



Word sketches of descriptive modifiers in children's short stories for teacher training in teaching English as a foreign language

Belén Labrador

Departamento de Filología Moderna, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, University of León, Campus de Vegazana, 24071, Spain



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ABSTRACT

Stories have proved to be an important didactic resource in language teaching; therefore, teacher trainees are often encouraged to design story-based tasks. However, they may find difficulties in identifying the language typically found in children's stories. For this reason, the present paper aims at exploring a relevant feature of this genre, descriptive modifiers, in order to raise student teachers' genre awareness and prompt them to use high-frequency words and phrases. In this corpus-based study, a number of key elements were first identified, then classified, and finally, their occurrences were analyzed to obtain patterns in their grammatical behavior and an inventory of their most common collocates. *SketchEngine* was used both to compile the corpus and to retrieve word sketches of each modifier. Gaining more insight into the language of stories can contribute to helping teacher trainees to perceive characteristic language in children-oriented text types and to develop their own storytelling abilities.

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1. Introduction

The importance of genre awareness, genre competence, and its application to the language learning classroom by means of genre-based approaches to language syllabi has been greatly advocated over the last few years (Dirgeyasa, 2016; Hyland, 2004; Paltridge, 2001; Yasuda, 2011). Genre competence has been defined as "the ability to identify, construct, interpret, and successfully exploit a specific repertoire of professional disciplinary or workplace genres to participate in the daily activities and to achieve the goals of a specific academic/professional community" (Bhatia, 2004: 145). However, in a broader sense, including non-professional or academic settings, a large number of text types used in everyday life can constitute genres. What all texts belonging to one particular genre have in common is the same communicative goals, a similar rhetorical structure, and highly conventionalized language. Although it is usually quite intuitive to recognize texts as members of a particular genre, it can be harder, especially for non-native speakers, to pinpoint the specific features that characterize them as members of a genre and still more difficult to recreate them in new instances of texts. Consequently, it makes sense to use genres in foreign language teaching, in order to guide students in the writing process of different text types.

The question that follows is which genres to choose for inclusion in different syllabi aimed at meeting different learners' needs.

When teaching English as a Foreign Language at university, we should consider the type of texts that may be of interest and usefulness for our students. Children-oriented texts, such as textbooks for school children and children's short stories, are text types that student teachers will probably use in their teaching; that's why this paper focuses on one of these types in particular, stories, as one important source of material and modeling – a lot of teaching can be done through story-based telling activities. In order to observe the special features of any particular text type, we need to analyze a representative number of texts and find out the prototypical characteristics, both macrolinguistic (rhetorical) and microlinguistic (syntactic, phraseological, and lexicological), and the best way to do so is by building specialized corpora of specific domains or genres.

Specialized or special corpora contain texts limited to one or more subject areas, domains, or topics and are usually related to Language for Specific Purposes (LSP), which tends to be associated with complex terminology and jargon. However, the present paper will make use of a specialized or special corpus, the CSS, a corpus of Children's Short Stories in English, to study not the language of a specific academic, scientific, or professional field, but general language found in one specific genre and especially suitable for teaching English as a foreign language to young learners (primary-school children). Children-oriented texts can be considered to have special purposes, as they are addressed to a particular kind of audience and display particular characteristics of language variation – they have textual and linguistic

E-mail address: belen.labrador@unileon.es

characteristics that distinguish them from general or ordinary language texts. Nonetheless, they lack the linguistic complexity, degree of abstraction, and expert knowledge typical of LSP. The CSS is not a general corpus - "a general corpus contains texts of general type belonging to various disciplines, genres, subject fields and registers" (Dash, 2008: 61) but a sample corpus "which is one of the major offshoots of a special corpus [...] a special variety of a sample corpus is the literary corpus, which may be further categorized based on the type of text included in it" (Dash, 2008: 65) Dash (2008) mentions short stories as a literary corpus "of a particular genre of text".

Children's short stories, as a particular subgenre of short stories, have two main textual functions: a) narrative - stories typically follow a linear structure where events unfold chronologically: first a situation is portrayed; then a problem arises; eventually, the conflict is resolved and a happy ending wraps up the story and b) descriptive - the narrative elements are interwoven with the description of the characters, the setting, and the actions. This study focuses on the second function and explores the use of some relevant descriptive resources in the stories: modifying adjectives and adverbs. The final aim is to draw teachers' attention, especially novice and non-native teachers, to some keywords and patterns that they can use in their teaching when telling or retelling stories, describing pictures, and also when they help their pupils to incorporate these natural, idiomatic and frequent words and expressions into their own production.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Stories as a pedagogical resource in TEFL

Many teaching textbooks and research papers propose or report on the use of stories in the language teaching classroom for young adult (secondary education), young (primary education), or very young (early childhood education) learners (Cavus & Ibrahim, 2017; Chou, 2014; Collins, 2005; Kalantari & Hashemian, 2016; Labrador, 2019; Slattey & Willis, 2001; Wong, Hwang, Choo Goh & Mohd Arrif, 2018). Some authors emphasize their use not only as a subsidiary resource but as the basic pillar of the teaching methodology through 'storied lessons' (Wajnryb, 2003), the storyline approach (Ahluquist, 2013; Wright, 2009), or 'story-based' syllabi (Griva, Chostelidou & Semoglou, 2015; Yanase, 2018), where stories are "at the 'core' of the project" (Griva et al., 2015:174).

There are all sorts of imaginable activities that can revolve around a story for all kinds of different purposes. Stories are used for teaching at all language levels: vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and discourse analysis. Similarly, and usually, simultaneously, they are used to develop all the communicative skills, both receptive (reading or listening to the story) and productive (writing about the story, talking about it, or dramatizing it), in a large number of possible variations (e.g., ordering parts of the story, writing a different ending, creating role-plays that change the story in some particular ways, etc.). In addition, soft skills and moral values can easily be taught through stories. The stories used in the classroom can be (a) part of the literary canon, (b) written by not-so-well-known authors, (c) made up by the teacher, or (d) invented by the learners. In any case, the potential of stories as a didactic resource in language teaching is undeniable and the possibilities of usage, endless.

2.2. Corpus-based studies in TEFL

Since the growth and expansion of corpus linguistics, in the 1990s, corpora have opened up new and extremely fruitful paths in linguistic research and have constituted the source of

data for most of the dictionaries and a considerable amount of the grammar books published since then. There has also been a long tradition of the use of corpora for teaching purposes (Aijmer, 2009; Aston, 2001; Aston & Bernardini, 2004; Boulton & Vyatkina, 2021; Campoy-Cubillo et al., 2010; Johns, 1990; Kettemann & Marko, 2002; O'Keeffe, McCarthy & Carter, 2007; Sinclair, 2004, to name but a few). DDL (Data-Driven Learning) considers that students should act as researchers using corpora and undertaking guided-discovery tasks (Johns, 1991). Lexical priming (Hoey, 2005) uses "insights from corpus linguistics and corpus data as evidence to explain how individuals are primed through exposure and use of language and [...] how this priming process is the basis for first and second language acquisition" (Jeaco, 2017: 274). The importance of co-text (i.e., textual context), collocations, colligations, and semantic and pragmatic associations in language has led to important implications in second/ foreign language teaching. The promotion of active discovery through the direct observation of the data provided by corpora has contributed to enhancing the learning process by raising awareness, increasing the learner's autonomy, and developing high order thinking skills.

Nevertheless, despite the successful direct use of corpora in the classroom, some authors have pointed out certain difficulties: students consider these tasks time-consuming; sometimes they prefer the teacher to analyze, summarize and explain the corpus findings for them; if their searches or interpretations are not effective, they become frustrated, and they do not usually show as much enthusiasm and motivation about the observations and deductions as researchers do (Charles, 2007; St. John, 2001). Some authors have opted for building corpora that are specially designed for pedagogy (Krishnamurthy & Kosem, 2007) or more user-friendly concordancers and the development of key features particularly addressed for learners (Jeaco, 2017). Alternatively, the indirect applications of corpora (their use by researchers and materials designers), as opposed to their direct use in the classroom, has also been advocated, as it is argued that the time spent by teachers and students on corpus-based activities can be used for more communicative tasks that make use of the patterns found in rigorous research studies and supplied to them. Teachers can rely on the findings of corpus-based studies that summarize useful contents for them to focus on during their lessons.

This paper claims that, although the direct application of corpora is often interesting to apply, for instance when it comes to teaching adults or even mid-to-late teens (as they can benefit from some consciousness-raising activities, reflection, and inferring work), in primary school settings, it tends to be better to focus on particular language items previously found in corpus-based research and practice them in the context of meaningful and content-based tasks. In our strive for a balance between meaning and form, these linguistic key elements and their use (collocational and grammatical behavior) can be part of the teachers' underlying teaching goals but not necessarily part of the learners' perception of the learning aims in a lesson, i.e. the teacher may have in mind, for instance, teaching different uses, patterns and collocates of some particular words, but in the young learners' eyes, the outcome of the lesson should be to learn a song, to talk about a story, to play a game or a role in a sketch, to prepare a trip or a party, to interview their classmates or any other meaningful task-based activities. Consequently, on many occasions, perhaps there is no need to use a corpus in the class but the results of corpus-based analyses, like the one presented here.

2.3. The importance of high-frequency words and patterns in TEFL

The advent of corpus linguistics, which has provided us with frequency lists and concordance lines, has highlighted the importance of core vocabulary and the co-occurrence of

words, hence, the interrelation between lexis and grammar advocated by communicative and functional approaches to language (Firth, 1957; Halliday, 1985; Sinclair, 1991; Lewis, 1997; Hunston & Francis, 2000; Willis, 2003). Among the wide range of existing frequency lists, we can find some specifically designed for pre-K and K-12 grades, like the sight word lists, e.g., Dolch Word Lists (<https://sightwords.com/sight-words/dolch/>) and Fry Word Lists (<https://www.k12reader.com/subject/vocabulary/fry-words/>), extracted from children's books with the aim of teaching children highly-occurring words in order to facilitate the reading process by helping them to instantly recognize these sight words.

As well as obtaining frequency rates, we can also retrieve information about the co-text of words thanks to the KWIC (Key Word In Context) tools, which means that we can easily identify words that tend to go together, i.e., collocations. A collocation has been defined as 'a sequence continuous or discontinuous, of words or other meaning elements, which is, or appears to be, prefabricated: that is, stored and retrieved whole from memory at the time of use, rather than being subject to generation or analysis by the language grammar' (Wray, 2000: 465). Also, different studies in lexicology, phraseology, and lexicogrammar have coined a number of terms for different types of multiword units, collocations, and patterns: *units of meaning* (Sinclair, 1991), *lexical bundles* (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad & Finegan, 1999), *formulaic sequences* (Wray, 2002), *grammar patterns* (Hunston & Francis, 2000), *specialized lexical combinations* L'Homme (2000), *semantic sequences* (Hunston, 2008), *lexico-syntactic patterns* (Montiel-Ponsoda & Aguado de Cea, 2011), etc.

Both selecting high-frequency words and analyzing their behavior and their syntagmatic relationships can help teachers devise story-based lessons where these pre-planned language items are embedded. A distinction should be made here between common high-frequency words (those that are very frequent both in stories and in general language) and high-frequency words that are very frequent in short stories but not so common in general language – specialized high-frequency words such as fairy story nouns (e.g., *spinning wheel, throne, steed*), some old and formulaic expressions, e.g., *once upon a time, in a faraway land, and they lived happily ever after*, etc. The latter only need to be recognized and understood by the learners, while reading or listening to them (receptive skills), whereas the former can also be incorporated into the children's own production in writing and speaking.

When it comes to addressing the *what-to-teach* matter, we can grade and select the input and itemize the language syllabus, following a corpus methodology and the main aim of the lexical approach: to "specify words, their meanings, and the common phrases in which they are used" (Willis, 1990: 15); secondly, when dealing with the *how-to-teach* issue, the target language can be taught using communicative methods and tasks based on stories. The learning of this kind of prefabricated language contributes to improving understanding and boosting fluency, which tends to benefit from lexicalized modes of communication. Children's short stories then come full circle – they are the starting point of the research leading to the extraction of the characteristic language of this genre and they can constitute a useful teaching resource that allows for meaningful learning, exposure to the language, and interaction in the language classroom.

2.4. Thematic sets vs semantic sets in TEFL

This proposal of using authentic materials such as children's short stories to increase the exposure to the target language items, which are retrieved through corpus-based analyses, goes hand in hand with a related purpose, namely, to advocate the importance of syntagmatic lexical relations, usually neglected in favor

of paradigmatic lexical relations. It is often the case that lessons plans and course designs in textbooks and teaching materials for Spanish-speaking beginning learners of English present vocabulary organized in terms of semantic fields, e.g., colors, clothes, animals, food, school supplies, etc. These items are often pre-taught as isolated words focusing on their form-meaning mapping, e.g., matching pictures (concepts) with words (representations), and then they are taught in the context of general grammatical patterns where any similar word can fit in (in slots like *I like apples/bananas/oranges*), that is, with an emphasis on paradigmatic relations. However, these closely related words which belong to the same lexical set and can fit in the same slot tend to interfere with one another in the learning process (Waring, 1997). On the other hand, "words can also be clustered thematically. This type of clustering is based on a cognitive relationship between words related to an existing schema in the mind" (Mirjalili, Jabbari & Rezai, 2012: 214). An example of a cluster perceived as thematically related would include terms like *frog, pond, swim, and green* (Tinkham, 1993), which are more varied according to their part of speech, so, instead of fitting in the same slot, they can be used to make a meaningful sentence: in this case, for instance, *a green frog is swimming in a pond*. Unlike semantic sets, words that are thematically linked, have a looser relation, and can be threaded into a narrative; therefore, they are easier to learn (Thornbury, 2002: 37).

As well as a prevailing focus on paradigmatic relations, another reason for the presentation of vocabulary as groups of isolated words belonging to the same semantic field may be the fact that children's capacities are sometimes underestimated, and therefore they are taught words, which seem to be shorter and easier, rather than chunks. Also, covering the most common words in each semantic field, field after field, can cause a false sense of security and the feeling that a lot of progress is being made. Nonetheless, children are well capable of learning this vocabulary in a non-linear order – reflecting the "nonlinear nature of language acquisition" (Lewis, 2000: 134) and in thematic sets rather than in semantic fields.

What this paper advocates is a shift towards genre-based approaches to TEFL that make use of children-oriented texts in order to present high-frequency language, selected on the basis of corpus-driven studies, organized in thematic sets. The results of an analysis of the most frequent descriptive modifiers found in a corpus of stories will illustrate how to extract patterns that are characteristic of a certain text type and therefore worth teaching to primary-school learners since exposure should be "carefully selected so that they are given not random exposure, but exposure to the commonest patterns and meanings in the language" (Willis, 1990: iv).

3. Materials and method

An *ad-hoc* corpus, CSS, has been compiled and explored with Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff et al., 2014). It is a monolingual English-language corpus of 454 Children's Short Stories, extracted from children-oriented websites during the year 2016, and it amounts to over half a million words (517,321). Some of the stories come from well-known folk tales or fairy tales originally written by Andersen, the Brothers Grimm, Joseph Jacobs, Perrault, Beatrix Potter, and Aesop; some others are new stories written by contemporary writers like Nathan Oser, Daniel Henshaw, David Lambert, Clare O'Dea, Deirdre Sullivan, and Jim McCarthy, etc.

CSS has been exploited to retrieve information about the characteristic features of this genre, and, for the purpose of this study, the most frequent modifiers: adjectives and adverbs have been searched for and their most salient grammatical patterns and collocations have been identified by using *word sketches* – an application within Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff et al., 2014; Thomas, 2015). "A

Table 1
The 100 most frequent adjectives in CSS and the selection of those that refer to physical characteristics.

Item	Freq	Item	Freq	Item	Freq	Item	Freq
LITTLE	1740	much	208	dear	123	android	91
OLD	963	few	196	lovely	123	TINY	90
good	958	bad	193	HARD	121	several	89
great	720	HIGH	193	rich	121	extra	85
other	702	BLACK	185	BRIGHT	117	DEEP	83
more	538	RED	184	sweet	117	hot	82
many	481	GOLDEN	183	cold	116	ugly	81
beautiful	479	full	181	second	112	TALL	81
last	470	able	180	fair	110	wild	80
BIG	458	strange	164	hungry	110	willing	79
LONG	455	different	156	colorful	108	useful	78
YOUNG	427	STRONG	156	glad	108	open	75
NEW	421	free	151	true	108	tired	75
next	376	third	149	inspirational	105	pretty	75
own	373	dead	149	wonderful	105	brave	73
first	318	fairy	148	late	101	single	73
SMALL	309	angry	148	only	101	FAT	73
happy	302	educational	146	nice	99	real	72
poor	295	sad	142	BLUE	97	special	69
LARGE	259	fine	140	DARK	97	HEAVY	69
WHITE	255	ready	137	early	95	warm	68
whole	243	GREEN	128	right	94	magic	68
SHORT	242	sure	127	HUGE	94	near	66
same	220	afraid	125	mobile	92	very	66
animated	214	such	124	ad-free	91	SOFT	64

word sketch is an automatic corpus-derived summary of a word's grammatical and collocational behavior" (Kilgarriff, Kovář, Krek, Srđanovic & Tiberius, 2010: 372). It is a one-page summary that shows the collocates categorized by grammatical relations such as words that serve as an object of the verb, words that serve as a subject of the verb, words that modify the word, etc. The typicality score (Log Dice) indicates how strong the collocation is. The higher the score, the stronger the collocation. A low score means that the words in the collocation also frequently combine with many other words or in other grammatical relations.

For the selection of the modifiers to be analyzed, the 100 most frequent adjectives and the 100 most frequent adverbs found in CSS were classified in order to obtain an overview of the distinctive characteristics of each subgroup and to focus on some of the most useful for TEFL to young learners. A selection was made of those descriptive adjectives and adverbs used to refer to physical characteristics and their occurrences were analyzed to find out more about their grammatical behavior and their most common collocates. Only patterns whose typicality scores were higher than 8 (Log Dice > 8) and whose occurrences were two or more were included in the results (all *hapax legomena* were discarded).

4. Analysis and results

4.1. Selection of modifiers

First of all, two wordlists were extracted from the corpus of the 100 most frequent adjectives (Table 1) and adverbs (Table 2) and their raw frequency rates, i.e., the number of times they occur in CSS.

Thirteen of the adjectives in Table 1 have not been considered because they are not descriptive, such as quantitative adjectives (e.g., *many, whole, few, several*) and sequence adjectives (e.g., *last, next, first, third*) or because they are descriptive adjectives but they refer to the whole story, i.e. they are only found at the heading or presentation of the stories on the websites, but are not part of the actual story: (e.g. *educational, inspirational, animated, ad-free and mobile*: e.g. "Explore our site to watch more educational and inspirational animated stories for kids").

We can divide the 87 descriptive adjectives into different groups according to their semantics:

- adjectives that refer to physical appearances like a) size and height (*little, big, long, large, short, high, huge, tiny, and tall*), b) color (*white, black, red, golden, green, bright, colorful, blue, dark*), and c) other semantic functions like age, complexion or texture (*old, young, new strong, hard, deep, fat, heavy, soft*).
- subjective adjectives that express opinion or judgment (*good, great, beautiful, bad, strange, different, fine, dear, lovely, sweet, wonderful, nice, ugly, pretty, special, useful, brave*).
- adjectives that refer to temporary states, including temperature (*cold, hot, warm*), feelings (*happy, angry, sad, afraid, hungry, glad, tired*), timeliness and readiness (*late, early, ready*), and other short-term or momentary characteristics particular of a given situation (*full, sure, right, willing, open*).
- adjectives that tend to express more long-lasting or permanent properties and have to do with wealth or lack of possessions (*rich, poor*), ability (*able*); some of them are adjectives that are usually binary rather than gradable (*dead, fair, true, real*) and some could be used with classifying rather than descriptive meanings (*wild, single, magic*).

The first group, comprising 27 adjectives expressing physical properties (in capital letters in Table 1), has been chosen for a more detailed study of their grammatical and collocational behavior because they seem to be more objective and informative than the second group, not so specific to a particular moment or situation as the third group and they form a more cohesive set, are more descriptive in nature and are easier for young learners to learn than those in the fourth group.

Moving on to the adverbial modifiers now, Table 2 shows the 100 most frequent adverbs in CSS. According to their meaning and function, these adverbs can be classified as follows:

- Adverbs expressing manner: well, together, quickly, alone, suddenly, immediately, fast, somehow, slowly, happily, easily, straight, hard, sadly, softly, carefully, loudly, directly.
- Adverbs expressing place or direction: there, here, back, away, about, far, down, up, out, somewhere, below, off, home, inside, forth, around, over, forward.

Table 2
The 100 most frequent adverbs in CSS and the selection of adverbs of manner.

Item	Freq	Item	Freq	Item	Freq	Item	Freq
not	4093	far	314	right	113	inside	55
so	2629	down	313	somewhere	111	EASILY	55
then	1806	ever	308	below	108	STRAIGHT	53
very	1301	long	260	rather	107	though	49
now	1144	no	259	already	104	pretty	48
as	981	quite	256	else	104	completely	45
again	800	up	245	somehow	103	HARD	44
there	797	TOGETHER	239	indeed	95	dear	44
just	755	QUICKLY	234	often	94	forth	43
here	738	also	230	ago	79	sooner	43
back	733	most	211	instead	79	that	42
away	723	really	208	asleep	78	nearly	41
all	721	however	199	off	77	scarcely	41
never	692	ALONE	172	home	77	SADLY	41
WELL	670	out	166	sometimes	75	SOFTLY	41
only	588	before	156	perhaps	74	sure	40
soon	579	SUDDENLY	151	hardly	73	CAREFULLY	40
once	545	longer	131	SLOWLY	70	LOUDLY	39
more	487	first	127	little	70	around	39
too	459	yet	126	HAPPILY	66	DIRECTLY	39
still	457	IMMEDIATELY	125	maybe	62	over	39
always	395	enough	124	surely	60	greatly	38
even	393	FAST	121	later	59	forward	38
about	367	finally	120	therefore	58	afterwards	38
much	341	almost	120	thus	56	exactly	38

- Adverbs of negation: not, no and contrast: however, instead, though.
- Adverbs of degree: so, very, all, more, much, quite, most, really, enough, almost, rather, hardly, little, pretty, completely, that, nearly, scarcely, greatly.
- Adverbs expressing time, sequence, frequency, and consequence: then, now, again, never, soon, once, still, always, ever, long, before, longer, first, yet, finally, already, often, ago, sometimes, later, therefore, thus, sooner, afterwards.
- Epistemic adverbs: indeed, perhaps, maybe, surely.
- Focusing adverbs that a) add information: too, also, else b) limit information: just, only, right, exactly, and c) express certain surprise about the expected information: even.

Some of these adverbs are polysemic: e.g., *as* (as an adverb of manner, comparison and as part of many different combinations and correlations: *as if*, *as soon as*, etc.) *too* (as an adverb of degree or a focusing adverb), *well* (an adverb of manner or a focusing adverbial in the combination *as well*). Also, some words which are usually classified as adverbs have been found among the adjectives, for example, *very*, and some other words that we tend to consider adjectives have been found among the adverbs, like *asleep*, *dear*, or *sure*. In some cases, the tagger that Sketch Engine runs may not be completely accurate (occasional errors in the POS tagging have been detected: e.g., *in that well swims a duck* is an example retrieved when searching for *well* as an adverb). In some other cases, the same word can act as an adjective sometimes and some other times as an adverb, for example in the cases of *little* or *pretty*. Sketch Engine has tagged *pretty* as a modifier of the adjective it precedes in cases where it simply acts as another adjective, e.g., *Ashra clapped her hands with delight when she saw the pretty little chair in the kitchen on the morning of her birthday*. These two grammatical categories, adjectives and adverbs overlap very often; in fact, “not all languages make a grammatical distinction between adverbs and adjectives” (Swan, 2016: 193). The important thing is that they are all modifiers of another element in the sentence.

For the purpose of this study, the adverbs of manner have been selected, as they have been considered to be the group of adverbs that contribute the most to the descriptive function in stories; on the other hand, time or place adverbs can be more readily asso-

ciated with the narrative function. Regarding the form of these 17 adverbs selected (in capital letters in Table 2), 11 of them are composed of the suffix *-ly*; regarding their meaning, they can be grouped into several categories:

- expressing company or the lack of it: *alone* and *together*,
- expressing pace: *directly*, *fast*, *immediately*, *quickly*, *slowly* and *suddenly*,
- expressing quality, dedication or ease of achievement: *carefully*, *easily*, *hard* and *well*,
- expressing feelings: *happily* and *sadly*,
- expressing specific manner with verbs of speech or movement: *loudly*, *softly*, and *straight*.

4.2. Word sketches of the modifiers selected

The analysis yielded the following results concerning the nature and behavior of the selected descriptive modifiers in the corpus. The word sketches found for each modifier with scores higher than 8 and with at least two occurrences were selected and displayed in Figs. 1–10. These word sketches summarize the grammatical and collocational behavior of the adjectives and adverbs studied and reveal some interesting grammatical patterns and collocations. Figs. 1–3 show the modifiers, verbs, and subjects that have been found to go with each of these groups of adjectives: size and height (Fig. 1), colors (Fig. 2), and age, complexion, and texture (Fig. 3); Figs. 4–6 correspond to the noun phrases where these adjectives occur and Figs. 7–9 present their combinations with other adjectives. Finally, Fig. 10 presents the word sketches of the adverbs studied.

The word forms are shown according to their occurrence in the corpus, which means that lexemes or headwords have not been used (i.e., singular form for nouns, infinitive for verbs, and positive for adjectives); the nouns may be singular or plural, the adjectives sometimes appear in comparative or superlative forms and the verbs are usually in the past form (as it the preferred style of narrative texts like stories).

As shown in Fig. 1, the adjectives in the upper part of the scale are the only ones frequently used in the comparative form: *much bigger*, *even bigger*, *no bigger*, *far bigger*, *no longer*, *much larger*; the

	LITTLE	BIG	LONG	SMALL	LARGE	SHORT	HIGH	HUGE	TINY	TALL
Mdf	other little very little	as big as even bigger far bigger much bigger no bigger too big	many long no longer so long too long very long	too small very small	much larger	too short	such high up high			
Inf.	little to eat									
Vs	had little of	became big grew big made sth big seemed big was big	had long prayed long sat long was long		grew large had + sth large	stopped short	flew high hung (so) high lifted high piled high rose high soared high			grew tall
Subj		eyes/eyeholes were big	way was long	cycle was small	pieces were large room was large		feet miles high window... high			inches feet tall

Fig. 1. Word sketches of adjectives expressing size and height: modifiers, verbs, and subjects.

	OLD	YOUNG	NEW	STRONG	HARD	DEEP	FAT	HEAVY	SOFT
Mdf	too old	many young		much stronger very strong	so hard too hard			too heavy	
Inf.				strong (enough) to carry	hard to be hard to believe hard to find hard to please hard to reach				
Vs	grew old was old			became stronger grew stronger looked stronger made (sb) stronger was stronger	begged hard blew hard found it (too) hard to hit sth/ sb hard pulled hard struck sth/ sb hard worked hard		got fat grew fat make sb fat	became heavy	
Subj	months old years old		something new	stone was strong wings were strong				heart was heavy stones were heavy	

Fig. 2. Word sketches of adjectives expressing age, complexion, and texture: modifiers, verbs, and subjects.

	WHITE	BLACK	RED	GOLDEN	GREEN	BRIGHT	BLUE	DARK
Mdf	as white as	as black as nearly black	as red as		many green	as bright as		quite dark
Inf.								too dark to see
Vs	grew white turned white	looked black	became red grew red			looked bright made sth bright		became dark grew dark
Subj	feathers... white	face... black hair... black	sky... red		trees... green	light... bright	eyes... blue	

Fig. 3. Word sketches of adjectives expressing color: modifiers, verbs, and subjects.

LITTLE	BIG	LONG	SMALL	LARGE	SHORT	HIGH	HUGE	TINY	TALL
little bird	big ape	long arm	small bag	large bag	short distance	high bidder	huge amount	tiny bed	tall knight
little boy	big bag	long beard	small boat	large basket	short legs	high crag	huge rat	tiny bit	tall rock
little cat	big boy	long blast	small boy	large bucket	short time	high degree	huge chest	tiny cottage	tall tower
little child	big brother	long day	small cave	large building		high esteem	huge mop	tiny bottle	tall tree
little cottage	big ears	long distance	small hole	large bush		high hill	huge head	tiny fellow	
little dog	big egg	long hair	small needle	large church		high king	huge mass	tiny hat	
little fellow	big eyes	long journey	small quantity	large circle		high mountain	huge palace	tiny house	
little frog	big field	long nose	small restaurant	large ear		high personage	huge stone	tiny lady	
little Gerda	big fish	long shadow	small fire	large egg		high road	huge tree	tiny opening	
little girl	big house	long story	small town	large fish		high rock	huge paw	tiny thread	
little gnome	big hug	long string	small village	large forest		high stone	huge rock	tiny shoot	
little house	big ox	long tail	small piece	large garden		high throne		tiny squirrel	
little hummingbird	big pot	a long time ago		large hall		high tower		tiny stream	
little Kay	big smile	long veil		large hogshead		high wall		tiny voice	
little maiden	big spider	long walk		large flock		high window			
little man	big surprise	long way		large house					
little mermaid	big tree	long while		large jar					
little mother	big truck	long work		large kingdom					
little mouse	big (bad) wolf	long year		large ship					
little pig				large lake					
little piper				large number					
little sister				large oak-tree					
little while				large piece					
little woman				large pot					
				large sledge					
				large stone					
				large sum					
				large town					
				large tree					

Fig. 4. Word sketches of adjectives expressing size and height: noun phrases.

OLD	YOUNG	NEW	STRONG	HARD	DEEP	FAT	HEAVY	SOFT
old age	young boy	new clothes	strong archer	hard winter	deep blue eyes	fat bear	heavy heart	soft blast
old boy	young brother	new friend	strong friends	hard work	deep breath	fat calf	heavy load	soft light
old brother	young daughter	new home	strong house	hard worker	deep hole	fat cattle	heavy rain	soft voice
old dame	young gentleman	new life	strong lion		deep lake	fat duck	heavy sack	
old duck	young girl	new wagon	strong pair		deep pool	fat meal	heavy storm	
old grandmother	young hen		strong person		deep (blue) sea		heavy weight	
old hag	young king		strong wind		deep shadows			
old home	young knight		strong youth		deep sigh			
old lady	young lady				deep sleep			
old man	young man				deep voice			
old mandarin	young one							
old mine	young people							
old stone	young prince							
old tree	young princess							
old wife	young queen							
old woman	young sister							
	young son							
	young woman							

Fig. 5. Word sketches of adjectives expressing age, complexion, and texture: noun phrases.

WHITE	BLACK	RED	GOLDEN	GREEN	BRIGHT	BLUE	DARK
white apron	black ant	red ant	golden apple	green bank	bright color	blue car	dark cloud
white arms	black cat	red berry	golden ax	green eyes	bright eye	blue eyes	dark eyes
white bear	black cloud	red boat	golden ball	green fields	bright face	blue light	dark figure
white beard	black cormorant	red brush	golden beads	green glade	bright flash	blue mountain	dark forest
white bed	black cow	red cap	golden bodkin	green grass	bright gleam	blue sea	dark hair
white bee	black dog	red cheek	golden bridge	green hill	bright house	blue silk	dark night
white blossom	black eye	red cross	golden brooch	green island	bright light	blue sky	dark prison
white bow	black fellow	red eyes	golden circlet	green jacket	bright moonlight	blue sofas	dark rock
white cat	black hair	red feather	golden crown	green jar	bright morning	blue water	dark shade
white cow	black horse	red gold	golden cup	green leaves	bright sun		dark spot
white deer	black marble	red half	golden ducats	green meadows			dark water
white dress	black mass	red jacket	golden egg	green patch			dark wood
white feather	black nose	red jar	golden flute	green plain			
white foam	black slave	red lip	golden hair	green seeds			
white fortress	black spot	red nose	golden harp	green silk			
white hair		red robe	golden helmet	green woods			
white hand		red roof	golden horn				
white hind		red rose	golden hue				
white horse		red seeds	golden key				
white leg		red shoes	golden letter				
white lily		red sleeve	golden light				
white marble		red suit	golden lion				
white mark		red velvet	golden mail				
white moon		red wagon	golden petal				
white paw			golden pieces				
white queen			golden plate				
white rabbit			golden spear				
white road			golden spinning-wheel				
white sand			golden stem				
white shield			golden strand				
white snow			golden sword				
white steed			golden tassels				
white stone			golden window				
white swan							
white wand							
white witch							

Fig. 6. Word sketches of adjectives expressing color: noun phrases.

intensifier *very* is used mostly with the opposite adjectives (those in the lower part of the scale): *very little*, *very small*, and *long* as well: *very long*. As for the verbs, *grew* stands out as a common verb next to most of the adjectives expressing high degree: *grew big*, *grew large*, and *grew tall*. In most other cases, there are general and copulative and causative verbs (*made*, *had*, *was*, *seemed*, *became*), and some particular verbs are used with *high*: *lifted*, *rose*, *soared*, *piled*, *flew*, *hung*.

The adjectives in Fig. 2 do not show such a wide range of intensifiers (*too old*/ *hard*/ *heavy* and *much stronger* or *very strong*); however, there are interesting patterns with verbs, especially the verb *grew*, which collocates with *old*, *stronger*, and *fat*, and *became*, with *stronger* and *heavy*. Other verbs include copulative and causative

verbs: *made*, *looked*, *became*, *was*, *got* and the most specific verbs go along with *hard*; however, *hard* takes on adverbial functions on these occasions: *hit*/ *struck*/ *worked*/ *begged*/ *pulled*/ *blew hard*.

Curiously enough, as can be seen in Fig. 3, the correlation *as...as* occurs with some of these color adjectives: *white*, *black*, *red*, and *bright*. Again, the verb *grew* collocates with several adjectives: *white*, *red*, and *dark*, and copulative and causative verbs are also frequent: *turned*, *looked*, *became*, and *made*.

All in all, in Figs. 1–3 we can see more (and more varied) modifiers among the adjectives expressing size and height than among the others, a predominance of the verb *grew* and verbs used with a subject complement (copulative verbs) and with an object complement (the causative verb *made*), many of them expressing change

LITTLE	BIG	LONG	SMALL	LARGE	SHORT	HIGH	HUGE	TINY	TALL
little black little blue little brown little dark little furry little great little green little naughty little old little red little sad little soft little weeny little white	big bad big beautiful big black big fat big hollow big old big red big ugly	long black long bushy long dark long floppy long green long happy long skinny long soft long white long yellow	small shiny small white	large bright large flat large green large ugly			huge old	tiny little tiny pink tiny white	
beautiful little cute little dark little dear little first little frightened little funny little furry little good little lovely little naughty little nice little normal little own little poor little pretty little sad little soft little sweet little third little tiny little	beautiful big fine big great big terrible big						old huge		
	big and beautiful big and fat big and ugly	long and dark long and happy long and hard	small and weak small and white	large and beautiful large and bright large and small large and ugly		high and low highest or lowest			tall and handsome tall and ready tall and strong tall and wide
	fat and big stout and big		great and small large and small	beautiful and large			old and huge		
	bigger and bigger bigger and blacker bigger and fatter bigger and stouter		smaller and weaker smaller and smaller	larger and heavier larger and larger		higher and higher			
	big, big	long, long				high, high			wider and taller

Fig. 7. Word sketches of adjectives expressing size and height: other adjectives.

OLD	YOUNG	NEW	STRONG	HARD	DEEP	FAT	HEAVY	SOFT
old broken-down old chinese old crooked old dumb old female old huge old nasty old ragged old rough old rusty old stupid old wooden		new red			deep blue deep green		huge old	soft fluffy soft green soft little soft sad soft stringy soft white
big old crooked old dear old first old good old great old huge old little old poor old ragged old second old strange old stupid old third old ugly old wise old wizened old	beautiful young dear young fine young good-looking young handsome young poor young	delicious new strange new	good strong			big fat fine fat good fat great fat		little soft long soft
old and huge old and poor old and rusty old and stupid old and weak old and wise	young and beautiful young and good-looking young and handsome	new and delicious	strong and active strong and brave strong and fast strong and good		deep and blue deep and thick	fat and big		soft and smooth soft and white
			active and strong brave and strong tall and strong	long and hard	thick and deep	big and fat		
			strongest and best stronger and better	harder and harder	deeper and deeper			
			braver and stronger fastest and strongest		greenest and deepest	bigger and fatter finer and fatter	larger and heavier	
old, old								

Fig. 8. Word sketches of adjectives expressing age, complexion, and texture: other adjectives.

WHITE	BLACK	RED	GOLDEN	GREEN	BRIGHT	BLUE	DARK
		red blue red orange			bright orange bright red bright sweet bright white		dark blue dark cold dark little
beautiful white bright white clean white great white little white long white lovely white rough white small white soft white thick white tiny white wicked white	big black great black little black long black wiry black	big red bright red little red new red ripe red	great golden	beautiful green deep green large green little green long green soft green	clear bright large bright	deep blue little blue red blue	cold dark little dark long dark thick dark
white and beautiful white and red white and thick	black and blue black and brown black and white	red and blue red and bright red and brown red and orange red and white		green and beautiful green and fresh green and yellow	bright and beautiful bright and clear bright and warm	blue and purple blue and yellow	dark and cold dark and stormy
black and white lovely and white red and white small and white soft and white	brown and black yellow and black	brown and red white and red		fresh and green yellow and green	clear and bright large and bright red and bright warm and bright	black and blue deep and blue purple and blue red and blue	cold and dark long and dark
	bigger and blacker				brighter and brighter		

Fig. 9. Word sketches of adjectives expressing color: other adjectives.

or progress; the most specific verbs tend to co-occur with *high* (Fig. 1) and *hard* (Fig. 2). Also, some units of measurement are used, with *high* and *tall*: *miles* and *feet* (Fig. 1) and with *old*: *years* and *months* (Fig. 2). There are some significant collocations, the only ones found with an infinitive: *little to eat* (Fig. 1), *strong to carry*, *hard to be/ believe/ find/ please/ reach* (Fig. 2), and *too dark to see* (Fig. 3).

The following three Figs 4–6. show the word sketches of these adjectives occurring within noun phrases, where we can see the most frequent noun collocates of each adjective Fig. 4. shows that most of the collocates of the adjective *little* are nouns related to people (even proper nouns), and animals. These kinds of nouns also appear, to a much lesser extent, along with the other adjectives, except for *long* and *short*. The word *house* and other references to human-made constructions, like *cottage*, *town*, *village*, *building*, *church*, *restaurant*, *tower*, *road*, *palace* are found among the word sketches of all adjectives except for *long* and *short*, but especially with *large*. *Big*, *long*, *large*, *short*, and *huge* usually precede parts of the body. Some of these adjectives are followed by places or natural objects, e.g., *big field*, *big/ large/ huge/ tall tree*, *small cave/ hole*, *large bush/ forest/ lake/ stone*, *high hill/ mountain/ rock*, *tiny stream*, *tall rock*. *Long* and *short* are the only adjectives in this group followed by time references (e.g., *long day/ distance/ journey*, *a long time ago*, *short distance/ time*), except for a *little while*. Objects are found in all the columns except for those of *little*, *short* and *tall*.

If we pay attention to each group of near-synonyms, some observations can be made: *little* is mostly followed by a type of person or animal, except for *little cottage*, *little house*, and *a little while*, whereas *small* and *tiny* are followed by fewer nouns but more diverse in nature – people or animals, e.g., *small boy*, *tiny fellow/ lady/ squirrel*; man-made objects, e.g., *small bag/ needle*, *tiny bed/ bottle/ hat*; natural objects, e.g., *small cave/ hole*, *tiny stream*; places, e.g., *small restaurant/ town/ village*, *tiny cottage/ house* and references to amounts, e.g., *small quantity/ piece*, *tiny bit*. As for *big*, *large*, and *huge*, *large* collocates with the most number of nouns appearing in the table and we can see that some nouns co-occur with two (*big/ large bag/ ear/ egg/ fish/ house*, *large/ huge stone*) or even the three of them (*big/ large/ huge tree*), but in general, most of the nouns in the table only co-occur with one of these adjectives, e.g., *big*

boy/ brother/ (bad) wolf, *large building/ kingdom/ number/ piece/ sum*, *huge amount/ palace/ rock*. Finally, *high* has a wider range of noun collocates than *tall*. They have two collocates in common: *rock* and *tower*; but the others only co-occur with either of them, e.g., *high degree/ esteem/ hill/ king/ mountain/ wall*, *tall knight/ tree*.

In general, some recurrent nouns are found with different, even opposite adjectives, e.g., *big/ small bag*, *little/ big/ small boy*, *little/ big/ large/ tiny house*, *long/ short distance*, whereas there seems to be a distribution of adjectives in other cases, e.g., *small boat* but *large ship*. The adjectives in these last examples emphasize a particular feature of the noun (a boat is by definition smaller than a ship), rendering the collocation almost redundant.

Not surprisingly, in Fig. 5 we can see that all the collocates of *young* and most collocates of *old*, *strong*, and *fat* are references to people or animals; there are some references to objects (e.g., *new clothes*, *heavy sack*, *fat meal*), to natural places or objects (e.g., *old mine/ stone/ tree*, *deep hole/ lake/ pool/ (blue) sea*), and especially in this case to weather conditions (e.g., *strong wind*, *hard winter*, *heavy rain/ storm*). Some other particular collocations also stand out, e.g., *old age*, *new life*, *hard work*, *deep breath/ sigh/ sleep*, *heavy heart/ load/ weight*, and the only noun that occurs with opposite adjectives is voice: *deep/ soft voice*.

As for the adjectives that express color, *white*, *golden* and *red* are those used with the largest number of collocates, as can be seen in Fig. 6. These three adjectives are often used with items of clothing (*white apron/ dress*, *red cap/ jacket/ robe/ shoes/ sleeve/ suit*, *golden helmet*) or jewelry (*golden brooch*, *circlet*, *crown*); and there is also *green jacket*. Animate referents like *queen*, *witch*, *fellow*, *slave* and kinds of animals tend to co-occur with *white* and *black* (e.g., *white bear/ bee/ rabbit/ steed*, *black ant/ cat/ cormorant/ horse*), with the exception of *red ant*, *golden lion* and *dark figure*. Parts of the body are common collocates for all the different colors, e.g., *white beard/ feather/ paw*, *black eye/ hair*, *golden hair/ horn*, *green eyes*, *bright eye/ face*, *blue eyes*, *dark eyes*. Most objects are preceded by *white*, *red* or *golden*, e.g., *white bed/ bow/ shield*, *red boat/ brush/ cross/ jar*, *golden axe/ ball/ beads/ cup/ flute/ harp/ spear/ spinning wheel*. Natural objects or places tend to be green (*green bank/ fields/ glade/ hill/ island/ meadows/ patch/ plain/ woods*), blue (*blue mountain/ sea/ sky/ water*), dark (*dark forest/ rock/ spot/ water/ wood*), white (*white foam/ marble/ sand/ snow/ stone*) or black

<u>ADVERB</u>	<u>PREMODIFIERS</u>	<u>VERBS PREMODIFIED</u>	<u>VERBS POSTMODIFIED</u>	<u>ADJS OR ADVS MODIFIED</u>
ALONE	all/ home/ quite alone		felt/ left/ let/ lived/ sat/ slept/ stood/ walked/ was/ went alone	
CAREFULLY	most/ very carefully	carefully took	looked/ watched carefully	
DIRECTLY				directly afterwards
EASILY	more/ quite/ very easily	easily break/ get/ see		
FAST	as/ so fast	fast approached	approached/ fell/ grew/ hasted/ held/ ran/ stuck fast	fast asleep
HAPPILY		happily agreed/ began/ enjoyed/ returned	lived happily	happily ever after/ together
HARD	so hard		blew/ kicked/ struggled/ thought/ tried/ worked hard	
IMMEDIATELY	away immediately	immediately became/ made/ started/ went	became/ closed/ hurried/ went immediately	
LOUDLY			called/ cheered/ cried/ laughed/ roared/ screamed loudly	
QUICKLY	as/ too quickly	quickly came/ climbed/ disappeared/ discovered/ dressed/ drew/ fetched/ finished/ followed/ found/ gobbled/ hid/ jumped/ picked/ searched/ spread	beat/ climbed/ drawn/ jumped/ passed/ ran/ rode spread/ swam/ went quickly	quickly away/ down
SADLY			said/ went sadly	sadly enough
SLOWLY	more slowly	slowly began/ said	began/ passed/ said/ walked slowly	
SOFTLY	very softly	softly blows/ sang	blew/ crept/ sang softly	
STRAIGHT			headed/ ran/ walked/ went straight	straight back/ down/ out/ up
SUDDENLY	quite/ then suddenly	suddenly appeared/ became/ disappeared/ stopped	turned suddenly	
TOGETHER	all/ happily/ home/ tightly together		called/ chewed/ gathered/ got/ joined/ knotted/ lived/ played/ remained/ rode/ sang/ sat/ stayed/ stuck/ walked/ went/ whispered/ worked together	
WELL	as/ perfectly/ pretty/ quite/ so/ very well	well acquainted/ behaved/ deserved/ done/ fed/ hidden/ known/ made/ pleased/ remembered/ treated can well imagine	danced/ got/ knew/ lived/ loved/ made/ remembered/ slept/ spoke/ understood/ was/ went/ worked well	well again/ enough/ off/ then

Fig. 10. Word sketches of the adverbs of manner.

(black marble/ spot). More specifically, there are references to flowers, fruits, seeds or grass: (white blossom/ lily, red berry/ rose/ seeds, golden apple/ petal/ stem, green grass/ leaves/ seeds) and to luxurious fabrics (red velvet, green/ blue silk). Also, we can find references to light, color and atmospheric elements, especially with the adjective bright: white moon, black cloud, golden hue/ light, bright color/ flash/ gleam/ light/ moonlight/ morning/ sun, blue light, dark cloud/ night/ shade.

In general, Figs. 4–6 show that the adjectives which have a wider range of strong collocates are: large, little, young, old, white and golden. The nouns found to collocate with the most number of adjectives are: eye/s (deep/ (deep) blue/ black/ red/ green/ bright/ dark eye/s), house (little/ big/ large/ tiny/ strong/ bright house), tree (big/ large/ huge/ tall/ old tree), hair (long/ white/ black/ golden/ dark hair), stone (large/ high/ huge/ old/ white), boy (little/ big/ small/ old/ young boy), rock (high/ huge/ tall/ dark rock) and light (soft/ golden/ bright/ blue light). In other cases, two or three adjectives are used with some nouns - sometimes they are synonyms, e.g., dark/ black spot, high/ tall tower, little/ tiny cottage, sometimes they are opposites, e.g., tiny/ soft/ deep voice, small/ deep hole, big/ small bag and sometimes they are unrelated, e.g., high/ golden window, long/ black/ red nose. And yet in other cases, only one adjective is a strong collocate of the noun, e.g., small cave, large hall, strong wind, deep pool/ shadows/ sleep, fat meal, heavy heart/ load/ rain/ sack/ storm/ weight, white rabbit, green fields, etc.

As for their co-occurrence with other adjectives, in Fig. 7 we can observe that, in most cases, the size adjectives precede other adjectives, with the main exception of little, which takes part in a wide range of patterns both following and preceding other adjectives. Sometimes both types of sequences are common: little dark

and dark little, little furry and furry little, little naughty and naughty little, little sad and sad little, little soft and soft little, big beautiful and beautiful big and huge old and old huge. Three of these adjectives: short, high, and tall are not so commonly used in this type of chain of adjectives. Another usual structure is the combination of adjectives joined with the conjunction and, with the exceptions of little, short and tiny. Not surprisingly, weak co-occurs with small, whereas fat, stout, strong and heavy, with big, large and tall. On the other hand, some other times there is not a restricted distribution, for example, big and large co-occur with both beautiful and ugly and sometimes opposites are joined together: great and small, large and small, high and low, highest or lowest. When it comes to combining comparative forms, in all four cases, there is a repetition of the same comparative adjectives: bigger and bigger, smaller and smaller, larger and larger and higher and higher, but these adjectives (except for higher) are also linked with others: e.g., bigger and blacker, smaller and weaker, larger and heavier. Finally, in order to emphasize the degree expressed by the adjective, repetition is resorted to, instead of the use of an intensifier: big, big; long, long; high, high.

In the case of adjectives expressing age, complexity, and texture, old stands out for the variety of adjectives both following and preceding it, as can be seen in Fig. 8. In the case of deep and soft, they tend to precede a few adjectives whereas young and fat tend to follow them. The only cases we can see where the order does not matter are: old huge/ huge old, old ragged/ ragged old, and soft little/ little soft. Some combinations with and are used with all these adjectives, in positive, comparative, and superlative forms, with only harder and deeper being repeated in the same combination: harder and harder, deeper and deeper. And there is a

repetition of the adjective only in the case of *old* and *long*: *old, old; long, long*. As for the nature of the adjectives, *old* seems to be associated with negative adjectives: *dumb, nasty, stupid, ragged, rusty, ugly, weak, wizened*, except for *wise* whereas *young* and *strong* tend to co-occur with positive adjectives: *young* with *beautiful, dear, fine, good-looking* and *handsome* and *strong* with *good, active, brave* and *fast*. The adjectives *dear* and *poor* occur both with *old* and *young*.

Finally, as for the adjectives of color (Fig. 9), *red, bright, and dark* both precede and follow other adjectives, whereas all the others only follow a number of different adjectives, some of them common to most of the color adjectives (e.g., *little white/ black/ red/ green/ blue/ dark*), some of them found with two of colors (e.g., *thick white/ dark, deep green/ blue, soft white/ green*) and some others specific to one of them (e.g., *clean white, wiry black, ripe red*). All of the color adjectives except for *golden* take part in binomials, both as the first or the second element, in most cases in combination with other colors. Sometimes the order is fixed (*black and white, black and blue, red and blue*) and sometimes the order of the elements varies (*white and red/ red and white, black and brown/ brown and black, red and brown/ brown and red, red and white/ white and red, green and yellow/ yellow and green, blue and purple/ purple and blue*). Some colors are associated with *beautiful* and *lovely*: *white/ green/ bright; green* collocates with *fresh*, *bright* with *clear* and *warm*, and *dark* with *cold, stormy, and long*. As for the repetition of the same comparative form, only *brighter and brighter* appears to be a strong collocation.

In a nutshell, in most of the combinations with other adjectives (Figs 7–9.), these descriptive modifiers follow the general rule (size adjectives usually come before color adjectives), with *little* and *old* displaying the highest variation in their position, as there is even fluctuation in the order of the same adjectives (e.g., *little sad/ sad little, old ragged/ ragged old*). They usually take part in binomials, sometimes in the comparative form and another pattern found is repetition, in the cases of *big, long, high, and old*.

Moving on to the adverbs selected, if we take a closer look now at the word sketches of each adverb in Fig. 10, we can see that *alone* and *together* share some collocates: *all, home, lived, sat, walked* and *went*, although some others clearly contribute to the meaning of the adverb and only occur with either of them, e.g., *felt/ left/ let alone, gathered/ joined/ happily/ worked together*. In the following group, *directly* is not as rich from a phraseological point of view as the others, as it only has one collocate: *afterwards*. In the case of the synonyms *fast* and *quickly*, there is a clear complementary distribution, as they only share a couple of common collocates: *as* and *ran* and also *fast* tends to follow verbs whereas *quickly* usually precedes them, although there are cases of both patterns, e.g., *quickly came, rode quickly, quickly climbed/ climbed quickly*. Another interesting collocation is *fast asleep*. *Slowly* does not present such a variety of collocates and two of them appear both behind and in front of the adverb: *slowly began/ said, began/ said slowly*. The remaining adverbs in this group, *immediately* and *suddenly* co-occur with similar verbs, denoting the start or end of something or its appearance or disappearance (*started, closed, turned, appeared, disappeared*), one of them common to both: *became*.

Some other observations that can be made about this group of adverbs are the fact that *easily* prefers to premodify verbs (*easily break/ get/ see*) whereas postmodification prevails in the case of *hard* (*blew/ kicked/ struggled/ thought/ tried/ worked hard*). *Carefully* and *well* use both, depending on the verb: *carefully took* but *looked/ watched carefully* and depending on the verbal form, i.e., *well* seems to precede past participles, e.g., *well fed/ hidden/ known* and to follow verbs in the simple past form, e.g., *knew/ slept/ spoke/ went well*. There are also more premodifiers frequently used with *well* and a strong collocation is *well off*. As for *happily* and *sadly*, the former usually precedes verbs, except in the case of *lived hap-*

pily, and the latter only follows them (*said/ went sadly*). A couple of other interesting collocations, characteristic of this genre are: *happily ever after* and *happily together*. Regarding the other adverbs, *loudly* follows the verbs, which are all speech verbs: *called, cheered, cried, laughed, roared, screamed*, whereas *softly* uses both patterns with one verb: *softly sang/ sang softly* but it follows *crept* and in the case of the verb *blow*, it precedes the present tense (*softly blows*) and follows the simple past (*blew softly*). Finally, *straight* follows verbs of movement: *headed/ ran/ walked/ went straight* and modifies adverbs of place: *straight back/ down/ out/ up*.

5. Discussion and implications for TEFL

The previous analysis of a selection of the most frequent descriptive adjectives and adverbs and the display of their word sketches have provided a deeper insight into the uses of these modifiers in children's short stories. Some expressions may spring to our minds when we think about these classical stories, e.g., *big (bad) wolf* or *happily ever after*; however, there are many more recursive expressions that would be hard to recall without the help of corpora. Corpus linguistics allows for the identification of many collocations that can be worth pinpointing in TEFL lessons so that they are integrated into the learners' input or exposure to the L2 language, and they can therefore be learned and used in their output or production. The use of collocations is extremely important in foreign language learning, to achieve a more natural process, similar to L1 acquisition. Raising awareness about frequent lexical elements in a particular genre and their most important collocates and patterns can help learners improve both their reading and writing skills. It is a way of learning vocabulary in context (in terms of the whole story), and in co-text (in terms of the immediate surroundings of the word).

Despite some limitations (the relatively small size of the corpus, the impossibility to detect absolutely all the most frequent patterns, the fact that some nouns stand out as collocates of the adjectives studied but searching for them might have yielded different results), the analysis has shown what particular things stories tend to describe (mostly some types of people, animals, natural and artificial objects, parts of the body, clothes, places, light, and weather) and how they do it, using certain adjectives and adverbs. Some of the collocates are predictable and pretty obvious; to name but a few examples: *small boat, large ship, green grass, white snow, white moon, white swan, blue sea, red lip, bright sun*. On the other hand, for some reason or other, the authors of the stories tend to characterize, for instance, wings as strong, stones as heavy, towers as tall or high, trees as tall, big, large, huge, or old, forest as large or dark, woods as green, hair as long, dark, white, black or golden, ears as big or large, crowns as golden, figures as dark, roses as red, etc. The use of these adjectives is not so redundant but still somewhat expected; similar examples would include: *flew/ lifted/ rose/ soared high, work hard, smaller and smaller, wise old, all alone, fast asleep, short/ long distances, well done, well known*, etc. On the other end of the cline, on other occasions, some adjectives are not so expected, which means that they are more informative, for example, a house can be any size, clothes can be any color, etc. This ties in with the dichotomy between following linguistic conventions and creatively breaking them (discussed in Hoey, 2005 and Hanks, 2013 among others). The results of this study should not be misinterpreted to tell children to use only these combinations and not others; they should be seen as tendencies that we can rely on as ready-made common patterns which flow smoothly and are not marked, in comparison with other combinations of words that can be used more creatively as marked features, since those words are not typically found together.

Some inferences can also be drawn not only from a lexical and phraseological point of view but also from a grammatical point of

view: the attributive position of the use of the adjectives studied in the context of stories seems to be more common than the predicative position. Also, these texts are characterized by a simple type of premodification (i.e., one or a couple of adjectives are used in attributive position) as opposed to the very complex and highly informative premodification (i.e., long chains of adjectives) that more adult-oriented and specialized texts may use. However, the premodification used in children's short stories is very graphic, it makes use of concrete rather than abstract adjectives and it helps children easily visualize schemata and imagine the settings and the characters in the stories. Recalling and recycling some of these clusters or collocations can be more easily achieved through the use of mini-stories, mini descriptions of pictures, or schemata where some of these recursive chunks in thematic sets are used (e.g. *the balloon went higher and higher* ; *her mother sang softly until the little girl was fast asleep*; *the children quickly climbed a high mountain and went into a dark forest*; *it was a huge palace, far bigger than their tiny cottage and as bright as golden light*, etc.).

Using chunks rather than isolated words in TEFL to young learners is not only a way to teach vocabulary more effectively; it is also an implicit way of teaching grammar, child-friendly grammar. For instance, simply in the examples above, children would naturally acquire knowledge about the formation, position, and use of adverbs (*sang softly, fast asleep, quickly climbed*), the use of binomials of comparative adjectives (*higher and higher*), the position of attributive adjectives in English (*little girl, high mountain, dark forest, huge palace, tiny cottage, golden light*), comparative structures (*as bright as*) and intensification of comparatives (*far bigger*).

These corpus-based findings can be used in the different stages of a task-based lesson, for example, brainstorming as a pre-task, with visual prompts like flashcards, puppets or pictures that describe a particular setting or scene in a story or a mini-story; using games (memory game, word bingo, nouns and crosses, word snap, etc.) to activate previous knowledge and to pre-teach some new vocabulary or expressions; in receptive activities like reading a story (possibly simplified or adapted) that makes use of some of these patterns; in productive activities like drafting a story to be told, read or performed; and in the language focus stage, with feedback given by the teacher which may include suggesting the addition of adjectives and adverbs (like those in this paper) to make the learners' descriptions richer and more interesting. The target language can also be introduced in the task production stage by guiding the learners with questions, thus eliciting answers that constitute the backbone of the story.

6. Conclusions

This paper has presented the results of a corpus-based study on one of the main pragmatic functions of stories: description, and the way it is expressed through adjectival and adverbial modifiers within certain grammatical patterns and in combination with their most frequent collocates. Although there are limitations to the method presented, and a study of a larger corpus would provide further information, the analysis has yielded the following main results:

- an inventory of the 100 most frequent adjectives and the 100 most frequent adverbs in children's short stories, their classification and a selection of 27 descriptive adjectives that refer to physical appearances like size, height, color, age, complexion, and texture and 17 adverbs of manner expressing company or the lack of it, pace, quality, dedication or ease of achievement, feelings, and modification of verbs of speech or movement.
- an inventory of their word sketches, i.e. the most salient grammatical structures and collocates of each of these modifiers, a

comparison of the use of near-synonyms (e.g. *huge/ large/ big, fast/ quickly*), and opposites (e.g., *long/ short, old/ young*), which reveals common patterns and collocates in some cases and a tendency for complementary distribution in others, and an internal analysis of the collocations found in terms of their predictability and informativeness: some are more predictable and expected, thus less informative than others.

The two main reasons stated to focus on these words and their usage are: first, the fact that they are high-frequency words, which means that they are basic words belonging to the core vocabulary of English, so they should be taught to young learners before other words. It is true that, as mentioned in Section 2.3., there are some among these words which are not common but specialized high-frequency words, i.e., very frequent only in children's short stories, not in general language (e.g., *golden hue, spear, shield*); therefore, it is enough for learners simply to understand them in receptive activities, not necessarily to use them. Secondly, the fact that they are found in children-oriented texts; they are authentic materials - short stories addressed to native children - so the foreign language learning process comes a little closer to the L1 acquisition process. The final aim of this paper has been to provide teacher trainees with typical descriptive modifiers, their patterns, and collocates, (extracted from a corpus-driven study) that they can use in their story-based lessons, or simply when describing pictures, mini-stories, or in other thematically-based activities. In addition, this study can guide them through the process of doing these kinds of analyses themselves. Word sketches of both specialized and sample corpora of other particular genres can also be used to supply specific target language addressed to different kinds of learners.

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