ICAME Journal • 48(1) • 2024 • 67–88
DOI: 10.2478/icame-2024-0004

sciendo

ICAME Journal

Semantic prosody, semantic transfer and semantic change

Research Article

Mathias Russnes

University of Oslo

Received 29 August 2023; accepted 18 January 2024

Abstract: This article investigates semantic prosody in a diachronic perspective. Although prosodies have been shown to change over time, there is no consensus regarding the source of such changes. The present study explores this further through a corpus study of the development of the lemmas FABRIC, FABRICATE and FABRICATION from the late 15th century to the late 20th century, drawing on material from Early English Books Online, the Corpus of Late Modern English Texts and the British National Corpus. The results of the study show that prosodic changes coincide with the emergence of new senses and indicate that these processes are related to and possibly caused by semantic transfer induced by persistent prosodies over time.

Keywords: *semantic prosody • semantic transfer • corpus linguistics • collocation • language change*

© Sciendo

1 Introduction

Semantic prosody is a relatively new concept that since its emergence in the late 20th century has become established within the field of corpus linguistics (Stubbs 2001; Hunston 2002; Partington 2004). The concept itself is generally ascribed to Sinclair (1991, 1996), although the term was first introduced by Louw (1993), who defined it as a "consistent aura of meaning with which a form is imbued by its collocates" (1993: 157). This notion presupposes a phraseological understanding of language, connecting grammar to meaning, and adheres to Sinclair's formulated *idiom principle,* which argues for longer meaning-bearing units (not restricted by word boundaries), in opposition to the open-choice principle, where each word represents one meaning (Hunston 2002: 138). From a Sinclairian perspective, these extended units of meaning consist of four elements in addition to their core: (1) collocation, (2) colligation, (3) semantic preference and (4) semantic prosody (Stubbs 2001: 87–88). An example of a seemingly neutral lexical unit ascribed a particular prosody is SET IN, which Sinclair claims has a tendency of occurring in environments expressing negative evaluative meaning, where recurring collocates like *rot, decay* and *malaise* tend to *set in* (Sinclair 1991: 67–79).

The concept has also received criticism, some notable examples being Whitsitt (2005) and Stewart (2010), and there are several aspects where a clear consensus does not yet exist, including but not limited to its relation to connotation, register-specificity, whether it requires a binary distinction, the hidden element, and its scope (Hunston 2007; Stewart 2010). This article will focus on another currently unresolved issue: how does semantic prosody relate to the theory of semantic transfer? This central but debated aspect of the notion of semantic prosody refers to how positive or negative evaluative meaning over time can be transferred to lexical items by the words with which they frequently co-occur. Yet, not that much research has been done on how this transfer arises, and a recurring theme in the existing previous research is the need for large-scale corpus studies on the topic (Morley and Partington 2009;

* *Corresponding author: Mathias Russnes, E-mail: m.s.russnes@ilos.uio.no*

Open Access. © 2024 Mathias Russnes, published by Sciendo.
This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 4.0 License.

Zhang 2013; Helsper and Hoffmann 2016). This article aims to play a part in filling that research gap, and will try to answer the following research questions:

(a) Is semantic prosody related to a diachronic process of semantic transfer?
(b) Can this process be separated from other kinds of semantic change?

Before discussing semantic prosody, transfer and change in more detail below, it is important to have a preliminary notion of how they may relate to each other. While semantic prosody can be defined as the evaluative meaning of an extended unit of meaning, semantic transfer is related to the process of how the core of such a unit is semantically influenced by elements in its immediate context. By adding a diachronic perspective, their potential connection to semantic change becomes obvious in that semantic change refers how the sense(s) of a lexical item can develop over time, and how new senses arise.

Thus, to answer these questions, a diachronic corpus study will be performed, focusing on the related lemmas FABRIC, FABRICATE and FABRICATION. The study will analyse their use from the late 15th century up until the late 20th century, drawing on material from Early English Books Online, the Corpus of Late Modern English Texts 3.1 and the British National Corpus 1994. The article is structured as follows: Section 2 summarises previous studies of semantic prosody in a diachronic perspective, with a focus on the process of semantic transfer, while Section 3 describes different processes of semantic change, and how they relate to the theory of semantic transfer. Section 4 presents the material and method used, and the results and subsequent discussion of the case studies are accounted for in Section 5, before a conclusion is given in Section 6.

2 Semantic transfer and previous diachronic studies of semantic prosody

Bublitz (1996: 13) claims that a word can be influenced by its collocational environment, and that persistent co-occurrence can cause meaning to "rub off" from adjacent items, leading to the word "adopting" the semantic features of its collocates. This process of semantic transfer inherent to the notion of semantic prosody is often described by the use of metaphors (Hunston 2007: 250; Stewart 2010: 42–43). Louw (1993) refers back to Bréal's (1897) theory of "contagion", through Ullmann (1962), in addition to using the term "imbuing", as well as "colouring", which also appears in Xiao and McEnery (2006), which in turn is reminiscent of Bublitz' "rubbing off" and "adopting". Sinclair himself (1996) uses a liquid comparison in describing how evaluative meaning is "poured over" from collocates into more "neutral" lexical item containers. Whitsitt (2005) argues against this notion of semantic transfer and by extension semantic prosody, claiming that the evidence of evaluative meaning being transferred to lexical items from their environments over time is lacking, and mainly views it as a practical way of distinguishing semantic prosody from connotation. Further, he states that a fundamental problem has been the use of synchronic corpora to research a diachronic process. Here, he uses the well-known examples of *set in* and *cause*, and claims that these have not been "contaminated" by their respective environments over time, but that they rather always have had inherent negative meanings, and that the failure to detect this can be attributed to weaknesses in the research (Whitsitt 2005: 296). He also goes further with the bolder claim that "the concept of semantic prosody was made possible because of the refusal to *look a word up*" (Whitsitt 2005: 293).

Morley and Partington (2009) counter these arguments by pointing out that *fraught* and *fraught with* have, through semantic transfer from recurring collocates, developed distinct negative prosodies over time, as supported by corpus evidence from the SIena-BOLogna corpus. This is also the case with *monger*, where the change in evaluative meaning actually is included in the *Oxford English Dictionary*'s (OED) definition of the noun (Morley and Partington 2009: 152–153), viz. the negative use of "a person engaged in a petty or disreputable trade of traffic" came into use in the 16th century.

Smith and Nordquist (2012) also challenge the claim put forward by Whitsitt (2005), and have in their study of CAUSE shown that its prosody has changed substantially over time, due to changing collocates transferring their meaning. Here, instances of the lemma in the Early Modern English part of the Helsinki

Corpus (spanning from 1500 to 1710) were analysed and compared with those in the Freiburg-Brown corpus, consisting of English texts from the 1990s. This study showed that CAUSE, both as a verb and as a noun, is now much more frequent in negative contexts than it used to be.

From the slightly different perspective of pragmatic adaptation, Andersen (2017) concludes that "semantic prosody is not static, but subject to change over time" (Andersen 2017: 16), based on his study of how the anglicism JOBB gradually lost its negative semantic prosody since its introduction into the Norwegian language in the late 19th century. Again, this seems to be triggered by shifting semantic transfer over time.

Another relevant study is Zhang (2013), who compares the occurrences of adverbial intensifiers in the Corpus of Late Modern English Texts, spanning from 1710 to 1920, with instances from the 1980s and onward, gathered from the Bank of English. According to the corpus evidence of this study, *awfully* and *terribly* are now much more frequently used in positive contexts than they previously were. However, this might in turn also be attributed to a process of delexicalisation (Zhang 2013: 73–78), where a lexical item "comes to fulfil a particular grammatical function – in the present instance, intensification – but has little or no independent meaning" (Morley and Partington 2009: 155).

On the basis of the studies outlined above, it is possible to conclude that, triggered by semantic transfer, the prosodies of lexical units can change over time, but there does not exist a clear consensus as to how one can separate this diachronic development from other types of semantic change. In the next section, a brief overview of the main processes driving these changes in meaning will be given, as well as how they relate to the theory of semantic transfer.

3 Semantic change and semantic transfer

Semantic change refers how the sense(s) of a lexical item can develop over time, and how new senses arise. However, multiple taxonomies have been created to describe these processes (Traugott and Dasher 2001: 4), and as a result, the "categories of semantic change are not universally agreed upon by scholars" (Sylvester 2022: 6). Still, an appropriate metaphor for the process in general is perhaps the "plasticity" of lexical meaning, illustrating how already formed meanings still can be subject to permanent changes (Robert 2008: 55–56). A central concept to do with the emergence of new meanings is that of *metaphor*, and Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 3–6) argue that "we live by" certain conceptual metaphors that imbue how we discuss particular topics. One example is the connection between "thought" and "food", which can be exemplified through how the phrase to *spoon-feed* not only refers to the physical act of giving someone food with a piece of cutlery, but by metaphorical extension to explain something in a very simple manner (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 46–47; Allan 2008: 4–14). In the creation of new meanings, this process "operates on a perceived similarity, physical or functional, between the descriptive meanings of two words" (Nevalainen 2006a: 68), and can also be divided into further categories. One of these is the *abstraction* of meaning, where lexical items with concrete meanings (often related to human senses) are applied to abstract categories, e.g. *sensible*, which used to carry the more specific meaning "perceptible to the senses" (Nevalainen 2006b: 446–447). Another category, also pertaining to senses, is *synaesthesia*, and refers to how a meaning can be "transferred from one sensory area to another" (Nevalainen 2006b: 445), for example how the term *hot* is used, not just for touch, but also for taste.

Another important distinction to make within semantic shifts is that between *narrowing* and *broadening*. In the former, a general meaning becomes more specific, a famous example being how *deer* previously had the meaning of 'beast', but over time has come to refer to one type of animal. Thus, it has moved from being a hypernym to being a hyponym. In the case of broadening, the opposite happens, and a word moves upwards in the lexical hierarchy. An example of this type of extension of meaning is *target*, which used to have a specialised meaning of a 'light round shield or buckler', but now has a very wide meaning (Ullmann 1962: 228–230; Sylvester 2022: 1–2).

It is also possible to draw a comparison between semantic transfer and some of the described reasons for semantic change. An example is *inferential shifts,* where meanings and connotations are described as changing on the basis of what we infer from the lexical items. For example, *addicted* used

to have a positive evaluative meaning, referring to someone 'devoted', 'inclined' or 'attached', but over time this has changed (Nevalainen 2006b: 439–441). Further, the idea of semantic transfer is also compatible with what Renouf (2013) claims about the creation of new meanings: "a semantic neologism, or new sense of an existing word, has been shown to be realised in part by the change in the word's collocational environment" (2013: 177).

The challenges with separating the diachronic development of semantic prosody from other kinds of linguistic change is also highlighted by Helsper and Hoffmann (2016), who studied the development of the lemmas BREAK OUT, CAUSE, and PROVIDE from the 1500s to the 2010s through their occurrences in Early English Books Online, the British National Corpus and the Corpus of Historical American English. They argue that these other kinds of linguistic changes should be taken into account when investigating semantic prosody in a diachronic perspective, primarily metaphorical extension, metonymic extension, pragmatic inferencing leading to change, and layering of older and newer meanings. In the case of BREAK OUT, it is actually suggested that "semantic change is a prerequisite for the establishment of a negative semantic prosody" (Helsper and Hoffmann 2016: 25). It is also worth noting that Helsper and Hoffmann do not arrive at the same conclusions as Smith and Nordquist (2012) in the case of CAUSE, as they conclude that its negative semantic prosody was already established at the end of the 15th century, and point out the small corpora used in the previous study as a possible factor for this discrepancy.

This emphasis on semantic change can also be found in Morley and Partington (2009: 154), who use the following example:

> The process of pejoration of *orchestrate(d)* in political discourse begins with a metaphorical departure from the original musical sense. In the new sphere it is free to adopt entirely new sets of semantic preferences, through retaining an underlying sense of organisation.

From this perspective, the (context-dependent) negative prosody of *orchestrate* is caused, not through semantic transfer, i.e. recurring association with negative collocates over time, but rather through a new metaphorical meaning applied in certain discourse contexts.

When examining processes of semantic change in the context of semantic prosody, an aspect also worth considering is the connection to polysemy, in the sense that additional meanings often accompany semantic change (Nevalainen 2006b: 450). One can even go so far as to see this as a prerequisite of the types of developments mentioned above, and to claim that "an essential stepping-stone to semantic shift" is "the general pervasiveness for polysemy within the lexicon" (Sylvester 2022: 5). In this context, time is also a relevant aspect, in that older words tend to have more senses than newer words. In the study performed by Finkenstaedt and Wolff (1973), it was found that an estimated 98 percent of words that entered the English language in the 20th century are monosemous, while only 40 percent of words that have been part of English since the 15th century are monosemous (Nevalainen 2006b: 434). Therefore, when looking at the potential diachronic development of the semantic prosody of lexical items, especially those with multiple meanings and a long history of usage, one could pose the following question: is this actually the same lexeme? By seeking to better define the boundaries between semantic change and semantic transfer, this article hopes to go some way towards answering this question.

4 Material and method

The material for this study is gathered from the following three corpora: Early English Books Online (EEBO), the Corpus of Late Modern English Texts 3.1 (CLMET3.1) and the British National Corpus 1994 (BNC1994). The reason for choosing these corpora is threefold. Firstly, they are all of a considerable size, containing enough instances of the selected core lemmas to create a comparable sample. Secondly, they all (predominantly) feature texts of the British English variety, making them comparable. And thirdly, together they cover a considerable time span without overlapping (see Table 1 for a brief overview and comparison of the corpora).

EEBO (accessed through the CQPweb edition at Lancaster) is a diachronic corpus spanning from the late 1400s to 1700. It is a corpus featuring texts from several languages, but only those texts categorised as English will be used, which constitute the overwhelming majority, although some of these also contain passages in other languages.[1] Similar, but monolingual,[2] CLMET3.1 (accessed through AntConc),[3] is also a diachronic corpus, featuring texts written between the early 18th century and the early 20th century. BNC1994[4] is also monolingual, but synchronic, exclusively featuring texts from the late 20th century. Additionally, all three corpora are annotated and tagged for part-of-speech (POS).

Table 1. Brief overview of the corpora used in this study.

Corpus	Time span	Number of words	Number of texts
EEBO	1475–1700	1,195,108,813	44,157
CLMET3.1	1710–1920	40,257,859	333
BNC1994	1964–1993	112,102,325	4,048

The primary reason for choosing the time span used in this study is because of its overlap with the established period of Modern English, i.e. English from around 1500 onwards, where the present-day variety is close enough to that of the beginning of the period to compare the uses of the nodes without difficulty (Nevalainen 2006a: 1–11). Furthermore, the beginning of this period also corresponds quite well with the first attestations of the lemmas, according to the OED, as seen in Table 2.

Table 2. First recorded uses of the lemmas of this study according to the OED.

Lemma	Part-of-speech	Year
FABRIC	Noun	1483
FABRICATE	Verb	1598
FABRICATION	Noun	1602

There are, however, some issues of comparability regarding the material that should be mentioned. Both EEBO and BNC1994 contain texts from a wide variety of registers, but their designs differ. While the texts of BNC1994 are chosen based on principles of designing a sampled general corpus (Burnard 2007), this is not the case in EEBO. Here, the texts are chosen primarily because they derive from the time period in question, which is also reflected in the number of texts (and tokens) within the separate text domains. A consequence of this worth mentioning, due to its possible impact on the results of the study, is the much higher proportion of religious texts in the EEBO compared to the other two corpora. This issue of sampling is also worth mentioning in relation to CLMET3.1, which features a high proportion of literary texts, making up roughly half the corpus.

Additionally, the corpora differ in size (see Table 1); EEBO is substantially bigger than BNC1994, which again is more than twice the size of CLMET3.1. The tokens in CLMET3.1 are also distributed over substantially fewer texts (see Table 1).

Furthermore, for obvious reasons, BNC1994 is the only corpus that features authentic spoken texts. This is, however, not a major issue in terms of comparability, in that the spoken part of the BNC1994

1 For a full list of the texts in EEBO, see: https://www.proquest.com/eebo.
2 The CLMET3.1 also contains passages in other languages, but these have been omitted from the sample.
3 AntConc (Version 4.2.0) [Computer Software] by Laurence Anthony. Tokyo, Japan: Waseda University, 2022. Available from https://www.laurenceanthony.net/software.
4 As BNC2014 is not yet available in the format needed here, the previous edition BNC1994 has been chosen for this study.

only makes up approximately 10 percent of the corpus. Additionally, the other two corpora do feature texts either documenting or simulating spoken language, and, although several of these texts would be expected to contain features of communicative distance, all corpora should at least contain some texts that are "rich in the features of communicative immediacy" (Culpeper and Kytö 2010: 11). Roughly 5 percent of CLMET3.1 is made up of *speech-like* texts within the register of drama, which simulates spontaneous spoken language. This register is included in EEBO as well, which also features *speech-based* texts, such as transcriptions of actual spoken language from the category termed 'Trials and disputes', as well as *speech-purposed* texts from the categories 'Sermons' and 'Speeches' (Culpeper and Kytö 2010: 18). Therefore, use within the spoken register is arguably included in varying degrees in all three corpora, albeit in most authentic terms in BNC1994.

Because of the somewhat limited frequency of FABRICATE and FABRICATION, all of the occurrences of the lemmas in the corpora have been included in the study, while a random sample of a similar size has been extracted for the much more frequent lemma FABRIC, as shown in Table 3. In the compilation of the sample, lemma search strings such as {fabric}_N* have been used in the CQPweb edition of EEBO and BNC1994, while an advanced search of the separate noun inflections and verb forms was made in AntConc, in order to return all the forms of the lemmas.

Table 3. Number of instances across the corpora in the sample.

Lemma	EEBO	CLMET	BNC1994
FABRIC	150	50	200
FABRICATE	167	55	183
FABRICATION	128	33	208

To analyse the development of the separate senses of these lemmas and the prosodies of the extended units of meaning where they function as cores, the instances will first be categorised according to meaning.

The next step will be to investigate the collocations of the respective cores. Mutual information (MI) score will be used as a metric to uncover the most frequent collocates of the lemmas in each corpus. The choice of MI score is related to the fact that it highlights "word combinations made up of low frequency words" (Granger and Bestgen 2014: 230), i.e. lexical items that often occur together, but rarely apart, which differs from for example *t*-score, which is more similar to raw frequency (Durrant and Schmitt 2009: 167). The collocates will be identified within a span of three words to the left and three to the right, and a cut-off point of MI scores below three will be employed, since it can be viewed as "non-collocational" (Granger and Bestgen 2014: 236). The minimum raw frequency required for these will be five in EEBO and BNC1994, but only two in CLMET3.1, due to its smaller size. Subsequently, the collocates' distribution across senses as well as their development across time will be investigated. This is also the case for their colligation, i.e. the syntactical environment of the lemmas, which will be the succeeding step.

Leaning on these results, manual scrutiny will be performed to identify patterns of semantic preferences, i.e. recurring patterns in a wider context, with a focus on their relationship with the separate senses. Finally, the findings from the previous steps will serve as the basis when determining how the prosodies of these extended units have been affected by the development of the senses of their cores.

For the purpose of this study, semantic prosody will be categorised in binary terms, distinguishing between positive and negative prosodies. However, some aspects are worth defining and operationalising. The instances will be categorised as either *positive, negative* or *neutral*, and following Xiao and McEnery (2006), these categories will be referred to as *meaning categories*. However, due to their broadness, certain issues might arise in the classification. As a rule, the following borrowed and slightly altered definition will serve in the categorisation for *negative*: environments describing objects, actions or concepts "that people generally disvalue or avoid" (Feng, Bose and Choi 2011: 1094). The reverse is then true for *positive*, and *neutral* will be used for those not expressing this type of evaluative meaning in either direction. However,

what is *valued* or *disvalued* will to a certain degree depend on the individual's understanding, and might differ from linguist to linguist. Further, negated cases, as in example (1) will be categorised as *negative*, because the action is still unfavourable, even though it is described as not happening.

(1) police officers do *not fabricate* evidence against men they know to be innocent (BNC1994)

Further, this article sees both semantic prosody and connotational meaning as aspects of evaluative meaning (Morley and Partington 2009: 150–151), but differing in degree of "obviousness", where it is clear and evident in the latter, but more "hidden" in the former. This is also connected to where meaning is located, and a further distinction can be made in this regard. Connotational meaning is seen as an inherent quality of a lexical item (Partington 1998: 67; Philip 2009: 80), whereas semantic prosody is seen to reside in an extended unit of meaning. Thus, the potential positive or negative evaluative meaning expressed in this study by the separate senses of the lexical items and their collocates will be attributed to the extended units of meaning where the senses function as cores, rather than the core lexical items alone.

5 Results and discussion

5.1 FABRIC

In terms of frequency, the use of this lemma appears to have increased substantially over the years. In EEBO it has a normalised frequency of 6.9 instances per million words, in CLMET3.1 a slightly higher frequency of 8.6 instances pmw, and in BNC1994, there is a drastic increase to 25.1 instances pmw. However, this needs to be read with the caveat of EEBO being less reliable when dealing with raw numbers, because some texts may mistakenly have been categorised as English, and there may be duplicates.

In the categorisation of the senses, the choice was made to divide the instances into four main categories, the first three of which were inspired by the definitions offered by the OED, but adjusted to establish senses applicable to the instances from all three corpora. The first, rather broad, sense encompasses instances that refer to 'a product of skilled workmanship', such as 'an edifice' or 'a building' (OED), and account for the literal use of the lemma within this sense. To separate these from the metaphorical use, i.e. when referring to immaterial objects, the second sense was added. The third sense has been used for instances referring to the more specific meaning of 'manufactured textile material' (OED). Finally, due to a number of instances in the sample describing the texture of rocks in the BNC1994, the fourth sense was included to account for this particular use of the lemma within natural science.

However, the instances within the sample offered some challenges in the process of categorisation. One of these is the somewhat blurred lines between literal and metaphorical uses of the lemma, as illustrated by examples (2) and (3), where the former has been categorised as the 'skilled' sense and the latter as the 'metaphorical' sense.

(2) his creation erected the whole *fabric of the world* (EEBO)
(3) some forms of censorship will be as much a part of the *fabric of society* as in a despotic state (BNC1994)

The *fabric of the world* is here categorised as a 'product of skilled workmanship'. That is, even though it can be read metaphorically, it is here understood as a literal construction of the world by the divine within the context of the text. A further reason behind this categorisation is its reference to something tangible, unlike (3). Similarly, on the basis of its tangibility, instances where FABRIC is used in reference to (parts of) the human body have also been treated as part of the 'skilled' sense, as in (4).

(4) how artificial and unimitable by mortal hand this *fabric of our body* is (EEBO)

The distribution of these senses across the corpora is outlined in Table 4.

Table 4. Distribution of separate senses of FABRIC across corpora.

EEBO – 1475–1700		
Sense	**Number of occurrences**	**Percentage**
Sense 1 – 'skilled'	81	54%
Sense 2 – 'metaphorical'	65	43.3%
Sense 3 – 'textile'	4	2.7%
Sense 4 – 'rock texture'	0	0%
CLMET3.1 – 1710–1920		
Sense	**Number of occurrences**	**Percentage**
Sense 1 – 'skilled'	11	22%
Sense 2 – 'metaphorical'	23	46%
Sense 3 – 'textile'	16	32%
Sense 4 – 'rock texture'	0	0%
BNC1994 – 1960–1994		
Sense	**Number of occurrences**	**Percentage**
Sense 1 – 'skilled'	6	3%
Sense 2 – 'metaphorical'	24	12%
Sense 3 – 'textile'	162	81%
Sense 4 – 'rock texture'	8	4%

The most notable diachronic development in the lemma's distribution across senses is the increase in the 'textile' sense and the decrease in the 'skilled' sense within the same time frame. The advent of the more specific meaning referring to textile material can be seen in the few instances of this sense in EEBO, appearing late in the period covered by the corpus, from 1680 onwards, as in (5) from 1700, nearly a century prior to the first attested use in the OED.

(5) Many Silk *Fabrics* are here made common with all Italy (EEBO)

The instances in the EEBO gathered from contemporary lexicographical sources also support this notion, in that they do not include the 'textile' sense in their definitions. Guy Miege's dictionary of French and English from 1677 lists the noun as a synonym of *structure*, while Wilkins' dictionary of English from 1668 defines it more narrowly as 'a building'. Both of these dictionaries predate the first use of the sense found in the sample, indicating that it became established at a later time.

This gradual process is also visible in CLMET3.1, where all but one of the instances of the 'textile' sense from the sample appear from the mid-19th century onwards, while seven out of the eleven instances of the 'skilled' sense occur in texts from the 18th century.

Although the 'textile' sense by far is the most common one in BNC1994, there are a few instances of the first sense within this corpus. However, only one of these is a clear-cut example of the 'skilled' sense, namely (6).

(6) damage to these *fabrics* in the Second World War was devastating (BNC1994)

The remaining five can be said to fit another OED definition, that is "the basic structure (walls, floor, roof) of a building", as in (7). These instances have been categorised as the 'skilled' sense, because they refer to literal constituents of tangible objects, even though they do not refer to the objects themselves.

(7) you may be able to arrange grants to help you do repairs to the essential *fabric* of the building (BNC1994)

It is also worth noting that the lemma's frequency in the 'metaphorical' sense appears to have decreased over time, and is much less common in BNC1994 than in the other two corpora. When examining

the occurrences, we can observe that the meaning of the metaphors also seems to have changed somewhat. Predominantly, the instances within EEBO and CLMET3.1 can be viewed as the 'skilled' sense in metaphorical uses, as in (8), while the instances within BNC1994 can viewed as the 'textile' sense in metaphorical uses, as in (9).

(8) this *fabric* of comfort is founded so strong, that it can not fall (EEBO)
(9) New arrivals were expected to blend smoothly into the *fabric* of Canadian life (BNC1994)

The collocational structures of the lemma in the corpora also follow the development in the distribution of the senses, where the most fixed collocations have moved from co-occurring most frequently with the lemma in the 'skilled' sense in EEBO to predominantly collocating with the 'textile' sense in BNC1994, as outlined in Table 5.

Table 5. Diachronic development of the collocates of FABRIC.

EEBO			Predominant sense with collocate			
Rank	**Collocate**	**MI-score (raw collocate frequency)**	**Sense 1 – 'skilled'**	**Sense 2 – 'meta-phorical'**	**Sense 3 – 'textile'**	**Sense 4 – 'rock texture'**
1	stateliest	9.849 (13)	X			
2	Logarithmes	8.951 (5)		X		
3	stately	8.412 (258)	X			
4	stupendous	8.407 (44)	X			
5	tottering	8.301 (30)		X		
6	overturns	8.045 (7)		X		
7	rearing	8.045 (7)	X	X		
8	structure	8.004 (73)	X			
9	reared	7.756 (22)	X			
10	conformation	7.695 (11)	X			
CLMET3.1			**Predominant sense with collocate**			
Rank	**Collocate**	**MI-score (raw collocate frequency)**	**Sense 1 – 'skilled'**	**Sense 2 – 'meta-phorical'**	**Sense 3 – 'textile'**	**Sense 4 – 'rock texture'**
1	baseless	12.531 (14)		X		
2	vision	6.753 (8)		X		
3	superstition	6.641 (5)		X		
4	built	5.607 (6)	X	X		
5	mighty	5.594 (5)	X	X		
6	vast	5.381 (6)	X	X		
7	social	5.082 (5)		X		
8	whole	4.233 (23)		X		
9	society	4.194 (8)		X		
BNC1994			**Predominant sense with collocate**			
Rank	**Collocate**	**MI-score (raw collocate frequency)**	**Sense 1 – 'skilled'**	**Sense 2 – 'meta-phorical'**	**Sense 3 – 'textile'**	**Sense 4 – 'rock texture'**
1	wallcoverings	10.966 (9)			X	
2	diagenetic	10.546 (16)				X
3	microfibre	10.480 (5)			X	
4	Gore-tex	10.316 (13)			X	
5	depositional	10.308 (9)				X
6	wallpapers	10.255 (11)			X	
7	Pertex	10.200 (6)			X	
8	ripstop	10.089 (11)			X	
9	Sekers	10.068 (19)			X	
10	furnishing	9.885 (38)			X	

It is also noteworthy that the strongest collocations are found with the 'metaphorical' sense in CLMET3.1, which correlates with this sense being the most prominent in the corpus.

The most prevalent collocates of the first two corpora imply more evaluation than those of BNC1994, in that there are several collocates implying contexts expressing both positive evaluative meaning, specifically *stupendous*, *mighty*, *vast* and *stately/stateliest*, as in (10), and negative evaluative meaning, specifically *tottering*, *superstition* and *baseless*, as in (11).

(10) The Church of Ratcliff in the Suburbs is a more noble Structure, being curiously arched, and made a *stately Fabric* all of pure Stone (EEBO)

(11) This *baseless fabric*, the monument of pride and servitude, was forever buried in the ruins of the empire (CLMET3.1)

By contrast, the collocates of BNC1994 imply more neutral contexts, and several are connected to specific meanings. Three of the most prevalent collocates in this corpus are brand names, namely *Gore-tex*, *Sekers* and *Pertex*, as in (12), and two are associated with the 'rock texture' sense, namely *depositional* and *diagenetic*, as in (13).

(12) A very lightweight ripstop *Pertex* nylon *fabric* originally designed for parachute canopies (BNC1994)

(13) Care must be taken to avoid *diagenetic fabrics* in any such analysis (BNC1994)

In terms of colligation, there is also a notable development over time that can be seen in relation to the change in the distribution of the senses. The lemma appears in the recurrent structure *the* (AdjP) FABRIC *of* NP in 37 percent of the instances in EEBO, as in (14), and is, apart from one instance of the 'textile' sense, divided evenly between the 'skilled' and the 'metaphorical' sense. However, the specific pattern *the* (AdjP) FABRIC *of* Det. (AdjP) *world* accounts for ten of the occurrences, as in the previously discussed example (2), indicating that this is a fixed phrase. In CLMET3.1, the situation is similar, where *the* (AdjP) FABRIC *of* NP accounts for 36 percent of the instances, but more than half of the occurrences feature the lemma in the 'metaphorical' sense, as in (15), while the remaining instances are distributed across the 'skilled' and the 'textile' sense, in line with the overall distribution of the senses. The situation is markedly different in BNC1994, where the lemma only features in this pattern in 12 percent of the occurrences. This pattern is also most recurrent for the 'metaphorical' sense, as in (16), and more than half of the instances of this sense in the corpus occur within this structure. Similarly, this pattern accounts for half of the instances of the 'skilled' sense, while it does not appear to be particularly recurrent for the 'textile' sense.

(14) Before *the fabric of the Government* can be changed and modelled to your desire, it is necessary above all things to make your self Master of the City (EEBO)

(15) for all men to bow before a threat of crime is to loosen and degrade beyond redemption *the whole fabric of man's decency* (CLMET3.1)

(16) authorities are striving to sustain an active supply-side policy to prevent *the fabric of industry* being destroyed (BNC1994)

Based on the corpus data, there is also a clear development in the semantic preferences of the lemma. In EEBO, the clearest tendency is for the lemma to occur in contexts discussing the divine, however, this specific preference might in part be influenced by religious texts being somewhat overrepresented in the corpus, as compared to CLMET3.1 and BNC1994. These contexts feature the lemma in both the 'skilled' sense, as in (17), and in the 'metaphorical' sense, as in (18). Further, the 'skilled' sense also appears to have a preference for the semantic field of the human body, as exemplified earlier by (4), in addition to contexts discussing construction and manufacturing, often in the form of grand buildings or impressive structures, as in (19).

(17) The *Fabric* and Bigness of Noah's Arc (EEBO)
(18) the whole *fabric* of religion is the cloud of darkness they strike at (EEBO)
(19) the first of which is the Building so stately a *Fabric* for Persons wholly unsensible of the Beauty and Use of it (EEBO)

The most striking change that occurs in CLMET3.1 is perhaps the loss of the lemma's preference for both the divine and the human body, which are not prevalent in this corpus. However, the preference for construction and manufacturing has been retained for the 'skilled' sense, and there is also a more specific preference developing for clothes and textile materials connected to the 'textile' sense, as in (20). Additionally, FABRIC has a stronger tendency of occurring in contexts discussing more intangible semantic fields, which can be seen in connection with its occurrences in religious contexts in the 'metaphorical' sense in EEBO, but is much more prominent in CLMET3.1 with different subject matters. These can broadly be divided into two categories, where the first can be summarised as society, organizations and norms, as in (21), and the second as contexts discussing the mind, for example in the forms of visions, superstitions or theories, as in (22).

(20) no one person in two hundred and fifty only need work in the factory to produce the cotton and woolen *fabrics* of the most amply clothed nation in the world (CLMET3.1)
(21) This revolution dissolved the *fabrics* of civil and military government (CLMET3.1)
(22) he raises from this simple truth one of the most beautiful *fabrics* of moral theory (CLMET3.1)

This last preference is also present in BNC1994, but predominantly in connection to society, organizations and norms. The same can be said of the lemma's preference for clothes and textile material, which is by far the most prevalent semantic field in the corpus. Further, a more specific subcategory within this field also emerges, where the lemma features in contexts discussing textile materials in more detail, which can be seen in relation to the lemma occurring in instructional texts and advertisements, as in (23) and (24).

(23) Knitweave can be thought of as a stocking stitch *fabric* with the weaving yarn caught into the purl side (BNC1994)
(24) Fully taped seams on the Gore-Text linings. Materials: outer *fabric* – sanded microfibre; drop lining – Winter Lite Fore-Tex (BNC1994)

The outlined development in the lemma's collocational, colligational and semantic preference is also evident in its prosody, visualised in Figure 1.

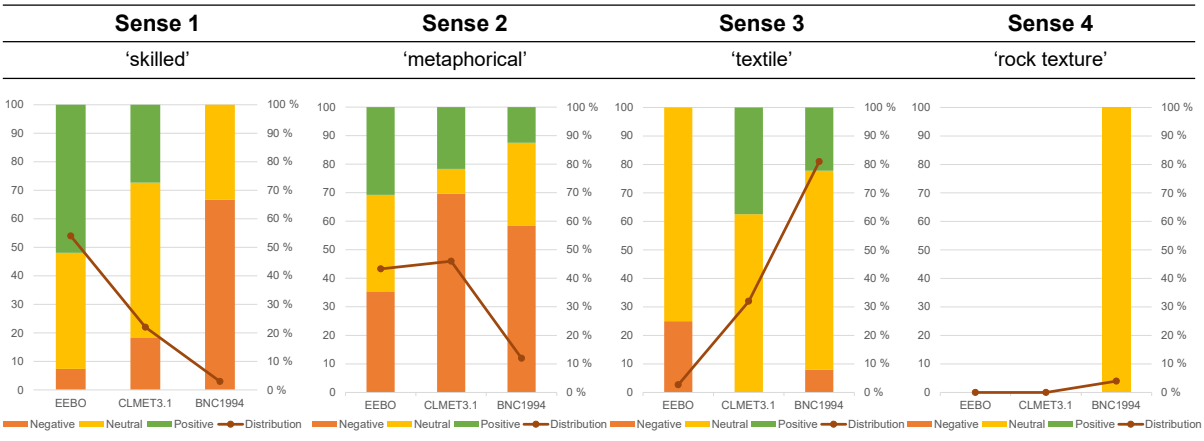


Figure 1. Distribution of separate senses of FABRIC across meaning categories.

FABRIC is commonly used with evaluation in EEBO, and the dominant 'skilled' sense most frequently occurs in contexts expressing positive evaluative meaning, while the 'metaphorical' sense is more evenly distributed across the meaning categories. For the former, it could even be claimed that its tendency of occurring in positive contexts is an inherent quality, i.e. that a *fabric* in this meaning refers to something elevated, as in (25) describing the "capital Conditions required in good Buildings".

(25) whether the Walls stand upright upon clean footing and Foundation; whether the *Fabric* be of a beautiful Stature; whether for the breadth it appear well burnished (EEBO)

This inherent positive meaning cannot be said to feature in the other senses, and the 'metaphorical' sense appears rather to have developed a stronger tendency of occurring in contexts expressing negative evaluative meaning, which seems to have cemented over time, as in (26).

(26) These typical judgements against dwindling authority formed part of a wider *fabric* of anxiety in this era (BNC1994)

However, although the newer 'textile' sense is consistently most common in neutral contexts across the corpora, as in (27), it also features relatively frequently in positive meaning categories in CLMET3.1 and BNC1994, especially compared with the 'rock texture' sense, which exclusively occurs in neutral contexts. Still, this tendency is not strong enough to be considered a property of the core sense in its extended unit of meaning, and for BNC1994, this could in part be influenced by instances gathered from advertisements, which might favour a more flattering language, as in (28).

(27) Among the synthetic fibres used in furnishing *fabrics* are nylon, polyester and acrylic (BNC1994)
(28) Gigli has created a quiet, enduring style with his men's collection, based on harmonious colours, traditional *fabrics* and soft constructions (BNC1994)

5.2 FABRICATE

Similar to FABRIC, the lemma FABRICATE appears to have increased quite drastically over time, from a normalised frequency of 0.16 instances per million words in EEBO, increasing substantially to 1.37 pmw in CLMET3.1, and finally to 1.68 pmw in BNC1994.

Initially, the instances of the lemma were divided into two senses, based on definitions offered by the OED, namely the literal 'skilled' sense ("to make anything that requires skill/construct/manufacture"), as in (29) and the 'falsified' sense ("to 'make up'; to frame or invent (a legend, lie, etc.); to forge (a document)"), which is predominantly used metaphorically. However, in the categorisation, a pattern arose of instances not fitting either of the senses, which inspired the choice of dividing the occurrences into three rather than two categories. This last sense can be said to correspond to one marked as obsolete in the OED, categorised as a variant of the first sense, but "with immaterial object". It is similar to the 'falsified' sense, in that it is a metaphorical extension denoting the creation of something intangible. However, the two differ in terms of their intentions. In one, there is a clear motivation for fabricating something, that is, to deceive someone, as in (30). However, this intent is not evident in the other sense, as in (31), where the described fabrication is not made with an ulterior motive.

(29) That good emperor took a great delight to *fabricate* and build great works (EEBO)
(30) Slooten and Dawson were accused of *fabricating* their data, and of failing to count dolphins accurately (BNC1994)
(31) If every man may *fabricate* his own Fortune, why not also contrive his own Faith? (EEBO)

Therefore, this metaphorical extension without the intent to deceive will be categorised as a separate sense (referred to as 'metaphorical'), while the instances of metaphorical extensions synonymous with 'forge; counterfeit', will be included in the 'falsified' sense. The distribution of these senses across the three corpora can be viewed in Table 6 below.

The most striking development within the distribution of the senses can be said to be that of the 'falsified' sense, which only has four occurrences in EEBO, but accounts for nearly half of the instances of CLMET3.1 and BNC1994. Within the first corpus, all the four instances also appear late, the first being from 1623, namely (32) below.

(32) because many persons with malice and natural curiosity, more then for conueniency or other good effect, do keep in their power, books which they call Verdes, or of leather, and Registers, and Catalogues of descendants *fabricated* without more authority nor cause, than that which his own indignation hath offered (EEBO)

Table 6. Distribution of separate senses of FABRICATE across corpora.

EEBO – 1475–1700		
Sense	**Number of occurrences**	**Percentage**
Sense 1 – 'skilled'	136	81.4%
Sense 2 – 'metaphorical'	27	16.2%
Sense 3 – 'falsified'	4	2.4%
CLMET3.1 – 1710–1920		
Sense	**Number of occurrences**	**Percentage**
Sense 1 – 'skilled'	27	49.1%
Sense 2 – 'metaphorical'	2	3.6%
Sense 3 – 'falsified'	26	47.3%
BNC1994 – 1960–1994		
Sense	**Number of occurrences**	**Percentage**
Sense 1 – 'skilled'	94	51.4%
Sense 2 – 'metaphorical'	14	7.6%
Sense 3 – 'falsified'	75	41%

It is, however, worth noting that this occurrence predates the first entry of the sense in the OED by more than 150 years. Further, another instance from EEBO is gathered from Wilkins' aforementioned dictionary from 1668, which lists FABRICATE as a synonym of *forge*, together with *feign* and *falsify*. This differs somewhat from the other instance from a dictionary in the corpus, Bullokar's *An English Expositor*, which was published five decades earlier in 1616, and defines the item as 'to frame; to build', indicating that the distinct meaning of the 'falsified' sense emerges in this period.

The rise of the lemma's use in the 'falsified' sense is also clear in its collocations, where the most frequent collocates over time gradually move from co-occurring most frequently with the lemma in the 'skilled' sense in EEBO to having the most fixed collocations with the lemma in the 'falsified' sense in BNC1994.

This development is also followed by the collocates gradually indicating more contexts expressing negative evaluative meaning. By comparing the most frequent collocate in all three corpora, it is possible to claim that we move from a somewhat positively loaded collocate in EEBO, through one indicating neutrality in CLMET3.1, to a collocate potentially contributing to a negative prosody in BNC1994, exemplified by (33)–(35).

(33) a great effect and power of Matter and Motion *rightly fabricated* and acted by the hands of artists (EEBO)

(34) he and the royal Apprentice *fabricated* an *Iron* Press (CLMET3.1)

(35) 'Munchausen's syndrome' is the name given to attention-seeking patients who feign illness or deliberately *fabricate symptoms* (BNC1994)

Table 7. Diachronic development of the collocates of FABRICATE.

EEBO			Predominant sense with collocate		
Rank	**Collocate**	**MI-score (raw collocate frequency)**	**Sense 1 – 'skilled'**	**Sense 2 – 'metaphorical'**	**Sense 3 – 'falsified'**
1	rightly	6.793 (5)	X		
2	body	3.559 (8)	X		
3	new	3.553 (5)	X		
CLMET3.1			**Predominant sense with collocate**		
Rank	**Collocate**	**MI-score (raw collocate frequency)**	**Sense 1 – 'skilled'**	**Sense 2 – 'metaphorical'**	**Sense 3 – 'falsified'**
1	iron	6.532 (2)	X		
2	false	6.164 (2)			X
3	employed	5.695 (2)	X		X
4	also	4.395 (3)	X		
BNC1994			**Predominant sense with collocate**		
Rank	**Collocate**	**MI-score (raw collocate frequency)**	**Sense 1 – 'skilled'**	**Sense 2 – 'metaphorical'**	**Sense 3 – 'falsified'**
1	symptoms	7.320 (5)			X
2	evidence	5.403 (9)			X
3	data	5.047 (6)			X

With regard to colligation, one development appears to be an increase in the use of FABRICATE in passive constructions. While only 12 percent of the instances in EEBO occur in passive constructions, this is the case for 29 percent in CLMET3.1 and 30 percent in BNC1994. However, this cannot exclusively be attributed to the increase of the 'falsified' sense, since the passive voice is evenly distributed between the 'skilled' sense, as in (36), and the 'falsified' sense, as in (37), in both CLMET3.1 and BNC1994:

(36) tail hooks *were* also *fabricated* and installed (BNC1994)
(37) the confessions of those convicted of the Guildford pub bombings *had been fabricated* (BNC1994)

From the surrounding contexts of the instances, it is evident that there has been a clear development in terms of semantic preference, from the early instances to the modern use of the lemma. In EEBO, the occurrences can broadly be divided into three categories. The first consists of instances with a very literal meaning of the lemma (in the 'skilled' sense), which has a preference for what can be summarised as tools or products related to industry/construction, and frequently co-occurs with lexical items such as *industry*, *instruments, wall, stone* and *bridge*, as in (38). The second comprises instances with a preference for surrounding contexts discussing the divine, as in (39). This is common for the lemma in all meanings, but more frequent for the 'metaphorical' and the 'falsified' sense than the 'skilled' sense. The third category, however, is restricted to the 'skilled' sense, and is made up of instances with a preference for environments describing biological processes, be it within plants or the human body, as in (40).

(38) whilst this part of the Bridge on Flanders side, was built, at the same time at St. Philips Fort on Brabant side was the other part of the *Bridge fabricated* (EEBO)
(39) the wonders the all powerful God miraculously *fabricated* (EEBO)
(40) That Plastic, or formative vital Principle (termed Anima) that delineated, and *fabricated* the Body in the Womb; does also govern, and is the sole Efficient cause of vital Actions, in the state of Health (EEBO)

Of these three, only the first is retained in CLMET3.1, and the instances in the corpus are divided between those in the 'skilled' sense with this preference, as in (41) and those in the 'falsified' sense with a preference for contexts describing deceit, as in (42).

(41) the same kind and quantity of cloth *fabricated* in England two centuries ago (CLMET3.1)
(42) he *fabricates* false antiques very cleverly (CLMET3.1)

This division is also continued into the 20th century. However, the former has developed somewhat, and now predominantly has a preference for very technical environments of a more recent date, as in (43), with a preference for words such as *mainframe, electrode, processor, components, silicon* etc.

(43) These multiprocessors will do three instructions per cycle and will be *fabricated* in a three-level metal process (BNC1994)

The prosodic development of the lemma outlined in Figure 2 is very much connected with the development in the senses and their preferred uses.

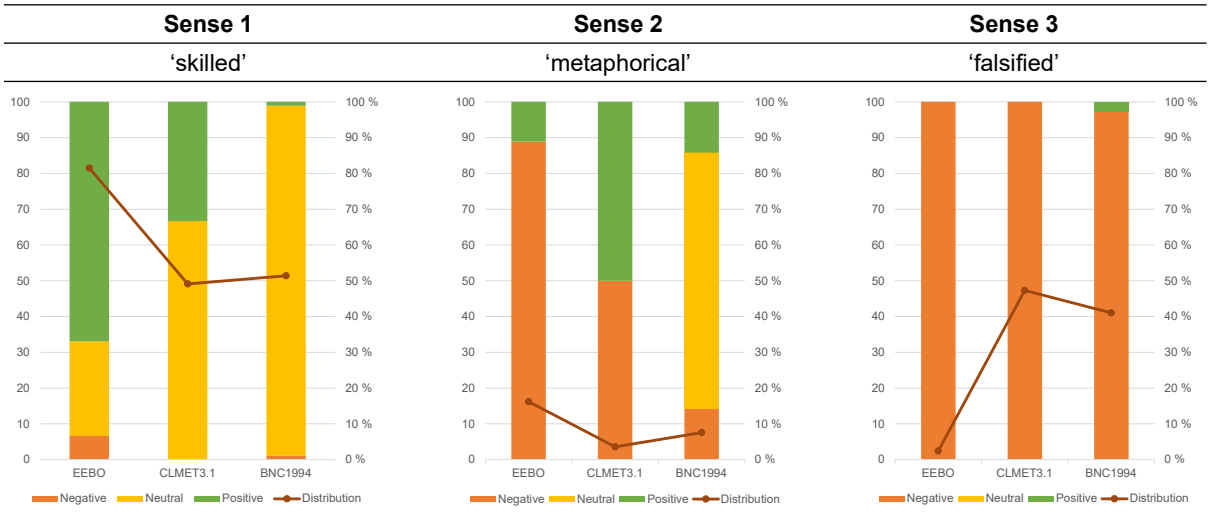


Figure 2. Distribution of separate senses of FABRICATE across meaning categories.

We can observe that the slight change in prosody in the 'skilled' sense can be attributed to its semantic evolution. The lemma in this sense does not express strong evaluative meaning in any of the corpora, but is certainly leaning more towards the *positive* in EEBO than in BNC1994, with CLMET3.1 somewhere in between. The same definition from the OED, "to make anything that requires skill; to construct, manufacture" is suitable for the lemma in all three corpora, but the emphasis on (and appreciation of) *skill* has somewhat disappeared from the 15th century texts in EEBO to the 20th century texts in BNC1994. Of course, it is true that the fabrication of semiconductors also requires a lot of skill, as in (44), but it does not perhaps share the same grand connotations as the armour Venus requested Vulcan to fashion for Aeneas, as in (45).

(44) metal organic phase epitaxy, an advanced production technique for *fabricating* optoelectronic semiconductor devices (BNC1994)
(45) Of firmer Metal, than that solid Plate which Vulcan's Cyclops once did *fabricate* for Venus Son (EEBO)

This is contrasted by the lemma in the 'falsification' sense, which consistently has a more obvious negative semantic prosody, as in (32), (35) and (37) above.

The occurrences of the lemma in the 'metaphorical' sense are generally more difficult to categorise into meaning categories, especially in EEBO, in that there is often a need to examine a wider surrounding context to understand the evaluative meaning conveyed, as well as the intent, in order to separate

it from instances of the 'falsified' sense. Still, it appears that it in its earliest use tended to occur in negatively loaded environments, and that it has since lost this tendency, predominantly appearing in neutral contexts in BNC1994, exemplified by (46)–(48).

(46) Ideas do cloth themselves with a body in the shape of the image *fabricated* in the imagination, and it is by these that those strange things are effected, that are falsely attributed to Demons (EEBO)

(47) I have come to be beside thee, causing to germinate thy head, to *fabricate* thee with the words of Phtah, like the brilliancy of the sun for ever (CLMET3.1)

(48) The noise was so constant and so intense that it *fabricated* silence (BNC1994)

5.3 Fabrication

Fabrication has a similar development to that of fabricate in terms of overall frequency, increasing from a normalised frequency of 0.13 instances pmw in EEBO to 0.82 pmw in CLMET3.1, and then substantially to 1.9 instances pmw in BNC1994. This is also the case for the lemma's distribution across senses, outlined in Table 8, which follows a similar pattern to that of its verb counterpart. Here, the same categories have been used as for fabricate, outlined in section 5.2.

Table 8. Distribution of separate senses of fabrication across corpora.

EEBO – 1475–1700		
Sense	**Number of occurrences**	**Percentage**
Sense 1 – 'skilled'	101	77.3%
Sense 2 – 'metaphorical'	27	21.1%
Sense 3 – 'falsified'	2	1.6%
CLMET3.1 – 1710–1920		
Sense	**Number of occurrences**	**Percentage**
Sense 1 – 'skilled'	12	36.4%
Sense 2 – 'metaphorical'	5	15.1%
Sense 3 – 'falsified'	16	48.5%
BNC1994 – 1960–1994		
Sense	**Number of occurrences**	**Percentage**
Sense 1 – 'skilled'	128	61.5%
Sense 2 – 'metaphorical'	5	2.4%
Sense 3 – 'falsified'	75	36.1%

Also here, examples of the lemma in the 'falsified' sense from the 1600s exist, the earliest being (49) from 1624:

(49) Superstition, block-up and fortified by Tyranny, enlarged and propagated both by the Mammon of the World, and fraudulent *Fabrication* of the Pseudo-Clergie (EEBO)

However, this sense is not mentioned in the instances gathered from lexicographic sources, which lean towards the 'skilled' sense, like the entry from Edward Phillips' *The new world of English words* from 1658, which describes the meaning as 'a making of a Fabric or Building'. Still, the dictionary entries cannot be said to overlap completely with the lemma's usage, like the translated version of Jean de Renou's *A medicinal dispensatory* by Richard Tomlinson from 1657, which simply states the meaning of the lemma as a 'building', which is not reflected in the concordance lines.

As in the case of FABRICATE (see Table 6), the lemma in the 'falsified' sense is proportionally most common in CLMET3.1, and it is curious that this meaning in both cases has a drastic rise in frequency in this corpus in comparison to EEBO, followed by a slight decline in BNC1994. However, it is worth taking into consideration that CLMET3.1 has a disproportionate number of literary texts compared to the other two corpora (see Section 4), and the explanation might be that this register favours this sense to a larger extent than non-fictional texts.

Even though the distribution is very similar to FABRICATE, the 'skilled' sense of the noun lemma appears to be slightly more common in BNC1994 than is the case with its verb equivalent. This can also be seen in its collocational patterns, viz. the most frequent collocates are predominantly connected to this meaning, as shown in Table 9, which differs from the pattern of the verb lemma (see Table 7).

Table 9. Diachronic development of the collocates of FABRICATION.

EEBO			Predominant sense with collocate		
Rank	**Collocate**	**MI-score (raw collocate frequency)**	**Sense 1 – 'skilled'**	**Sense 2 – 'metaphorical'**	**Sense 3 – 'falsified'**
1	organization	14.610 (5)	X		
2	moneys	9.306 (5)	X		
3	world	4.650 (18)	X		
4	used	4.545 (5)	X		
5	parts	4.214 (5)	X		
CLMET3.1			**Predominant sense with collocate**		
Rank	**Collocate**	**MI-score (raw collocate frequency)**	**Sense 1 – 'skilled'**	**Sense 2 – 'metaphorical'**	**Sense 3 – 'falsified'**
1	mere	6.109 (2)			X
BNC1994			**Predominant sense with collocate**		
Rank	**Collocate**	**MI-score (raw collocate frequency)**	**Sense 1 – 'skilled'**	**Sense 2 – 'metaphorical'**	**Sense 3 – 'falsified'**
1	wafer	13.118 (8)	X		
2	semiconductor	10.025 (5)	X		
3	Ltd.	8.410 (5)	X		
4	fuel	6.715 (5)	X		
5	plant	6.612 (9)	X		
6	techniques	6.224 (5)	X		
7	complete	5.978 (9)			X
8	oil	5.438 (5)	X		
9	total	4.663 (5)			X
10	evidence	4.382 (5)			X
11	research	4.045 (5)	X		X

As a result, the most frequent collocates of the lemma indicate contexts expressing neutral evaluative meaning. Still, the collocational patterns of the lemma in the 'falsified' sense gradually also become stronger, and are most fixed in BNC1994. Unlike those of the 'skilled' sense, the most frequent collocates of this meaning, namely the adjectives *complete* and *total,* as well as the nouns *evidence* and *research*, indicate a negatively loaded context, as in the examples (50) and (51).

(50) I suppose it's a *total fabrication*, a *complete* sham, isn't it? (BNC1994)

(51) Questions were raised over the *fabrication* of *evidence* (BNC1994)

One explanation for the higher MI scores of the collocations with FABRICATION as compared to the verb lemma, might be connected to its colligational development. In BNC1994, FABRICATION is frequently part of compound nouns, with recurring lexical items such as *work, techniques, shed, plant* and *yard,* as in (52). This also includes proper nouns, which is the case when it co-occurs *Ltd,* as in (53).

(52) the fragile economy which is or has been augmented by local centres of enterprise such as the oil platform *fabrication yard* at Arnish near Stornoway (BNC1994)
(53) He also had an interest in a company, *Heathrow Fabrications Ltd.*, and was the company's auditor (BNC1994)

This is in stark contrast with the other corpora, in that there are no examples of the lemma as part of a compound noun in CLMET3.1 and only one in EEBO, namely (54).

(54) Besides other things of great admiration, Wrought by this *Glasses Fabrication* (EEBO)

However, as with FABRIC, a common pattern the three corpora do share is the following: *the* (AdjP) FABRICATION *of* NP, as in (55)–(57), although there is a clear decrease in its frequency over time. This pattern accounts for roughly 40 percent of the instances in EEBO, 30 percent of the instances in CLMET3.1, and only 10 percent of those in BNC1994.

(55) Saint Augustine resolves those, which demand what God did before *the fabrication of the world* (EBBO)
(56) cultivated either for medicinal purposes, or to serve in *the fabrication of essences and powders* (CLMET3.1)
(57) The work consisted mainly of boiler repairs and *the fabrication of new water tanks* (BNC1994)

In terms of semantic preference, the noun overlaps with FABRICATE to a large extent. In EEBO, the lemma has a divine preference in all meanings, as in (58), as well as a semantic preference in the 'skilled' sense for biological environments, as in (59), in addition to occurring in contexts discussing production and construction in a literal sense, as in (60).

(58) God in the *Fabrication* of man made him the Epitome and little Model of the World (EEBO)
(59) The *Fabrication* of the Tongue, its Papillary Surface, and the Manner of its Application to Objects, bears a great Similitude to that of the Skin now Described (EEBO)
(60) To endure ignition, extension by the hammer, and *fabrication* into instruments (EEBO)

In CLMET3.1, the 'skilled' sense retains the last of these, as in (56) above, but the preference for the divine and biology is almost lost, while a preference for deception accompanies the rise in frequency of the 'falsified' sense, as in (61).

(61) The Colonel was quite sure those woodcuts were mere *fabrications* to deceive Rachel (CLMET3.1)

Like the verb lemma, the instances of FABRICATION in BNC1994 in the 'falsified' sense share this deceptive preference, while the instances in the first sense are usually found in technical contexts, as in (62).

(62) The degree in Microelectronics require emphasis on integrated circuit design, integrated circuit *fabrication* and systems application (BNC1994)

The development in preference also correlates with the change in semantic prosody over time, as outlined in Figure 3.

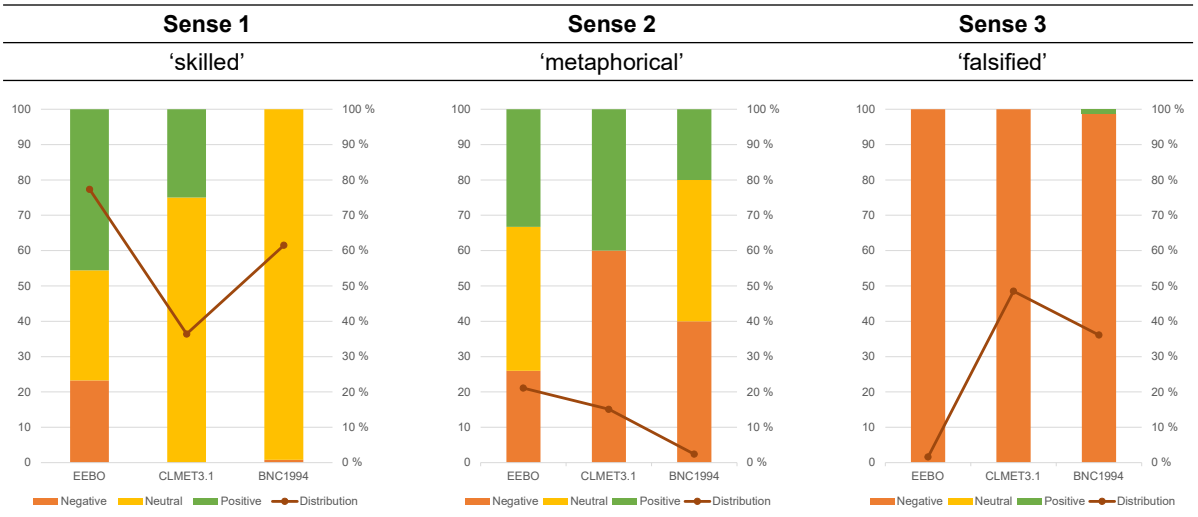


Figure 3. Distribution of separate senses of FABRICATION across meaning categories

Although the pattern is largely comparable to that of FABRICATE, a striking difference is the distribution of the instances between the meaning categories in EEBO. This is especially clear for the 'metaphorical' sense, where the instances almost exclusively appear in negative contexts, but also to a certain extent for the 'skilled' sense, which is more common with negative meanings here than its verb equivalent. However, a large part of the negative instances of this sense is due to the recurring fixed phrase *World of Fabrication*, as in (63), which refers to Assiah, the lowest spiritual realm in Kabbalah, as well as vivid descriptions of the less delicate natural processes, as in (64).

(63) Which is called therefore called the *World of Fabrication,* because Death and Stupidity so prevails in the most parts of it (EEBO)

(64) the excretion and voiding of excrements, by her own institution and *fabrication* (BNC1994)

As in the case of its verb equivalent, the instances of FABRICATION in EEBO are difficult to categorise in terms of meaning category, because the positive evaluative meaning that occurs, often can be seen as more of an inherent property of the core of the extended unit of meaning, in that the meaning of the 'skilled' sense can, at least to a certain extent, be described as more positively charged than that of its modern usage. This is also reflected in its preference for the divine, where a recurring denotation is the creations made by the Almighty, as in (65).

(65) the fruitful Fiat of God, out of the Tohu, or infitinve space of Nothing, called up a sufficient stock of the first Matter, for the *fabrication* of the World in that most excellent Form (EEBO)

Further, we also find the recognisable pattern of the 'skilled' sense losing this evaluation over time, (almost) exclusively occurring in neutral meaning categories in BNC1994, while the 'falsified' sense increases in general frequency over time, but always occurs in negative contexts, the exception being (66), where the sense is deployed in an ironic positive sense for rhetorical purposes (cf. Louw 1993).

(66) With such Daedalian skills, Davide's forebears committed themselves to *fabrication* (BNC1994)

The rise of the 'falsified' sense also coincides with the decline in the use of the 'metaphorical' sense to a larger degree than is the case for FABRICATE, and its prosodic development is slightly different from that

of its verb counterpart. Yet, the same issues in the categorisation of its instances are also relevant for the noun lemma, an example being (67), where it is difficult to separate this meaning from the 'falsified' sense.

(67) I wanted to identify those moments when American literature was complicit in the *fabrication* of racism, but equally important, I wanted to see when literature exploded and undermined it (BNC1994)

While similar to those of the 'falsified' sense, in that the depicted intangible creation clearly is negative, the issue lies in the interpretation of the intent, which in this instance is understood as not being done in order to deceive.

6 Conclusion

In this study we have seen that the change in semantic prosody of both the lemmas FABRICATE and FABRICATION coincides with their respective semantic changes, in that the growing share of instances in negative meaning categories follows a new sense created by metaphorical extension. In this case it would therefore be difficult to argue that the two processes are not connected. However, the question remains as to what the triggering factor is. To explain the development of this new sense in the light of the theory of *semantic transfer*, it would be along the lines of the following: first, the lemmas are used with literal meanings, i.e. the 'skilled' sense. Then the lemmas are used with new meanings through metaphorical extension, i.e. the 'metaphorical' sense. Over time the metaphorical senses are used more and more frequently in negative contexts, causing the core lexical items to be *imbued* with negative evaluative meaning by their collocates, until the instances of the lemmas in these contexts become new senses, distinct and separate from the original ones, i.e. the 'falsified' sense. This evolution is exemplified by (68) from 1598, (69) 1651, and (70) 1839 respectively, all from the verb lemma FABRICATE.

(68) a very narrow entrance, and somewhat long, whose sides were not walls *fabricated* by artificial hand, but made of trees by nature (EEBO)

(69) The most subtle threads of the King, were strong enough sometimes to *fabricate* toils and nets for his subjects (EEBO)

(70) Crimes were also *fabricated*; false accusations were resorted to; and persons were sometimes employed to seduce the unwary into practices with a view to the conviction and the sale of them (CLMET3.1)

From this point of view, the 'metaphorical' sense, as in (69) can be seen as a sort of proto version of the 'falsified' sense, as in (70).

It is also possible to relate this development to the aforementioned *plasticity* of lexical meaning (Robert 2008), where the 'falsified' sense now can be said to have solidified into a meaning with a distinct prosody. Further, the creation of this sense can be explained as an *inferential shift*, and it can be described as a *neologism* caused by changes in collocational environment of the word. In other words, depending on linguistic theory, it might be possible to describe the same process using different terminology.

FABRIC, on the other hand, appears to have gone through a different process of semantic change, namely *narrowing*, where the predominant sense of the lemma has moved from being the hypernym 'skilled' sense to the hyponym 'textile' sense, and in the process, also appears to have been subject to a loss of evaluation. This shift could be explained by the lemma occurring more frequently in new contexts, colouring the core of the extended unit over time, resulting in a change in both meaning and evaluation. This development may also have influenced the metaphorical uses of the lemma, but with a different trajectory in terms of evaluation, in the sense that it appears to originally have been used as a metaphorical 'skilled' sense without a clear prosody, but now seems to have taken on the more specific 'textile' sense in its metaphorical meanings, in addition to a more negative prosody. However, in both

cases, these new meaning contexts could also be seen as a result of the semantic change itself, and the triggering factor is therefore unclear, best described as a chicken-and-egg situation.

On the basis of this, and with reference to the research questions, it is possible to claim that semantic prosody is related to and can indeed be caused by a diachronic process of semantic transfer, and that this process can, at least easily, not be separated from other kinds of semantic change. However, in order to state this with more certainty, more large-scale diachronic corpus studies tracing the prosodic development of separate senses of polysemous items must be conducted. Such future studies should consider using larger samples than those used in this study, as well as more comparable corpora in terms of text domains, to limit the potential impact of different uses of items within particular registers.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Hendrik De Smet at the University of Leuven for kindly granting me access to CLMET3.1. I also wish to thank Daniel Helsper and Sebastian Hoffmann at the University of Trier for sharing the slides from the paper entitled *A diachronic study of semantic prosody* (2016) delivered at ICAME 37.

References

Allan, Kathryn. 2008. *Metaphor and metonymy. A diachronic approach*. Chichester: The Philological Society.

Andersen, Gisle. 2017. A corpus study of pragmatic adaptation: The case of the Anglicism [*job*] in Norwegian. *Journal of Pragmatics* 113: 127–143.

Bréal, Michel. 1897. *Essai de Sémantique*. Paris: Hachette.

Bublitz, Wolfram. 1996. Semantic prosody and cohesive company: *Somewhat predictable. Leuvense Bijdragen: Tijdschrift voor Germaanse Filologie* 85 (1–2): 1–32.

Bullokar, John. 1616. *An English expositor teaching the interpretation of the hardest words vsed in our language. With sundry explications, descriptions, and discourses.* London.

Burnard, Lou (ed.). 2007. *Reference guide for the British National Corpus (XML Edition)*.http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/docs/URG/.

Culpeper, Jonathan and Merja Kytö. *Early Modern English dialogues: Spoken interaction as writing.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Durrant, Philip and Norbert Schmitt. 2009. To what extent do native and non-native writers make use of collocations? *International Review of Applied Linguistics* 47 (2): 157–177.

Feng, Song, Ritwik Bose and Yejin Choi. 2011. Learning general connotation of words using graph-based algorithms. In R. Bartzilay and M. Johnson (eds.). *Proceedings of the 2011 Conference of Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing* (EMNLP 2011), 1092–1103. Edinburgh, Scotland, UK: Association for Computational Linguistics.

Finkenstaedt, Thomas and Dieter Wolff. 1973. *Ordered profusion: Studies in dictionaries and the English lexicon*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter.

Granger, Sylviane and Yves Bestgen. 2014. The use of collocations by intermediate vs. advanced non-native writers: A bigram-based study. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching (IRAL)* 52 (3): 229–252.

Helsper, Daniel and Sebastian Hoffmann. 2016. A diachronic study of semantic prosody. Paper presented at ICAME 37, Hong Kong, n.p.

Hunston, Susan. 2002. *Corpora in applied linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hunston, Susan. 2007. Semantic prosody revisited. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics* 12 (2): 249–268.

Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson. 1980. *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Louw, Bill. 1993. “Irony in the text or insincerity in the writer? The diagnostic potential of semantic prosodies”. In M. Baker, G. Francis and E. Togini-Bonelli (eds.). *Text and technology. In honour of John Sinclair*, 157–176. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Miege, Guy. 1677. *A new dictionary French and English with another English and French according to the present use and modern orthography of the French inrich'd with new words, choice phrases and apposite proverbs.* London.

Morley, John and Alan Partington. 2009. A few *frequently asked questions* about semantic – or *evaluative* – prosody. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics* 14 (2): 139–158.

Nevalainen, Terttu. 2006a. *An introduction to Early Modern English*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Nevalainen, Terttu. 2006b. Early Modern English lexis and semantics. In R. Lass (ed.). *The Cambridge history of the English language. Volume III: 1476–1776*, 332–458. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

OED = *Oxford English Dictionary online*. 2023. Oxford University Press. Retrieved from https://www.oed.com (last accessed on 12th January 2024).

Partington, Alan 1998. *Patterns and meanings. Using corpora for English language research and teaching.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Partington, Alan. 2004. 'Utterly content in each other's company': Semantic prosody and semantic preference. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics* 9 (1): 131–156.

Philip, Gill. 2009. Why prosodies aren't always present. Insights into the idiom principle. In M. Mahlberg, V. González-Díaz and C. Smith (eds.). *Proceedings of the Corpus Linguistics Conference CL2009, University of Liverpool, UK, 20–23 July 2009.* Available at https://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/publications/cl2009/#papers. Last accessed on 11 March 2024.

Phillips, Edward. 1658. *The new world of English words, or, a general dictionary containing the interpretations of such hard words as are derived from other languages*. London.

Renouf, Antoinette. 2013. A finer definition of neology in English: The life-cycle of a word. In H. Hasselgård, J. Ebeling and J. Ebeling (eds.). *Corpus perspectives on patterns of lexis*, 177–208. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Renou, Jean de. 1657. *A medicinal dispensatory* (Richard Tomlinson, trans.). London.

Robert, Stéphane. 2008. Words and their meanings: Principles of variation and stabilization. In M. Vanhove (ed.). *From polysemy to semantic change,* 55–92. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Sinclair, John. 1991. *Corpus, concordance, collocation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sinclair, John. 1996. The search for units of meaning. Reprinted in J. M. Sinclair and R. Carter (eds.). *Trust the text* (2004), 24–48. London: Routledge.

Smith, K. Aaron and Dawn Nordquist. 2012. A critical and historical investigation into semantic prosody. *Journal of Historical Pragmatics* 13 (2): 291–312.

Stewart, Dominic. 2010. *Semantic prosody. A critical evaluation.* London: Routledge.

Stubbs, Michael 2001. *Words and phrases: Corpus studies of lexical semantics.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Sylvester, Louise. 2022. Semantic shift in Middle English: Farming and trade as test cases. *Transactions of the Philological Society* 120 (3): 427–446.

Traugott, Elizabeth Closs and Richard B. Dasher. 2001. *Regularity in semantic change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ullmann, Stephen. 1962. *Semantics: An introduction to the science of meaning.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Whitsitt, Sam. 2005. A critique of the concept of semantic prosody. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics* 10 (3): 283–305.

Wilkins, John. 1668. *An alphabetical dictionary, wherein all English words according to their various significations, are either referred to their places in the philosophical tables, or explained by such words as are in those tables.* London.

Xiao, Richard and Tony McEnery. 2006. Collocation, semantic prosody, and near synonymy. A cross-linguistic perspective. *Applied Linguistics* 27 (1): 103–129.

Zhang, Ruihua. 2013. A corpus-based study of semantic prosody change: The case of the adverbial intensifier. *Cocentric: Studies in Linguistics* 39 (2): 61–82.