

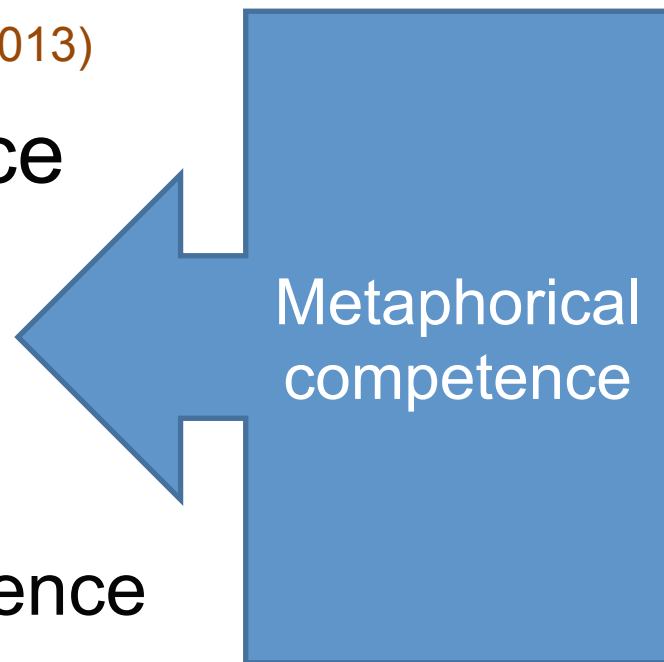
Development of L2 metaphorical competence from ages 10-19

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LCR 2017

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Why metaphor and the L2?

- Ubiquitous (Steen et al, 2010, Nacey 2013)
- Communicative competence
 - Sociolinguistic competence
 - Illuctionary competence
 - Textual competence
 - Lexico-grammatical competence
 - Strategic competence (Littlemore & Low 2006)



Previous research (see Nacey 2017)

CEFR
criteria for
metaphor

- Comprehension
- Production

➤ *An investigation in metaphor use at different levels of second language writing* (Littlemore et al. 2014)

- Cambridge exams (Cambridge Learner Corpus)
- 100 English essays written by Greek learners
- 100 English essays written by German learners
- For each: 20 per CEFR level (A2-C2)

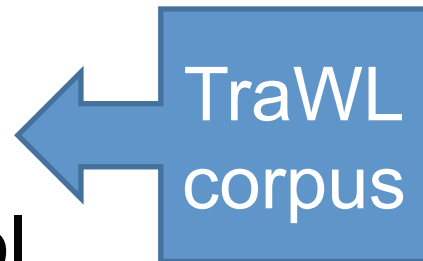
Research questions

1. How does metaphor density per grade level?
2. Are there different frequency patterns for open-class vs. closed-class metaphors across grade levels?
3. Does the distribution of metaphor clusters across grade levels vary?

What is the function of metaphorical clusters?

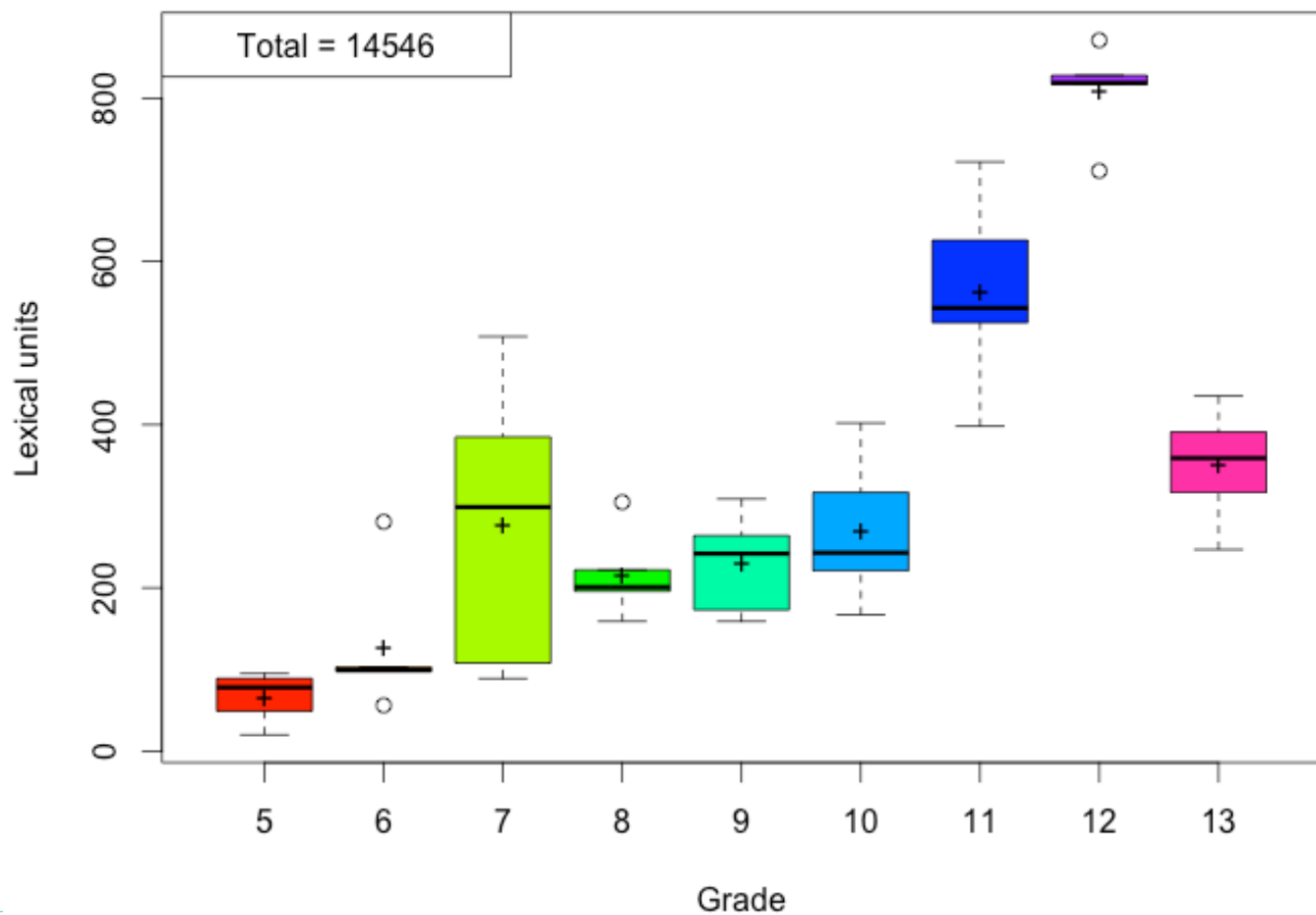
Primary material

- Texts written by Norwegian pupils
 - Ages 10-19
 - 5th grade – upper secondary school
- 45 texts
- 5 texts per grade level
 - 9 grade levels
 - 45 individual writers



Topics per grade

Grade	Ages	Tokens	Topic
5	10-11	331	My family
6	11-12	637	A fairy tale
7	12-13	1389	Drawing / dream
8	13-14	1083	My favorite artist
9	14-15	1147	The most interesting thing I know
10	15-16	1350	How to make newcomers feel welcome
11	16-17	2814	Why is it important to learn English?
12	17-18	4046	Problems immigrants face / prejudice
13	18-19	1749	A personal statement



Cinderella

Cinderella ran away into the wood.
And her clothes got very dirty again.
The prince and his knights ran
after her. Cinderella climbed up in the
tree and hid her self. The prince saw
something grey in the tree and he
climbed up. Cinderella was there, and
she said: The girl you danced with
was not me. This is me. But the prince
said: I now it's you, I can see it in
your eyes. You are the princess
I'm looking for. And then they climbed
down from the tree and lived
happily the rest of their lives.

6th grade text
11-12 years old

Metaphor identification

MIPVU

I can take the next step and push myself even further.

(Grade 9 text about ‘the most interesting thing I know’)

Indirect
metaphor

Do not judge a book by its cover.

(Grade 12 text about problems immigrants face)

Direct
metaphor

step (noun)

Basic sense


- 1 [COUNTABLE] a short movement made by putting one foot in front of the other
take/move a step: *I am too tired to take another step.*
He moved a step nearer the two men.
retrace your steps (=go back the same way you came): *We were lost and decided to retrace our steps.*

 Synonyms and related words

Ways of walking: *gait, limp, pace...*

[Explore Thesaurus](#)


- a. the sound that your feet make while you are walking
I could hear the steps coming closer.

 Synonyms and related words

Sounds made by people: *babble, babel, footfall...*


[Explore Thesaurus](#)

- b. the short distance that your feet move while you are walking
The postbox is just a few steps from my front door.

 Synonyms and related words

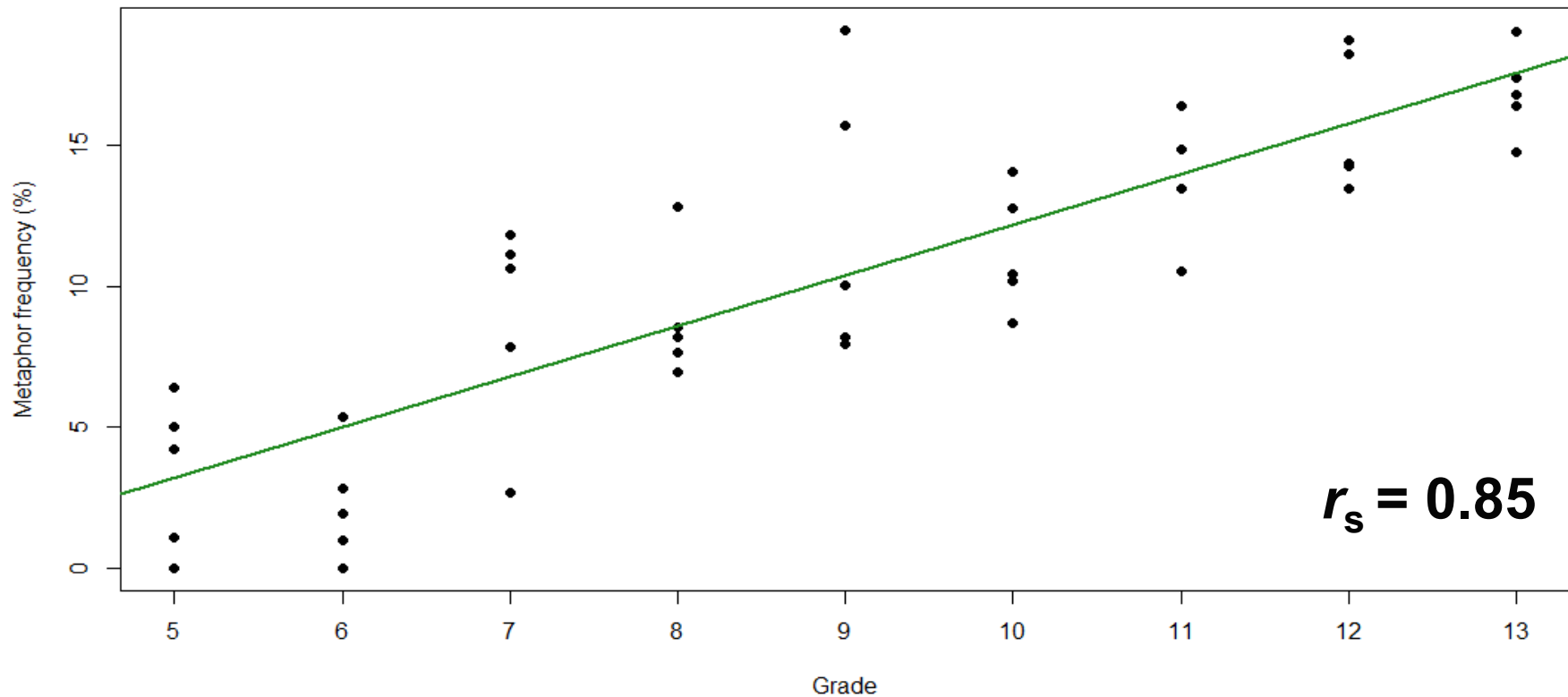
Contextual sense

- 6 [COUNTABLE] one of the stages in a process, or one of the levels on a scale
steps in your learning process
a step up: *Her new job is a big step up for her.*
a step up on the pay scale
be a/one step ahead of someone: *She was congratulating herself on her cleverness, but he was one step ahead of her.*
repeat a step: *When you finish the exercise, repeat steps five to ten.*

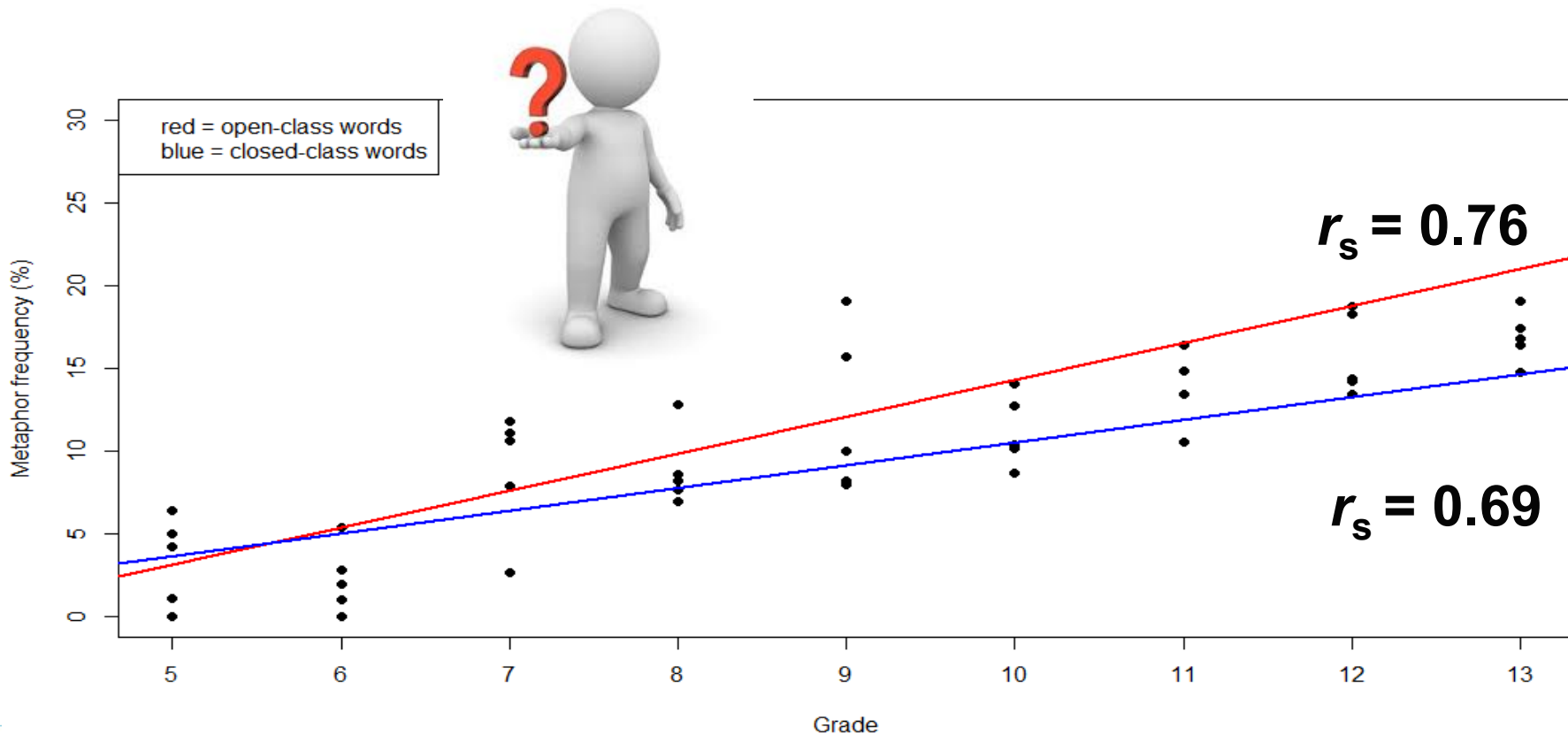
 Synonyms and related words



Q1: How does metaphor density per grade level?

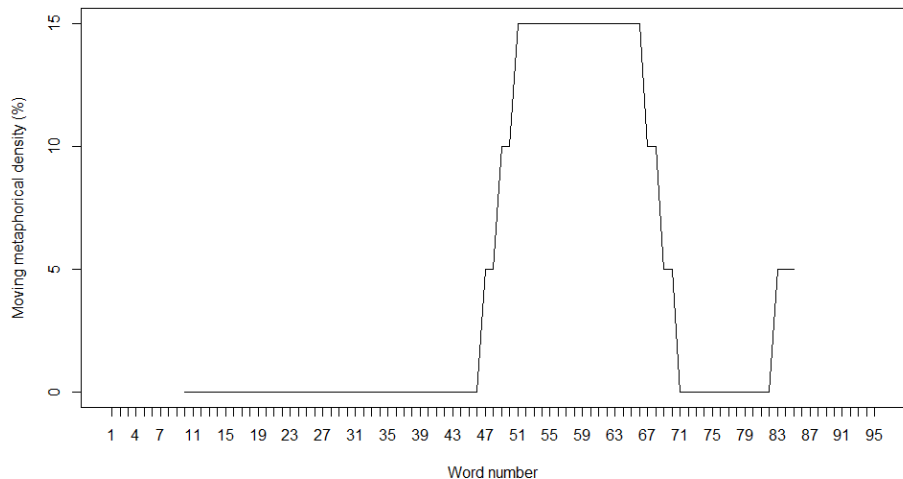


Q2: Are there different frequency patterns for open-class vs. closed-class metaphors across grade levels?

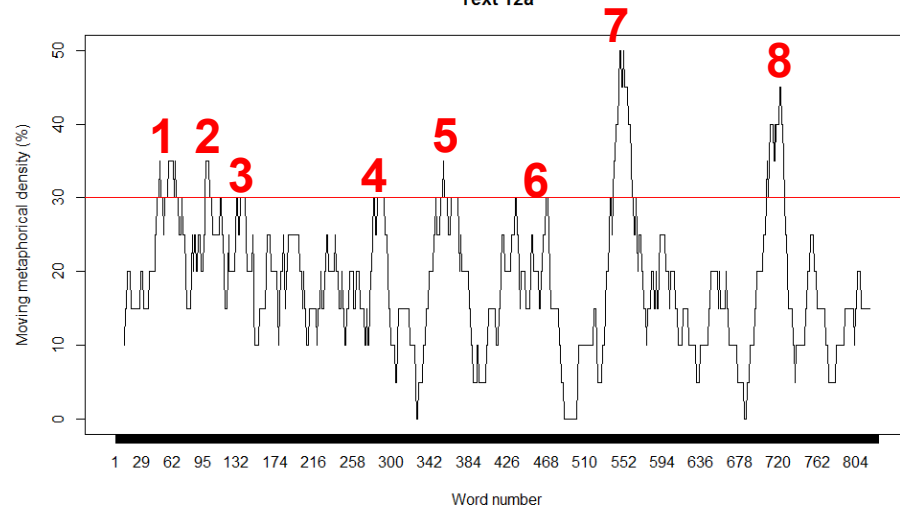


Metaphorical clusters

Text 5a

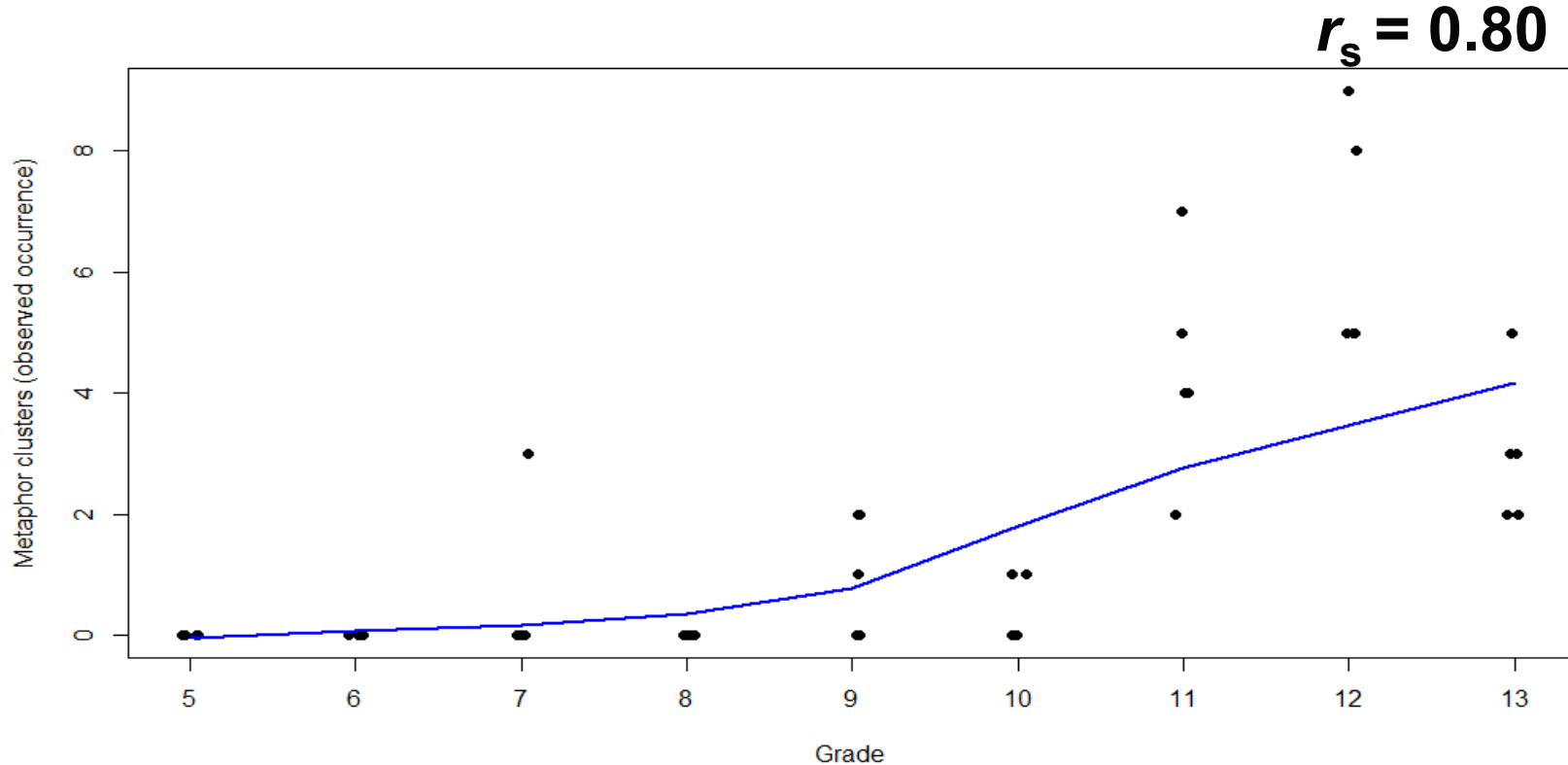


Text 12a



Moving metaphoric density
Turner 2010: 61-73

Q3: Does the distribution of metaphor clusters across grade levels vary?



Function of metaphorical clusters

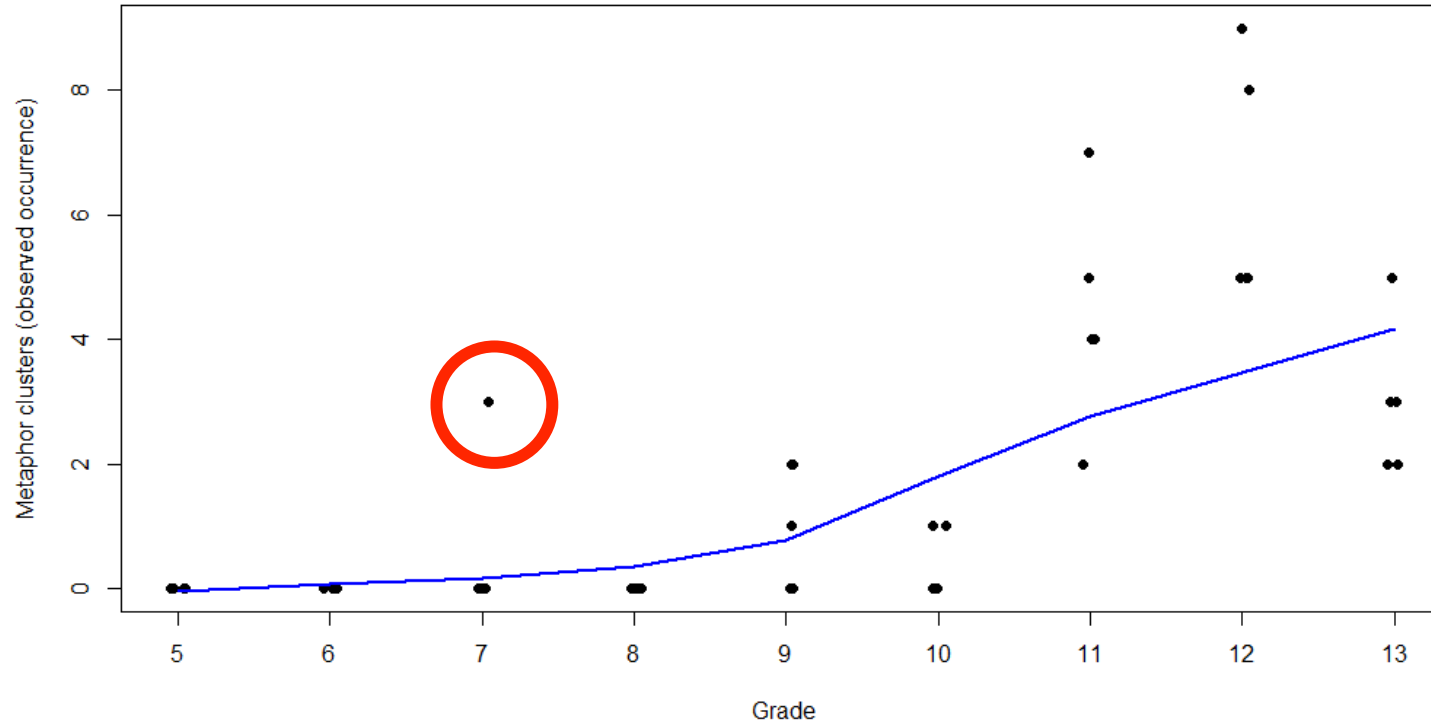
Littlemore et al. 2014:

- Serve evaluative function
- Create dramatic effect
- Create dramatic contrasts
- Organize discourse
- Convey sarcasm
- For humor
- Sum up/round off an argument

Nacey 2017:

- Random variation in the quantity of metaphorical language
- Direct metaphor included in clusters

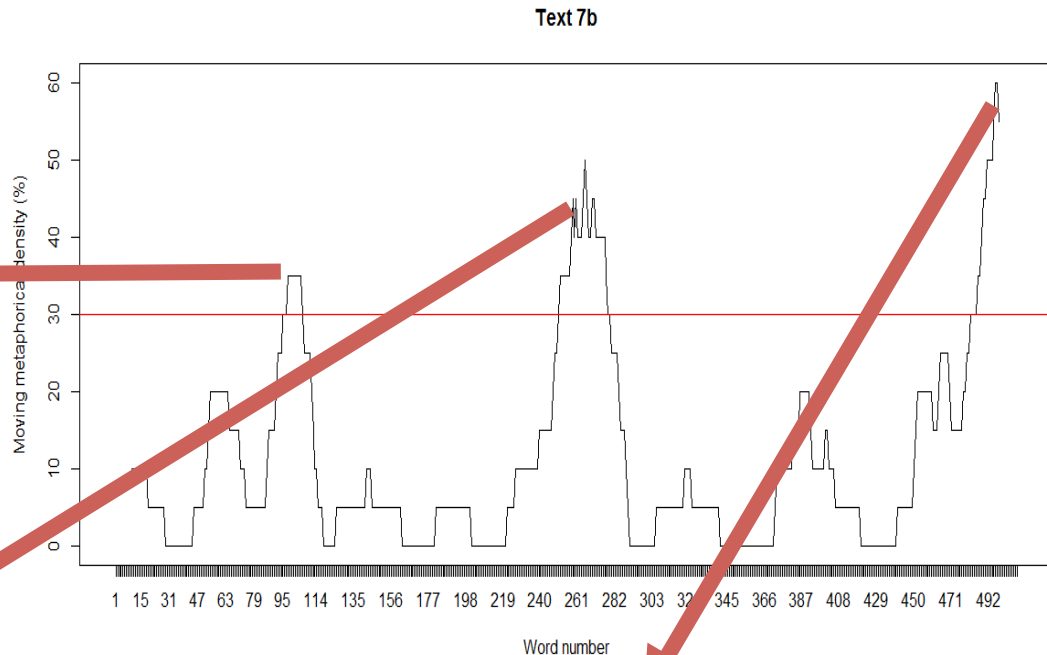
Metaphorical clusters per grade



Direct metaphor

I remember that my
heart beating and that
I had butterflies in my
stomach.

It felt like my heart
breaking in to a
thousand peices. It felt
like I got punched in
the gut. It hurt like
knives stabbing me.



It felt like someone punched my balls and
gut. My heart broke in to a thousand peices
and started burning.

Concluding thoughts



Findings:

- Metaphor density increases across grade levels
 - No clear role for metaphor at lowest levels beyond e.g. prepositions
 - Increases at higher levels, more so for content words
- Clusters appear around Grade 9 (ages 14-15)...
 - ...but they have no clear function

Methodology:

- Metaphor density and clusters = heuristic tool for exploring discourse

Selected references

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