

# Gradable abstract nouns and eventualities

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# Gradable abstract Nouns (GNs) related to Gradable Adjectives (GAs)

- The morphologically simpler form can be nominal or adjectival

Property	English Adj		English N	Finnish Adj		Finnish N	German Adj		German N
BEAUTY	beautiful	←	beauty	kaunis	→	kauneus	schön	→	Schönheit
COURAGE/ BRAVERY	courageous	←	courage	rohkea	→	rohkeus	mutig	←	Mut
	brave	→	bravery				tapfer	→	Tapferkeit
GUILT	guilty	←	guilt	syllinen	→	syllisyys	schuldig	←	Schuld
HONESTY	honest	→	honesty	rehellinen	→	rehellisyys	erhlich	→	Erhlichkeit
WISDOM	wise	→	wisdom	viisas	→	viisauus	weise	→	Weisheit

**Table:** Adjective-Noun (Adj-N) pairs in English, Finnish and German. Arrows indicate derivational dependencies, 'is derived from', such that  $a \leftarrow b$  means that  $a$  is morphologically derived from  $b$ .

## *beauty vs. bravery: stativity*

Both are stative

- (1) a. ?Alex's three minute/year long bravery  
b. ?The garden's/Fido's three minute/year long beauty  
c. Alex's three minute long speech/four hour long party
- (2) a. Alex's constant/ever-present bravery  
b. The garden's/Alex's constant/ever-present beauty  
c. ?Alex's constant/ever-present speech/party

## *beauty* vs. *bravery*: Spatiotemporal location

### Restriction to a spatiotemporal location:

- Relatively unrestricted for *bravery*
  - More restricted for *beauty*, the referent must be reasonably conceived of as undergoing a change of state across salient times/places
- (3) a. Alex's bravery yesterday/on the battlefield was noteworthy.  
b. (i) The garden's beauty last winter was noteworthy.  
(ii) ?Alex's beauty last year/in Greece was noteworthy.

## *beauty* vs. *bravery*: Acts and actions

*bravery* but not *beauty* of an agent can be exemplified straightforwardly in terms of acts/actions

- (4) a. Those (three) acts/actions showed Alex's bravery.  
b. ?Those (three) acts/actions showed Alex's beauty.

## Dispositional vs. non-dispositional GNs

### Claim:

- Bravery needs one at least to be disposed to act in a certain way (to perform acts of bravery)
- Beauty does not require any actions/dispositions to act (whilst in that state)

Nouns that pattern with *bravery*: *courage, honesty*

DISPOSITIONAL GNs

Nouns that pattern with *beauty*: *anger, guilt, happiness*

NON-DISPOSITIONAL GNs

## Proposal summary

### Main Goal

- Account for the distributional differences between GAs and GNs, as well as between dispositional and non-dispositional GNs
- Proposal: GAs and GNs share a common semantic core: a measure function on STATES (cf. e.g., Moltmann 2013; Zato 2020; Wellwood 2014)
  - Type distinction between GAs ( $\langle s, \langle d, \langle v_s, \langle e, t \rangle \rangle \rangle \rangle$ ) and GNs ( $\langle s, \langle d, \langle v_s, t \rangle \rangle \rangle$ )
- Proposal: DISPOSITIONAL GNs (*bravery*) make available a set of eventualities that manifest the relevant STATE, NON-DISPOSITIONAL GNs (*beauty*) do not

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## Selected References

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Wellwood, A. (2014). *Measuring Predicates*. Ph. D. thesis, University of Maryland.

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