UiO : University of Oslo

Bringing closure

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Aim

Explore V + (emotional) *closure* as an extended lexical unit and as a cultural fact

Overview of talk

- Examples of kinds of *closure* in the BNC

- "Emotional" *closure*

- Frequency of use in COCA 1990-2015

- Verbs that collocate with (emotional) *closure*

- V[DESIRE/WANT] *closure*

Piqued my interest

..., but Daniel still needed to put his own mind at rest. <u>Achieve closure</u>, as Miranda liked to say. [MarEdw1.s913]

"Sad. At least they '<u>ll get closure </u>now. The families I mean." [LucVes1.s4306]

SECTION (CLICK FOR SUB-SECTIONS) (SEE ALL SECTIONS AT ONCE)	FREQ	SIZE (M)	PER MIL	CLICK FOR CONTEXT (SEE ALL)
1810	0	1.2	0.00	
1820	0	6.9	0.00	
1830	1	13.8	0.07	▮
1840	1	16.0	0.06	▮
1850	2	16.5	0.12	▮
1860	9	17.1	0.53	▬▬
1870	1	18.6	0.05	▮
1880	2	20.3	0.10	▮
1890	4	20.6	0.19	▮
1900	12	22.1	0.54	▬▬
1910	13	22.7	0.57	▬▬
1920	56	25.7	2.18	▬▬▬▬▬▬
1930	13	24.6	0.53	▬▬
1940	28	24.3	1.15	▬▬▬
1950	48	24.5	1.96	▬▬▬▬▬
1960	39	24.0	1.63	▬▬▬▬
1970	44	23.8	1.85	▬▬▬▬
1980	64	25.3	2.53	▬▬▬▬▬▬
1990	136	27.9	4.87	▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬
2000	161	29.6	5.45	▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬
TOTAL	**634**			SEE ALL TOKENS

Figure 1. *closure* in COHA

Kinds of *closure* in the BNC
(1,922 matches in 633 texts [BNC*web, CQP edition*])

Concrete, observable, mostly (regarded/pitched as) undesirable [Ex. reactor]
- factory/hospital/office/pit/plant/school/road closure
- the (planned/possible/premature/recent) closure of the factory etc.
- plant etc. faces/is earmarked/heading for closure

Concrete, observable, desirable/neutral
- wound closure / colostomy closure
- velar/alveolar closure

Abstract (metaphorical?)
- narrative closure (neutral)
- social closure (undesirable, e.g. access to private schools)
- "emotional" closure (desirable)
    - (How many of this type in the BNC do you think?)

Only two clear instances

Sydney Schanberg put [sic] it as follows, "You do n't, as the psychiatrists say, "get closure" ." [G2E.s1951]

Part of Schanberg 's problem in achieving "closure" has undoubtedly been the degree of exposure that The Killing Fields has brought him. [G2E.s1987]

Source info: Harpers & Queen (Harper's Bazaar) [Written, W:pop_lore, Adult, Informative: Leisure, Perceived level of difficulty: Low, Medium of Text: Periodical, Target audience sex: Female])

Method

1. Extract 500 instances for each five year period from COCA between 1990 and 2015 (= 5 5-year periods/quinquennials)

2. Classify instances of the type "emotional" *closure* according to
   - the verb it collocates with
   - type of pre-modification of *closure*
   - genre (COCA)
   - note down if the use is highlighted/commented on (cf. the two instances from the BNC)

Table 1. Total no. of *closure* in each 5-year period

Quinquennial	Freq	Size (M)	Per mill.
1990-1994	792	104.0	7.62
1995-1999	962	103.4	9.30
2000-2004	824	102.9	8.00
2005-2009	789	102.0	7.73
2010-2015	957	121.6	7.87

Table 1a. No. of "emotional" *closure* in each 5-year period based on 500 instances

Quinquennial	90-94	95-99	00-04	05-09	10-15
No. of occ.	7	107	141	124	146
Percentages	1.4	21.4	28.2	24.8	29.2

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Table 2. No. of occurrence by COCA genre

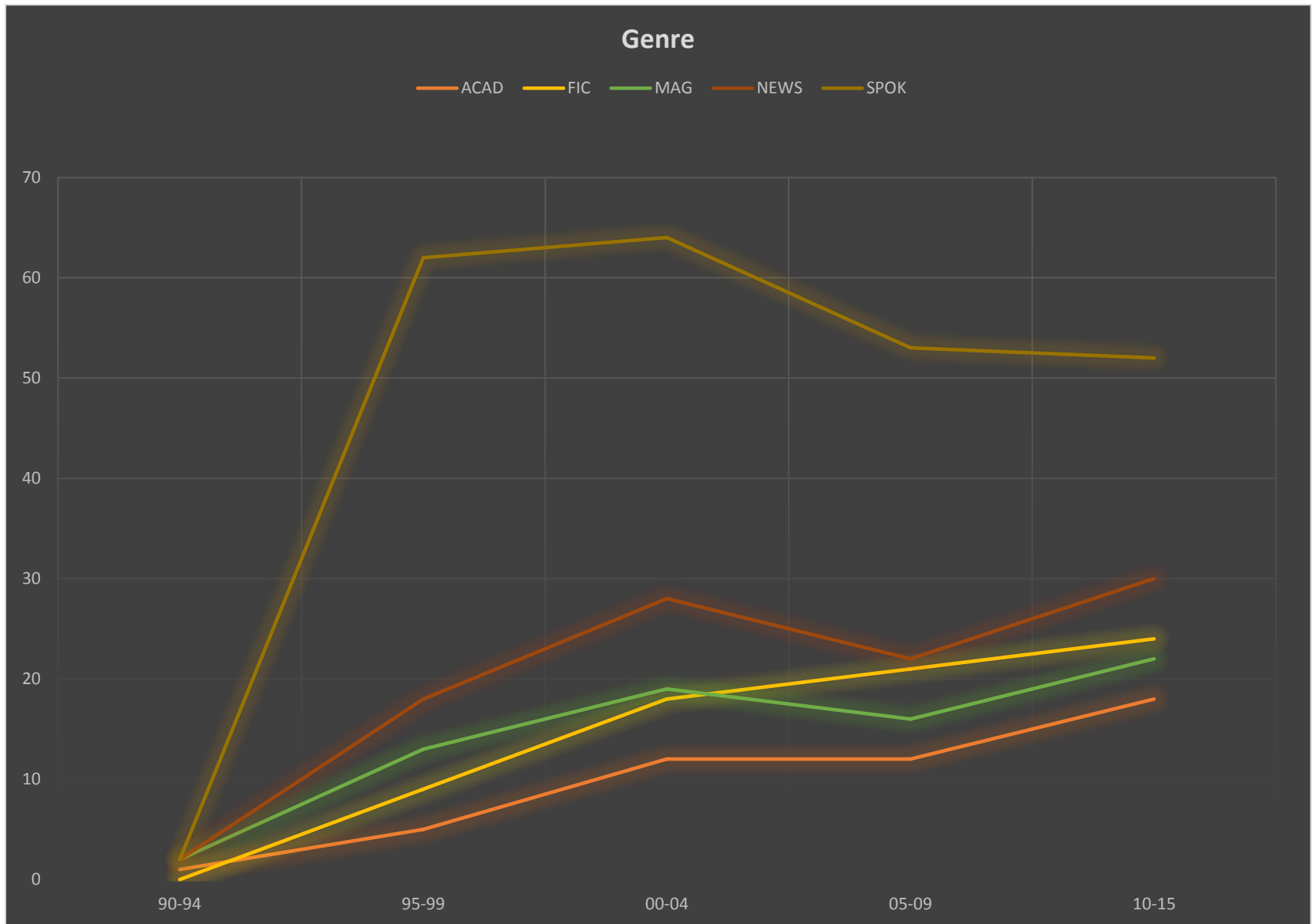| Quinquennial	90-94	95-99	00-04	05-09	10-15
ACAD	1	5	12	12	18
FIC	0	9	18	21	24
MAG	2	13	19	16	22
NEWS	2	18	28	22	30
SPOK	2	62	64	53	52
Total	**7**	**107**	**141**	**124**	**146**

Figure 2. Instances of V + (emotional) *closure* in COCA by genre

Table 3. Verbs occurring at least 5 times in one quinquennial

Quinquennial	90-94	95-99	00-04	05-09	10-15
achieve	1	2	5	1	3
be	1	20	32	21	14
bring	2	14	20	16	16
find	0	6	10	4	8
get	0	4	11	11	9
give	1	2	3	8	6
have	0	11	7	10	8
look for	0	0	2	3	6
need	0	3	1	9	6
no verb	0	15	15	6	19
provide	0	2	6	4	10
seek	0	3	0	1	6
want	0	5	5	8	7
Total	**5**	**87**	**117**	**102**	**118**

Instances with these "verbs" account for approx. 80% of all occurrences.

Modification of *closure*

Approx. 42% of the instances have some kind of pre-modification or a determiner in front of *closure*

some: 42
a/some sense of: 24
no: 11
some kind of: 10

-- have had some horrible things happen in their life. They want <u>some closure</u> to this, and so they're hoping that ...

..., a good therapist gently helps you end the therapy and <u>achieve a sense of closure</u>.

Different (verb) patterns

1. something brings/provides closure
- But Steve Fritsch says *the return of his brother's remains* <u>brings final closure</u>.

2. someone achieves/finds/gets/has closure
- You will never get this cancer off your marriage until *you* <u>achieve emotional closure</u>.

3. someone looks for/needs/seeks/wants closure
- *I'm* not *looking* so much for justice for Toni, but *for closure* for the girls, ...

4. there BE closure
- Well, today is sentencing. Hopefully, <u>there will be closure </u>for you and the rest of the victims.

5. No verb (use of *closure* highlighted/commented upon)
- What's <u>the most bullshit word </u>in the English language. "<u>Closure</u>."

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Levels of analysis

Concordance/ Collocation		..., dead of a massive heart attack. There was a strangely satisfying kind of closure in this, Jane told Doug when she phoned him in Florida.
Colligation / Syntax	V + (pre-modification +) *closure*	
Semantic preference/ Meaning	desire/want ending of bad experience	How long ago was 16 years? [...] I mean, some things we - I've had to learn to live with. [...] Don't heal, they don't, they don't, and this - and they don't close. There's no closure. There's no healing, there's no closure.
Semantic prosody / Communicative purpose	come to terms with / "carry on" / healing	

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V[DESIRE/WANT] *closure*

Types of social facts (cf. Stubbs 2014: 50, Table 1)

Institutional facts are ontologically subjective but epistemically objective (marriage, money, professorship)

What about:?
pleasure, fear, excitement, **desire**: ontologically and epistemically subjective

> Depends on personal experience/judgement (epistemically subjective), yet meaning and use shared and understood by a (speech) community (ontologically subjective)

Do we need a new/different term for these?

Culturally entrenched speech acts?

Cultural (f)acts?

Avenues of further research

- Syntactic flexibility/versatility (Cp. e.g. the fixedness of *come to terms with* with the several different (types of) verbs *closure* collocate with)
- Diachronic development (Why/When did it become a household expression? Is it a new concept? Or new "name" for an hitherto, non-articulated concept/feeling?)
- Genre spread (Has it spread to all genres/text types? All variants of English?)
- Cultural dispersion (Has it "travelled" as a new concept? (How) Is it articulated in other languages?)

Different (verb) patterns

1. something brings/provides closure
- But Steve Fritsch says *the return of his brother's remains* <u>brings final closure</u>.
- First, *it* <u>provided closure</u> and shared knowledge with a wider audience.

2. someone achieves/finds/gets/has closure
- You will never get this cancer off your marriage until *you* <u>achieve emotional closure</u>.
- It's really about helping *people* <u>find closure</u> and ...
- I think *they* <u>need to get some closure</u>.

3. someone looks for/needs/seeks/wants closure
- *I'm* not *looking* so much for justice for Toni, but *for closure* for the girls, ...
- Anyway, she says, if a *person* <u>wants closure</u>, they got ta deal with their problems head on.

4. there BE closure