between cause and effect, as in (60) below, and for Meaning 3 when the lemma occurs in a syntactical pattern of CAUSE + noun phrase + infinitive clause, as in (61) below:

(59) stress can also *cause* temporary shedding (BNC: CB8 1400)

(60) Thieves *caused* damage estimated at £50 when they threw a paving stone through a window at Kwik Save store (BNC: K4W 5131)

(61) The latter may well *cause* the amount and the calibre of the load to alter (BNC: GV0 1126)

The top-20 collocates presented in Table 4.2.1 were then sorted in terms of their distribution across the identified meanings in the BNC sample, to investigate the collocation of the separate meanings of CAUSE. The results are presented in Table 4.2.3 below, where both the singular and plural forms of nouns have been included where both occur:

Table 4.2.3: Distribution of Top-20 BNC Collocates across the Separate Meanings of CAUSE

Collocate	Total no. of occurrences	In Meaning 1			In Meaning 2			In Meaning 3		
		Neg	Pos	Neu	Neg	Pos	Neu	Neg	Pos	Neu
Problem(s)	31	17	-	-	13	-	-	1	-	-
Damage(s)	28	7	-	-	21	-	-	-	-	-
Injury/injuries	20	4	-	-	16	-	-	-	-	-
Trouble(s)	13	3	-	-	10	-	-	-	-	-
Loss(es)	11	3	-	-	8	-	-	-	-	-
Serious	9	3	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-
Death(s)	8	2	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-
Difficulty/difficulties	6	4	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
Pain	6	3	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-
Severe	6	3	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-
Concern(s)	4	2	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-
Confusion	4	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
Distress	4	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Harm	4	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-
Disease	3	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bodily	2	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
Disruption	2	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Grievous	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Pollution	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Total	**163**	**61**	**0**	**0**	**100**	**0**	**0**	**2**	**0**	**0**

From the information offered in Table 4.2.3, it is clear that all of the collocates co-occur most frequently in Meaning 1 and Meaning 2 in the random sample, as one would expect, as Meaning 3 is significantly less frequent in the sample than the two former meanings. However, while Meaning 3 constitutes 12 % of the instances, only 1.2 % of the general top-20 collocates co-occur with this meaning. By comparison, Meaning 1 constitutes 36.3 % of the instances and 37.9 % of the general top-20 collocates co-occur with this meaning, while Meaning 2 constitutes 51.7 % of the instances and 60.9 % of the collocates co-occur with this meaning. Because of this, the collocations appear to be significantly less recurrent in Meaning 3 than in the former two meanings, although this might also be due to the more limited number of instances of the lemma in this meaning available from the sample.

In addition, in all of the instances the collocates are negative in nature and express a negative evaluative meaning. Table 4.2.4 exemplifies the predominant usage of the collocates, sorted by the meaning they most frequently occur in. Here, the frequency of the meanings in the sample have been taken into account, meaning that the collocates' occurrences are weighed against the total frequency of the specific meanings they appear in. As an example, *pain* has three occurrences in both Meaning 1 and 2. However, it has a higher normalised frequency in

Meaning 1, since this meaning only constitutes 36.3 % of the instances in the sample, while Meaning 2 constitutes 51.7 %. Thus, it is sorted under Meaning 1.

Table 4.2.4: Exemplification of Predominant Use of CAUSE's most Frequent Collocates Sorted by Meanings

Meaning 1	
Collocate	Example
Problem(s)	"An issue of the Adverse Drug Reaction Bulletin on the subject of the effects of nicotine has suggested that nicotine gum could *cause* many of the health *problems* associated with cigarettes" (BNC: EC0 63)
Difficulty/difficulties	"Those stones with a diameter of less than 1 cm can almost always be removed, whereas those more than 1.5 cm diameter often *cause difficulties*" (BNC: HWS 3007)
Pain	"Unemployment is remarkably steady at 7 %; enough to *cause* localised *pain*, but not enough to save Mr Clinton's $16 billion stimulus package" (BNC: CRA 1096)
Severe	"Otherwise this will *cause* quite *severe* pain and bleeding" (BNC: CJE 811)
Confusion	"This could *cause* some *confusion*" (BNC: HAC 7363)
Distress	"It is situational stress which is probably the most significant factor in those many episodes which fall short of systematic and gross abuse but which nevertheless *cause* great *distress*" (BNC: CFE 500)
Disease	"Let us first consider the other factors that can *cause* heart *disease*" (BNC: BN5 40)
Disruption	"The Ofgas plan could cost £3 billion over ten years and *cause* widespread *disruption* to the business during the transition period" (BNC: K5H 816)
Meaning 2	
Collocate	Example
Damage(s)	"The Iraquis had also carried out widespread looting and had *caused* serious *damage* to the county's infrastructure" (BNC: HL4 5416)
Injury/injuries	"Failure to do so is likely to *cause injury*" (BNC: BN5 1046)
Trouble(s)	"You have *caused* enough *trouble*" (BNC: HTX 3990)
Loss(es)	"No cover is provided for *loss* or damage *caused* by riots or civil commotion" (BNC: HB5 1076)
Serious	"Which had *caused* such social distress and *serious* unrest in the late-Elizabethan and early-Stuart period" (BNC: HY9 1406)
Death(s)	"A man has been charged with *causing death* by reckless driving" (BNC: K4W 188)
Harm	"While the notion of 'deliberately *causing harm'* may be central to a culture's concept of aggression" (BNC: CJ1 878)
Bodily	"Sharpe, of Jarrow, denied assault *causing* actual *bodily* harm outside The Venue pub in South Shields in July" (BNC: CEN 4073)
Grievous	"he intended to *cause grievous* bodily harm" (BNC: ACJ 100)
Pollution	"Heavy vehicles are arriving from 5.30am, *causing* fumes, *pollution* and noise" (BNC: K4W 11076)
Meaning 3	
Collocate	Example
Concern(s)	"the note of *concern* in his voice *causing* fresh tears to gather in Isabel's eyes" (BNC: HH1 2972)

As mentioned in section 4.2, most of the lemma's collocates in the BNC are nouns with an inherently negative evaluative meaning. The remaining four collocates are adjectives and/or adverbs, and to expand slightly on these, they exclusively modify nouns with negative evaluative meaning. *Severe* modifies *damage* and *problems* (as in the example in Table 4.2.4 above) twice, as well as *(mental) handicap* and *pain* once. Similarly, *serious* modifies *injury* in five of the occurrences, in addition to *trouble*, *damage*, *(personal) harm*, and *unrest* once.

Further, both *bodily* and *grievous* modify *harm* in all of their shared total of three occurrences, as in the examples above.

Since all the 20 most frequent lexical collocates appear in the concordance lines of the 300 instances, one can argue that the random sample is representative of the overall use of the lemma CAUSE, and more specifically, for the use of the lemma in Meaning 1 and 2. Based on this, one can modify the earlier claim, and argue that CAUSE as a verb in Meaning 1 and 2 frequently co-occur with lexical items expressing a negative evaluative meaning. For Meaning 3, however, one cannot make the same claim, because the collocational evidence is lacking. There are two occurrences of the collocates in this meaning, namely *problem* and *concern*, but even though the latter of these does occur within a 4L-4R span, the collocate is not in connection to the node.

There does not appear to be much difference between the collocates occurring most frequently in Meaning 1 and in Meaning 2, in the sense that they generally express a negative meaning, but it is perhaps possible to argue that some of the collocates in Meaning 1, for example *problem(s), difficulty/difficulties, confusion, distress, and disease* indicate a less direct consequence of actions than some of the collocates of Meaning 2, for example *damage(s)*, *injury/injuries*, and *death(s)*.

By examining the random sample through AntConc, the tendencies appear to be the same, where the most frequent collocates from the whole BNC dominate Meaning 1 and 2. However, for the former, it can be worth mentioning an additional collocate, namely *cancer*, which occurs twice in the random sample, as in (62) and (63) below. This particular collocate can be said to add weight to the argument of a less direct relationship between cause and effect for Meaning 1:

(62)   the high percentage of compounds found to *cause cancer* (BNC: B7C 311)

(63)   was claimed by the Natural Resource Defence Council (NRDC) to *cause cancer* (BNC: J2Y 14)

Similarly, for Meaning 2, *explosion* occurs twice as a collocate in the sample, as in (64) below, featuring a more direct relationship between cause and effect:

(64)   This *caused* a violent *explosion* resulting in extensive damage (BNC: HXW 240)

For Meaning 3, there does not appear to be any recurring collocates expressing particular evaluative meanings on the basis of the random sample. Apart from function words, the only lexical items that occur more than once are *them* (four instances) and *us* (two instances), exemplified by (65) and (66) below, where all but one instance (of *them*) occur in neutral or positive contexts.

(65)   Milanese Allessandro Traina, who *causes us* to mediate on the notion of time (BNC: EBU 2617)

(66)   He it was who rescued a number of precious unpublished test recordings from private collections, and *causes them* to be made available for the first time (BNC: ED6 3050)

4.2.2 Colligation

To examine colligation, the instances of the separate meanings in the random sample of 300 were analysed to investigate if they occur in recurring syntactic patterns. CAUSE as a verb in Meaning 3 was mainly defined by syntax, and thus it is exclusively followed by an infinitive clause, either directly or with a noun phrase occurring in between the node and the clause. However, it is worth noting that there is only one occurrence of the lemma in this meaning occurring in the pattern CAUSE + infinitive clause (example (67) below), a passive variant of the pattern CAUSE + noun phrase + infinitive clause, which all the 34 remaining instances occur in, exemplified by (68):

(67)   And these men are not *caused to die* by the fact that all men die (BNC: F9K 562)

(68)   The latter may well *cause the amount and the calibre of the load to alter* (BNC: GV0 11)

One would expect there to be more overlap between the syntactic environment Meaning 1 and Meaning 2 most commonly occur in, and this appears to be the case to a certain extent. Still, there are also some key differences between the colligational patterns of these meanings. CAUSE in Meaning 1 in the sample is always in the active voice and directly followed by a noun phrase, as in (69) below, and this is also the case in 85 out of the 151 instances of CAUSE in Meaning 2, as in (70) below.

(69)   odours are notoriously subjective in nature affecting some individuals and not others and *causing a variety of symptoms* (BNC: G06 115)

(70)   I didn't like to *cause trouble* (BNC: B2D 147)

In the remaining 66 instances of Meaning 2, however, CAUSE does not follow this pattern. In 60 of these, it is directly succeeded by a preposition, and in 49 of these occurrences the preposition in question is *by*. Within these, the lemma occurs in the non-finite "-ed" form in 31 of the instances (71), and in the long passive in 18 of the instances (72). In the remaining six instances, it is followed by either punctuation or a conjunction, as (73) below exemplifies.

(71)   his successors created a single English kingdom out of the ruins *caused by* the Danish invasion of the ninth century (BMS 2496)

(72)   Medical complications are common and are *caused by* starvation or weight reduction habits (BNC: GX2 407)

(73)   This cadaver will call for more extensive 'treatment' by the embalmer, due partly to the delay it *causes and* partly because what is perceived by him to be often unwarranted mutilation (BNC: CES 2000)

4.2.3 Semantic Preference

The next step was to examine the lemma's semantic preference, based on the collocational and colligational evidence as well as the individual concordance lines. Although the collocational patterns suggest that CAUSE in Meaning 1 and 2 occur in predominantly negative contexts, there are still some issues connected to formulating a specific semantic preference for these separate meanings of the lemma. For example, one can compare it to Sinclair's (1996b) discussion of *naked eye* and his claim of it having a semantic preference for "visibility" (see section 2.4), which differs, in that the concordance lines of the random sample of CAUSE in these meanings do not offer similar unambiguously semantic patterns as those of *naked eye*. This is both due to the wide span in subject matter, and to the wide span within the negative meaning category. To exemplify this, examples (74) and (75) below from the random sample can be used, both within Meaning 2.

(74)   We didn't want to *cause* embarrassment (BNC: ACM 1141)

(75)   the emotional, psychological, and physical damage *caused* by child sexual abuse (BNC: FT6 701)

Both occur in negative contexts, but to a very different degree. To *cause embarrassment* is not positive, but seems very trivial in comparison to the latter, and the two can perhaps be argued to be at opposite ends of the spectrum. Further, it is difficult to find another common denominator for the two, apart from their negative evaluative meaning. Because of this, one can perhaps view the lemma in these meanings in relation to examples of less specific

semantic preferences, like Xiao and McEnery's discussion of *price/cost*, which they argue "demonstrate a semantic preference for items indicating unpleasantness" (Xiao and McEnery 2006: 122) when it used in a metaphorical sense, or Partington's discussion of *absolutely*, which, in his words, "displays a distinct semantic preference in collocating with items which have a strong or superlative sense" (Partington 2004a: 146). Thus, it does perhaps make more sense to make a broader description, and argue that CAUSE in Meaning 1 and 2 has a semantic preference of either expressing the result of, or expressing the decisive factor in the occurrence of something negative, or even more generally, a semantic preference of negative evaluation. However, to differentiate between the two, reference can again be made to the distinctions offered by Johns (1997) in relation to LEAD TO and BRING ABOUT (see section 2.10.2), namely that the relationship between cause and effect appears to be more direct in Meaning 2 than in Meaning 1, and that animate causers do not occur in Meaning 1. Thus, it is possible to claim that CAUSE in Meaning 1 has a semantic preference of something to lead to something negative, while Meaning 2 has a semantic preference of someone or something to bring about a negative occurrence or change. Further, on basis of the random sample, Meaning 1 appears to have a tendency to occur more frequently in medical semantic environments, co-occurring with lexical items such as *disease* and *cancer* (see section 4.2.1), as well as (*mental*) *handicap*, and *AIDS*:

(76)   it can *cause* metabolic disorders resulting in mental handicap (BNC: ANA 135)

(77)   what *causes* AIDS? The infections and cancers which characterise AIDS are a late consequence of damage to the immune system (BNC: CJ9 1297)

This does not appear to be the case with Meaning 2. From the occurrences of the random sample, this meaning seems to have a tendency of appearing in semantic contexts where the occurrences have more immediate and disastrous consequences, often co-occurring with lexical items such as d*amage, trouble, death*, and *explosion* (see section 4.2.1), in addition to *uproar, war,* and *accident*:

(78)   Any accident, injury, loss or damage which is *caused* by or is a result of either: earthquake; or riot or civil commotion (BNC: HB5 1486)

The descriptions above do not seem to be as applicable to CAUSE in Meaning 3, and the negative quality expressed in the former two meanings does not appear to be as present in this. For this meaning, one can perhaps rather ascribe a semantic preference of making something happen or making somebody do something. Moreover, although the collocational evidence is somewhat lacking, with only *us* and *them* occurring more than once in the sample,

this meaning does appear to have a tendency to occur in semantic environments where more technical and scientific subject matters are being discussed, as in (79), (80) and (81) below:

(79)　　　the presence of thin, base-deficient soils and drift cover, *causes* surface water to be highly susceptible to acidification in the region (BNC: CFW 873)

(80)　　　it *causes* an electric current to sound the alarm (BNC: FUU 592)

(81)　　　Use light even strokes so as not to *cause* bubbles to form in the film (BNC: A16 199)

Further, the preference for this semantic field appears to be limited to this particular meaning, as it does not occur in Meaning 1 and 2.

4.2.4 Semantic Prosody

The final step in this study was to determine the semantic prosody of the separate meanings of the lemma CAUSE, and to do so, the individual instances in the random sample were categorised into meaning categories through manual analysis of the concordance lines based on the evaluative meaning they convey. Here, the same choices regarding technical information, negated cases, and occurrences where the evaluative meaning is dependent on the reader's political persuasion as in the previous study (see section 4.1.4). The results of this analysis are shown in Table 4.2.5 below. Since eight of the instances in the random sample were in fact either abbreviations of the conjunction *because* or nouns which had been wrongly tagged as verbs, the information is based on the remaining 292 occurrences.

Table 4.2.5 Distribution of Separate Meanings of CAUSE across Meaning Categories

Meaning 1: Synonymous with "lead to"		
Meaning category	**Number of occurrences**	**Percentage**
Negative	91	86.7 %
Positive	1	0.9 %
Neutral	13	12.4 %
Meaning 2: Synonymous with "bring about"		
Meaning category	**Number of occurrences**	**Percentage**
Negative	135	89.4 %
Positive	4	2.7 %
Neutral	12	7.9 %
Meaning 3: Synonymous with "make"		
Meaning category	**Number of occurrences**	**Percentage**
Negative	23	63.9 %
Positive	3	8.3 %
Neutral	10	27.8 %

It is clear from the information in Table 4.2.5 that there does appear to be a marked difference

between CAUSE in Meaning 1 and 2 and CAUSE in Meaning 3, in the sense that the distribution of the former two within the separate meaning categories is very similar, while the third meaning stands out. Based on both the individual concordance lines, the collocational evidence and their semantic preference, CAUSE in Meaning 1 and 2 can be ascribed a negative semantic prosody, because they predominantly occur in negative contexts with negative collocates. One can also point out that this goes against Hunston's claim that the negative quality of CAUSE is restricted to contexts with animate causers (Hunston 2007: 263 (see section 2.9), in that the lemma in Meaning 1 exclusively features inanimate causers.

There are, however, five examples from the sample where the lemma in these meanings are used in positive contexts. Still, it is worth noting that three of these (one in Meaning 1 and two in Meaning 2) feature the construction *cause a sensation*, as in example (82) from Meaning 2 below:

(82)   He *caused a sensation* at Maisons-Laffitte in April when making the most of a falsely-run race and heavy ground to beat Zafonic a short head
(BNC K4C 370)

One could perhaps see this in relation to Partington's (2004a) discussion of *utterly*, which he argues is used with positive adjectives, even though it is considered to convey a negative evaluative meaning, because it creates a particular rhetorical effect: "the existence of *utterly pleasant* demonstrates again how tendencies are not inviolable and can be exploited by speakers for particular effects" (Partington 2004a: 147). Thus, this might also be the case with *cause a sensation*, i.e. that this usage of two lexical items with contrasting evaluative meanings is chosen for rhetorical purposes.

The situation is somewhat different for CAUSE in Meaning 3. It also occurs most frequently in negative contexts, but to a lesser degree than in Meaning 1 and 2. In addition, the collocational evidence for this meaning is also somewhat lacking, because no clear patterns of either recurring negative or positive collocates have emerged, and the negative quality of its semantic preference appears to be less prominent. Thus, CAUSE in Meaning 3 cannot be ascribed a negative semantic prosody to the same extent as Meaning 1 and 2.

4.3 HAPPEN

The lemma HAPPEN as a verb occurs 31,171 times in the BNC with a normalised frequency of 317.06 per million words. As for the previous verb lemmas, a list of the 20 most frequent

collocates was produced, giving a general overview of the collocations it enters into in the BNC (presented in Table 4.3.1), and the collocates have been sorted in terms of log-likelihood value (see section 3.2.1). However, unlike in the case of the other two lemmas, the span 10L-10R was implemented because of the frequent anaphoric and cataphoric use of the lemma (see section 2.10.1). Further, contrary to the ones produced for COMMIT and CAUSE, no changes were made to the list due to the majority of function and non-lexical words.

Table 4.3.1: Lexical Collocates of HAPPEN in the BNC within a span of 10L-10R

Rank	Collocate	Raw collocate frequency	Log-likelihood value
1	What	13263	47812.8365
2	It	9049	4959.0884
3	That	8851	4043.9773
4	To	16320	3929.9056
5	Something	1373	3143.9734
6	If	3005	2870.3796
7	Things	1144	2660.4998
8	Nothing	1000	2507.7798
9	?	3714	2503.9092
10	When	2524	2461.7459
11	This	4047	2384.615
12	Had	3518	1812.872
13	Thing	832	1743.7683
14	Whatever	546	1688.5045
15	n't	2773	1574.8014
16	Know	1479	1512.2066
17	Happen	425	1440.6444
18	Anything	602	1145.9177
19	Would	2048	1046.4324
20	Accident	305	1014.9375

This list indicates that the lemma as a verb predominantly co-occurs with lexical items that do not express a particular evaluative meaning. Of the 20 most frequent collocates, only *accident* can be said to have a clear negative evaluative meaning, and there are no examples of positive collocates. To expand by investigating the 100 most frequent collocates, only two more negative collocates appear, namely *incident*, which is the 51st most frequent collocate, with a log-likelihood value of 386.8936 and *accidents*, which is the 52nd most frequent collocate with a log-likelihood of 386.0147, while there is only one example of a collocate that can be said to express a positive evaluative meaning, namely *miracle*, at rank 90, with a log-likelihood value of 130.9854.

4.3.1 Collocation

Table 4.3.2 shows how the collocates from the top-20 list are distributed over the separate meanings of the lemma within the random sample of 300.

Table 4.3.2 Distribution of HAPPEN over Separate Meanings

Meaning	Number of occurrences	Percentage
Meaning 1: "Take place; occur" (*Lexico*)	272	90.7 %
Meaning 2: "To do or be by chance" (CED)	28	9.3 %

These result show, as one might have expected, that HAPPEN in Meaning 1, exemplified by (83) below, is significantly more frequent in the random sample than Meaning 2, exemplified by (84) below:

(83) So hopefully that's going to stop this sort of thing *happening* in the future (BNC: FLY 617)

(84) I just *happened* to have a photograph (BNC: K1R 3567)

Although the majority of the collocates in the top-20 list do not express a particular evaluative meaning, it is still worth analysing their distribution according to the meaning of the lemma and the semantic environment they occur in, to examine if certain patterns emerge. Table 4.3.3. gives an overview of this as well as the two meanings, based on the collocates' occurrences within the sample. Here, some alterations have been made, namely that the question mark (*?*), the preposition and infinitive maker *to*, and the negator *n't* (the short form of *not*) have been removed from the list, since they are arguably more relevant in the context of colligation.

Table 4.3.3 Distribution of Top-20 BNC Collocates across the Separate Meanings of HAPPEN

Collocate	Total no. of occurrences	In Meaning 1			In Meaning 2		
		Neg	Pos	Neu	Neg	Pos	Neu
What	112	65	10	35	-	1	1
It	92	55	16	15	1	3	2
That	90	38	25	15	1	4	7
This	35	24	3	8	-	-	-
Had	30	24	3	1	-	-	2
If	27	17	3	5	-	2	-
Know	25	14	3	4	-	2	2
Something	21	13	3	4	-	-	1
Thing(s)	19	8	8	3	-	-	-
When	19	11	4	3	1	-	-
Happen(s)/happening	15	9	2	4	-	-	-
Nothing	13	6	2	5	-	-	-
Would	12	5	5	1	-	-	1
Whatever	9	6	-	1	-	-	2
Accident(s)	3	2	-	-	1	-	-
Anything	3	2	-	1	-	-	-
Total	**525**	**299**	**87**	**105**	**4**	**12**	**18**

As is visible from Table 4.3.3, all of the most frequent collocates of HAPPEN as a verb from the BNC occur in the random sample of 300 (cf. Table 4.3.1). Several of these are highly recurrent and often co-occur with other collocates, as in (85).

(85)   *This* is *what had happened* in 1931 *when* Ramsay MacDonald's Labour
         government had attempted a very small expansion of spending
         (BNC: FA0 122)

The clearest pattern that emerges is that all the collocates most frequently occur in negative contexts in Meaning 1, while the majority of the collocates most frequently occur in positive or neutral contexts in Meaning 2. However, the majority of the collocates themselves cannot be said to express a particularly negative meaning. The only collocate that can be described as having an inherent negative evaluative meaning, namely *accident*, occurs thrice in the random sample, and with both meanings, as exemplified by (86) below, from one of the occurrences in Meaning 1:

(86)   The *accident happened* half a mile west of the Melsonby crossroads last
         September (BNC: K55 2801)

In addition, within the random sample, there are no instances of either *incident* or *miracle*, the other top-100 collocates within the BNC expressing a particular negative or positive evaluative meaning (see previous section).

Still, it can be worth exploring the semantic environment the collocates occur in, and

to exemplify their use, Table 4.3.4 has been made. Here, the collocates are sorted by the meaning they most frequently occur in, as well as by the evaluative meaning they predominantly express. There are more instances of all the collocates within Meaning 1 than in Meaning 2, which is perhaps to be expected, since this meaning is much more frequent in the random sample. As in Table 4.2.4 for CAUSE, the frequency of the collocates have been weighed against the frequency of the meanings themselves in the categorisation (see section 4.2.1).

Table 4.3.4: Exemplification of Predominant Use of HAPPEN's most Frequent Collocates Sorted by Meanings

Meaning 1: "Take place; occur" (*Lexico*)		
Collocate	**Predominant evaluative meaning**	**Example**
It	Negative	"*It* is horrible to think of what *happened* to that poor family" (BNC: CEM 1169)
What	Negative	"It's even worse than *what happened* to Saint Maria Goretti" (BNC: GUK 3750)
This	Negative	"Oh dear God! Why had *this happened*?" (BNC: AT7 2243)
Had	Negative	"He *had* known right away what *had happened*. His mother *had* suffered two heart attacks before the third one" (BNC: EF1 519)
If	Negative	"*If* something *happened* to Dr. Ting, the team he held together would fall apart" (ABG 2939)
When	Negative	"Because *when* the night sets in, strange things *happen* out in the wilds" (BNC: B3K 826)
Would	Neutral/positive	"He believed that if nothing were done about filling in the quarry, another tragedy *would happen* there" (BNC: K5M 4078)
Something	Negative	"But then *something* more serious *happened*" (BNC: G3R 1505)
Thing(s)	Positive	"Since Donald had that terrible *thing happen* to, we have been a bit closer" (BNC: ASS 2843)
Nothing	Positive	"All evils have to be dealt with; *nothing happens* by accident" (BNC: BLY 44)
Happen(s)/happening	Neither	"It was unpleasant, what *happened* next. Such things *happen* in bad dreams" (BNC: EDN 114)
Anything	Neither	"Did *anything … anything* odd *happen* to you at Rose Cottage?" (BNC: G1S 1286)
Meaning 2: "To do or be by chance" (CED)		
Collocate	**Predominant evaluative meaning**	**Example**
That	Neutral	"I recall, for instance, the occasion around *that* time I *happened* to encounter her in the back corridor" (BNC: AR3 1000)
Know	Positive/neutral	"I *know* if I *happen* to find a bunch that's been thrown out 'cause it's past its best, I can likely get a threepenny piece for it at the railway station" (BNC: FPK 1504)
Whatever	Neutral	"Instead of passively accepting *whatever* inflow of funds they *happened* to receive and relying on their skill at selecting assets for their profit, institutions began to 'bid' for funds" (BNC: H8E 1073)
Accident(s)	Negative	"the civil servant who, when on holiday or at home, *happens* to witness a road traffic *accident*" (BNC: FC7 125)

The collocational patterns extracted from the random sample using AntConc show very similar tendencies to those presented in Table 4.3.4. The most frequent recurring collocates of Meaning 1 are generally the same as those already discussed in Tables 4.3.3 and 4.3.4. However, one collocate that does not feature in the previous lists, with an inherently negative meaning is *terrible*, which occurs twice in the sample, as in (87):

> (87)   I knew something *terrible* was *happening* there (BNC: ALH 2481)

For Meaning 2, the tendencies are also very similar to the top-20 list from the BNC, in the sense that the recurrent lexical items co-occurring with the lemma in this meaning are predominantly function words. There are, however, ten non-function words that occur in more than one concordance line in the sample, namely *assemble*, *Boeing*, *day*, *father*, *leave*, *people*, *poor*, *random*, *small*, and *sufficient*, which all occur twice. Of these, only *assemble*, *Boeing*, and *father* occur in close proximity to the node twice, however, the former two co-occur in both instances and originate from the same text sample in the BNC. Thus, *father* is the only non-function word to appear in close proximity to the node in more than one instance from more than one text sample, as in (88) below:

> (88)   His *father happens* to be a close neighbour of mine in the village of Comerford (BNC: H8L 898)

The occurrence of this collocate might be described as being somewhat coincidental. By probing the BNC for this particular meaning using the search string {happen/V} to_TO0 (HAPPEN (verb) + to-infinitive), this does indeed seem to be the case. Within a search span of 4L-4R *father* is only the 94th most frequent collocate, and within a span of 10L-10R, it is not even among the 200 most frequent collocates. Still, there are some other frequent collocates emerging from these lists worth adding, particularly within the narrower of the two spans. As for the lemma in general, the list is dominated by function words, but in addition to these one can find *mention* (12th most frequent collocate), *passing* (14th most frequent collocate), *meet* (20th most frequent collocate), and *bump (into)* (22nd most frequent collocate), which can all be categorised as neutral in nature. The first of these also appears in the random sample:

> (89)   One day I *happened* to *mention* that I didn't know one end of a bomb from the other (BNC: B3F 1248)

In the examples above, the semantic context is quite clear within a short span of the node, and as a result, the evaluative meaning expressed is as well. However, this is not always the case

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in the random sample, and this might in part explain the lack of collocates with inherently positive or negative evaluative meanings for the lemma. HAPPEN is often used anaphorically and cataphorically (see section 2.10.3), and as a result, what the lemma actually refers to is not in close proximity to the node, but is rather described earlier or later in the text. One can imagine that this might affect the collocates in the following ways: Firstly, when what actually *happens* is described distantly from the node, one can argue that words expressing a particular evaluative meaning might also be distributed over a larger span in the text, and as a result, there will be fewer recurring positive or negative collocates in close proximity to the lemma. Secondly, some of the recurring collocates for this lemma are also used as anaphoric or cataphoric references, like for example *it* and *this*, also referring to something earlier or later in the text. This is exemplified in (90) below:

(90)   In those days parents did not complain at such authoritarian behaviour — they knew better than argue with Mr. Russ who was a greatly respected member of the community. I remember one Monday morning, just after we went into the Boys' School, he came into Standard One and brought with him, from our class, Jim Weeks, who had been absent when the registers were called. The headmaster stood at the front of the class with Jim looking rather embarrassed and announced, 'Weeks has been before the magistrates this morning and has been discharged without a stain on his character. If any boy says anything to Weeks about it I will cane him.' No-one knew that Jim was even in trouble and to this day I don't know what it was all about. *This happened* in the days before Juvenile Courts and it must have been a terrifying experience to be taken into the Court as a seven-year-old to be tried. (BNC: B22 39)

Here, *this* has anaphoric reference to a substantial part of the text, and because of this, what is being described is not located in the immediate surroundings of the node HAPPEN. It can also be worth mentioning that the collocate *this* does not occur in Meaning 2 in the random sample, indicating that this type of reference is more frequent in Meaning 1.

Based on the collocational evidence, one can conclude that CAUSE in both Meaning 1 and Meaning 2 often co-occur with collocates expressing neutrality, but that these collocates most frequently occur in negative semantic environments in the former meaning, while they most frequently occur in a neutral semantic environment in the latter meaning.

4.3.2 Colligation

The next step was to examine typical colligations to investigate possible recurring syntactic patterns surrounding the individual meanings of HAPPEN, which was performed through an analysis of the random sample of 300. The collocates from the top-20 list that were not discussed in the previous section because of their relevance to colligation, namely the preposition and infinitive marker *to*, the negator *n't* and the punctuation *?* (see section 4.3.1) were used as a starting point. The most obvious colligational pattern in this sense is perhaps related to Meaning 2, in that it is directly succeeded by the infinitive marker *to* in 24 out of the 28 instances (85.7 %) of this meaning in the sample, as in (91) below:

> (91)   I recall, for instance, the occasion around that time I *happened to* encounter her in the back corridor (BNC: AR3 1000)

It should be emphasised that this construction is limited to this particular meaning of the lemma and does not occur in Meaning 1. However, it is directly succeeded by the preposition *to* in 37 out of 272 instances in the random sample, and is directly succeeded by another preposition in 52 instances. Thus, the construction HAPPEN (Meaning 1) + preposition occurs in 32.7 % of the instances in the sample, exemplified by (92) and (93):

> (92)   It's *happening to* both of us! (BNC: JYD 1983)

> (93)   We expect that to *happen in* the autumn (BNC: K4M 219)

This construction does not occur in Meaning 2. In the remaining 4 instances of this meaning (14.3 %), the lemma is preceded by the pronoun *it*, either directly, exemplified by (94) below, or in a construction featuring *(just) so*, exemplified by (95) below:

> (94)   Yeah. It's been really nice, as *it happens* (BNC: HTU 1844)

> (95)   Look, *it so happens* that a number of people have dropped out of the scheme for one reason or another (BNC: B0U 2254)

In relation to negation, this does not occur in Meaning 2, but occurs in 19 instances of the lemma in Meaning 1 (7 %), exemplified by (96):

> (96)   Joe's contract had been renewed during each year of his captivity but that *didn't happen* this year (BNC: C8T 1962)

The lemma in Meaning 1 also appears to be used in interrogative constructions, which is the case in 32 of the instances in the sample (11.8 %), as in (97) below, while it only occurs once in Meaning 2 (3.6 %), in (98) below:

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(97)   So what *happened*? (BNC: A7A 2567)

(98)   Do you *happen* to know where he lives? (BNC: FSR 876)

4.3.3 Semantic Preference

In Sinclair's (1991) study of the lemma, he claims that "the verb *happen* is associated with unpleasant things – accidents and the like" (Sinclair 1991: 112), and Partington (2004a) adds to this, and argues the following:

> It would appear then that, in addition to its unfavourable prosody, *happen* has a non-obvious preference for another semantic field. It has a strong tendency to indicate "non-factuality", to appear in environments where things are not (yet) fully known and/or determined to co-occur, as we have seen, with items which expresses this general semantic area. (Partington 2004a: 140)

Both these statements can be said to hold true in relation to HAPPEN in Meaning 1 based on the random sample. To begin with Sinclair's claim, even though the collocational evidence expresses neutrality (see section 4.3.1), the individual collocates in the sample appear to frequently occur in negative semantic contexts, where "unpleasant things" occur, an example from the sample actually being *accidents*.

Partington's argument is relevant in relation to the lemma's lexical and syntactical environment in this meaning, in the sense that it frequently co-occurs with question words, such as *what* and *when*, and thus often occurs in interrogative constructions. In addition to this, the conditional *if* is a frequent collocate, as well as lexical items like *whatever*, *anything*, *something*, and *thing(s)*, which can be said to express uncertainty.

Thus, one can argue that HAPPEN in Meaning 1 has a semantic preference of unpleasant events, often connected to a degree of uncertainty and hypothetical propositions, exemplified by (99) below:

(99)   Police say it's too early in the investigation to say what *happened*
         (BNC: K1C 3871)

However, these observations are limited to the lemma in Meaning 1, and do not seem to apply to HAPPEN in Meaning 2. Yet, the occurrences within this meaning in the sample appear to share a common feature, somewhat supported by the limited collocational evidence, and can be said to have a semantic preference of unexpected, incidental, and random events or encounters, as in (100):

(100)   His father *happens* to be a close neighbour of mine in the village of Comerford
         (BNC: H8L 898)

4.3.4 Semantic Prosody

To determine the semantic prosody of the separate meanings of the lemma HAPPEN, the
individual instances in the random sample were categorised into meaning categories through
manual analysis of the concordance lines based on the evaluative meaning expressed. The
result of this analysis is shown in Table 4.3.5 below. The same issues as those discussed in the
categorisation of COMMIT (see section 4.1.4) are relevant for this lemma, namely negated
cases and technical information inside a field where the reader has limited knowledge.
However, there is one issue which is especially relevant for HAPPEN when categorising the
instances of the separate meanings in terms of meaning categories, namely the
aforementioned anaphoric and cataphoric use of the lemma exemplified by (90) in section
4.3.1. This entails that the description of what actually *happens* in many instances occurs
much earlier or later in the text, and that the lemma might be a reference to a substantial
quantum of text, making the manual analysis of individual cases more complicated. It is also
worth a mention that, based on the instances in random sample, this appears to be mostly
relevant in relation to Meaning 1.

Table 4.3.5: Distribution of Separate Meanings of HAPPEN across Meaning Categories

Meaning 1: "Take place; occur" (*Lexico*)		
Meaning category	**Number of occurrences**	**Percentage**
Negative	165	60.7 %
Positive	44	16.2 %
Neutral	63	23.2 %
Meaning 2: "To do or be by chance" (CED)		
Meaning category	**Number of occurrences**	**Percentage**
Negative	3	10.7 %
Positive	7	25 %
Neutral	18	64.3 %

It is clear from the numbers presented in Table 4.3.5 that there are marked differences
between the meaning categories in which the separate meanings of HAPPEN most frequently
occur. Meaning 1 most commonly occurs in negative contexts, and it appears to have negative
semantic prosody, as exemplified by (101):

(101)   don't think I want to know what's going to *happen* to me (BNC: GUU 3304)

However, one can emphasise the "hidden" quality of semantic prosody in this sense (see section 2.6), since it is not strikingly apparent. To elaborate, the semantic preference also points in a negative direction, but the collocational and colligational evidence can be said to be more ambiguous. For example, if one were to compare it to the collocational patterns of the previously discussed COMMIT in Meaning 1 (see section 4.1.1), it would be clear that these are quite unambiguously negative, while the recurring collocates of HAPPEN express a more neutral evaluative meaning.

Meaning 2 differs from Meaning 1, occurring most frequently in neutral contexts, and very infrequently in negative contexts. This also correlates with the collocational and colligational patterns, as well as the semantic preference for this meaning, which can also be said to express neutrality. Because of this, it is possible to claim that HAPPEN in Meaning 2 appears to have a neutral semantic prosody, as exemplified by (102), and appears to be used in an almost "matter-of-factly" manner:

(102)   The church had been chosen simply because its priest *happened* to be a friend of Eliot's solicitor (BNC: EFX 1183)

However, it should be borne in mind that the material for this meaning is more limited, with only 28 occurrences within the random sample, and that a certain margin of error therefore should be taken into consideration.

4.4 Summary

The study performed in this chapter displays that separate meanings of lexical items can have markedly different semantic prosodies when treated as cores in separate extended units of meaning. This is arguably most apparent in (but not limited to) COMMIT, where this difference is visible in the contrasting collocational and colligational patters, as well as the semantic preference of the meanings, and the semantic contexts they occur in. The next chapter will discuss these results in light of the disputed aspects of semantic prosody, as outlined in Chapter 2, in addition to the research question posed and hypotheses put forward in Chapter 1.

5   Discussion and Further Analysis

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the results of the corpus study in light of the research question, the hypotheses and relevant literature, in addition to suggesting topics for further research. To do so, the focus will primarily be on what the corpus study of the separate meanings of the three lemmas performed in the previous chapter can contribute to the following aspects of debate; (1) The scope of semantic prosody and where meanings is located, (2) if a binary distinction is applicable, (3) the hidden quality, (4) the relationship between semantic prosody and connotational meaning, (4) register-specificity, and finally (5) suggestions for further studies.

5.1   Scope and where Meaning is Located Revisited

To define where semantic prosody is located, one can refer to Partington (1998, 2004a), who argues that semantic prosody is not located in single lexical items, but rather expressed by the node's association with its collocates (see section 2.7). This definition also appears to be applicable to most of the meanings of the lemmas discussed in the previous chapter. Still, to define a scope for the extended unit of meaning is less clear-cut, and there does not seem exist a consensus other than that it is larger than the individual word (Bublitz 1996; Partington 1998, 2004a; Hunston 2002; Stubbs 2002). For all the meanings of the lemmas COMMIT and CAUSE, the "benchmark" span of 4L-4R (Stubbs 1995; Bublitz 1996) has been used as a starting point for collocation when creating the top-20 lists based on the overall use in the BNC, and the collocates have been shown to generally reside in close proximity to the node. This is perhaps especially the case with COMMIT. In Meaning 1 (synonymous with "perpetrate") and 3 (for example being officially sent to prison), which have both been ascribed a negative semantic prosody, the recurrent collocates expressing a negative evaluative meaning usually occur within a narrow span, examples being *crime(s)*, *suicide*, and *atrocities* for the former and *offences*, *trial*, and *prison* for the latter. In turn, the semantic preference for these meanings are also quite unambiguous. Somewhat similarly, in Meaning 2 ("to promise or give loyalty"), where the collocates, more or less in line with to the prosody, predominantly express neutrality, for example *government* and *himself*. Here, they also appear in close proximity to the node, albeit with a more general semantic preference.

The situation is similar with CAUSE in Meaning 1 (synonymous to "lead to") and 2

(synonymous to "bring about"), where the ascribed semantic prosody is negative, and the recurrent collocates predominantly expressing a negative evaluative meaning frequently co-occur within a 4L-4R span of the node.

However, this becomes more problematic when discussing CAUSE in Meaning 3 (synonymous to "make") and the meanings of HAPPEN, primarily in Meaning 1 ("to take place or occur"). The latter of these meanings has previously been ascribed a negative semantic prosody (Bublitz 1996), and has in this thesis also been shown to generally appear in negative contexts (section 4.3), but can be said to differ from the meanings of the other lemmas, both in relation to where meaning is located and the scope of the extended unit of meaning. Firstly, it is difficult to claim that the negative meaning is expressed by HAPPEN in Meaning 1 in association with its collocates, in the sense that the collocates predominantly express neutrality. This point can also be made for CAUSE in Meaning 3, which predominantly occurs in negative contexts, but generally co-occurs with neutral collocates. In addition to this, the semantic preferences for both these meanings also appear to be quite general.

Secondly, the anaphoric and cataphoric function connected with HAPPEN makes the scope an unknown quantity. The larger span of 10L-10R has been used in relation to collocation, but as shown in section 4.3.1, what the node is a reference to often resides outside even of this span.

These observations do not, however, seem to apply to HAPPEN in Meaning 2 ("to do or be by chance") to the same extent. Here, the collocates match the predominant meaning category, in that they are primarily neutral, and the lemma in this meaning does not seem to rely on the anaphoric and cataphoric reference to the same extent as Meaning 1, and thus, what is being described spans over a shorter portion of the text, arguably resulting in a shorter scope for the extended unit of meaning.

Based on these observations, it is possible to argue that the scope of semantic prosody is relative, and that it can differ, not just from lexical unit to lexical unit, but between the meanings of specific lexical items.

5.2   Binary Distinction Revisited

As discussed in section 2.5, there are different opinions regarding whether or not semantic prosody should be considered a binary distinction. Sinclair (1987, 1991, 1996a, 1996b)

himself began by using a binary distinction, but later moved on to broader categorisations, although without fully defining or operationalising them. In this thesis it has been understood in binary terms, or rather as a ternary distinction, i.e. that prosodies have been categorised as either *positive*, *negative*, or *neutral*, in contrast to, among others, Hoey (1997), who argues for broader, non-binary, specific categories.

Still, one can argue that the categories have been broadened to an extent, since the prosodies have been treated as gradable, meaning that some prosodies have been shown to be more negative than others, following Partington's (1998, 2004a) suggestion of a binary but gradable distinction. As an example, COMMIT in Meaning 1 appears to have a clearer negative semantic prosody than CAUSE in Meaning 3, on the basis of the study performed in the previous chapter. This distinction can also be said to be applicable to many of the meanings explored here. That is, COMMIT in Meaning 1 and 3, as well as CAUSE in Meanings 1 and 2 can all clearly be categorised as having a negative semantic prosody, in accordance with their collocation, colligation, and their semantic preference. The same case can also be made for HAPPEN in Meaning 2, albeit for a neutral semantic prosody.

It does, however, become more problematic when discussing the semantic prosodies of meanings like COMMIT in Meaning 2, where the collocation is more ambiguous, the semantic preference is broad, and the occurrences in neutral and positive meaning categories are quite evenly distributed. In this thesis, it has therefore not been ascribed a particular prosody, but rather the claim that it predominantly occurs in neutral or positive contexts has been made. Thus, for this meaning, a binary distinction does not appear to be applicable.

Philip (2009) addresses this issue and argues that "semantic prosodies are often difficult to describe clearly and succinctly, and this may well explain the widespread tendency to speak loosely of positive/negative prosodies rather than attempt to articulate the semantic prosody more precisely" (Philip 2009: 3), and goes on to say that using a binary distinction is to ignore the primary function (ibid: 3), as outlined by Louw:

> A semantic prosody refers to a form of meaning which is established through the proximity of a consistent series of collocates, often characterisable as positive or negative, and whose primary function is the expression of the attitude of its speaker or writer towards some pragmatic situation. (Louw 2000: 57)

Thus, a broader, non-binary categorisation would perhaps be more suited for instances such as COMMIT in Meaning 2. For this particular meaning, one could for example propose

devotion, in line with its semantic preference (section 4.1.3).

Similarly, HAPPEN in Meaning 1 has been ascribed a negative semantic prosody in this study, but one might argue that this represents an oversimplification. The lemma in this meaning most frequently occurs contexts where a negative evaluative meaning is expressed, but neither its collocations nor semantic preference can be said to be unambiguously negative, and using a binary classification does perhaps not capture the complex nature of this meaning. Because of this, one might also benefit from categorising in terms of more specific semantic prosodies than positive, negative, neutral.

In this context, one can mention Morley and Partington (2009: 141), who in a sense offers a compromise between a binary and a broad categorisation of semantic prosody, by using a two-term Linnaean-style binomial notation, with sub-categories in addition to a binary distinction. This might be more applicable for instances like HAPPEN in Meaning 1, where there appears to be negative quality, but an ascribed negative prosody alone is not a satisfactory description. For this specific meaning, a suggestion could be [negative: unpleasant events], to borrow the semantic preference proposed for this meaning in this thesis (see section 4.3.3), or rather [negative: unpleasantness].

5.3   Hidden Quality Revisited

As outlined in section 2.6, the hidden quality is another debated aspect of semantic prosody. Stewart (2010), for example, argues somewhat critically that "hiddenness" appears to be a requirement of semantic prosody, while Philip (2009) claims that semantic prosody always is present for lexical items, but varies in degree, based on the items' collocation, colligation and semantic preference. This is also in accordance with Bublitz, who argues that collocation is a "scalar category" (Bublitz 1996: 27). Thus, as the collocation becomes more fixed, the semantic prosody becomes more apparent.

Based on the study performed in this thesis, this claim seems to hold true. The negative semantic prosody of CAUSE, both in its general use and in its specific meanings (particularly 1 and 2), is clearer than that of HAPPEN, both in its general use and in Meaning 1, and the meanings of CAUSE have more fixed collocates expressing a negative evaluative meaning than HAPPEN.

In addition to this, the study also offers insight into another aspect that might attribute to the alleged hidden quality of semantic prosody, as hypothesised in this thesis' introduction (section 1.3), namely that semantic prosody could in some cases be attributed to separate meanings of the same lexical item. In the current context, this is perhaps most relevant for the lemma COMMIT (see section 4.1.4). In the random sample of 300, the lemma appears in positive and neutral meaning categories in 165 instances, which corresponds to 55 % of the total number of occurrences. However, all of these are within Meaning 2, while the instances from Meaning 1 and 3 exclusively occur within a negative meaning category. As a result of this, the lemma's tendency, in particular meanings, to occur in negative contexts is arguably not an apparent quality of the lemma in its overall use, but rather requires manual analysis to discover.

5.4 Semantic Prosody and Connotational Meaning Revisited

As discussed in section 2.8, the lines between semantic prosody and connotational meaning are somewhat blurry, and the exact nature of their relationship is debated, where some linguists, like Partington (1998), Hunston (2002), and Stubbs (2002), see it as an aspect of connotation, where others, like Louw (2000) and Stewart (2010), try to define a boundary between the two concepts. One of the hypotheses outlined in the introduction stated that: *For certain specific meanings within a lexical item found to have a particular semantic prosody, it might be more precise to ascribe a positive or negative connotational meaning*. For the sake of either proving or disproving this, an effort will be made to operationalise a distinction, and to do so, it is necessary to draw certain boundaries between semantic prosody and connotative meaning based on the previous discussion of the two. To begin, one can make use of the term "obviousness", borrowed from Morley and Partington (2009), since it deals with how apparent the evaluative meaning expressed is. For connotative meaning, this entails that the possible positive or negative evaluative meaning can be viewed as an inherent, obvious quality of the lexical item. For semantic prosody, however, this entails that the evaluative meaning is more "hidden", and not immediately visible to the "naked eye".

Furthermore, this is also connected to where the evaluative meaning is located. For connotative meaning, one could argue that it resides in single words or lexical items. For semantic prosody, however, there appears to be a consensus that it resides in a unit larger than

the individual word or lexical item, "in the collocational patterns of items in a text" (Morley and Partington 2009: 150), where the node functions as the core of an extended unit of meaning (Partington 1998: 67). This distinction is also in accordance with Philip (2011), who argues:

> The semantic prosody of an utterance has to be identified relative to its collocates, colligates and semantic preference, not in isolation. Unlike semantic associations such as connotation and evaluation, it is integral to the context of situation, only becoming identifiable in actual contexts of use. (Philip 2011: 80)

Thus, connotative meaning will be understood in a lexical sense, while semantic prosody will be understood in a phraseological sense.

In attempt to prove or disprove the abovementioned hypothesis, this operationalisation will be used on the meanings that have been ascribed a negative semantic prosody in this thesis. Beginning with HAPPEN in Meaning 1, it would appear that the lemma in this meaning clearly fits into the description of semantic prosody following the operalisations outlined above. The negative aspect can be said to be "hidden" and not "obvious", in the sense that manual analysis is needed to detect that it often occurs in a negative meaning category. Further, it does not appear to be an inherent quality of the lexical item, but rather spread out over a unit larger than the individual word. This description also fits with that given by Louw (2000), who discusses HAPPEN (corresponding to Meaning 1), and makes the following claims:

> Even forms which we consider free-standing an uncontroversially prosodic such as *happen* are dependent for much their prosodic power upon the fact that their subject is effectively deleted or remains latent or only potential. The proxy form and frequent collocate *something* almost seems to direct much of the prosodic power of *happen* by creating a fractured context of situation which human beings find disquieting … Not that even where forms with *some** are in the object position and well away from *happen* their prosodic power survives (Louw 2000: 5)

Therefore, HAPPEN in Meaning 1 does not in and of itself carry a negative evaluative meaning, but it is rather dependent on its context as the core of an extended unit of meaning with a considerable scope, where the prosody is a result of its collocation, colligation, and semantic preference.

The most significant difference here between the prosodies within the same lemma can arguably be found within COMMIT. In Meaning 1, it exclusively appears in negative meaning contexts in the random sample (see section 4.1.4), but before categorising this

meaning, it can be worth discussing a synonym of it. In this thesis it has been defined as a synonymous of *perpetrate*, a lexical item one would perhaps argue has a negative connotational meaning, in that it appears to have an inherently negative meaning, which is not dependent of its semantic environment. Because of this, one might expect a synonym to embody the same qualities. However, to distinguish this meaning from the other meanings of the lemma, there is a need to study the context surrounding it. This means that the negative aspect cannot be considered to be an inherent quality of the lemma in this meaning, which is in accordance with Partington's description of the prosody of COMMIT (corresponding to Meaning 1). He argues that the "unfavourable connotation" resides, not in the lexical item, but in larger a unit that consists of COMMIT and the lemma's collocates, examples being *offence*, *crime*, and *foul* (Partington 1998: 67). As a consequence, the negative aspect of COMMIT in Meaning 1 is not an "obvious" quality of the lexical item, meaning that it, like HAPPEN in Meaning 1, functions as the core of an extended unit of meaning. Further, the same argument can also be made for COMMIT in Meaning 3.

However, this might largely be due to the homonymous quality of the lexical item; the hidden quality and dependence on collocation to express meaning arguably exist because of the need to distinguish them from Meaning 2.

For CAUSE, the situation is different. As mentioned in section 2.10.2, Stubbs argued in the mid-90s that CAUSE is nearing the stage where it has negative connotations outside of context, but that further study is required (Stubbs 1995: 20-21). Bublitz agrees with this, and like Stubbs, emphasises the diachronic aspect, arguing that there is a need to examine if CAUSE over time more frequently co-occurs with negative collocates, and that if this proves to be the case, "we could then examine *cause* for negative connotations (Bublitz 1996: 14).

This study is based on corpus material from the late 20th century (3.1.1), so a possible diachronic change can therefore not be seen. However, it has been shown that the present-day dictionaries now include the negative aspect of CAUSE in their definitions (see section 2.10.2). Still, even though the definitions that are contemporary of the texts of the BNC do not highlight a negative aspect, the examples used in the dictionaries consulted, spanning several hundred years in the case of the OED, feature the lemma as a verb predominantly in negative contexts (see section 3.2.2). Because of this, it is difficult to say whether this change in the definition of CAUSE is due to a diachronic change or just development in lexicography, for example through the usage of corpus data and techniques.

The corpus study performed in this thesis has shown that CAUSE in all three meanings most commonly occurs in negative contexts, albeit to different extents (see section 4.2.4). For Meaning 1 and 2, this is the case in 86.7 % and 89.4 % of the instances in the random sample respectively, while for Meaning 3, this is the case in 63.9 %. Because of this, there are differences between the three in terms of the ascribed negative semantic prosody. One could, therefore, imagine that this would also be the case when discussing these in a possible connotational sense, but as discussed in the case of COMMIT, the semantic environment is integral to distinguishing the meanings from each other, i.e. the meanings cannot differ outside of context, and must be treated as one lexical item in a connotational sense.

The question remaining is then whether CAUSE has an obvious and inherent negative evaluative meaning independent of context, or if it the negative aspect rather is context-dependent and belongs to an extended unit of meaning. Because it is both defined as negative and predominantly occurs in contexts expressing negative evaluative meanings (85.3 % of all the instances in the random sample regardless of meaning), it might be the case that CAUSE does have a negative connotational meaning. However, this is hard to determine on the basis of the material studied in this thesis, and, as Stubbs (1995) and Bublitz (1996) already have argued, requires further research.

5.5   Register-specificity Revisited

In section 2.9, the possibility of semantic prosody being register-specific was discussed, and as Xiao and McEnery (2006) claim, this might be an aspect of the concept that have been somewhat overlooked. Similarly, in his theory of priming, Hoey (2004) argues that it is context-specific, and further, Tribble (2000) suggests a distinction between "local" and "global" prosodies for lexical units.

This particular aspect has not been a focus area in this study, so the observations regarding this that can be extracted from the results are therefore limited. However, there does appear to be some tendencies worth mentioning. CAUSE in Meaning 3 has a less prominent negative semantic prosody than Meaning 1 and 2, and it appears, from the instances in the random sample, to occur more frequently in contexts where technical and scientific information is being discussed. This suggests that Huston's (2007) claim that the negative evaluation of the lexical item is lost when occurring in scientific registers is, at least, partly

substantiated. In addition, CAUSE in Meaning 1 appears to occur more frequently in medical contexts, however, without losing its negative evaluation. Further, COMMIT in Meaning 3 occurs exclusively in texts discussing crime and the judiciary system. These claims can also be made for COMMIT in Meaning 1, albeit to a lesser extent. This does not offer any insights regarding the register-specificity of the prosody of these particular meanings, in the sense that they also exclusively occur in negative contexts in the sample, i.e. the prosodies appear to be negative regardless of register. It is, however, relevant if one were to discuss the lexical item in its general use, since one would perhaps expect these meanings to occur more frequently in registers where this subject matter is discussed, and as a result, the item would more frequently express a negative evaluative meaning in these registers.

The study does not offer much information in terms of the register-specificity of the prosodies of HAPPEN as a verb in either meaning, but some aspects that might shed light on why this lemma in Meaning 1 frequently occurs in negative contexts can be noted. Partington argues that this lemma (corresponding to Meaning 1) in the form *happened* has a negative semantic prosody in academic texts (Partington 2004a: 136). This can neither be proven or disproven on the basis of the study, but Partington does make another observation that is relevant in this instance concerning another register, namely newspaper texts. He claims that newspaper articles generally focus on negative events, and refers to Galtung & Ruge (1965) to back up his argument (Partington 2004a: 134). To elaborate, they believe that:

> Negative news enters the news channel more easily because it satisfies the *frequency* criterion better. There is a *basic asymmetry* in life between the positive, which is difficult and takes time, and the negative, which is much easier and takes less time
> (Galtung & Ruge 1965: 69)

And, further, they claim that negative news is more consensual and unambiguous, more consonant, and more unexpected than positive news (Galtung & Ruge 1965: 69-70). The relevance of this in this context can be said to be twofold; firstly, the focus on negative events in this register might affect the prosody of seemingly neutral lexical items, because they would more frequently occur in negative contexts. HAPPEN in Meaning 1 might therefore be more frequent in negative than in positive contexts, because what is *happening* tends to be negative. Secondly, this information might also be applicable to other registers and can offer insights into why certain seemingly neutral lexical items often occur in negative contexts in general. This can also be seen in relation to Louw (2000), who claims that a negative focus in text is somewhat universal:

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The fact that negative prosodies are more frequent than positive ones ought not to surprise us greatly. In the same way that unrequited love forms most of the subject matter for the greatest love poetry in English and not requited love (with the superb exception of John Donne's *The Good Morrow*), we ought not to be surprised to find that contented human beings utter much less than discontented ones. Besides, requited love is a fairly busy and time consuming state and one which is as inimical to the act of writing. (Louw 2000: 5)

If this is in fact the case, it could explain why HAPPEN in Meaning 1 is more common in negative than in positive or neutral contexts, because these contexts are more frequent themselves.

5.6 Suggestions for Further Studies

As demonstrated in the previous sections of this chapter, there are still several aspects of semantic prosody related to separate meanings of lexical items that leave unanswered questions. In this thesis, the primary suggestion for further studies concerns register-specificity, and relates to all three of the verb lemmas. This can entail investigating if the specific prosodies ascribed based on the study in Chapter 4 are, to borrow Tribble's (2000) terminology, "global", meaning that they are unaffected by different types of texts, or if more "local" prosodies exist, where certain meanings have separate prosodies in different registers. A starting point worth considering could be to build on Hunston (2007), to test her claim that the negative semantic prosody of CAUSE disappears in a scientific register (see section 2.9 and 5.5), and to investigate if this is the case with all meanings, or if it primarily relates to Meaning 3.

Further, it can be worth examining more closely if the prosody of HAPPEN, specifically in Meaning 1, differs between registers, by building on Partington's (2004a) work on the lexical item in academic and newspaper texts and expanding by analysing occurrences in more registers. Comparing the prosodies in specific registers to that of the meaning regardless of registers might also help testing the claims made by Galtung & Ruge (1965) and Louw (2000), that negative contexts in both news and in general are more frequent than positive ones.

In addition to this, it is now more than two decades since Stubbs (1995) and Bublitz (1996) claimed that CAUSE might be nearing a state of negative connotational meaning rather than semantic prosody (see section 2.8 and 5.4), and it could be worthwhile investigating if this

now can said to be the case. This can be performed through a diachronic approach, as they have suggested, for example by comparing the instances in the BNC with those in the forthcoming BNC2014, which is scheduled to be launched sometime in 2020 (see section 3.1.1), which will allow for both examining if there has been a development in the general use of the lemma, as well as for the separate meanings of it.

6   Conclusions

To conclude this thesis, this chapter aims to return to the research question and the hypotheses put forward in Chapter 1 (see section 1.3), and to draw conclusions on the basis of the corpus study in Chapter 4 in light of the literature discussed in Chapters 2 and 5. The research question was as follows: *To what extent is a word's meaning decisive from the semantic prosody of lexical units?* Based on the corpus study, it does appear to be decisive for certain lexical units. Of the three lemmas investigated in this thesis, this is arguably most clearly the case for COMMIT, where Meaning 1 and 3 have a very clear negative semantic prosody, while Meaning 2 has a more ambiguously neutral or even positive prosody (see section 4.1.4). Similarly, while HAPPEN in Meaning 1 appears to have a negative prosody, this is not the case for the lemma in Meaning 2, where the prosody is more neutral (section 4.3.4). In CAUSE, however, the separate meanings are less decisive, in the sense that all three meanings have a negative semantic prosody, but to different extents, where it is very prominent in Meanings 1 and 2, but less so in Meaning 3 (section 4.2.4). These findings also shed light on the hypotheses posed in Chapter 1, the first being:

1. Specific lexical meanings of items can be triggering factors and should be taken into account when determining semantic prosody.

This would appear to be the case, especially for lexical items with very distinctly different meanings. In this instance, it is possible to argue that the negative prosodies of COMMIT in Meaning 1 and 3 might be the triggering factors for the negative semantic prosody the lemma previously has been ascribed, which also relates to the second and third hypothesis:

2. In certain cases, it might be more precise to treat these meanings as homonyms with separate semantic prosodies.
3. The hidden quality of semantic prosody might in part be attributed to the different prosodies of the separate meanings of the same lexical item.

As discussed in section 5.3, the hidden quality of semantic prosody, at least in the instance of COMMIT, might in part be explained by the substantially different meanings and their prosodies. In this case, it would perhaps be more natural to view them as homonyms. For HAPPEN, the differences are not as great, but one would expect Meaning 1 to be a triggering factor, since it might overshadow Meaning 2 because of its much higher frequency. In any

case, one can conclude that ascribing a general prosody for the lemmas would be inaccurate, and that they should rather be viewed as cores of separate extended units of meaning. For CAUSE, however, the meanings are more related, both in terms of their definitions and their prosodies, and because of this, the label of homonym might not be appropriate. Still, the prosodies do seem to differ, and as a result, should be taken into account and might contribute to the negative aspect not necessarily being completely obvious to the naked eye.

Even though the results of the corpus study appear to comply with the first three hypotheses to different extents, this is not necessarily the case with the fourth and final one, which reads as follows:

4. For certain specific meanings within a lexical item found to have a particular semantic prosody, it might be more precise to ascribe a positive or negative connotational meaning.

As discussed in section 5.4, this does not appear to hold true, at least after the operalisations outlined in said section. The reason for this is that the evaluative meaning in semantic prosody has been defined as being located in a unit larger than the individual word where the node functions a core in an extended unit of meaning, while it is an inherent obvious quality of lexical items in connotational meaning. Since the separate meanings are dependent on their semantic environment to be distinguished from one another, they cannot be categorised as having a negative or positive connotational meaning, although CAUSE may be closest to having a (negative) connotational meaning.

In addition to these findings, some further observations can be made. As outlined in section 5.1, the corpus study shows that the scope of sematic prosody is relative and can differ, not only between lexical units, but within the meanings of lexical items themselves, an example being between HAPPEN in Meaning 1 and 2. In addition to this, the study also indicates some tendencies regarding differences in register-specificity between separate meanings of the same lexical item (see section 5.5). However, as this was not an area of focus for the study, it is not possible to draw any firm conclusions regarding this aspect of semantic prosody on the basis of it, which is why suggestions for further studies in this area have been made, as outlined in section 5.6.

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