Word spacing

ZEKI HAMAWAND

Is a space between word pairs random or purposeful in English?

1. Introduction

There are two main ways to communicate messages linguistically: verbally and non-verbally. In verbal communication, the message is transmitted by means of such devices as stress, intonation and pausing. An example of stress is the word *object* which has different meanings when stressed differently, as in *ob'ject* and *'object*. The first is a verb which means 'disagree'. The second is a noun which means 'material thing'. An example of intonation is the expression *What a beautiful day!* which expresses different feelings when said with different intonations. With a falling intonation, it is said perfunctorily. With a fall-rise intonation, it is said enthusiastically. With a rise-fall intonation, it is said sarcastically. An example of pausing is the expression *Don't eat that honey*. When the pause is after *that*, *that* refers to an object and *honey* refers to a person, meaning 'darling'. When the pause is after *honey*, *honey* refers to an object. So, the listener is ordered not to eat the honey. These devices are extensively covered in Roach (2009), Carr (2012), Odden (2014) and Kennedy (2016), among others.

In non-verbal communication, the message is transmitted by means of such devices as word choice, sentence structure and punctuation marks. An example of word choice is the pair *freakish* and *freaky*. *Freakish* describes character as in *She dislikes freakish visitors*, whereas *freaky* describes appearance as in *She dislikes freaky clothes*. An example of sentence structure is the sentence pair *I bid him come in* and *I bid him to come in*. In the bare infinitive, the bidding is direct and realised. In the to-infinitive, the bidding is indirect and non-realised. The two devices of word choice and sentence structure are extensively covered in Hamawand (2007, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2016). An example of punctuation marks is the sentence pair *She is scared of two things: cats and dogs*, and *She is scared of two things – cats and dogs*, which are not equivalent in meaning. The colon introduces a clause that clarifies what comes before it. The em dash generates a strong emotion. For a general treatment of punctuation marks, see Terban (2000), Truss (2003), Trask (2004), Lukeman (2007) and Casagrande (2014). For a cognitive treatment of punctuation marks, see Hamawand (2018).

Another important device for conveying meaning, which is the task of the present study, is word spacing. This is an area in typographic communication that refers to the presence or absence of spaces between words, resulting in combinations that can be considered either one word or two. A pair consists of two words, each having two parts used with or without a space as in *any way*

ZEKI HAMAWAND is Professor of English Linguistics at the University of Kirkuk and a Senior Lecturer at the University of Sulaimaniya, Iraq. His research interest is in Cognitive Linguistics. He has published several books, textbooks and articles in different areas of language. His books include Atemporal Complement Clauses in English: A Cognitive Grammar Analysis *(Lincom, 2002),* Suffixal Rivalry in Adjective Formation: A Cognitive-Corpus Analysis *(Equinox, 2007),* Morpho-Lexical Alternation in Noun Formation *(Palgrave, 2008), and* The semantics of English Negative Prefixes *(Equinox, 2009). His textbooks include* Morphology in English: Word Formation in Cognitive Grammar *(Continuum, 2011),* Semantics: A Cognitive Account of Linguistic Meaning *(Equinox, 2016), and* Modern Schools of Linguistics Thought*:* A Crash Course *(Palgrave, 2020). Email: zeki.hamawand@gmail.com.*

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versus *anyway*. To my knowledge, the topic of word spacing in English has not been given an exhaustive treatment. Some usage manuals like Fowler (1996), Peters (2004) and Garner (2016) explain some individual examples but not in minute detail. Although such works contribute to our understanding of the topic, they do not specify the factor that is responsible for the semantic distinctions. The distinctions are not based on the operation of rules as they assume, but on the notion of construal, the multiple ways of conceiving and expressing the conceptual content of a situation. Therefore, the present study constitutes the first cognitive inquiry that discusses word spacing in a systematic manner.

Word pairs in English cause trouble for speakers and writers, be they native or non-native. This is so because the words pairs share the same spelling and pronunciation, and so are easy to confuse or misuse. At this juncture, two questions can be raised with reference to word spacing. (1) Is word spacing random or purposeful? If the latter is true, what function does it serve? (2) Are pairs of words with a difference in spacing freely interchangeable? If not, what factor is responsible for separating them in actual use? In terms of the present approach, a space between two words is argued to make a difference in meaning. Accordingly, spaced and non-spaced word pairs are considered different linguistic realisations that result from different ways of conceptualising their common content. It is conventional that different syntactic structures convey different meanings. Word spacing is significant because it changes meaning and aids comprehension of written language. To see how purposeful word spacing is and how it affects meaning, compare the following pair of sentences:

(1) a. I cannot drink coffee *anymore*.
b. I cannot drink coffee *any more*.

In (1), the two italicised words have the same spelling, but they are not equivalent in meaning. In (1a), *anymore* is written without a space in between. It functions as an adverb, referring to time. It is reserved for the meaning any longer, or from now on. The sentence means that I cannot drink coffee any longer. In (1b), *any more* is written with a space in between. It functions as a phrase, referring to quantity. It consists of the adjective *any* and the noun *more*. It is reserved for the meaning even the smallest amount, or additional amount. The sentence means that I cannot drink *any more* coffee. I already had some coffee, and I don't need more of it. (Fowler, 1996: 58) Conceptually, the difference is caused by construal, the way the speaker conceptualises the situation and expresses it in language. The sentences, therefore, encode different conceptualisations of the same content. Hence, they are semantically distinct. Linguistically, the difference in meaning is reflected by the presence and absence of a space between the words. This is in line with the cognitive linguistic dictum that a difference in construal results in a difference in meaning, and the difference in meaning is manifested by a difference in form.

2. Theoretical framework

To address the questions above, I adopt the approach of Cognitive Semantics, as described in Langacker (1988, 1997). It is a theory which takes the relationship between meaning and mind as its central concern. The meaning of a linguistic expression is the function of both conceptual content and construal. *Conceptual content* is the meaning that is conventionally associated with an expression. *Construal* is the ability of the language user to construe a situation differently and use different linguistic structures to represent them in discourse. One and the same situation can be construed in distinct ways depending on the communicative needs. When two linguistic expressions share the same content, they differ in terms of the conceptual ways the language user imposes on their common content. Each expression serves to highlight a different aspect of the content. Each expression encodes a distinct meaning. Therefore, each expression is realised in language differently.

One dimension of construal that is responsible for perceiving the content of a situation is *perspective*, defined as the viewpoint taken on a situation which changes relative to discourse demands. Consider, for example, the contrast between *Let's stop and rest awhile* and *Let's stop and rest a while*. The two words *awhile* and *a while* sound the same, yet they have subtle differences in meaning. Each word form has its own sense. The difference shows up in writing by means of a space. The one-word version *awhile* functions as an adverb. It is equivalent to the phrase for a short time. The sentence means they wanted to rest for a short time. The two-word version *a while also* functions as an adverb. It is equivalent to the phrase for a period of time. The sentence means they wanted to rest for a period of time. Of the two words, only *a while* can come after a preposition. *Let's stop and rest for a while* is acceptable, whereas *Let's stop and*

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rest for awhile is not. For more on the theory of construal in other areas of language, see Langacker (1987, 1991, 2008).

Cognitive Semantics is based on fundamental premises which are crucial to the meaning of linguistic expressions.

1. A linguistic expression is a symbolic assembly. It has two poles. The semantic pole is linked to a particular a concept. The phonological pole is associated with a perceptible form, which can be spoken or written. The use of an expression thus involves mapping its meaning onto its form. For example, the expression *overtime* is regarded as an association between the semantic structure 'extra time' and the phonological structure /ˈəʊvətaɪm/. To express a concept like this, language relates the two structures.
2. All linguistic expressions posited in language have conceptual content. Differences in conceptual content signal differences in meaning. Differences in meaning always indicate differences in form. For example, the expressions *upon* and *up on* encode different conceptual contents. The one-word spelling *upon* describes something which is on top of something else. By contrast, the two-word spelling *up on* describes something which is in a high place. Each expression is a vehicle of a certain semantic structure.
3. The use of a linguistic expression is the outcome of the specific construal imposed on its content. Differences in construal spell difference in meaning. For example, the expressions *sometime* and *some time* look alike in form except for space, but they are separate in use. The conjoined form *sometime* is an adverb. It means at an unspecified point. It does not refer to a span of time. By contrast, the separated form *some time* is an adjective and a noun. It means an unspecified period of time.
4. Construal is a multi-faceted phenomenon. It consists of dimensions which express experiences. Language provides conventions to represent them. For example, the two word forms *anytime* and *any time* share the same letters. Nonetheless, construal reserves them for independent uses. It is the space that projects the difference in meaning. The one-word form *anytime* is an adverb. It means at any time. By contrast, the two-word form *any time* is a noun phrase. It means any particular amount of time.
5. No two expressions are in free variation. Variants reflect different conceptualisations, and as a result are encoded linguistically differently. For example, whereas the two word forms *overtime* and *over time* are pronounced alike, they are different in writing which is due to a space. Construal maintains a noticeable difference between them in use. As one word, *overtime* refers to work done beyond a regular shift. By contrast, as two words *over time* refers to the passage of time.

In what follows, I investigate five case studies. The source of the data comes from usage dictionaries and manuals such as *Webster's Dictionary on English Usage* (1989), Burchfield's *The New Modern English Usage* (Burchfield, 1996), *The Penguin Dictionary of American English Usage and Style* (Lovinger, 2000), *The Cambridge Guide to English Usage* (Peters, 2004), *The American Heritage: Guide to Contemporary Usage and Style* (2005) and *Garner's Modern English Usage* (Garner, 2016). These sources are considered important pedagogical tools for anyone who is learning a language. My method of procedure includes three steps. First, I explain the nature of the case study and give definitions of its crucial ingredients. Second, I present the argument which is responsible for triggering semantic distinctions. Third, I provide examples of troublesome word pairs to substantiate the argument. The general aim is to emphasise the role of construal in allowing the speaker to conceptualise a given situation in alternate ways, which result in different linguistic manifestations. The specific aim is to provide new insights into word spacing and show that each member of a word pair reflects a different intention of the speaker. It is to be noted that the variety of English that I use and on which my study draws is British English.

3. Case studies

English has a lot of confusing word pairs, which are misused by language users. These are written either together as one word as in *onboard*, or separately as two words as in *on board*. Such word pairs are mixed up by language users because they look and sound alike, and appear as if they have the same meaning. Nevertheless, a difference in meaning governs the way in which they are written and used. The choice between such word pairs is not a matter of coincidence but the result of construal. Such words are simply different lexemes that happen to be homophones. The joining or disjoining of the elements of such word pairs depends on the way a situation is construed by the language

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user. For their part, listeners rely on context to understand the sequence as one or two words. The two versions of the sequence are by no means randomly interchangeable. Rather, they exhibit a subtle difference in meaning. Each version has, therefore, a different task to carry out in the language. Below are some case studies which involve the choice between one or two words.

3.1 Prepositions versus phrases

The first case study to be investigated involves the distinction between prepositions and phrases. A preposition is a word that comes before a noun, pronoun, or gerund. A phrase is a group of words that form a unit within a clause. Prepositions come be simple, compound and complex. My primary concern here is to compare compound prepositions with phrases, which can cause problems for language users. With the two parts written together, they act as a preposition. With the two parts written separately, they act as a phrase. The distinction, I argue, is based on actuality versus potentiality. The compound preposition is biased towards actuality, referring to a situation that has actually occurred, or is occurring at the moment of speaking. Pragmatically, the success of the action is guaranteed. The phrase, on the other hand, is biased towards potentiality, referring to a situation that has not yet occurred or is about to occur. Pragmatically, the success of the action is not guaranteed. A typical indication of this distinction is offered by the confusing examples below:

(2) a. She crawled *into* the bed.
    b. She crawled *in to* the bed.

The two word forms *into and in to* sound almost indistinguishable when they are said aloud. Yet, they have subtle differences in meaning. In each word form, the writer construes the situation differently, and so uses the prepositions discriminately. The difference becomes clear in writing through the presence of a space. As one word, *into* is a preposition that indicates movement towards the inside of a place or container. It usually answers the question, where? The sentence means that she crawled and landed within the bed. As separate words, *in* is part of a verbal phrase and acts as an adverb to the verb *crawl*, whereas *to* is either a preposition taking an object, or a part of an infinitive carrying the meaning of *in order to*. The phrase *in to* indicates movement towards a location considered as a goal. It answers the question why? The sentence means that she crawled in with the aim of reaching the bed, an action that is not sure to happen.

To bolster the argument, we need to consider further sentences to see how the two expressions differ.

(3) a. He walked *onto* the garden.
    b. He walked *on to* the garden.

The two word forms *onto* and *on to* sound almost identical. Nevertheless, they represent different construals of the situation, and so have individual meanings. The difference becomes evident in writing through the use of a space. When written as one word, *onto* functions as a preposition. It denotes movement towards a position on the surface of something, or movement from one place to another. It is equivalent to the phrase on the surface of something. The sentence means that he walked on and he ended on the garden. When written as two words, *on* functions as an adverb to the verb *walk* and *to* as a preposition linked to the object *garden*. It denotes movement towards a location. The sentence means that he continued the journey but did not necessarily end up on the garden, which is considered as a goal. In *on to*, *to* functions as an adverbial of purpose. As evidence, the sentence accepts the insertion of an adverbial expression, as in *He walked on fast to the garden*.

3.2 Adverbs versus phrases

The second case study to be investigated involves the distinction between adverbs and phrases. An adverb is a word used for modifying a verb, an adjective, another adverb, or a whole sentence. A phrase is a small group of words standing together as a conceptual unit, forming a component of a clause. In English, there are some adverbs which share the same written form with phrases or the same pronunciation but have different meanings. Such adverb-phrase expressions are easily confused by language users. When they are put together, they mean something. When they are separate, they mean something else. The situation becomes worse when the single-word version shows up in place of the two-word version, and vice versa. In such cases, either option works, depending on the intention of the writer. The distinction, I argue, resides in degree versus manner. The adverb is associated with degree, telling about the strength or intensity of an action. The phrase is associated with manner, telling about the way or mode of an action. A pertinent illumination of this distinction is afforded by the problematic examples below:

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(4) a. The rumours are *altogether* false.
b. The rumours are *all together* false.

Although the two words *altogether* and *all together* sound the same, they actually have separate functions. The construal of the situation in each word form is different, and so causes a distinction in their use. The difference emerges in writing by means of a space. The one-word form *altogether* is used as an adverb. It emphasises degree, meaning on the whole, entirely or completely. The sentence means that the rumours are false on the whole. The two-word form *all together* is a phrase: *all* is an adjective and *together* is a noun. It emphasises manner, meaning as a whole, as a unit or as a group. The sentence means that the rumours are false as a whole. As evidence, it is not uncommon to see a noun or a verb between the elements of the phrase, as in *They put all the tickets together in a wallet*, and *You should all come together to the garden*. In pronunciation, both elements of *all together* are stressed.

To reinforce the argument, we need to examine further sentences to see how the two expressions differ.

(5) a. He *always* tries to make profits.
b. He tries *all ways* to make profits.

Although the word forms *always* and *all ways* are identical in sound, they differ in terms of construal, and so have different meanings. The sentences in which they appear are also grammatically different. The difference in meaning emerges in writing by means of a space. *Always* is used as an adverb, meaning all the time, repeatedly or perpetually. The sentence means that he tries to make profits all the time. *All ways* is a two-word phrase, where the adjective *all* describes the plural noun *ways*. It means all methods or every possible way. The sentence means that he tries to make profits using all methods. Evidence in support of the analysis of *all ways* is that it can be used with an article or an adjective, as in *He tries all the ways to make profits*, or *He tries all possible ways to make profits*.

3.3 Phrasal verbs versus derived nouns

The third case study to be investigated involves the distinction between phrasal verbs and derived nouns. A phrasal verb is an idiomatic phrase made up of a main verb together with an adverb or a preposition, or both. A phrasal verb has meaning which is different from that of the original verb. In *They called off the meeting*, the phrasal verb *call off* means *cancel*. As can be seen, a phrasal verb is written with a space between its separate parts. However, when a noun is derived from a phrasal verb, the space gets lost. It is here where confusion arises between the meaning of the phrasal verb and the meaning of the derived noun. Both signify action in the domain of process, but each, I argue, describes a different aspect of it. The noun involves summary scanning, in which the component states of the action are made available as a single gestalt, that is, in one piece, unabridged and undivided. A perfect reflection of this distinction is provided by the confusable examples below:

(6) a. The company will start the *layoff* of workers next week.
b. The company will start the *lay off* workers next week.

Whereas the two word forms *layoff* and *lay off* sound similar in speaking, they are different in writing. As for meaning, construal draws a sharp demarcation between them. The difference is manifested in writing by means of a space. *Layoff* as a single word is a noun. It refers to a dismissal, especially temporary, of a worker or workers. As a noun, it profiles a thing. It describes an action as a whole. It involves a series of component states distributed through time but scanned in summary fashion. *Layoff* is construed as static and holistic. *Lay off* as two words is a phrasal verb. It refers to the act of dismissing a worker or workers, usually for economic reasons. As a verb, it highlights a process. It describes an action as sequential. It involves a series of component states tracked from one moment to the next, which is scanned in sequential fashion. *Lay off* is construed as variable and atomistic.

To maintain the argument, we need to probe further sentences to see how the two expressions differ.

(7) a. The diagram describes the *setup* of the tent.
b. The diagram describes the *set up* of the tent.

Whereas the two word forms *setup* and *set up* are similar in speaking, they are different in writing. The difference is demonstrated in writing by means of a space. As for meaning, construal makes a clear distinction between them. *Setup* is a noun meaning an arrangement. Because it acts as a noun, the parts are written together without a space in between. As a noun, *setup* evokes a summary scanning, in which the different facets of the event are made available at the same time as in a photo. In *setup*, the component states are conceived collectively and experienced simultaneously as a single gestalt. *Set up* is a phrasal verb meaning

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making arrangement. Because it acts as a verb, the parts are written separately with a space in between. As a verb, *set up* evokes a sequential scanning, in which the different facets of the event are transformed from one into another. In *set up*, the component states are conceived individually and experienced successively with the passage of time.

3.4 Indefinite pronouns versus phrases

The fourth case study to be investigated involves the distinction between indefinite pronouns and phrases. An indefinite pronoun is a pronoun that does not refer to any definite person, place or thing. In English, there is a particular group of indefinite pronouns beginning with *any, some, every* and *no*, and ending with *–one, –body, –thing, –way, –time, –place* and *–day*. A phrase is a small group of words which forms a unit, either on its own or within a sentence. Indefinite pronouns can be easy to confuse because the writer has the choice between using them as one word or two. A common writing error occurs when the writer uses the single-word version in place of the two-word version, and vice versa. Without a space, the words function as a pronoun. With a space, the words function as a phrase. The writer can shift from one-word to two-word forms depending on discourse demands. For the reader, it is hard to determine which choice is meant unless it is correctly spaced. To clarify the point, let us consider examples with *any*, *every*, and *some*.

3.4.1 Pronouns with any

The distinction between indefinite pronouns and noun phrases beginning with *any* and ending with *thing* or *one* is inherent, I argue, in the scope of application, which can be either broad or narrow. A broad application is one in which the pronoun has a more general sense. Linguistically, it is represented by the indefinite pronoun. It represents free choice, where the person can select one or more from the options available. By contrast, a narrow application is one in which the pronoun has a more restricted sense. Linguistically, it is represented by the phrase. It represents restricted choice, where the person can select only one from the options available. This is meant to show that grammatical distinctions are motivated by conceptual considerations. Each expression reflects a semantic distinction of its own. To make the distinction plain, let us examine the sentences below.

(8) a. Choose *anything* you like.
b. Choose *any thing* you like.

The two word forms *anything* and *any thing* are orthographically similar. Still, construal confines them to distinct uses. Hence, they cannot be substituted for each other. It is the space that manifests the difference in meaning. Both refer to an unidentified thing, but with a semantic difference. The unitary form *anything* is a pronoun. It means any one thing or a thing of any kind. There is no limit in what you can choose. It does not matter which one. The sentence means the addressee can choose one or more of the displayed things. The separated form *any thing* is a phrase consisting of an adjective and a noun. It means choosing any single thing in a set. The sentence means the addressee can choose only one of the displayed things. As evidence, it is possible to insert an adjective before the noun *thing* in *any thing*, as in *They were not allowed to bring any expensive thing on the trip*. The same analysis is true of *anyone* vs. *any one*.

3.4.2 Pronouns with every

The distinction between indefinite pronouns and noun phrases beginning with *every* and ending with *thing* or *one* is established, I argue, in entirety versus singularity. The indefinite pronoun represents entirety, which implies the whole of something, with all parts included. The phrase represents singularity, which implies one thing or person rather than a group, with all parts considered separately. This shows that the semantic distinction between such expressions is subtle but significant. The distinction is not based on the operation of rules; it is exclusively a property of construal which gives the speaker the flexibility to construe the same conceptual content in alternate ways. Every grammatical expression assumes a specific semantic value. To account for the distinction, look at the sentences below.

(9) a. *Everything* in the guidelines is clear.
b. *Every thing* in the guidelines is clear.

The italicised words mean different things despite the fact that they share similar spelling. Construal marks a certain distance between them in use. The difference in meaning is connected to a space in writing. The single word *everything* is a pronoun. It implies all things within a group or class. It covers the entire situation. The sentence means that all the items in the guidelines are clear as a whole. The two-word form *every thing* is a noun phrase: *every* is an adjective and *thing* is a noun. It implies each thing within a group or class. The sentence means that each individual

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item in the guidelines is clear. The noun phrase is used when there is a need to emphasise the separateness of the things referred to. As evidence, the two-word form can be separated by an adjective, as in *Every single thing in the store is cheap*. In brief, the difference between the two words is one of emphasis: *everything* focuses on all items as a unit, whereas *every thing* focuses on individual items. The same analysis is true of *everyone* vs. *every one*.

3.4.3 Pronouns with some

The distinction between indefinite pronouns and noun phrases beginning with *some* and ending with *thing* or *one* is built, I argue, in the concrete versus abstract categories of language. Concrete refers to tangible things that can be perceived through the five senses. Abstract refers to intangible qualities and ideas that cannot be perceived through the five senses. The indefinite pronoun *something* represents both concrete and abstract entities. It refers to an unspecified object or a concept. The phrase *some thing* represents just a concrete entity. It just refers to an unspecified object. This shows that grammatical distinctions are motivated by semantic considerations. Every grammatical expression is a vehicle of a certain semantic structure. The distinction between the two variants is a matter of two construals of the same content. The choice and distribution of either expression is not automatic, but governed by semantic stipulations. To clarify the distinction, see the sentences below.

(10) a. *Something* is wrong there.
b. *Some thing* is wrong there.

The two words *something* and *some thing* look alike, but they are two different expressions with two different meanings in terms of construal. The space in writing discloses the difference in meaning. As a combined word, *something* is a pronoun. It indicates either a non-specified object or an unknown situation. In the sentence, it refers to a discrete entity or an abstract idea. It is used to mention a thing without saying what it is. *Something* can be modified by adjectives or prepositional phrases following the pronoun, as in *Something wrong happened*. As separate words, *some thing* is a noun phrase, in which *some* is an indefinite pronoun modifying the noun *thing*. It always indicates a physical entity. In the sentence, it refers to a discrete entity. In some cases, *some thing* can be pluralised by adding an –s to *thing*, as in *She found some things in the closet*. As evidence, in the sentence *Something tells them that they are wrong*, *some thing* would be incorrect because the sentence refers to an abstract situation. The sentences, therefore, encode different conceptualisations of the same content. Hence, they are semantically distinct.

3.5 Compounds versus phrases

The final case study to be investigated involves the distinction between compounds and phrases. A compound consists of two words linked together to produce a word with a new meaning. A phrase consists of two or more words that form part of a sentence and express an idea. The compound-phrase spelling causes confusion. When used together, the two words function as a compound. When used separately, the two words function as a syntactic phrase. The distinction between them is innate, I argue, in non-compositionality versus compositionality. Compounds are non-compositional, where the meaning of a compound is determined by both the semantic contribution of its parts and the pragmatic knowledge behind what is actually symbolised. Syntactic phrases are compositional, where the meaning of a phrase is fully determined by the meanings of its parts. The topic of compounding in English is extensively covered in Hamawand (2011, Part IV). A vivid demonstration of this distinction is supplied by the tricky examples below:

(11) a. They obtained the permit to erect a *greenhouse.*
b. They obtained the permit to erect a *green house.*

The italicised word forms are similar in spelling. The modifier is an adjective and the head a noun. Still, each word form represents a different construal of the situation, and so has its own definition. The difference is exhibited is writing by a space. Without a space, *greenhouse* is a compound. Its meaning does not only reside in the meanings of its parts, but also in the clues provided by the context in which it is used. It means a glass house for the cultivation and exhibition of plants. In the compound, the first part is clearly accented. The compound has mostly a falling intonation. With a space, *green house* is a syntactic phrase. Its meaning is a combination of the meanings of its parts. It means a house that is painted green. In the phrase, both parts are accented, but the second is accented more heavily. As evidence, only the syntactic phrase allows the insertion of a lexical item as in *a green dark house*.

To sustain the argument, we need to scrutinise further sentences to see how the two expressions differ.

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(12) a. Check the *blackboard* on the wall.
b. Check the *black board* on the wall.

The italicised word forms contain the same spelling. The modifier is an adjective and the head a noun. Nevertheless, each word form incarnates a different construal, and so has its individual sense. The difference is displayed in writing by a space. Without a space, *blackboard* is a compound. Its meaning is not only a function of the meanings of the parts, but also a function of encyclopaedic knowledge. It means a chalk board. The stress is on the first component. It has mostly a falling intonation. With a space, *black board* is a syntactic phrase. Its meaning is a combination of the meanings of the parts. It means a board that is black. Both parts are stressed, but the second is more stressed. As evidence, only the syntactic phrase allows the insertion of a lexical item between its parts as in *a black large board*. Compounds can be written as solid, hyphenated or open. For a discussion of this, see Poole (2020).

4. Conclusion

Adopting the framework of Cognitive Semantics, the current study has explored the effects of two devices on language. One is conceptual and represented by construal. It is defined as the way a situation is conceived and realised in language. The other is linguistic and represented by spacing. It is defined as the presence or absence of a space between word pairs in writing like *anyway* versus *any way*. The study has hypothesised the existence of a strong link between writers' conceptualisations, which are based on personal experiences, and their use of spacing. The objective was to show that although word pairs are similar on the surface, they are distinct in meaning. From the preceding discussion, some findings have emerged. Concerning the first question, the study has found that word spacing is purposeful. Spacing serves to distinguish meaning. No spacing makes it more difficult for the reader to distinguish one word from the other unless, of course, it has become conventional for all or part of a phrase to be written without spaces, e.g. 'insofar as'. Therefore, spacing plays a critical role in making an expression accessible for the reader. Otherwise, the reader is forced to rely on the surrounding context to ensure successful understanding. Concerning the second question, the study has found that word pairs with a difference in spacing are not freely interchangeable. The primary factor responsible for separating them in actual use is construal. Each word symbolises a different perspective which the writer takes on a situation. The language user should space them correctly so as to avoid potential misunderstanding.

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