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The Historical Development and Present-day Use of the Noun *idea* as Documented in the OED and Other Corpora

1. Introduction¹

This paper deals with the use and meaning of the English lexeme *idea* today and in the past. For anyone who has always believed that the OED is a dictionary, the title of the paper will probably come as a surprise. However, although it cannot be denied that the OED is indeed intended to be used as a dictionary, this is by no means the only rewarding way of working with it, especially since the OED was published on machine-readable disks (CD-ROM) in 1988 (1st ed.) and 1992 (2nd ed.). Due to its unique collection of passages of English taken from all historical stages of this language, the OED makes up a veritable treasure trove for anyone eager to find examples of a particular word in context. Prior to the publication of the CD the wealth of material collected in the quotations had more or less lain dormant because there was no systematic access to it; today the compact disk version provides an easy and convenient way of retrieving exactly the kind of information one is looking for from all sections of the dictionary entries, including the huge number of quotations. It is one aim of this paper to illustrate the enormous potential opened up by computer technology.

Besides this methodological point — to demonstrate the potential of the OED as a historical corpus of the English language — this paper pursues

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aims pertaining to four linguistic disciplines or approaches: diachronic linguistics, lexicology, cognitive linguistics and stylistics. The diachronic objective is to give an account of the historical development of the use and meaning of the word *idea*. As regards lexicological theory, it will be argued that the lack of tangible semantic features, which is typical of abstract concepts, can be compensated for by an analysis of the collocational patterns in which a word occurs and of the metaphors which are used to conceptualize it. For the latter aspect, the modern cognitive-linguistic view of language provides valuable insights. Finally, it will emerge that there is a marked medium-related variation in the use of *idea*.

2. The use of *idea* in present-day English: a preliminary survey

If one takes a closer look at some modern examples of the word *idea* (cf. Schmid 1993: 165ff) — in this case the 233 singular occurrences recorded in the Lancaster-Oslo-Bergen Corpus of English (LOB; for more details see section 4 below) — one realizes that nowadays the word is typically used in half a dozen specific collocations (Sinclair 1991: 109ff). These are presented in Table 1 together with a short example and their frequencies of occurrence in the LOB corpus:²

collocation	example	freq.
A) idea of	(1) <i>we must end the idea of war</i>	96
B) idea that / is that	(2) <i>the idea that human lives are separate entities. . .</i>	37
C) idea <i>wh</i> -element	(3) <i>I have no idea where we are going</i>	11
D) idea to / is to	(4) <i>the idea is to eliminate the other players</i>	9
E) good (etc.) idea	(5) <i>this was a brilliant idea</i>	9
F) have / get an idea	(6) <i>suddenly he had an idea</i>	5

Table 1: Survey of specific contexts for *idea* with examples and frequencies in the LOB

In terms of numerical distribution, context (A), i.e. the combination of

² The examples given in table 1 are taken from the LOB but some have been adapted in order to keep them short. In the following, references to authentic passages from this standardized corpus include the text category, the text number and the line number; for example the reference [A12 120] should be read as "text category A (Press: reportage), text 12, line 120".

idea with a postmodifying *of*-PP, seems to represent the most frequent way of using *idea*: 96 out of the 233 examples in the LOB are of this type, and this amounts to a proportion of 41.2%. 37 examples (or 15.9%) belong to context type (B), 11 (4.7%) to type (C), 9 (3.9%) to types (D) and (E) respectively, and, finally, 5 (2.2%) to type (F). Altogether, these six types of collocation account for 167, or almost three-quarters, of the 233 examples of *idea* in the LOB. This high proportion of more or less fixed lexico-grammatical environments can be seen as a corroboration of Sinclair's claim "that a language user has available to him or her a large number of semi-preconstructed phrases that constitute single choices, even though they might appear to be analysable into segments" (1991: 110).

The lexical and grammatical environment of the remaining 66 examples is more variable, but it is still possible to find a common denominator for these examples: to a large extent, these noun phrases refer to earlier passages in the text. Typical signals of such textual relations can be identified in the determinative group. Thus the demonstratives *this* and *that*, the possessive pronouns *his* and *her*, the definite article *the* with anaphoric reference and other lexical items such as *above*, *earlier*, *such* or *same* are used to establish an anaphoric relationship to the preceding text (cf. Halliday & Hasan 1976: 31ff). An example of this type of usage is given in (7):

- (7) I suggested to him that it would be a good idea for me to make an anthology picked from the many poets he had published. He fell for *this idea* . . . [G16 019]

It is quite obvious that in the second sentence of this example the NP *this idea* refers back to *a good idea* in the first.

Turning from the syntactic and lexical environment to the meaning of the lexeme *idea*, a remark of a more general nature must first be made. As is well known, the semantic characteristics of abstract concepts are much harder to pin down than those of words denoting categories of organisms or concrete objects. For abstract concepts it is not possible to resort to the properties of their denotata in the real world, and therefore their semantic descriptions, for example as given in dictionaries, tend to be far more general and vague than those of concrete nouns. Nevertheless, the analysis of the meaning of the lexeme *idea* is not impossible. Indeed the collocations and examples in Table 1 seem to suggest fairly specif-

ic glosses for the actual meanings expressed.³ In collocation (A), the meaning of *idea* could be rendered by such glosses as CONCEPT or MENTAL IMAGE. In collocation (B), BELIEF seems to capture what is conveyed by the word *idea*, while in (C), KNOWLEDGE seems to be an appropriate gloss. In the collocation *the idea to* or *the idea is to* (D), *idea* could be replaced by AIM or PURPOSE. Finally in both collocations (E) and (F), the word *idea* evokes the notion of an INSPIRATION (or German EINFALL). Table 2 gives a survey of the correspondences between the syntactic and/or lexical collocations and the typical senses of the word *idea* which are represented by shorthand glosses. This table will serve as a frame of reference for the discussion of the historical development of the use of *idea* in the later sections of this paper.

Syntactic/lexical collocation	Prototypical subsense
A) idea of	A) CONCEPT, MENTAL IMAGE
B) idea that / is that	B) BELIEF
C) idea <i>wh</i> -element	C) KNOWLEDGE
D) idea to / is to	D) AIM, PURPOSE
E) good (etc.) idea	E) INSPIRATION
F) have / get an idea	F) INSPIRATION

Table 2: Correspondences between collocation and prototypical subsenses of *idea*

As mentioned in the introduction, the material for this investigation is taken from the quotations in the OED. With the software accompanying the OED on CD-ROM it was possible to retrieve 3145 instances of the word *idea* in the singular from quotations which are distributed over the last five centuries.⁴ The following discussion is subdivided according to centuries mainly for practical reasons. When the retrieval of the data was started, 100-year periods seemed to be sensible chunks to see how many

³ The glosses that are given should not be regarded as synonyms or paraphrases, but as shorthand semantic descriptions of meanings which are prototypically associated with certain contexts. As such, the glosses must be understood as operating on the level of a linguistic metalanguage. In order to remind the reader of this special status, small capitals are used to indicate glosses in this paper.

⁴ The search was restricted to occurrences in the singular because most uses of *idea* in the plural are not accompanied by postmodifying elements (cf. Schmid 1993: 180f), and therefore do not lend themselves to the lexico-syntactic method of analysis on which this paper is based.

quotations would be available. Divisions into other periods, oriented towards the development of the English language or towards the history of ideas, would perhaps have been more appropriate for the subject-matter. Nevertheless, this separation has been maintained, because it is easy to manage and the equal size of the periods allows for numerical comparisons.

3. The historical development of the use of *idea* in English

3.1 A glimpse of the philosophical background: The Platonic and Neo-Platonic conceptions of ideas

Although originally part of the common core of Greek, the noun *idea* seems to have entered the Romance and Germanic languages as a philosophical technical term, strongly associated with Plato's understanding of the concept. For classical Latin this can be seen from the fact that the entry for *idea* in the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, which takes up no more than five lines, includes the label "Platonic phil." and that both quotations given are taken from Seneca.⁵ In Plato's own philosophy (e.g. in his *Republic*, esp. VI, 6, 506b — VII, 3, 518b), ideas were conceived as absolute qualities or universal forms which alone are truly real and therefore not subject to the vagaries of our perception, as all seemingly real particular things are (Ross 1953: 37ff, Sheppard 1994: 6). However, when the notion of ideas was revived by Petrarch and other humanists in Italy, it was not in this pure Platonic conception, but as a mixture of Platonist, Neo-Platonist (mainly going back to Plotin) and Christian notions (Hutton 1994: 69). Under the influence of Plotin, the early Christian Fathers and the Scholastics, Plato's radically realist conception of ideas as original and universal patterns of the things in the perceptible world was transformed into a Christian concept. Ideas were then conceived as "thoughts of God, universals existing in the divine intellect" (Rice 1958: 62). This was presumably the prevailing conception of ideas when the first Latin translation of all the Platonic dialogues by the Florentine translator, editor and philosopher Ficino appeared in 1484.

⁵ In French, the Latin borrowing *idée* emerges as early as in the 13th century in its philosophical sense. Apparently it was vulgarised from the 17th century onwards (cf. Danzat 1938, s.v. *idée*). When the word was first used in German by Martin Luther and others in the 16th century it was as a philosophical term as well. According to Jones (1979: 260) it was not before the second half of the 17th century that it began to be used in everyday language.

It is very likely that Ficino's translation gave a strong impetus for the spread of the Florentine Neo-Platonism over the Continent and to Tudor England (cf. Bush 1941: 56, Cassirer 1970: 104ff). However, there is evidence that even before that time there were contacts between Italian Neo-Platonists and English scholars. Humphrey Duke of Gloucester, for example, instigated and supported two translations of Plato's *Republic* by Leonardo Bruni (1369-1477) and Pier Candido Decembrio (1392-1477) into Latin (Hutton 1994: 70). Indirectly, Humphrey is also responsible for the first occurrence of the word *idea* recorded in the OED; he commissioned the poet John Lydgate to translate Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium* into English, and it is from this translation, called *The Fall of Princes* and dated 1430 to 1440, that the earliest quotation in the OED is taken:

- (8) In the too schooles of Prudent Socrates And of Plato which that bar the keie Of secre mysteries & of dyvyn *Ideie*. (OED s.v. *idée*)

This quotation is taken from a passage which describes Callisthenes' youth and education in the philosophical schools of not just Socrates and Plato, but interestingly enough also of Aristotle, before he is killed by Alexander. The collocation *dyvyn Ideie* in this passage nicely illustrates the character of the Neo-Platonic conception of ideas.

3.2 The 16th century

In the *Middle English Dictionary* (Kuhn 1968: s.v. *idea*), two more occurrences of the word *idea* before the 16th century are recorded, another one taken from Lydgate's work and one from John de Trevisa's translation of Bartholomew de Glanville's *De Proprietatibus Rerum* (1398).⁶

The OED records the concept *idea* three times in the French spelling *idée*, with quotations dated 1542, 1573 and 1589 (s.v. *idée*), and twice in the spelling *idæe*, dated 1563 (s.v. *idea*, 1.1.) and 1586 (s.v. *idea*, 1.2.a). In addition, two early uses of *idea* in the plural forms *ideae* (1531, s.v. *idea*, II.7.a) and *ideas* (1588, s.v. *idea*, II.8.c) can be found in the entry

⁶ Neither of these examples were found in the initial search in the OED on CD-ROM because they have the spelling *ydeyes* and *ydea* respectively. An additional search in the OED for these two forms showed that the two quotations are apparently not included.

on *idea*. The first singular quotation in the modern English spelling is dated 1581 and taken from Sir Philip Sidney's *An Apologie for Poetrie*:

- (9) The skil of the Artificer standeth in that *Idea* or fore-conceite of the work. (s.v. *idea*, 1.3.)

From a semantic point of view, this example is highly illuminating because the coordinated noun *fore-conceite* gives a good clue as to the intended meaning of the word *idea*. What it suggests is that Sidney uses the word *idea* to denote a prior pattern, draft or model of a work of art, a conception which is in line with the philosophical notion that ideas are the original forms of perceptible things. Example (9) is also interesting from a syntactic perspective because it is the first quotation with a post-modifying o/-PP. This grammatical construction is the linguistic reflection of the relational nature of ideas, i.e. of the notion that ideas are usually ideas **of** something rather than just ideas as such.

Even if one includes the two records found in the *Middle English Dictionary*, no more than eleven examples of *idea* in English texts between 1430 and 1589 have been found. Quite surprisingly, the next decade from 1589 to 1599 alone yields as many as eight examples. The last decade of the 16th century can therefore with some confidence be taken as the time when the word *idea*, after the rather sporadic occurrences before that time, was beginning to establish itself in the English language. Since, as we have seen above, the concept *idea* is closely related to humanism and the Renaissance movement, it is interesting to note that "the decade of the 1590s was the flowering time of the English Renaissance" (Salingar 1982: 68). This parallel strongly suggests the conclusion that the change in the intellectual climate may have caused or at least supported the emergence and establishment of the word *idea* in English (but cf. the discussion in 3.7).

Grammatically, all eight examples from the 1590s are constructed in the same way, namely with a postmodifying *of*-PP. Following the procedure introduced in section 2, all eight examples should receive the glosses **CONCEPT OF MENTAL IMAGE**, especially the latter of which captures the meaning very well. A closer scrutiny of the examples, which is possible here because of their small number, reveals more subtle semantic characteristics. Thus in seven of the eight examples, the **MENTAL IMAGE** referred to by the word *idea* is that of a particular human person:

- (10) Was euer any so infortunate, The right *Idea of a cursed manl* (s.v. *idea*, I.2.b., The Troubled Raigne of King John)⁷
- (11) I did inferre your Lineaments, Being the right *Idea of your Father*, Both in your forme, and Noblenesse of Minde. (s.v. *idea*, II.7.a., Shakespeare)
- (12) Me thinkes the *Idea of her person* represents it selfe an obiect to my fantasie. (s.v. *idea*, III.8.a., Greene)
- (13) Hold up your head, do; and let the *Idea of what you are*, bee portray'd i' your face. (s.v. *idea*, II.7.a., Johnson)
- (14) Th' *Idea of her life* shal sweetly creepe Into his study of imagination, (s.v. *idea*, II.8.a., Shakespeare)
- (15) Within my hart. . The fayre *Idea of your celestiall hew*. . remains immortally, (s.v. *idea*, III.8.a., Spenser)
- (16) Loue..straight diued into my heart, And there did shrine the *Idea of your selfe*. (s.v. *shrine*, v., 4., Greene)

The eighth quotation from the 1590s, which is taken from Thomas Blundeville's *Exercises*, is embedded in a more abstract context. Here the word *idea* refers to "the shape of Gods mind":

- (17) The chiefe *Idea* or shape *of Gods mind*, which hath neither beginning nor ending, and therefore is compared to a Circle, (s.v. *idea*, II.7.D)

While for the seven examples above (see 10-16) it is not possible to decide to what extent the Neo-Platonic conception of ideas has left its mark, in example (17) it certainly seems to play a role. The difference between (10) to (16) on the one hand, and (17) on the other, becomes clearer when we take into account that, with the exception of (10), all the examples in the larger group are taken from Elizabethan love poetry. It is well-known that the Elizabethan sonnet writers were strongly influenced by the Italian Renaissance. Besides Petrarch, the Italian poets Castiglioni, Bembo and Pico della Mirandola had a major share in bringing Neo-Platonism to England, either directly or through the mediation of French

⁷ When the text introducing or commenting on an example does not contain the reference to the author and the work from which a quotation is taken, the source or the name of the author is provided in the reference to the entry in the OED.

writers such as Du Bellay and the Pléiade (Hutton 1994: 72). It seems plausible that the English poets did not just take over the Platonic philosophy of love in isolation but were also interested in the epistemic philosophy of Plato and the Neo-Platonists. Michael Drayton, for example, even went so far as to address his beloved in his sonnets by the name *Idea*, a choice of name which reflects his interest in the Neo-Platonic conception both of love and of ideas.

Before we move on to the 17th century, it is worth drawing attention once more to examples (14) to (16) because they contain interesting clues as to where ideas are located. In example (14), Shakespeare describes an idea as being on its way into the speaker's "study of imagination", presumably a metaphor for the speaker's mind. Spenser (15) and Greene (16), on the other hand, locate their ideas in the *h(e)art*. These passages give a first glimpse of the pervasive metaphor which treats ideas as if they were concrete objects or even animate organisms that are located in the mind of a human being and can be moved to other persons' minds and other places. We will come back to this very important aspect of the use of *idea* in section 5.2 of this paper.

3.3 The 17th century

For the years between 1600 and 1699, 164 quotations containing the word *idea* were retrieved from the OED. The bulk of this material, as many as 142 quotations, was produced in the second half of the 17th century. These examples are very interesting from a philosophical perspective because they reflect the debate between the so-called Cambridge Platonists and the emerging empiricist theory of ideas. The leading Platonists Henry More and Ralph Cudworth are represented with 23 quotations, and the founder of empiricism, John Locke, has a share of as many as 61.⁸ Central to the doctrine of the Cambridge Platonists was their view that ideas are innate and inspired by God, and therefore learning came down to a matter of recollection (Scott 1994: 139ff). This view, which is largely derived from Plato's conception of recollection, can be gleaned from an example in the OED (cf. 18), a short passage by Henry More dated 1653, which also demonstrates one of the main metaphors used to conceptualize

⁸ Prior to Locke, the major British contribution to the development of an empirically-minded philosophy had been that of Francis Bacon (1561-1626). However, Bacon is not represented in the corpus because with very few exceptions he wrote his philosophical works in Latin.

the acquisition of ideas, namely the metaphor of the *implantation* of ideas in the soul or mind (cf. section 5.2).

- (18) The implantation of the *idea* of God in the Soul. (s.v. *implantation* 4.)

John Locke, on the other hand, thought that ideas could only be imprinted on the human mind by sensation or reflexion. In strong contrast to the Platonists, he argued that the human memory could change ideas back into what was their original state, namely the state of perceptions. Locke conceived of ideas in a much wider sense than the Platonists, as is indicated in the following example taken from *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690):

- (19) I must here in the Entrance beg Pardon . . . for the frequent use of the Word *Idea*. . . . It being that Term, which, I think, serves best to stand for whatsoever is the Object of the Understanding when a Man thinks, I have used it to express . . . whatever it is, which the Mind can be employed about in thinking, (s.v. *idea*, IV.10.)

Considering the encouraging increase of available material from less than 20 examples before the year 1600 to 164 examples between 1600 and 1699, the syntactic and semantic diversity of the use of *idea* is rather disappointing. 82 out of the 164 occurrences, i.e. exactly 50%, are again examples of collocation type (A), i.e. constructions of *idea* with a postmodifying *of*-?? which can be glossed as **CONCEPT** or **MENTAL IMAGE**. As before 1600, ideas are thus understood as being relational in nature. What do exhibit a greater diversity than in the 16th century, however, are the prepositional complements of the preposition *of* in the postmodification. In examples (10) to (16) above, persons prevailed in this position (e.g. (10) *idea of a cursed man*, (11) *idea of her father*, (12) *idea of her person*). Starting with the 17th century, one finds not just expressions denoting persons, but animals, objects, shapes and abstract notions in this position as well. From a modern point of view, the usage in the 17th century displays only one gap in the range of possible prepositional complements of *idea of*, namely the missing use of mg-forms. Thus expressions similar to present-day English *the idea of eating hare* (LOB F07 122) or *the old idea of investing one's money* (LOB E28 097) are not attested in the 17th century material, at least not in the OED.

In all the other 82 quotations dating from the 17th century, the word *idea* occurs in non-specific contexts. No instance of the modern collocations (B) to (F) could be found. As in present-day English, one function of the word *idea* in these non-specific contexts is that of establishing anaphoric reference. In addition, the philosophical source of many examples may be a factor responsible for the very large number of uses of *idea* in non-specific contexts, in many of these examples, the word *idea* is not used as an everyday word denoting some abstract notion, but the concept of *ideas* is the subject-matter of the text. It is quite predictable that under these circumstances, i.e. when a text is concerned with the notion of *idea* on a terminological and philosophical meta-level, the word *idea* will often occur in atypical constructions. This claim has already been illustrated by example (19) above, in which the expression "the Word *Idea*" clearly has a metalinguistic function.

3.4 The 18th century

The 18th century is marked by the first appearances of collocations B {*idea that*} and C {*idea* + w/z-element}. Starting with collocation (C), the earliest example of this type is taken from a diary written by a lady named Miss Burney (1777):

- (20) You can have no *idea what a shatter every new comer gave me*. (s.v. *shatter*, sb, 2.)

Within the boundaries of the 18th century only three more examples of this type are attested, dated 1784, 1793 and 1794. Interestingly, the 1794 quotation is also attributed to an F. Burney, but taken from a personal letter. Given the small number of examples of this type at that time, it may perhaps not be pure speculation that the collocations *idea how* and *idea what* had not yet gained widespread currency by the end of the 18th century. If we allow ourselves a glance into the 19th century at this stage, this hypothesis is supported by the fact that the next quotations of this type do not occur until the 1830s.

In all four quotations of type (C) in the 18th century, the meaning of *idea* corresponds closely to the gloss **KNOWLEDGE** (in table 2 in section 2). As in modern usage, the knowledge referred to in the subordinate interrogative or exclamatory clause can be of virtually any kind, especially when *idea* is preceded by *no*, as in example (20). When *idea* has a defi-

nite or indefinite article in determiner position, the subordinate clause frequently refers to some kind of procedure or to the manner in which a process takes place, as in (21):

- (21) I will subjoin an instance which perhaps may give the reader an *idea how the pronouns arise*, and what is their primary sensible signification, (s.v. *sensible*, I.1.d., Beddoes)

The other type of collocation which occurs for the first time in the 18th century, collocation (B) (= *idea that*), advanced much more rapidly from its first appearance to an apparently widespread use. This can be gleaned from the dates of the 11 examples of this type in the 18th century: 1775, 1777 (twice), 1782, 1789-92, 1790 (three times), 1796 (twice), 1799. To illustrate this type, the first three quotations are given below as examples (22) to (24):

- (22) The pikes of both Athos and of Tenedos suggest *the idea that their mountains have burned*, (s.v. *pike*, sbⁱ, obs., I.b., Chandler).
 (23) He rejected with indignation *the idea that any race of men was born to servitude*, as irreligious and inhumane, (s.v. *inhumane*, I., Robertson)
 (24) The Cartesian hypothesis . . . goes upon *the idea that the essence of mind is thought*, (s.v. *go*, v., I.5.b., Priestley)

For all three examples, and for all the others as well, the proposed gloss **BELIEF** seems to render the actual meaning of *idea* quite well, either as the **BELIEF** in a product of visual perception, as in (22), or in an abstract notion, as in (23) and (24).

Although so far only 15 examples from the 18th century have been discussed, no more will be said about individual examples in this period, because they do not provide new systematic insights into the development of the use of *idea*. The total number of examples from the 18th century amounts to 324, 180 of which belong to type (A) and 129 to the non-specific or anaphoric type. Compared to the earlier centuries, the number of occurrences which are taken from philosophical sources is much lower. The three most important 18th century philosophers, Berkeley, Burke and Hume, together contribute not more than 44 examples to the corpus. This trend, which perhaps also reflects the diminishing interest of English philosophers in epistemic issues, becomes even stronger as we move into

the 19th century, and so the philosophical perspective can be left aside in the ensuing discussion.

3.5 The 19th century

With a total number of 1252 relevant quotations, the material for the 19th century is quite substantial. As before, the bulk of the examples (635 quotations or 50.7%) belongs to type (A). Non-specific/anaphoric examples amount to 469 or 37.5%. The more recent contextual variants introduced in the 18th century are also beginning to thrive, especially type (B) (= *idea that*), which is attested 103 times (= 8.2%). The related type *the idea is that* begins to occur in this century as well (10 examples). The syntactic and semantic diversification of the use of *idea* thus seems to be making progress.

Besides these familiar types, the 19th century sees the introduction of the three other specific collocations mentioned in section 2. The constructions *the idea to* or *the idea is to* (D), *a good* (etc.) *idea* (E) and *have* or *get an idea* (F) occur, though only the first of them produces a noteworthy number of examples. As semantic counterparts to these collocations **AIM/PURPOSE** (D) and **INSPIRATION** (E/F) were put forward in table 2.

The documented use of collocation (D) starts off with a quotation dated 1827. While for the next sixty years only five examples are available (dated 1835, 1856, 1862, 1878, 1882), there are seven quotations dated between 1890 and 1900. This suggests that the construction *the idea is to* was coming into wider use during the last decade of the 19th century.

To get an impression of the semantic potential of this usage, the reader is invited to have a look at example (25) which dates from 1882:

- (25) Evidently the *idea was to frighten and terrorise the lady into paying*. (s.v. *frighten*, b., Law Times)

In this example, the word *idea* refers to a mental state or activity that is directed into the future and implies the intentional pursuit of an aim, and this is the semantic value which was intended to be conveyed by the gloss **AIM/PURPOSE**.

The related construction *idea to*, which also conveys the intentional meaning typical of *the idea is to*, occurs a little later in the OED data.

The first instance of this type, given here as example (26), is taken from a scientific text (1862):

- (26) The *idea* very naturally suggested itself, *to look* to dinitrobenzol as the source from which phenylene-diamine might reasonably be expected to arise, (s.v. *phenylene*, b., Hofmann)

The future orientation implicit in the word *idea* in this usage is well demonstrated here by the reference to what can be "expected" if the intention is carried out.

As mentioned above, examples of types (E) and (F), which received the gloss *INSPIRATION*, also crop up for the first time, though the numbers of occurrences are still very small. Taking type (F) first, only two clear cases could be found, dated 1858 and 1863 (cf. 27 and 28):

- (27) 'I've a *capital idea*, GypseyT (that was his name for his dark-eyed wife when he was in an extraordinarily good humour.) (s.v. *gipsy*, 2.b., Eliot)
- (28) Marrows, cries a bully, *aw've an idea*. . . . We'll find Sir John Franklin, (s.v. *bully*, 1.2., Tyneside Songs)

Looking at these two quotations one cannot help noting that they differ markedly from the material discussed so far. The use of the quotation marks in (27) and the form "aw've" for / *have* in (28) indicate that both passages were originally spoken texts or written in such a way as to mimic spoken language. In the light of the present-day use of *idea* this is not at all surprising, because even today this use of *idea* seems particularly widespread in spoken language and colloquial style (cf. section 4). If we take into consideration that the quotations in the OED represent written rather than spoken language (see section 3.7), then we should hesitate to draw the tempting conclusion that the use of *idea* in collocation (F) did not occur before the middle of the 19th century. More than with the more formal variants (A) to (D), it could be the case that *idea* was widely used in collocation (F), although this is not attested in the OED quotations. Therefore a cautious interpretation of the data should perhaps be endorsed here along the lines that *idea* as a semantic equivalent to German *Einfall* probably emerged during the first half of the 19th century.

Collocation type (F) is interesting not only from a stylistic but also from a semantic point of view because it can often be difficult to distin-

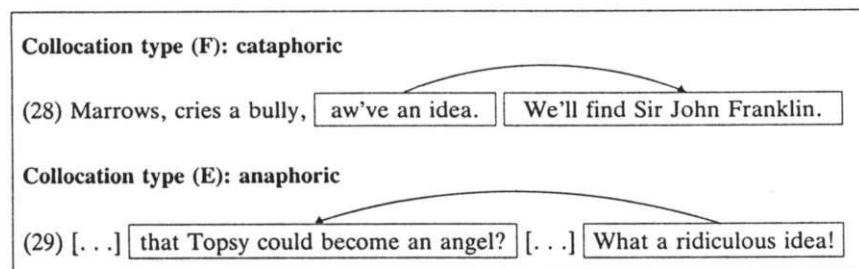
guish it from type (E) (*a good etc. idea*). Example (27) is a case in point. Besides the semantic component of a new thought that has suddenly come to someone's mind, the exclamation contains the adjective *capital* whose evaluative meaning meets the defining criterion of collocation type (E), and so the example could also be attributed to this type. Other ambivalent examples exist in fairly large numbers, and this suggests that the semantic difference between an idea that is new and an idea that is judged as being positive is not very important. Nevertheless, it is definitely worth making the distinction between type (E) and type (F) because they contrast on a different linguistic level. To identify the main aspect, a look at the only clear example of type (E) in the 19th century will be helpful:

- (29) '[...] You believe, don't you, that Topsy could become an angel . . . if she were a Christian?' Topsy! *what a ridiculous idea!*' (s.v. *idea*, II1.9.b., Mrs Slowe)

From a semantic point of view, this example is a very good illustration of the evaluative function of the noun phrase containing *idea*. However, the real difference between the use of type (E) and type (F) only emerges when we consider how the two instances of the word *idea* are related to their wider contexts in examples (28) and (29). In (28) the word *idea* functions as a signal indicating that what the idea is will be mentioned later. If someone utters the expression / *have an idea*, the natural response is to assume that the idea will be specified afterwards. In textlinguistic terms, when it is used in collocation type (F), the word *idea* functions as a cataphoric signal referring to the following text.

By contrast, the type (E) usage of *idea* establishes an anaphoric relationship to the preceding text, and this is illustrated in example (29). Here, a mental process or state is first explicitly described ("You believe . . ."), and then taken up again by means of the word *idea* and at the same time evaluated by an emotive adjective. In short, the difference between usages (E) and (F) is ultimately a matter of textual perspective and discourse reference: when a speaker uses the word *idea* in collocation type (E), he or she directs the hearer back to something that has already been mentioned; when collocation type (F) is used, the hearer is led to anticipate that information already labelled as an *idea* will soon be given (cf. Francis 1994). Figure 1 illustrates the different text-referential potential of collocation types (E) and (F).

Figure 1: Cataphoric and anaphoric reference of idea



The semantic and text-referential differences between type (E) and type (F) are also manifested on the level of intra-clausal syntax. The anaphoric/evaluative type (E) is typically realized by a S-V-Cs-clause. In this pattern the subject is a referring element, in most cases *it* or *this*, and the subject complement is realized by the noun phrase headed by *idea* and is modified by an evaluative adjective or noun, for example *this was a splendid idea*. Type (F), on the other hand, typically occurs in the construction 'human experiencer as subject+*have/get+an idea*'. It is this syntactic difference that ultimately leads us to classify example (27) above as belonging to type (F), although the decisive textlinguistic clues are not available.

All in all, the data collected from the 19th century indicates that in this period, the lexeme *idea* was coming to be used in a syntactic and semantic variability which is comparable to its present-day use. We have also seen that *idea* acquired new functions on the supra-sentential level, pointing backwards and forwards in the text. As far as the more colloquial variants (E) and (F) are concerned, it is difficult to ascertain whether the small number of examples reflects the fact that the types were not yet in common usage or whether it is due to the lack of colloquial material in the OED. One way of checking these two hypotheses is to look at the further development of the two types in the OED quotations from the 20th century.

3.6 The 20th century and numerical and diagrammatic summaries

Confirming our intuitions about the widespread use of *idea* in collocation types (E) and (F) in present-day English, the OED data exhibits a remarkable growth for the two types in the 20th century. Out of the 1396 quotations which were retrieved for this period, 58 (or 4.15%) belong to type (E) and 19 (1.36%) to type (F). Although these are of course not very large proportions, they are symptomatic of the general development from the 19th to the 20th century: the more recent usages (B) to (F) increase their share of the total material that is available, while the relative frequency of type (A) and the non-specific uses decline. The constructions *the idea is that*, as a variant of *the idea that*, and *it is a good idea to*, as a mixture of types (D) and (E), occur 30 (2.15%) and 15 (1.07%) times respectively. On the whole then, the use of *idea* in the 20th century is marked by a greater diversity with respect to syntactic and lexical patterns, which corresponds to a wider semantic potential than in earlier centuries.

In the remainder of this section two ways of summarizing the historical development of the use of *idea*, as it is documented in the OED, will be presented. First, a statistical overview of the examples and their distribution across the types of collocations is given in table 3.

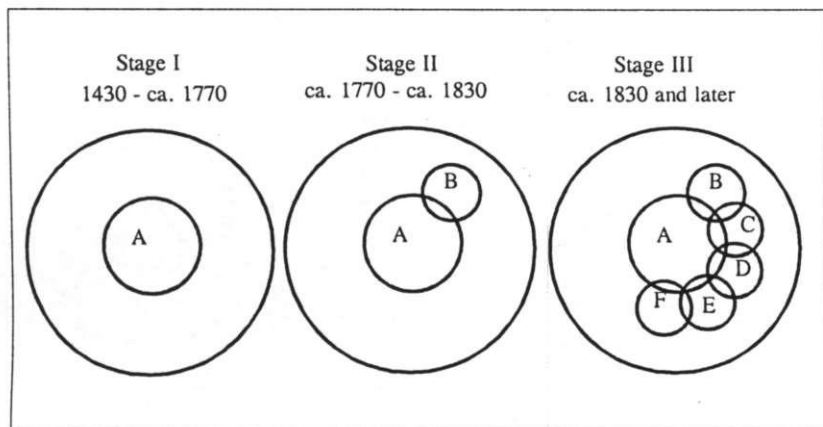
In this table, the absolute and relative numbers of occurrences are listed for the five centuries that have been discussed. For a comparison between the centuries only the (relative) percentages are relevant. As the first line with the scores for the non-specific/anaphoric uses indicates, the relative frequency of this type goes down from 50% in the 17th century to a mere 29% in the 20th century. If we leave out the 100% for type (A) in the 16th century from our quantitative considerations (because this number is based on no more than the nine singular examples in the English spelling), the development of type (A) is quite similar, though not as drastic. After a slight increase from the 17th to the 18th century, the proportion of this type in the whole material in the 20th century is reduced to 43%.

For types (B) to (F) the table documents the opposite development. Beginning with their first sporadic occurrences in the 18th (B and C) and the 19th century (D, E and F), these five types taken together make up more than a quarter of the material available from the 20th century.

Corpora:	OED 16th Cent.		OED 17th Cent.		OED 18th Cent.		OED 19th Cent.		OED 20th Cent.	
	Abs.	%	Abs.	%	Abs.	%	Abs.	%	Abs.	%
Collocations:										
Neutral type			82	50.00%	129	39.81%	469	37.46%	404	28.94%
non-specific/anaphoric										
Type A	9	100.00%	82	50.00%	180	55.56%	635	50.72%	601	43.05%
idea of										
Type B					11	3.40%	113	9.03%	198	14.18%
idea that / is that										
Type C					4	1.23%	13	1.04%	59	4.23%
idea + wh-element										
Type D							19	1.52%	57	4.08%
idea to / is to										
Type E							1	0.08%	58	4.15%
a good (etc.) idea										
Type F							2	0.16%	19	1.36%
have/get an idea										
TOTAL	9	100.00%	164	100.00%	324	100.00%	1252	100.00%	1396	100.00%

Table 3: Statistical summary of the data in the OED

The second type of summary of the OED data is an attempt to visualize the historical evolution of the syntactic and semantic potential of the lexeme *idea*, again as documented in the dictionary. For that purpose, three stages of the development, as shown in figure 2, can be distinguished.

Figure 2: A rough sketch of the syntactic and semantic diversification of the lexeme *idea*

Stage I reaches from the first record of the word *idea* in the OED (1430/40) to around 1770 when examples of the sense **BELIEF** (collocation type B) begin to occur in noteworthy numbers. At this stage, the OED data suggests that besides the non-specific type only the sense **CONCEPT**, which corresponds to the pattern *the idea of*, was used. This state of affairs is represented by the first of the three so-called Venn diagrams in figure 2 (cf. Lyons 1977: 154ff, Lipka¹1992: 51). In this diagram the large circle stands for the more general sense of the non-specific type of usage, while the smaller enclosed circle represents the specific sense **CONCEPT**. The logic of the circles is based on the concept of (referential) extension: the large circle symbolizes all possible abstract notions that the available examples of *idea* can possibly refer to, and the smaller circle the more specifically-defined set of possible referents of *idea* when it is used in a type (A) collocation.

Stage II from the 1770s to the 1830s is marked by the introduction of the sense **BELIEF** corresponding to the pattern *the idea that*. The intersection of the two smaller circles in the second diagram in figure 2 is meant to indicate that the meaning and extension of the two variants may overlap, so that for practical purposes some cases defy a distinction between the two types.

The last diagram illustrates the considerable diversification of the use and meaning of *idea* that can be observed to be taking place from the 1830s onwards. As discussed above, in this stage the other specific variants are beginning to claim their share of the available material. Just like in the second stage, the new senses do not arise out of the blue, but their meaning is related to the earlier variants. Although the diagrammatic representation does not necessarily suggest this metaphor, the evolution of the meaning of *idea* can thus be imagined as a series of splits which results in new prototypical subsenses of this lexeme (cf. Ungerer & Schmid 1996: 265ff). That it can sometimes be hard to attribute less prototypical uses to one particular subtype is a natural property of language and should not irritate us here. This fuzziness of meaning is represented in the diagrams by the overlaps between the circles.

3.7 Some critical remarks on the representativity of the data and the results

Throughout the foregoing discussion of the records of *idea* in the OED the tacit claim has been that this corpus reflects the way in which this word has actually been used in the past five and a half centuries. Since the total number of 3145 examples is quite substantial, the picture would presumably not have changed dramatically if even more examples had been available, and this suggests that the material mirrors linguistic reality. On the other hand, most of the material for the OED was collected by readers who were particularly interested in extraordinary words and unusual constructions. The first editor of the OED, James Murray, remarked that "the editor and his assistants have to search for precious hours for examples of common words which readers passed by. [...] Thus of *Abusion*, we found in the slips about 50 instances: of *Abuse* not five" (quoted from Johansson 1995: 24, note 2). Apparently, what is at stake here is the question of the representativity of the OED material: is it legitimate to claim that in view of its considerable wealth of data the OED reflects the 'real' development of language, or in this case, of a lexical item?

In order to give a reasonable answer to this question, we have to divide the material into two parts, namely the 173 quotations taken from up to the end of the 17th century on the one hand, and the 2972 from the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries on the other.

For the first part, the limitations of the corpus are fairly obvious. Since the material is mostly taken from either poetic or philosophical works, it is probably biased towards the style typically used in such texts and will hardly be representative of the everyday language spoken in the homes, streets and public houses. Furthermore, the 61 examples by John Locke, which make up more than 37 percent of the material from the 17th century, show that the data can easily be skewed by the influence of single authors when the overall size of the corpus is fairly small. By the same token, one should perhaps not be too confident when drawing parallels between the increased appearance of the word *idea* at the end of the 16th century and the coinciding emergence of Italian-influenced literary fashions (cf. section 3.2 above). After all, the higher literary output and the resulting expansion of available sources alone could be responsible for the sudden increase in occurrences of the word *idea*. So for the older part

of the corpus, one had better be aware of the danger of making circular claims.

The situation is different when one considers the second part of the corpus, the quotations dating from 1700 or later. It has already been mentioned that the relative number of philosophical sources is beginning to decrease dramatically at that time. In addition, there is no predominance of single authors comparable to that of John Locke in the 17th century because a much larger number of texts with a greater thematic and stylistic diversity is available. For instance, the quotations rendered as (27) to (29) above seem to represent fairly colloquial language. So the material from the last three centuries can be viewed with a little more confidence than the older data because it is more extensive and heterogeneous.

Nevertheless the range of styles for which the OED data can be regarded to be representative is still rather limited. It must be kept in mind that all the quotations in the OED have ultimately been taken from written texts. As a consequence, the corpus which has been collected for this study represents the written rather than the spoken medium, edited rather than spontaneous texts and literary rather than common style. Once one has recognized this bias in the data, the question arises as to whether anything can be done to overcome these limitations. Is it possible to widen the scope of the material?

As far as the historical material is concerned, an expansion of the data to common spontaneous spoken language seems only feasible at the cost of an extended perusal of as many colloquial sources as can be found. On the other hand, it seems unlikely that this traditional method of collecting examples would yield more material than that contained in the OED. So for the earlier periods of English, the somewhat fatalistic conclusion is that ultimately a larger, biased corpus is probably more useful than a much smaller, though perhaps more representative, one.

In the case of present-day English the situation is different because for this period other machine-readable corpora which can provide substantial numbers of examples are available, and this enables a broader perspective on the stylistic variability of the use of *idea* to be obtained. For that purpose three other corpora of present-day English will briefly be examined in the following section.

4. A wider perspective on the use of *idea* in present-day English

The first modern corpus of English was already mentioned in section 2, when the 233 singular instances of the lexeme *idea* in the LOB corpus were discussed. This corpus consists of 500 texts with a length of approximately 2000 words each so that the whole material adds up to about 1 million words. These texts are taken from a variety of genres or text categories (cf. Johansson *et al.* 1978: 3), ranging from different types of journalistic texts, texts on religion, skills, trades, hobbies and popular lore to learned and scientific writing as well as different types of fiction. Yet in spite of this mixture, the LOB material is still very much skewed towards the written and edited type of language. In addition, the yield of 233 examples is not very high, and this makes clear that the LOB material is also rather limited.

Taken together, the other two corpora that were investigated for this study overcome these deficiencies.

To increase the amount and diversity of data from present-day English, all singular occurrences of *idea* were retrieved from the January 1993 editions of *The Independent* on CD-ROM. Although this corpus represents the style of English typically used in modern newspapers, it has the advantage of providing us with highly authentic up-to-date examples of our target lexeme. *The Independent* corpus, which could of course have been augmented by retrieving material from more than just one month, produced 504 examples, a number which should be large enough for a comparison with the LOB and the OED material from the 20th century.

To examine the use of *idea* in spoken language, the London-Lund Corpus of Spoken English, which is also available on CD-ROM, was processed (cf. Svartvik 1990).⁹ Although only 104 instances of *idea* could be found in this corpus of about 500,000 words, the results are still interesting because they differ quite markedly from the other corpora under investigation.

In Table 4 the quantitative results of the analysis of the OED in the 20th century, the LOB, *The Independent* and the London-Lund corpus have been compiled.

⁹ The London-Lund corpus is marked with a large number of diacritics which also occur within words. To retrieve as many examples of the word *idea* as possible, the following seven strings were used as search targets: *idea*, *id/ea*, *i'dea*, *id\ea*, *i:dea*, *i_dea*, *i:Vdea*.

Corpora:	Written corpora						Spoken corpus	
	OED 20th Cent.		LOB		The Independent		London-Lund	
	Abs.	%	Abs.	%	Abs.	%	Abs.	%
Collocation:								
Neutral type	404	28.94%	66	28.33%	146	28.97%	26	25.00%
non-specific/anaphoric								
Type A	601	43.05%	96	41.20%	188	37.30%	23	22.12%
<i>idea of</i>								
Type B	198	14.18%	37	15.88%	78	15.48%	16	15.38%
<i>idea that / is that</i>								
Type C	59	4.23%	11	4.72%	27	5.36%	8	7.69%
<i>idea + wh-element</i>								
Type D	57	4.08%	9	3.86%	23	4.56%	14	13.46%
<i>idea to / is to</i>								
Type E	58	4.15%	9	3.86%	39	7.74%	16	15.38%
<i>a good (etc.) idea</i>								
Type F	19	1.36%	5	2.15%	3	0.60%	1	0.96%
<i>have/get an idea</i>								
TOTAL	1396	100.00%	233	100.00%	504	100.00%	104	100.00%

Table 4: *Idea in the OED (20th century), the LOB corpus, The Independent (January 1993) and the London-Lund corpus*

As in the case of table 3, the most informative scores are the percentages. Looking first at the three corpora of written English, one is struck by the high degree of agreement between the results. The only remarkable differences between the OED and the LOB data are the slightly lower score for type (A) in the LOB column and the compensating higher scores for types (B) and (F). In the newspaper data from *The Independent*, the relative frequency of type (A) is even lower. In this column, the score which differs most markedly from the neighbouring ones is the score for type (E). This score is, however, hardly surprising when one recalls that type (E) is the evaluative collocation, and that the commenting and evaluating of ideas and proposals is a frequent feature of many types of newspaper texts. As for the scores for type (F), it is probably wrong to draw any quantitative conclusions from the data, because the absolute numbers are fairly low here. Leaving type (E) out of the calculation, the homogeneity of the three written corpora can also be shown statistically with the chi-square test (cf. Woods *et al.* 1986: 139ff). In this test, the scores from the written corpora yield a total deviance of 15.10 at 10 degrees of freedom, which indicates that there is only a 20 percent chance that the three corpora represent different samples of language.

The picture changes when one looks at the results of the spoken London-Lund corpus. While for the neutral context and for collocation types (B) and (C) the scores are quite in line with those of the three written corpora, type (A) and especially types (D) and (E) stand out from the rest. The scores indicate that compared with the three written-language corpora, the London-Lund corpus has a much smaller proportion of *idea-of* constructions (type A) and a much larger proportion of intentional (type D) and evaluative collocations (type E). This distribution of the examples is in line with the intuitive feeling that the nominal construction *the idea* c/+NP is more typical of written language and formal style, while the intentional and the evaluative collocations predominate in colloquial style. A specific feature of the spoken material is the frequent use of the combination of these two types, which is realized as *it is a good idea to ...* or as *it is a good idea if ...*. Again, the difference between the written and the spoken material can be proved statistically. When the scores of the London-Lund corpus are included in the chi-square test, the total deviance for the resulting 15 degrees of freedom is 64.22, which is highly significant at the 0.001-level. This means that the probability that the four corpora belong to the same sample of language is lower than 1:1000.

Altogether, the comparison of data from different sources indicates that for written language the distribution is stable and that therefore the OED data from the 20th century may after all be representative of the use of *idea* in a wider range of styles of writing. So the claim of one of the pioneers of modern computer corpora, W. Nelson Francis, that data collections like those of the OED are "inevitably skewed in the direction of the unusual and the interesting constructions that the readers encounter" (1992: 28f) is called into question.

In spoken language, however, the results suggest a distribution which differs from that in the written material. Here a much larger share is taken up by uses of *idea* which were found to have emerged comparatively recently in the history of this word. Unfortunately, the number of spoken examples is so low that the scores should perhaps not be interpreted with too much confidence. The result that collocation (F) is not attested in the London-Lund corpus, although on intuitive grounds it seems to be a fairly frequent usage type in colloquial style, sheds light on the historical data as well. It suggests that the more recent collocations (B) to (F) may have been in common use in spoken language long before they are recorded for the first time in the OED.

5. The conceptual support of metaphors

We have seen that the recurring syntactic and lexical environments in which the lexeme *idea* is frequently embedded make a substantial contribution to its disambiguation. However, the lexical context contributes in yet another way to providing the noun *idea* with semantic specificity and to rendering actual uses of the word more concrete. For example, if someone says *I have dropped the idea*, he or she is talking about an abstract concept as if it were a concrete and tangible object. Technically speaking, what the speaker does here is use a metaphor which builds on our experience with concrete things to verbalize and conceptualize an abstract event. This concretization (cf. Schmid forthcoming) allows for a better understanding of abstract notions. In the remainder of this paper, the conceptual support of metaphors for our understanding of the abstract lexeme *idea* will be discussed and their historical evolution will be sketched out. To begin with, however, some terminological and methodological issues relating to the conception and analysis of metaphors have to be explained.

5.1 Terminology and methodology

The theoretical, terminological and analytical background for the following discussion is based on the modern cognitive-linguistic view of metaphor (cf. Lakoff 1993: 203ff, Ungerer & Schmid 1996: 118ff, Schmid forthcoming).¹⁰ According to this view, metaphors must be investigated both from a linguistic and a cognitive perspective. From a linguistic perspective, we are confronted with so-called *metaphorical expressions* which can be identified by the observation of an overt semantic incongruity (Leisi 1985: 208ff, Kittay 1987: 64ff, Jackendoff & Aaron 1991: 325). Basically, this incongruity can emerge either from syntagmatic clashes between the elements combined in a sentence or from clashes between a sentence (or parts of it) and the extra-linguistic referent or situation to which it refers. Clashes between the semantics of a sentence and the extra-linguistic referents must be established on the basis of the context surrounding the sentence. Since most of the examples collected for this study do not surpass the limits of one sentence, the identification of incongruities with the extra-linguistic situation is impossible and therefore only syntagmatic incongruities will be examined.

¹⁰ For a survey of other theories of metaphor see e.g. Nöth (1985) and Kittay (1987).

Cognitively speaking, a semantic incongruity is manifested by the simultaneous activation of two different cognitive models. Because of their coactivation, the two cognitive models interact.¹¹ From the cognitive perspective, *metaphors* can be defined as mappings of the cognitive structure, or parts of it, from one cognitive model (the so-called *source model*) onto another (the *target model*). A cognitive model is the sum of the contexts related to a concept or conceptual field, which have been experienced and stored individually by a person or collectively by the members of a society or social group (Ungerer & Schmid 1996: 45ff; cognitive models will be marked by the use of small capitals in italics in the following). In a nutshell, the following discussion is based on the view that *metaphors* are cognitive phenomena which are linguistically manifested by *metaphorical expressions* which in turn can be identified by a syntagmatic semantic *incongruity*. In the case of the concept *idea*, which evokes a cognitive model related to the world of abstract notions, an incongruity arises whenever an expression or sentence simultaneously activates a cognitive model associated with the world of concrete things.

There are four ways in which the coactivation of models which are incongruent with the model *IDEA* can be triggered linguistically:¹² first, when the word *idea* occurs in a spatial relation; second, when the NP containing *idea* acts as subject or complement of a concrete verb; third, when the noun *idea* is modified by a concrete adjective; and fourth, when the noun *idea* is part of the postmodification of a concrete noun. These four possibilities are summarized and illustrated with short examples in table 5. In addition, the source models which can be derived from the metaphorical expressions are indicated.

Type of context	example	source model
locative relation	(30) <i>the idea behind the project</i>	OBJECTS
concrete verb	(31) <i>he formed an idea</i>	ARTEFACTS
concrete adjective	(32) <i>the bright idea</i>	LIGHT
concrete headnoun	(33) <i>the blossom of the idea</i>	PLANTS

Table 5: Types of metaphorical expressions with examples and source models

¹¹ As the use of the verb *interact* in this context suggests, the cognitive-linguistic theory of metaphor is perhaps less far away from the interaction theory (cf. Richards 1936, Black 1962) than is often assumed.

¹² For a very interesting more general discussion of grammatical aspects of metaphor see Brooke-Rose (1958).

The examples given in Table 5 give a first idea of how the analysis works. Yet although the definitions of metaphor and metaphorical expression are fairly straightforward, the application of the analytical procedure is still subject to a number of considerations. The three most important questions to be discussed here briefly are: what counts as a metaphorical expression; what is the source model on which a mapping is based; and how can the difference between creative and conventionalized metaphors be taken into account?

Looking at example (30) in Table 5, one can argue that the expression *the idea behind the project* is not metaphorical because it lies in the nature of many languages, including English, that spatial prepositions have an enormous number of figurative meanings. As a consequence of this semantic proliferation, these prepositions are no longer able to activate a cognitive model related to concrete locative relations. This is especially true for such high-frequency prepositions as *in*, *out* or *on*. On similar grounds, the metaphorical status of the expressions *have an idea* and *get an idea*, which strictly speaking can be said to involve a semantic incongruity, is doubtful because *have* and *get* are function verbs which have lost their concrete meaning. Since it is not the purpose of this paper to enlarge on the theoretical background of this problem (cf. e.g. Jackendoff & Aaron 1991: 323ff), the position taken here is that combinations of *idea* with the two function verbs and with locative relations are only interpreted as metaphors when additional clues for a metaphorical interpretation are available. This is the case, for example, when a function verb is linked with a locative relation as in the expression *have an idea in mind*. This expression evokes a cognitive model of an object which is located in some kind of container, and therefore the expression is judged as being a manifestation of a metaphor relying on the source model *OBJECTS*.

The second problem in the practical analysis of metaphors is the determination of the source model. Two aspects have to be considered here. Firstly, it can be difficult to determine the source model when the linguistic clue that is available allows for several concrete interpretations. Thus the adjective *bright* in (32) can be interpreted as evoking a cognitive model related to *LIGHT* or *COLOUR*, or even *PERSON*. Under such circumstances, an effort will be made to choose the most basic cognitive model possible.¹³ Operationally, the most basic source model will be derived

¹³ For the concept of basicness cf. Langacker (1987: 147), who works with the term 'basic domain', and Ungerer & Schmid (1996: 126ff).

from the first subentry for the relevant lexeme in the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (Cowie 1989).¹⁴ For the adjective *bright* this is the subentry related to the "giving out or reflecting of [. . .] light" and therefore the model *LIGHT* has been indicated as source model in table 5. Secondly, it can sometimes be difficult to determine the specificity of the source model. In example (31) in table (5), both the general model *OBJECTS* and the more specific model *ARTEFACTS* are good candidates. In example (33), where the word *blossom* is used as a headnoun for an *of*-PP containing *idea*, the general model *PLANT* and the more specific models *FLOWER* and *TREE* are equally feasible. In cases like these, the more general source model will be selected because the choice between competing models on the same level of specificity can often be arbitrary. In (31), however, where the verb *form* gives a clue as to the more specific nature of the source model, *ARTEFACTS* rather than *OBJECTS* is warranted.

Finally, one must distinguish between novel, creative or even idiosyncratic metaphors on the one hand, and conventionalized, lexicalized or 'dead' metaphors on the other (see e.g. Lipka 1996: 61ff). Although creative metaphors are perhaps more exciting and illuminating, especially from a stylistic point of view, conventionalized metaphors play a more important role for the systematic conceptualization of abstract notions because they have become part of the cognitive and linguistic system. Thus when Shakespeare says that an idea "shal sweetly creepe Into his study of imagination" (cf. ex. (14) above), this may evoke a very rich metaphorical image, but the source models *ANIMAL*, or more specifically perhaps even *REPTILE*, which are activated by the verb *creepe*, are not manifested in other expressions in the corpus. Such metaphorical mappings in the data are not part of the stable linguistic and cognitive system and will therefore not be the concern of this paper. Instead, the focus of the following discussion will be on sets of metaphorical expressions which either recur in identical form in the material or rely on one and the same source model.

¹⁴ The assumption behind the use of this operational criterion is that in the fourth edition of *OALD* the subentries are not, at least not explicitly, ordered according to principles such as chronology or frequency. It can therefore be assumed that the lexicographers started their entries intuitively with the most 'basic' or 'important' subsenses.

5.2 The historical development of the metaphors supporting *idea*

5.2.1 The 16th century

The dominating metaphor in the nine examples from the 16th century (cf. (9)-(17)) is the container metaphor, which was interpreted above as relying on the source model *OBJECTS*. As already hinted at in section 3.2, there are three examples (14) to (16) in which ideas are treated as objects which are either on their way into or in a container. While in Shakespeare's example, the object is portrayed as being animate and in motion (as suggested by the verb *creepe*), Spenser (15) and Greene (16) describe a stative locative relation. For Shakespeare, the locus of the idea is "the study of imagination"; Spenser and Greene imagine the heart as the appropriate container for ideas. Besides Shakespeare's verb *creepe*, the only other verb giving rise to a metaphorical expression is *shrine* in example (16). However, like *creepe*, this verb does not occur a second time in the rest of the data and it is not supported by other expressions evoking the same cognitive source model.

In short, the only productive source model in the 16th century is the model *OBJECTS*, as derivable from spatial expressions. In analogy to the discussion in section 3.7, it is impossible to say whether this scarcity of metaphors is due to the small number of available examples or to the gradual and tentative establishment of the concept of *idea* in the English language.

5.2.2 The 17th century

In section 3.3 it was found that the material from the 17th century is dominated by the debate between Neo-Platonists and empiricists. Their philosophical controversy supplies a good starting-point for the examination of the metaphors current in this period. In the quotations by the Cambridge Platonists Cudworth and More only very few metaphorical expressions could be found. More's use of the expression *implantation of the idea* was already mentioned above (cf. ex. 18). The same source model *PLANTS* is applied and considerably expanded in a quotation by one John Chandler, dated 1662:

- (34) Seeing all madness doth arise from a *budding* or *flourishing*, conceptual, foreign, *Idea implanted* into anothers ground, (s.v. *conceptual* 1.)

The only other two metaphors used by More are mappings of the source models *HUMAN BEING* (*conceive an idea*) and *ARTEFACTS* (*frame out an idea*). In the eleven examples taken from Cudworth not a single metaphorical expression was found. So the data available in the OED suggests that the Cambridge Platonists employed metaphors in a rather sparing way, and this can be seen as corresponding to their somewhat abstract and disembodied view of ideas.

In contrast, John Locke conceived of ideas as mental entities which are derived from perceptual sensation or reflexion. This conception is reflected in the metaphors he uses. Thus in five quotations he speaks of ideas as being located *in the mind*. But for Locke, the mind is not just important as a container for ideas but also as their perceptual experienter. Thus in one example, the "mind fixes its view on an idea" (s.v. *intention* LI.). Other quotations by Locke which rely on a mapping from the same model of *VISIBLE OBJECTS* are *bringing an idea again in view* (Locke's definition of the notion of "recollection"; s.v. *recollection* 3.) and *keeping an idea in view* (his definition of "contemplation"; s.v. *view* III.15.b.). The cognitive model *VISIBLE OBJECTS* is also the source for the nominal expression *at the first sight of the idea* (s.v. *intuition* 4.). Finally, Locke's frequent use of the metaphorical collocation *clear idea* (six times) can also be mentioned in the context of *VISIBLE OBJECTS*, since the first subentry on the adjective *clear* in the OALD begins with the definition "easy to see through".

It seems, then, that the contrast between the idealist conception of ideas proposed by the Cambridge Platonists and the empiricist conception of John Locke is reflected in the metaphors on which these authors rely when they write about ideas. Apart from the dominating metaphors discussed above, the only other metaphorical expression used by Locke, *produce an idea* (s.v. *efficacy* 2.), exploits the source model *ARTEFACTS*. The view of ideas as objects which are produced or made also forms the basis of expressions like *frame out an idea* (used by More, see above) and *form an idea*, which is recorded twice in the 17th century material. Besides *VISIBLE OBJECTS* and *ARTEFACTS*, another specific variant of the *OBJECTS* model is the model *PROPERTY*. If the verbs *have* and *get* had not been ruled out as function verbs in section 5.1, they could be regarded as man-

ifestations of this highly productive source model. Verbs that should indeed be interpreted as giving rise to metaphors based on the model *PROPERTY* are *give an idea* (recorded five times in the 17th century) and *an idea belongs to* (recorded once).

If the above-mentioned image of ideas as **PLANTS** is to be consistent, the mind must be regarded as the ground or soil where the ideas can grow. In another metaphor, the mind plays a different role. This is the metaphor evoked by the expression *imprint an idea*, which occurs twice in the 17th century material. The metaphor is related to the notion of a *tabula rasa*, which literally means 'scraped' and hence 'blank' writing tablet (cf. OED s.v. *tabula rasa*). Apparently, the idea of the *tabula rasa* goes back to Albertus Magnus (Schischkoff²¹ 1982: s.v. *tabula rasa*), but it is better known in the context of the empiricist philosophy of Locke and others. The claim of these philosophers, which is in strong contrast with the innateness hypothesis supported by the Cambridge Platonists and other philosophical schools, was that in its initial state, the human mind is an empty slate, into which ideas and experiences are engraved or imprinted during a person's lifetime. Interestingly, metaphorical expressions exploiting this metaphor are recorded in the OED only in quotations from the 17th and in the 18th century, but not later. This can be interpreted as an indication that the interest in and the illuminative power of the metaphor may have waned, while other metaphors were becoming more important.

5.2.3 The 18th century

The most productive metaphors in the 18th century are derived from the source models *OBJECTS* and *PROPERTY*. Compared to the 17th century data, there is an increase in metaphorical expressions denoting *PROPERTY*, both in terms of types and of tokens of metaphorical expressions. In number (35) below, a list of all types of verbs in the 18th century material which activate this source model is given (frequencies larger than 1 are indicated in brackets):

- (35) *PROPERTY*: *give* (24), *gain*, *lay hold of*, *lose*, *possess*

In a related type of metaphor, ideas are conceptualized as objects or properties which are moved from one place to another. On the one hand,

this ties in with the container metaphor, and on the other hand, associations with the metaphor that ideas are the results of some sort of production process can be observed. Verbs which are manifestations of these two source models have been collected in (36):

- (36) *PORTABLE OBJECTS*: carry, convey (10), drop, fix
ARTEFACTS: compress into, design, form (10), frame (2), produce, support, strengthen, wrap up

Finally, in (37) the remaining source models attested for the 18th century, which are only manifested in sporadic occurrences, have been collected:

- (37) *VISIBLE OBJECTS*: perceive, see; bright, clear (2), faint (3)
PLANTS: branch out; blossom of
HUMAN BEINGS: conceive, mature
FOOD: sweet

5.2.4 The 19th century

The material taken from the 19th century exhibits a dramatic expansion in the diversity both of metaphorical expressions and of source models of metaphors. To begin with some familiar types, Table 6 provides a list of metaphorical expressions whose underlying source models have already been discussed.

As the table shows, the models *PROPERTY*, *ARTEFACTS* and *VISIBLE OBJECTS* are gaining more importance in the 19th century. Among the metaphorical verbs related to *PORTABLE OBJECTS*, the verb *convey* seems to develop into some kind of favourite, a trend whose onset can already be observed in the 18th century. The domain of visual perception clearly loses ground in comparison to Locke's time, at least as far as verbs are concerned. However, adjectives that can be traced back to the same cognitive model are becoming an important means for characterizing the extent to which an idea is understandable (e.g. an idea can be *clear* or *foggy*), or the degree of conformity between a fact and the corresponding idea formed by a person (e.g. one can have a *clear* or a *faint idea* of something).

Metaphorical expressions	Source model
<i>borrow</i> (3), <i>gain</i> (3), <i>give</i> (36), <i>hold</i> , <i>obtain</i> (3), <i>owe</i> , <i>take</i> (4)	<i>PROPERTY</i>
<i>attach to</i> (2), <i>deform</i> , <i>destroy</i> , <i>form</i> (11), <i>furnish</i> (2), <i>give shape</i> , <i>make</i> , <i>produce</i> (2), <i>split up</i> , <i>take</i> <i>shape</i> , <i>thin down</i>	<i>ARTEFACTS</i>
<i>see</i> ; <i>bright</i> (2), <i>clear</i> (4), <i>crystallized</i> , <i>dim</i> , <i>faint</i> (3), <i>foggy</i> , <i>hazy</i>	<i>VISIBLE OBJECTS</i>
<i>carry</i> (2), <i>convey</i> (31), <i>get about</i> , <i>put aside</i>	<i>PORTABLE OBJECTS</i>
<i>strike root</i> ; <i>rooted</i>	<i>PLANTS</i>

Table 6: A selection of metaphorical expressions recorded in OED quotations from the 19th century with their underlying source models

The 19th century witnesses a surge in the use of animate beings, or perhaps rather human beings, as a source model for the understanding of ideas. In the OED data from this period, verbs covering large parts of the life cycle of a person are recorded:

- (38) *HUMAN BEINGS*: conceive (20), give birth to, grow up, nurse, pass away.

These records are supplemented by the verbs *abandon* (2), *adopt* (3), *awaken* and *operate on*, and by the nominal expression *the birth of an idea*, all of which are related to animate beings, typically human ones, as well. A more specific source model associated with human beings is that of a *FIGHT* in which ideas are seen as combatants. This model is only manifested by a single use of the verb *combat* in the 19th century but, as we will see presently, it is elaborated further in the 20th century.

Connected with the model *VISIBLE OBJECTS*, there is a metaphorical source model related to *LIGHT* or *BRIGHTNESS*. While this model occurs neither before nor after the 19th century, in this period it is manifested by the eight metaphorical expressions listed in (39):

- (39) *LIGHT*: glimmer; dawn of an idea, glimmering of an idea, irradiation of an idea, light of an idea (2); luminous idea, shadowy idea.

In a large number of quotations from the 19th century, the container

metaphor is exploited. However, in most of these examples the metaphorical character of the expression cannot be located in one single locative relation. Instead, the image of containment is evoked by combinations of locative expressions with verbs, which can, but need not, introduce additional elements into the metaphor (cf. e.g. the verbs *glimmer*, *expel*, *hover* or *swell* in the list below). The metaphorical expressions of this type attested in the OED are listed in (40) in decontextualized form:

- (40) *an idea comes into one's head / mind or enters one's head*
an idea crosses one's mind or flashes across one's brain
expel an idea from consciousness
fill a person with an idea
an idea fills one's imagination
an idea pervades the minds of several persons
a person's mind runs over with an idea
an idea swells and increases in one's heart
an idea glimmers in one's mind
a person puts an idea in another person's mind / head
an idea slips from one's recollection
one idea cannot be separated in thought from another idea

In a second metaphor manifested by combinations of locative relations and verbs, ideas are portrayed as residing in words. This image is part of the so-called "conduit metaphor" of human communication first discussed by Reddy (1993; originally 1979) in what turned out to be a seminal paper for the cognitive-linguistic theory of metaphor (cf. e.g. Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 10f and Lakoff 1993: 202). Roughly speaking, the conduit metaphor suggests that speakers put ideas into words and send them along a conduit to hearers who take the ideas out of the words again. Not quite unexpectedly, the relevant expressions in the OED data concern the packaging of ideas into words. These expressions, which are given below in (41), can also involve additional metaphorical components, depending on the semantic characteristics of the verb or other lexical items. Please note that, as above, only expressions that are attested in the OED are given, but again in decontextualized form:

- (41) *the words contain the idea of something*
one cannot catch a single idea out of the words

an idea seems to be couched in a single word
an idea steeped in verse

In a quotation attributed to a certain Whately (1840; the precise reference to the source is missing in the bibliography of the OED), a particularly rich and drastic elaboration of this metaphor can be found, which has therefore been singled out for full reproduction as example (42):

- (42) I have been to-day sledge-hammering your idea about Simeon into a sermon, (s.v. *sledge-hammer*)

The metaphor evoked in this passage gives a beautiful image of the strain and the energy that can be involved when ideas have to be expressed by means of words.

5.2.6 The 20th century and a survey of the relevant metaphors

Viewed from the perspective of collocations as discussed in section 3, the data from the 20th century was marked by an increasing diversification of the use of the word *idea*. To a large extent, a similar development can be observed in the attested use of metaphors. With the exception of the domain **LIGHT**, all source models current in the 19th century are still in use in the 20th century. Since it is not necessary to repeat the types of metaphorical expressions which were already quoted from the 19th century, we will limit our attention to those expressions which emerge for the first time in the 20th century data. These are collected in table 7.

Metaphorical expressions	Source model
<i>create, take shape</i>	ARTEFACTS
<i>bring back, drop, grasp, pick up</i>	PORTABLE OBJECTS
<i>get hold of, sell</i>	PROPERTY
<i>die, kill, revive; growth of</i>	HUMAN BEINGS
<i>off-shoot of</i>	PLANTS

Table 7: *Metaphorical expressions which are specific to the 20th century data but related to older source models*

In addition to the familiar ones, there are three source models which we encounter for the first time in the 20th century data. The first, which is a more specific variant of the *ARTEFACTS* type, can be called *BUILD-*

INGS. This cognitive model is evoked by the metaphorical expressions *be based on*, *be founded upon* and *be without foundation*. In a wider interpretation, the predicates *support* (which occurs already in the 18th century) and *lie at bottom* can also be said to evoke a picture of vertically organized structures similar to buildings. The second metaphor new in the 20th century data relies on the source model *FOOD*. (In fact a herald of this source model is attested in the 18th century with the adjective *sweet* (cf. 5.2.4)). Three quotations belonging to this type are attested, namely *feed with ideas*, *an idea tastes like . . .* and *stuff ourselves up with ideas*. Finally the verbs *defend* and *attack*, as well as the nominal expression *defenders of an idea*, activate the source model *FIGHT* already mentioned above.

In analogy to section 3.6, this last diachronic section on the role of metaphors will be brought to a close with an attempt to summarize the results obtained from the examination of the OED data. Table 8 gives a survey of the contribution of different source models to the conceptualization of the target model *IDEAS* in its historical development. In this table, the source models have been arranged in such a way as to facilitate a comparison between the five centuries. Conceptual relations between the source models have largely been ignored. Source models which are only represented by one or two occurrences of metaphorical expressions are put in brackets.

16th century	17th century	18th century	19th century	20th century
<i>OBJECTS</i>	<i>OBJECTS</i>	<i>OBJECTS</i>	<i>OBJECTS</i>	<i>OBJECTS</i>
	<i>VISIBLE OBJECTS</i>	<i>VISIBLE OBJECTS</i>	<i>VISIBLE OBJECTS</i>	<i>VISIBLE OBJECTS</i>
	<i>ARTEFACTS</i>	<i>ARTEFACTS</i>	<i>ARTEFACTS</i>	<i>ARTEFACTS</i>
	<i>PROPERTY</i>	<i>PROPERTY</i>	<i>PROPERTY</i>	<i>PROPERTY</i>
	<i>PLANTS</i>	<i>(PLANTS)</i>	<i>PLANTS</i>	<i>PLANTS</i>
	<i>(IMPRINT)</i>	<i>(IMPRINT)</i>		
	<i>(HUMAN BEINGS)</i>	<i>(HUMAN BEINGS)</i>	<i>HUMAN BEINGS</i>	<i>HUMAN BEINGS</i>
		<i>PORTABLE OBJECTS</i>	<i>PORTABLE OBJECTS</i>	<i>PORTABLE OBJECTS</i>
			<i>FIGHT</i>	<i>FIGHT</i>
		<i>(FOOD)</i>		<i>BUILDING</i>
			<i>LIGHT</i>	<i>FOOD</i>

Table 8: Survey of source models used for the conceptualization of the concept *idea* as recorded in the OED material

Although no statistical evidence is provided, Table 8 gives an idea of how the metaphorical range of the quotations in the OED expands. The only two source models that are introduced at one stage but do not, at least not according to the material used here, survive up to the present day are the model related to the notion of *tabula rasa* (*IMPRINT*) and the model *LIGHT*. Besides the development in the philosophical debates, the change of the everyday writing materials is probably responsible for the loss of the former source model. The decline of this model can also be interpreted as support for the notion that metaphors enhance the understanding of abstract concepts because it shows that once a metaphor loses its motivation, it can pass out of use.

If we finally have a look at the nature of source models collected in table (8), we realize that the lexeme *idea* relies primarily on source models of a very general semantic type. The general models *OBJECTS*, *VISIBLE OBJECTS*, *PORTABLE OBJECTS* and *ARTEFACTS* clearly prevail, while the more specific models *FIGHT*, *BUILDING* and *IMPRINT* yield only very few metaphorical expressions. What is more, on a hypothetical scale from highly general (e.g. *THING*, *PERSON*, *PLANT*) to very specific source models (e.g. *PAPERBACK*, *CHILD*, *ROSE*) these three models are still located on the general rather than on the specific side, and they will therefore not qualify as what Lakoff calls *basic level metaphors* (1987: 406). So one major result of this study is that the lexeme *idea* is mainly conceptualized by means of very general metaphors which have the function of concretizing the abstract notions it is used to express.¹⁵

5.2.7 Metaphor, medium and style

On the whole, the comparison of the use of metaphors across the four different corpora yields results analogous to the analysis of collocations and meanings. Thus, the three written-language corpora are again fairly uniform, at least as far as the choice of productive source models is concerned. In the LOB, the range of recurrent source models is identical to that in the 20th century material from the OED. The same is true of the examples collected from *The Independent*. Yet the newspaper material differs slightly from the other written data in that a larger number of more original and inventive metaphorical expressions manifesting these

¹⁵ Lipka (1996) illustrates different functions of metaphor with up-to-date examples, while Schmid (forthcoming) focusses mainly on the cognitive functions of metaphor.

source models can be found. For example the source model **OBJECTS** is invoked by such expressions as *toy with* or *play with an idea*, *an idea floats* and *get to grips with an idea*, the model **PERSON** by *an idea falls between two stools*, and the model **FOOD** by the interesting elaborations *swallow an idea*, *an idea sticks in one's throat* and *push an idea down one's customers' throats*. Other inventive metaphorical expressions found in *The Independent*, such as *an idea chimes in*, *shrug off an idea* and *kick an idea round*, do not qualify as a contribution to the systematic conceptualization of the lexeme *idea* because they are isolated examples.

Since the material from *The Independent* is not only typical of the style of writing used in newspapers, but also represents the most recent corpus used in this study, both medium-related variation and diachronic change may play a role in these examples. On the one hand, journalists and editors try perhaps even more than any other types of authors to make their texts attractive and exciting to read, and one reflection of this endeavour may be the more or less deliberate use of inventive metaphors. On the other hand, the fact should be taken into account that the English language has of course also changed from the time of the LOB material (i.e. around 1960) to the year from which *The Independent* data was taken (1993).

Compared to the three written corpora, the examples taken from the spoken London-Lund corpus contain very few metaphors. The only source models manifested by metaphorical expressions are the models **OBJECTS**, **VISIBLE OBJECTS**, **PROPERTY** and, surprisingly, **IMPRINT**.¹⁶ This seems to indicate that conventionalized metaphors are much less important, or at least used with lower frequency, in spoken than in written language. Since it has been argued that the meanings of abstract nouns like *idea* are rendered more specific and tangible in two ways, by embedding them in recurring collocations or by concretizing them with the help of conceptual metaphors, this finding is not unwelcome. For it suggests that the lack of metaphors is compensated for by the more frequent use of the specific collocation types (C) to (E), as opposed to the more general collocation *idea of* and the neutral type of usage (cf. table 4 above), which are more frequent in written style and often supported by conceptual metaphors.

¹⁶ The model **IMPRINT** is invoked by a 49-year-old academic in a radio discussion on the capacity of animals for thought. The metaphorical expression used by him is *Even the animal imprinting an idea and bringing it out on a later occasion—that is a process of thought* (LL 5 2 31 5780; diacritics have been deleted here).

6. Conclusion

The aim of this case study was to show how a diachronic, a stylistic and a cognitive-linguistic perspective can be combined in order to attempt a fruitful and convincing analysis of an abstract concept.

Diachronically, the use of *idea* was seen to be marked by a gradual diversification both of recurring lexico-syntactic environments and of conceptual metaphors.

Thus, from its first records in the OED up to the present day, the range of collocations and the scope of possible meanings of the word *idea* have widened remarkably. In addition to its semantic proliferation and its increasing use in semi-fixed collocational patterns, the word *idea* has acquired specific textual functions as a means of anaphoric and cataphoric reference.

Stylistically, the comparison of data from four corpora has given reason to believe that on average, the use of *idea* in various types of written language is remarkably uniform, whereas its use in spoken language differs in a number of respects. The collocation *the idea of NP* occurred less frequently in the spoken than in the written corpora, while the collocations *the idea is to . . .*, *the idea how/what . . .* and *a good idea* were used much more often. This suggests the conclusion that Sinclair's *idiom-principle* (1991: 110) may be more important for the spoken than for the written medium, a conclusion which also seems quite reasonable from a language-processing point of view. After all, speech production has to be performed much more rapidly than the production of written language, and therefore prefabricated chunks of language are all the more useful and welcome.

The cognitive-linguistic analysis of the lexicalized metaphors by means of which the abstract notion *idea* is conceptualized has revealed that a number of fairly general cognitive domains have predominated over the centuries as sources for metaphors, while specific metaphors were found to be very rare. As far as the medium-related variation of the metaphors is concerned, the data suggested that in spoken language speakers of English tend to rely more on the support of the above-mentioned collocations than on metaphorical expressions in order to render the abstract concept *idea* more tangible. A compensational mechanism can be seen to be at work here which ensures that the semantic impact of actual uses of *idea* is not left hanging in the air.

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1. Jugend, Jugendliche und ihre Altersrolle

Das deutsche Substantiv *Jugend* ist abgeleitet von dem Adjektiv *jung*. Diese Konstellation ist gemeingermanisch, sie ist also in den germanischen Sprachen verbreitet, wie etwa englisch *young* und *youth* belegen. Von *Jugend*, dessen Antonym *Alter* ist, wird dann das Adjektiv *jugendlich* abgeleitet, und die Substantivierung des Adjektivs ergibt maskulin *Jugendlicher* bzw. feminin *Jugendliche*, so auch der Plural. Während *jung* und *Jugend* schon im Althochdeutschen belegt sind, ist **die** Substantivierung *Jugendlicher* erst seit dem 19. Jahrhundert im Sprachgebrauch, ein früher Beleg ist für 1875 nachzuweisen, in einer Zeitschrift für Gefängniskunde: „Wir zählen zu den sogenannten *Jugendlichen* unter unseren Gefangenen all diejenigen, welche bei ihrer Einlieferung das 25. Lebensjahr noch nicht vollendet haben",¹ —ein erster Hinweis darauf, daß dem Kreis der Jugendlichen eine Altersgrenze — natürlich — gesetzt ist. Rund 50 Jahre später, im Jahre 1923, sind die Jugendlichen schon ganz und gar etabliert und melden sich selbst kritisch zu Wort, z.B. in dem Blatt „Junge Menschen. Blatt der deutschen Jugend": „Jeder Jugendliche ist weise. Jeder Jugendliche erkennt, daß die Welt schlecht ist. Jeder Jugendliche will sie bessern. Der eine will die Verhältnisse bes-

¹ Hermann Paul, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*. 9., vollständig neu bearbeitete Auflage von Helmut Henne und Georg Objartel unter Mitarbeit von Heidrun Kämper-Jensen. Tübingen 1992, 441.