A practical primer on processing semantic property norm data

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Author Note

Any suggested author note?

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10 Abstract

Semantic property listing tasks require participants to generate short propositions (e.g., 11

darks>, <has fur>) for a specific concept (e.g., dog). This task is the cornerstone of the 12 creation of semantic property norms which are essential for modelling, stimuli creation, and 13 understanding similarity between concepts. However, despite the wide applicability of semantic property norms for a large variety of concepts across different groups of people, the 15 methodological aspects of the property listing task have received less attention, even though 16 the procedure and processing of the data can substantially affect the nature and quality of 17 the measures derived from them. The goal of this paper is to provide a practical primer on 18 how to collect and process semantic property norms. We will discuss the key methods to 19 elicit semantic properties and compare different methods to derive meaningful 20 representations from them. This will cover the role of instructions and test context, property 21 pre-processing (e.g., lemmatization), property weighting, and relationship encoding using 22 ontologies. With these choices in mind, we propose and demonstrate a processing pipeline 23 that transparently documents these steps resulting in improved comparability across different 24 studies. The impact of these choices will be demonstrated using intrinsic (e.g. reliability, number of properties) and extrinsic measures (e.g., categorization, semantic similarity, lexical 26 processing). Example data and the impact of choice decisions will be provided. This practical 27 primer will offer potential solutions to several longstanding problems and allow researchers 28 to develop new property listing norms overcoming the constraints of previous studies.

Keywords: semantic, property norm task, tutorial

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1. Available feature norms and their format

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- Property listing task original work: Toglia and Battig (1978); Toglia (2009); Rosch and

 Mervis (1975); Ashcraft (1978)
- English: McRae, Cree, Seidenberg, and McNorgan (2005), Vinson and Vigliocco (2008),
- Buchanan, Holmes, Teasley, and Hutchison (2013), Devereux, Tyler, Geertzen, and
- Randall (2014), Buchanan, Valentine, and Maxwell (2019)
- Italian: Montefinese, Ambrosini, Fairfield, and Mammarella (2013); Reverberi,
- Capitani, and Laiacona (2004), Kremer and Baroni (2011)
- German: Kremer and Baroni (2011)
- Portuguese: Stein and de Azevedo Gomes (2009)
- Spanish: Vivas, Vivas, Comesaña, Coni, and Vorano (2017)
- Dutch: Ruts et al. (2004)
- Blind participants: Lenci, Baroni, Cazzolli, and Marotta (2013)
- I'm sure there are more, here's what we cited recently.
- Define concept, feature for clarity throughout make sure you use these two terms consistently.
- 2. Pointers about how to collect the data
- a. instructions, generation, verification, importance
- I really like the way the CSLB did it: https://cslb.psychol.cam.ac.uk/propnorms
- They showed the concept, then had a drop down menu for is/has/does, and then the
- 52 participant typed in a final window. That type of system would solve about half the
- problems I am going to describe below about using multi-word sequences. Might be some

other suggestions, but for that type of processing, you could do combinations and have more consistent data easily.

3. Typical operations performed on features

Due to the productivity in language, a semantic feature can be expressed in a myriad of ways. Without any further processing, many features will be expressed in an idiosyncratic way, despite the fact that they capture the same meaning. For example, the fact that bicycles have two wheels is expressed as ",, ,. The next sections provide a tutorial on how data from the semantic feature listing (SFL) task might be processed from raw input to a more compact feature output. The tutorial is written for R and is fully documented, such that users can adapt it to their language of choice. Figure 1 portrays the proposed set of steps including spell checking, lemmatization, exclusion of stop words, and final processing in a multi-word sequence approach or a bag of words approach. After detailing these steps, the final data form will compared to previous norms to determine the usefulness of this approach.

67 Materials and Data Format

The data for this tutorial includes 16544 unique concept-feature responses for 226 concepts from Buchanan et al. (2019). The concepts were taken from McRae et al. (2005), Vinson and Vigliocco (2008), and Bruni, Tran, and Baroni (2014). The concepts include 185 nouns, 25 verbs, and 16 adjectives. Concreteness ratings collected by (???) were matched with the current data set. The concreteness ratings can range from 1 (abstract (language based)) to 5 (concrete (experience based)). The nouns were rated as most concrete: M = 4.59 (SD = 0.52), followed by adjectives: M = 3.78 (SD = 0.81), and verbs: M = 3.57 (SD = 0.79). The data consist of a text file where concept-feature observation is a row and each column is a variable. An example of this raw data is shown in Table 1. The original data can be found at https://osf.io/cjyzw/.

This data was collected using the instructions provided by McRae et al. (2005),
however, in contrast to the suggestions for consistency detailed above (Devereux et al., 2014),
each participant was simply given a large text box to include their answer. Each answer
includes multiple embedded features, and the tutorial proceeds to demonstrate potential
processing addressing the data in this nature. With structured data entry for participants,
the suggested processing steps are reduced.

84 Spelling

Spell checking can be automated with the hunspell package in R (Ooms, 2018). Each answer can be checked for misspellings across an entire column of answers, which is located in the master dataset. The default dictionary is American English, and the hunspell vignettes provide details on how to import your own dictionary for non-English languages. The choice of dictionary should also normalize between multiple varieties of the same language, for example, the "en GB" would convert to British English spellings.

```
## Lower case to normalize
master$answer <- tolower(master$answer)

## Install the hunspell package if necessary
#install.packages("hunspell")

library(hunspell)

## Check the participant answers

## The output is a list of spelling errors for each line
spelling_errors <- hunspell(master$answer, dict = dictionary("en_US"))</pre>
```

The result from the hunspell() function is a list object of spelling errors for each row of data. For example, when responding to apple, a participant wrote fruit grocery store orchard red green yelloe good with peanut butter good with caramell, and the spelling errors were denoted as yelloe caramell. After checking for errors, the hunspell_suggest() function was used to determine the most likely replacement for each error.

```
## Check for suggestions
spelling_suggest <- lapply(spelling_errors, hunspell_suggest)</pre>
```

For yelloe, both yellow yell were suggested, and caramel caramels caramel l camellia 96 camel were suggested for caramell. The suggestions are presented in most probable order, 97 and using a few loops with the substitute (gsub()) function, we can replace all errors with 98 the most likely replacement in a new dataset spell checked. A specialized dictionary with 99 pre-coded error responses and corrections could be implemented at this stage. Other paid 100 alternatives, such as Bing Spell Check, can be a useful avenue for datasets that may contain 101 brand names (i.e., apple versus Apple) or slang terms and provides context sensitive 102 corrections (e.g., keeping Apple as a response to computer, but not as a response to green). 103

04 Lemmatization

The next step approaches the grouping different word forms that share the same lemma. The process of lemmatizing words involves using a lexeme set (i.e., all words forms that have the same meaning, am, are, is) to convert into a common lemma (i.e., be) from a trained dictionary. In contrast, stemming involves processing words using heuristics to remove affixes or inflections, such as ing or s. The stem or root word may not reflect an actual word in the language, as simply removing an affix does not necessarily produce the

lemma. For example, in response to airplane, flying can be easily converted to fly by removing the ing inflection. However, this same heuristic converts the feature wings into w after removing both the s for a plural marker and the ing participle marker.

Lemmatization is the likely choice for processing property norms, and this process can
be achieved by installing TreeTagger (Schmid, 1994) and the koRpus package in R

(Michalke, 2018). TreeTagger is a trained tagger designed to annotate part of speech and
lemma information in text, and parameter files are available for multiple languages. The
koRpus package includes functionality to use TreeTagger in R. After installing the package
and TreeTagger, we will create a unique set of tokenized words to lemmatize to speed
computation.

```
lemmas <- spell_checked

## Install the koRpus package

#install.packages("koRpus")

#install.packages("koRpus.lang.en")

## You must load both packages separately

library(koRpus)

library(koRpus.lang.en)

## Install TreeTagger

#https://www.cis.uni-muenchen.de/~schmid/tools/TreeTagger/

## Find all types for faster lookup

all_answers <- tokenize(lemmas$answer, format = "obj", tag = F)

all_answers <- unique(all_answers)</pre>
```

The treetag() function calls the installation of TreeTagger to provide part of speech tags and lemmas for each token. Importantly, the path option should be the directory of the TreeTagger installation.

```
treetagger="manual", format="obj",

TT.tknz=FALSE, lang="en",

TT.options=list(path="~/TreeTagger", preset="en"))))
```

This function returns a tagged corpus object, which can be converted into a dataframe of the token-lemma information. The goal would be to replace inflected words with their lemmas, and therefore, unknown values, number tags, and equivalent values are ignored by subsetting out these from the dataset. Table 2 portrays the results from TreeTagger.

Similar to spelling correction stri_replace_all_regex() is used to replace the wordforms with their corresponding lemmas from the stringi package (Gagolewski & Tartanus, 2019). Table 3 shows the processed data at this stage.

131 Multi-word Sequences

Multi-word sequences are often coded to mimic a Collins and Quillian (1969) style 132 model, with "is-a" and "has-a" type markers. If data were collected to include these markers, 133 this step would be pre-encoded into the output data, rendering the following code 134 unnecessary. A potential solution for processing messy data could be to search for specific 135 part of speech sequences that mimic the "is-a" and "has-a" strings, and a more complex set 136 of regular expressions has been implented in Strudel by Baroni, Murphy, Barbu, and Poesio 137 (2010). An examination of the coding in McRae et al. (2005) and Devereux et al. (2014) 138 indicates that the feature tags are often verb-noun or verb-adjective-noun sequences. Using 139 TreeTagger on each concept's answer set, we can obtain the parts of speech in context for 140 each lemma. With dplyr (Wickham, Francios, Henry, Muller, & Rstudio, 2019), new 141 columns are added to tagged data to show all bigram and trigram sequences. All verb-noun 142 and verb-adjective-noun combinations are selected, and any words not part of these 143 multi-word sequences are treated as unigrams. Finally, the table() function is used to 144 tabulate the final count of n-grams and their frequency.

```
## Create an empty dataframe
multi words <- data.frame(Word=character(),</pre>
                         Feature=character(),
                         Frequency=numeric(),
                         stringsAsFactors=FALSE)
## Create unique word list to loop over
unique_concepts <- unique(lemmas$word)</pre>
## Install dplyr
#install.packages("dplyr")
library(dplyr)
## Loop over each word
for (i in 1:length(unique_concepts)){
  ## Create parts of speech for clustering together
  temp_tag <- suppressWarnings(</pre>
    suppressMessages(
      treetag(c(lemmas$answer[lemmas$word == unique_concepts[i]], "NULL"),
          ## Control the parameters of treetagger
```

```
treetagger="manual", format="obj",
        TT.tknz=FALSE, lang="en",
        TT.options=list(path="~/TreeTagger", preset="en"))))
## Save only the dataframe, remove NULL
temp_tag <- temp_tag@TT.res[-nrow(temp_tag@TT.res) , ]</pre>
## Subset out information you don't need
temp_tag <- subset(temp_tag,</pre>
                    wclass != "comma" & wclass != "determiner" &
                      wclass != "preposition" & wclass != "modal" &
                      wclass != "predeterminer" & wclass != "particle" &
                      wclass != "to" & wclass != "punctuation" &
                      wclass != "fullstop" & wclass != "conjunction" &
                      wclass != "pronoun")
## Create a temporary tibble
temp_tag_tibble <- as_tibble(temp_tag)</pre>
## Create part of speech and features combined
temp_tag_tibble <- mutate(temp_tag_tibble,</pre>
                           two_words = paste(token,
                                              lead(token), sep = "_"))
temp_tag_tibble <- mutate(temp_tag_tibble,</pre>
                           three_words = paste(token,
                                                lead(token), lead(token, n = 2L),
                                                sep = " "))
temp_tag_tibble <- mutate(temp_tag_tibble,</pre>
                           two_words_pos = paste(wclass,
                                                  lead(wclass), sep = "_"))
temp_tag_tibble <- mutate(temp_tag_tibble,</pre>
                           three_words_pos = paste(wclass,
                                                    lead(wclass), lead(wclass, n = 2L),
                                                    sep = "_"))
## Find adjective, noun, verb combinations to cluster on
verb_nouns <- grep("\\bverb_noun", temp_tag_tibble$two_words_pos)</pre>
adj_nouns <- grep("\\badjective_noun", temp_tag_tibble$two_words_pos)</pre>
verb_adj_nouns <- grep("\\bverb_adjective_noun", temp_tag_tibble$three_words_pos)</pre>
## Use combined and left over features
features_for_table <- c(temp_tag_tibble$two_words[verb_nouns],</pre>
                         temp_tag_tibble$two_words[adj_nouns],
                         temp_tag_tibble$three_words[verb_adj_nouns],
                         temp_tag_tibble$token[-c(verb_nouns, verb_nouns+1,
                                                   adj_nouns, adj_nouns+1,
                                                   verb_adj_nouns, verb_adj_nouns+1,
```

```
verb_adj_nouns+2)])
## Create a table of frequencies
word_table <- as.data.frame(table(features_for_table))
## Clean up the table
word_table$Word <- unique_concepts[i]
colnames(word_table) = c("Feature", "Frequency", "Word")
multi_words <- rbind(multi_words, word_table[ , c(3, 1, 2)])
}</pre>
```

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This procedure produces mostly positive output, such as fingers-have_fingernails and couches-have_cushions. One obvious limitation is the potential necessity to match this coding system to previous codes, which were predominately hand processed. Further, many similar phrases, such as the ones for zebra shown below may require fuzzy logic matching to ensure that the different codings for is-a-horse are all combined together, as shown in Table 4.

Bag of Words

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The bag of words approach simply treats each token as a separate feature to be tabulated for analysis. After stemming and lemmatization, the data can be processed as single word tokens into a table of frequencies for each cue word. The resulting dataframe is each cue-feature combination with a total for each feature.

```
pasteO(lemmas$answer[lemmas$word == unique_concepts[i]], collapse = " "),
    format = "obj", tag = F)))

## Clean up the table
word_table$Word <- unique_concepts[i]
colnames(word_table) = c("Feature", "Frequency", "Word")

bag_words <- rbind(bag_words, word_table[ , c(3, 1, 2)])
}

## Remove punctuation
bag_words <- bag_words[-c(grep('^[[:punct:]]',bag_words$Feature)), ]</pre>
```

Table 5 shows the top ten most frequent responses to *zebra* given the bag of words
approach. The top ten features in zebra indicate a match to the multi-word sequence
approach but the inclusion of words such as *be, in, a* indicate the need to remove irrelevant
words listed with features.

61 Stopwords

As shown in Figure 1, the next stage of processing would be to exclude stopwords, such as the, of, but, for either the multi-word sequence or bag of word style processing. The stopwords package (Benoit, Muhr, & Watanabe, 2017) includes a list of stopwords for more than 50 languages. For multi-word sequence processing, these values can be removed by subsetting the data to exclude stopwords as unigrams.

167 Descriptive Statistics

The finalized data now represents a a processed set of cue-feature combinations with their frequencies for analysis. Given the differences in sample size across data collection points from Buchanan et al. (2019), this information was merged with the sample data.

Table 6 includes descriptive statistics for the processed cue-feature set. First, the number of cue-feature combinations was calculated by taking the average number of cue-feature listings for each cue. Therefore, the total number of features listed for *zebra* might be 100, while apple might be 45, and these values were averaged.

More cue-feature combinations are listed for the multi-word approach, due to 175 differences in combinations for some overlapping features as shown in Table 4. The large 176 standard deviation for both approaches indicates that cues have a wide range of possible 177 features listed. The correlation provided represents the relation between sample size for a 178 cue and the number of features listed for that cue. These values are high and positive, 179 indicating that the number of unique features increases with each participant. Potentially, 180 many of the cue-feature combinations could be considered idiosyncratic. The next row of the 181 table denotes the average number of cue-feature responses listed by less than 10% of the 182 participants. This percent of responses is somewhat arbitrary, as each researcher has 183 determined where the optimal criterion should be. For example, McRae et al. (2005) used 184 16% or 5/30 participants as a minimum standard, and Buchanan et al. (2019) recently used 185 a similar criteria. A large number of cue-features are generated by a small number of 186 participants, indicating that these are potentially idiosyncratic or part of long tailed distribution of feature responses with many low frequency features. The advantage to the suggested data processing pipeline and code provided here is the ability of each researcher to 189 determine their own level of response necessary, if desired. Additionally, feature weighting 190 using statistics such as pointwise mutual information could be implemented to discount rare 191 features without excluding them. 192

The next two lines of Table 6 indicate cue-feature combination frequencies, such as the 193 number of times zebra-stripes or apple-red were listed by participants. The percent of 194 responses is the frequency divided by sample size for each cue, to normalize over different 195 sample sizes present in the data. These average frequency/percent was calculated for each 196 cue, and then averaged over all cues. The correlation represents the average 197 frequency/percent for each cue related to the sample size for that cue. These frequencies are 198 low, matching the results for a large number of idiosyncratic responses. The correlation 199 between frequency of response and sample size is positive, indicating that larger sample sizes 200 produce items with larger frequencies. Additionally, the correlation between percent of 201 response and sample size is negative, suggesting that larger sample sizes are often paired 202 with more items with smaller percent likelihoods. Figure 2 displays the correlations for the 203 average cue-frequency responses and the percent cue-frequency responses by sample size. It appears that the relationship between sample size and percent is likely curvilinear, rather than linear. The size of the points indicates the variability (standard deviation of each cue word's average frequency or percent). Variability appears to increase linearly with sample 207 size for average frequency, however, it is somewhat mixed for average percent. 208

209 Internal Comparison of Approach

In this section, we show that the bag of words approach processed completely through code matches a bag of words approach that was hand coded from Buchanan et al. (2019). In Buchanan et al. (2019), the McRae et al. (2005) and Vinson and Vigliocco (2008) datasets were recoded in a bag of words approach, and the comparison between all three is provided below. The multi-word sequence approach would be comparable if one or more datasets used the same structured data collection approach or with considerable hand coded rules for feature combinations. The data from open ended responses, such as the Buchanan et al. (2019), could potentially be compared in the demonstrated multi-word sequence approach, if

the raw data from other such projects were available.

Cosine is often used as a measure of semantic similarity, indicating the feature overlap 219 between two sets of cue-feature lists. These values can range from 0 (no overlap) to 1 220 (perfect overlap). There are two potential cosine values from the Buchanan et al. (2019): the 221 raw cosine, which included all features as listed without lemmatization or stemming, and the 222 translated cosine, which included hand lemmatization processing. Each cue in the sample 223 data for this project was compared to the corresponding cue in the Buchanan et al. (2019). 224 If data were processed in an identical fashion, the cosine values would be nearly 1 for 225 Buchanan et al. (2019) data or match the cosine values found for McRae et al. (2005) and 226 Vinson and Vigliocco (2008) in the Buchanan et al. (2019) results (original feature cosine =227 .54-.55, translated features = .66-.67). However, all previous datasets have been reduced by 228 eliminating idiosyncratic features at various points, and therefore, we might expect that 229 noise in this data to reduce the average cosine values. Table 7 BLAH BLAH BLAH. Again, 230 these values indicate that the data processed entirely in R produces a comparable set of 231 results, albeit with added noise of small frequency features.

233 External Comparison of Approach

The MEN dataset (Bruni et al., 2014) contains cue-cue pairs of English words rating for similarity by Amazon Mechanical Turk participants. In their rating task, participants were shown two cue-cue pairs and asked to select the more related pair of the two presented. Each pair was rated by 50 participants, and thus, a score of 50 indicates high relatedness, while a score of 0 indicates no relatedness. A range of relatedness values were selected from this dataset with overlapping cues from Buchanan et al. (2019), and these values were compared to the cosine calculated between cues using the bag of words method. The correlation between cosine on the processed data and the MEN ratings was r = .69, 95% CI [.61, .76], N = 179, indicating considerable agreement between raters and cosine values.

Future Directions

Generally, coding ontology is cumbersome on the researcher, as it is normally 244 performed by hand using a coding schema. Wu and Barsalou (2009) developed a hierarchical 245 taxonomy for coding categories as part of the feature listing task, that has been used in 246 several projects, notably the McRae et al. (2005). Examples of the categories include taxonomic (synonyms, subordinates), entity (internal components, behavior, spatial relations), situation (location, time), and introspective properties (emotion, evaluation). Coding ontology may be best performed systematically with look-up rules of previously 250 decided upon factors, however, clustering analyses may provide a potential avenue to explore 251 categorizing features within the current dataset. One limitation to this method the sheer size 252 of the idiosyncratic features as mentioned above, and thus, features smaller in number may 253 be more difficult to group. 254

Discussion

- this sort of thing is great for replication purposes, which is pretty important because of
 the garden of forking paths which applies not just to statistical analyses but also to
 processing.
- we've provided a workflow suggestion that a researcher can use to format their work, along with functions that can be detailed to match any hand processing results.
 - weave this to match introduction

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• how concrete or abstract the words are

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Table 1 $Example \ of \ Data \ Formatted \ for \ Tidy \ Data$

word	answer
airplane	you fly in it its big it is fast they are expensive they are at an airport
	you have to be trained to fly it there are lots of seats they get very
	high up
airplane	wings engine pilot cockpit tail
airplane	wings it flys modern technology has passengers requires a pilot can be
	dangerous runs on gas used for travel
airplane	wings flys pilot cockpit uses gas faster travel
airplane	wings engines passengers pilot(s) vary in size and color
airplane	wings body flies travel

 $\label{thm:condition} \begin{tabular}{ll} Table~2\\ Lemma~and~Part~of~Speech~Information~from~TreeTagger \end{tabular}$

token	tag	lemma	lttr	wclass
is	VBZ	be	2	verb
are	VBP	be	3	verb
trained	VBN	train	7	verb
lots	NNS	lot	4	noun
seats	NNS	seat	5	noun
wings	NNS	wing	5	noun

 $\begin{tabular}{ll} Table 3 \\ Original \ Data \ with \ Lemmatization \\ \end{tabular}$

word	answer
airplane	you fly in it its big it be fast they be expensive they be at an airport
	you have to be train to fly it there be lot of seat they get very high up
airplane	wing engine pilot cockpit tail
airplane	wing it fly modern technology have passenger require a pilot can be
	dangerous run on gas use for travel
airplane	wing fly pilot cockpit use gas fast travel
airplane	wing engine passenger pilot(s) vary in size and color
airplane	wing body fly travel

 $\begin{tabular}{ll} Table 4 \\ Multi-Word Sequence Examples for Zebra \end{tabular}$

Word	Feature	Frequency
zebra	be_horse	1
zebra	be_similar_horse	1
zebra	build_horse	1
zebra	horse	22
zebra	horse-like	1
zebra	look_similar_horse	1
zebra	related_horse	1
zebra	resemble_small_horse	1
zebra	run_fast_horse	1
zebra	run_horse	1

Table 5 $Bag\ of\ Words\ Examples\ for\ Zebra$

Word	Feature	Frequency
zebra	stripe	71
zebra	black	63
zebra	white	61
zebra	be	56
zebra	animal	54
zebra	have	54
zebra	a	46
zebra	and	46
zebra	in	41
zebra	horse	32

 $\begin{tabular}{ll} Table 6 \\ Descriptive Statistics of Text Processing Style \\ \end{tabular}$

	Multi-Word Sequences		Bag of Words		Vords	
Statistics	M	SD	r	M	SD	r
Number of Cue-Features	191.85	98.19	0.74	171.80	76.96	0.66
Frequency of Idiosyncratic Response	182.57	96.43	0.76	158.85	73.97	0.69
Frequency of Cue-Feature Response	2.14	3.46	0.73	2.73	4.80	0.83
Percent of Cue-Feature Response	3.47	5.14	-0.64	4.34	4.80	-0.62

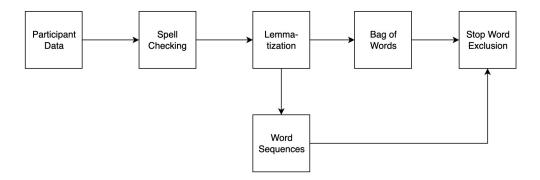
Note. Correlation represents the relation between the statistic listed for that row and the sample size for the cue.

Table 7

Cosine Overlap with Previous Data Collection

	With Stopwords		No Stopwords		
Statistic	Original	Translated	Original	Translated	
B Mean	.54	.57	.69	.72	
B SD	.16	.17	.17	.16	
M Mean	.32	.48	.38	.58	
M SD	.15	.14	.18	.14	
V Mean	.50	.49	.59	.58	
V SD	.18	.19	.18	.19	

Note. Translated values are hand coded lemmatization from Buchanan et al. (2019). B: Buchanan et al. (2019), M: McRae et al. (2005), V: Vinson & Vigliocco (2008). N values are 226, 61, and 68 respectively.



 $Figure\ 1.$ Flow chart illustrating how feature listings are recoded to obtain a standard feature format.

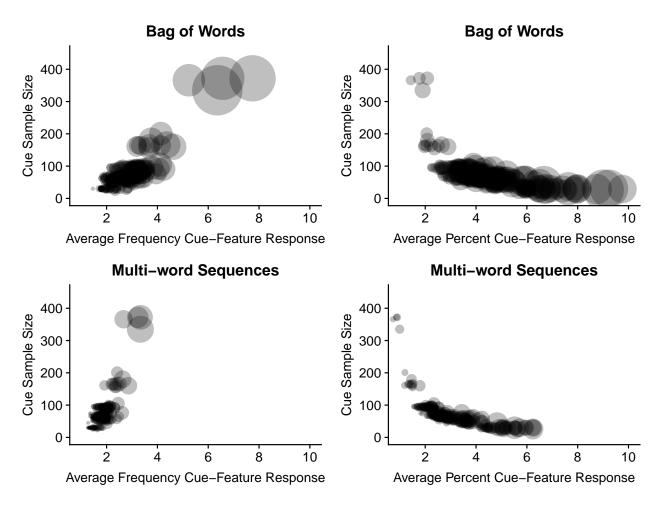


Figure 2. Correlation of sample size with the average cue-feature frequency (left) and percent (right) of response for each cue for both processing approaches. Each point represents a cue word, and the size of the point indicates the variability of the average frequency (left) or percent (right).