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The embodied meanings of *towards* and *against*

Two English prepositions from a cognitive and contrastive
linguistics perspective

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Title: *The embodied meanings of towards and against: Two English prepositions from a cognitive and contrastive linguistics perspective*

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Abstract: This is a study of semantic differences in the use of the English prepositions *towards* and *against* analysed in terms of cognitive linguistics. The data for this analysis is provided by a selection of 120 sentence examples from the *British National Corpus*, BNC. The constructions with these prepositions are viewed as conceptualizations known as spatial scenes. In accordance with the method developed in cognitive linguistics spatial scenes are analysed by means of the trajector and landmark concepts. The following general distinctions between the spatial scenes associated with *towards* and *against* have been found: the identified meanings of *towards* are associated with scenes in which the trajector is bound to the landmark in different ways by a path. The identified meanings of *against* are associated with scenes in which the trajector is bound to the landmark by different types of relations of force and non-physical opposition. At the same time, the semantic relations between these prepositions can be difficult to distinguish, especially when it comes to abstract meanings.

The presumption that there is a significant semantic overlap between *towards* and *against* and that both prepositions can be rendered by the Swedish preposition *mot*, which can be confusing for Swedish learners of English, was tested in a contrastive analysis of data provided by the *English-Swedish Parallel Corpus*, ESPC. The corpus-based data analysis has confirmed the fact that there is a significant semantic overlap between *towards* and *against* as this is manifest in the translation of the two prepositions with their Swedish equivalent *mot*.

Keywords: *Towards, against, mot*, polysemy, cognitive linguistics, spatial scene, trajector, landmark, contrastive linguistics, corpus, equivalent

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1. Introduction

Cognitive linguistics is an approach to the study of language that has received growing attention in the last thirty years. One of the basic ideas in this relatively new field of language study is that language is a reflection of how we experience our physical environment via our bodies and how we structure these experiences with the help of our cognitive abilities. How language is linked to body and mind is a central issue in cognitive linguistics. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson were among the first linguists to claim that meaning is embodied (Johnson 1987, Lakoff & Johnson 1999). Andrea Tyler and Vyvyan Evans, two other researchers with a cognitive approach to language, express their thoughts on the embodiment of mind and meaning in this way:

In other words, our world, as mediated by our perceptual apparatus (our physiology and neural architecture, in short, our bodies), gives rise to conceptual structure, that is, to thought and concepts. Hence, our claim, one supported by an impressive and growing body of research, is that meaning itself is embodied. (Tyler & Evans 2003: 23–24)

Tyler and Evans further suggest that “concepts expressed by language should largely derive from our perception of spatio-physical experience” (Tyler & Evans 2003: 24). This is a central idea in this study in which the meanings of the English prepositions *towards*¹ and *against* will be examined. The spatial relations that prepositions represent between different entities are understood as conceptualizations called *spatial scenes* (2003: 27). This can also address the issue of foreign language acquisition. If teachers of English were able to explain the meanings of a certain preposition by describing the different types of spatial scenes involved in it, this could help their second language students to understand and use that preposition better. Thus Swedish learners and users of English are known to confuse the use of *towards* and *against* because they both prototypically correspond to the Swedish preposition *mot* in many cases. This presumption will be verified in the present contrastive analysis of the two prepositions and tested against the data provided by an English-Swedish parallel corpus (ESPC).

¹ “Towards” is the most common British English spelling while “toward” is mainly used in American English.

1.1 Aim and research questions

This essay aims to examine semantic differences between the English prepositions *towards* and *against* from a cognitive linguistics point of view. Thus, the first research question to answer is whether there are significant differences between the spatial scenes associated with these prepositions. These could eventually help Swedish learners and users of English to clarify the semantic relations between *towards* and *against*. The second research question to answer is how often and in what contexts the Swedish preposition *mot* is used as the equivalent for *towards* and *against*; this question will be answered on the basis of contrastive analysis of data provided by the parallel corpus.

1.2 Material and method

60 example sentences and phrases with *towards* and 60 example sentences and phrases with *against* chosen randomly by the search system for the *British National Corpus*, BNC, provide the empirical data for the first research question. The purpose of using a random selection of examples is to have data as representative as possible. Therefore, examples are selected from all types of genres in the corpus. To limit the analysis, example sentences which include infinitive or *-ing* clauses have been excluded from the empirical material.

The data analysis aims to define meanings of the two prepositions by viewing different prepositional constructions manifest in the empirical material². As a first step, the semantic restrictions which the prepositions impose on the constructions are examined. This includes a definition of the type of *domain*, or conceptual content, that the words preceding and following the prepositions can be connected to. Then, the prepositional constructions are viewed as descriptions of spatial scenes. This type of categorization of meanings will be in terms of concrete and abstract meanings, depending on if the prepositions denote a spatial or a non-spatial relation between the entities participating in a certain scene. In cognitive linguistics the relationships between the different meanings of a preposition are thought to be motivated and systematic (Brugman & Lakoff 2006: 110, Tyler & Evans 2003: 32). This can

² *Towards* and *against* differ etymologically: *toward*, Old English *toward* “in the direction of”; *against*, Middle English *aganes* “in resistance to” (12th century); “in opposition to”; “in return for” (13th century) (*The Oxford dictionary of English Etymology*). This fact could be, but is not considered in the present study as other methods of semantic analysis are used.

be explained with the help of two types of imaginative phenomena, namely *metaphor* and *image schemas*, which also will be considered. The second step of the analysis compares the meanings of *towards* and *against* with the focus on the spatial scenes and image schemas associated with these meanings. The method used was developed together with Christina Alm-Arvius whose semantics course at Stockholm University I took in fall 2010 (Alm-Arvius 2010).

The empirical data for the second research question is provided by the *English-Swedish Parallel Corpus*, ESPC. The ESPC is a parallel corpus which consists of English original texts and their Swedish translations as well as Swedish original texts and their English translations. The parallel corpus consists of text samples of 10,000-15,000 words that have been taken from two main text categories, fiction and non-fiction, in each language. The text samples have been taken from texts published since 1980, and among the English texts there are British, American, Canadian, Irish and South African English texts. The corpus consists of 2.8 million words. For the purpose of this study all the text samples of English original texts and their Swedish translations are selected (1,4 million words). The use of the preposition *mot* and other Swedish prepositions and expressions is analysed in relation to the meanings of *towards* and *against* in the source text. These meanings are identified in the cognitive linguistics part of the study.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Literature review

In cognitive linguistics the study of prepositions has a significant role. They denote basic spatial and configurational relations which can be conceptualized and examined from a cognitive point of view. They are also considered to be closely connected to the “pre-conceptual” (Langacker 2008: 32) structures known as “image schemas” which have a central role in cognitive linguistics. Some of the important studies on prepositions are Brugman (1981), a study of the preposition *over*, and Lakoff (1987) and Brugman and Lakoff (1988), which are based on Brugman’s study of *over*. In these studies the relation between the different meanings of *over* is examined. Brugman and Lakoff claim that the meanings of a polysemous lexical item such as a preposition form a *radial category*. Another important

work on prepositions is Langacker (2009), which discusses the complexity of the meanings of prepositions. Works with the aim to explain the meanings of prepositions are, for instance, Lindstromberg (1998) and Brorström (1987). Lindstromberg (1998) is a survey of the meanings and uses of a large number of English prepositions directed at teachers, students and translators. In the second edition (2010) the explanations of the prepositions are mainly based on corpora and frequency data. The theoretical ground of this book is cognitive linguistics. Brorström (1987) examines English prepositions from a Swedish learner point of view. This textbook is a contrastive description of Swedish and English prepositions aiming to help Swedish students to understand and use English prepositions better. Regarding *towards* and *against*, Brorström maintains that the former corresponds to the directional meaning of the Swedish preposition *mot* and the latter to the meanings of *mot* expressing physical contact and opposition. This observation will be tested against the data from the English-Swedish Parallel Corpus.

2.2 A cognitive linguistics view of prepositional polysemy

An aspect of prepositions that is important to consider in the study of their meaning is their polysemous nature as the meaning of a preposition is associated with a network of distinct but related meanings. According to the findings of cognitive linguistics, this network of meanings is organized in a motivated, or natural, way (Lakoff 1987: 91, Brugman & Lakoff 2006: 110, Tyler and Evans 2003: 38). There is a primary meaning in the centre and other extended meanings around it; together they form a so-called radial category of meanings (Brugman & Lakoff 2006: 109). In order to explain the organized polysemy networks of prepositions and other lexical elements, Brugman and Lakoff (2006) connect this to the imaginative phenomena such as metaphor and image schemas.

Metaphor has often been regarded as something that adds a poetic and decorative character to language. In the cognitive approach to language study, imaginative phenomena like metaphor have a much more important role: they play a significant part in the processes of conceptualizing and reasoning (Saeed 2009: 359–60). Basically, in cognitive linguistics a *conceptual metaphor* is described as an imaginative phenomenon in which one concept is understood in terms of another; it invites us to “understand one domain of experience in terms of another” (Lakoff & Turner 1989: 135). For instance, in the metaphor *love is a journey*, the

target concept “love” is understood by means of the source concept “journey”. As in this metaphor the concept regarded as familiar, the source concept, is often concrete while the concept being understood, the target concept, is often abstract. The correspondences between the source and target concept in a metaphor are called *mapping*.

The other imaginative phenomenon that has been used for describing organized polysemy, image schemas, is considered more basic than metaphor. These structures are viewed as a sort of schematized images by means of which we recall our embodied experiences of physical environment. For instance, the *container* image schema can be seen as a thought structure stored as a sort of schema through which we recall our experiences of placing an object inside a larger three-dimensional object or of being a container ourselves. Because of their “preconceptual” character image schemas are thought to influence the form that conceptual structures can take (Lakoff 1987: 271, Langacker 2008: 32).

In many cognitive linguistics theories, image schemas represent the spatial relations designated by prepositions (Lakoff 1987). The polysemy of prepositions is thought to arise from transformations or metaphorical extensions of the prepositions’ underlying image schemas (Lakoff 1987: 460, Brugman & Lakoff 2006: 110). For instance, the English preposition *over* has several meanings in a dictionary. Brugman and Lakoff suggest that the central meaning of *over*, the *above-across* meaning, is represented by a certain schema. In this schema the *trajector* moves along a path over the *landmark*. The trajector is the entity that is being located or described while the landmark is a less prominent entity in a scene (Langacker 2008: 70) (See section 2.3.3 for further explanation of the terms *trajector* and *landmark*). Other meanings, such as the *above* and the *covering* meanings are the result of transformations and metaphorical extensions of that schema (Lakoff 1987: 419-427, 460). In this study, metaphor as well as image schemas have been used to describe the polysemy of *towards* and *against* and the Swedish preposition *mot*.

2.3 A cognitive linguistics view of prepositional construction

Subsections 2.3.1-2.3.3 below present a model of semantic analysis, worked out in collaboration with Christina Alm-Arvius at Stockholm University (Alm-Arvius 1998, 2003). This model is mainly based on theories within the field of cognitive linguistics and on the theory of cognitive grammar elaborated by Langacker (2008, 2009). Langacker’s theories can be said to have a kind of intermediate position between traditional semantics and more

cognitively oriented semantic theories. Other cognitive linguistics theories and studies that also have been helpful are Johnson (1987) and Lakoff and Johnson (1999), and Tyler and Evans (2003).

The syntactic structure of a sentence or a phrase with *towards* and *against* is illustrated in examples (1-6) in subsection 2.3.1 In 2.3.2 the same sentences are looked at from the point of view of argument structure, and in 2.3.3 they are viewed as descriptions of spatial scenes. These examples have been chosen as they represent different types of sentences and phrases in the empirical material.

2.3.1 The syntactic structure of prepositional constructions with *towards* and *against*

The aim of this subsection is to briefly describe the syntactic function of *towards* and *against* in different prepositional constructions. Examples (1-3) show the constituents of sentences and phrases with *towards*:

(1) a woman walked **towards** London Bridge
Subj. Verb Advl.

Prep. NP
towards London Bridge
PP

(2) he was dragging her **towards** the door
Subj. Verb Dir. obj. Advl.

Prep. NP
towards the door
PP

Head/NP Postmodifier/PP
(3) US policy **towards** the Middle East
NP

Prep. NP
towards the Middle East
PP

In these examples the preposition *towards* is followed by a noun phrase (NP): the preposition and the noun phrase form a preposition phrase (PP). In the sentence examples (1-2), the preposition phrase functions as an adverbial. In the noun phrase example (3), the preposition phrase functions as a postmodifier. Therefore, in these prepositional constructions *towards* is

followed by a noun phrase and is preceded either by a whole clause (examples (1-2)) or a noun phrase (example (3)).

Examples (4-6) show the constituents of sentences and phrases with *against*:

(4) The dragon's master leaned **against** a tree
 Subj. Verb Advl.

 Prep. NP
against a tree
 PP

(5) Guy rocked her **against** him
 Subj. Verb Dir. obj. Advl.

 Prep. NP
against him
 PP

(6) a protection **against** predators
 Head/NP Postmodifier/PP
 NP

 Prep. NP
against predators
 PP

In these sentences *against* is also followed by a noun phrase with which it forms a preposition phrase. In examples (4-5) the preposition phrase functions as an adverbial and in example (6) it functions as a postmodifier. In example (4) it is also possible to consider *against* as being included in a prepositional verb, *leaned against*, instead of an adverbial. As in the case of *towards*, *against* is followed by a noun phrase and is preceded either by a whole clause (examples (4-5)) or a noun phrase (example (6)) in these prepositional constructions.

2.3.2 The argument structure of *towards* and *against*

The prepositions *towards* and *against* function as semantic predicates in different kinds of prepositional constructions. From the point of view of traditional semantics, the valance of these prepositions consists of two arguments: one preceding the preposition and one following it, which makes them two-place predicates. These arguments are similar to what Langacker (2008) calls *elaboration sites*, or *e-sites* for short, in his theory of cognitive grammar. The *e-sites* of these prepositions can be described as components which specify the prepositions' schematic substructure. In the case of *towards* and *against* this substructure is a relationship

between two things (Langacker 2008: 198). For instance, in example (7) below the noun phrases *a woman* and *London Bridge* are components which specify, or elaborate, the relationship substructure of the preposition *towards*. Examples (7-12) illustrate the e-site structure of the sentences and phrases with *towards* and *against* analysed above. The first argument of the prepositions is referred to as e-site₁ and the second as e-site₂.

(7) a woman walked **towards** London Bridge
 e-site₁ Prep. e-site₂

(8) he was dragging her **towards** the door
 e-site₁ Prep. e-site₂

(9) US policy **towards** the Middle East
 e-site₁ Prep. e-site₂

(10) The dragon's master leaned **against** a tree
 e-site₁ Prep. e-site₂

(11) Guy rocked her **against** him
 e-site₁ Prep. e-site₂

(12) a protection **against** predators
 e-site₁ Prep. e-site₂

The examples that are whole sentences, (7-8) and (10-11), show that the argument structure of *towards* and *against* is often intertwined with that of the verb. In (11) for instance, the verb *rocked* has two arguments, *Guy* and *her*, of which the latter is one of the arguments of *against*. In (8) and (11) only *her*, not *he* or *Guy*, is considered to be directly involved in the argument structure of *towards* and *against* respectively.

2.3.3 Prepositional constructions with *towards* and *against* viewed as spatial scenes

In a cognitive linguistics approach prepositional constructions can be understood as descriptions of different types of scenes. The entities describing a scene are represented by terms that are more specific than e-sites, namely *trajector*, TR, and *landmark*, LM. For a better understanding of these notions, they can be viewed with the help of other concepts. For instance, in cognitive grammar the interpretation (Langacker uses the term *constual*) of linguistic expressions involve among other things arranging their conceptual content into *foreground* and *background* (Langacker 2008: 57). For instance, in a discourse, new

information can be seen as the foreground and given information as the background. In terms of perception this relation is represented by the notions *figure* and *ground*. Langacker's example of the relation between a figure and its ground is "a sudden noise stands out as figure against the ground of silence" (Langacker 2008: 58). Their relation can be either perceptual, like in a visual scene, or conceptual. In order to distinguish the relation between these participants, the more specific notions such as trajector and landmark are used. The trajector is the most prominent participant, the primary focus. It is the entity understood as being located or described by the landmark, the secondary focus (Langacker 2008: 70). The figure-ground relation and the specific variant of it known as trajector and landmark are important notions in theories that relate language concepts to viewing scenes. Below, examples (13-18), the prepositional constructions with *towards* and *against* analysed earlier, are viewed as descriptions of different spatial scenes:

(13) a woman walked **towards** London Bridge
 TR Prep. LM

(14) he was dragging her **towards** the door
 TR Prep. LM

(15) US policy **towards** the Middle East
 TR Prep. LM

(16) The dragon's master leaned **against** a tree
 TR Prep. LM

(17) Guy rocked her **against** him
 TR Prep. LM

(18) a protection **against** predators
 TR Prep. LM

In these examples *towards* and *against* designate the spatial relation between the trajector (TR) and the landmark (LM). That is, they define how the trajector is located in relation to the landmark. In example (13), for instance, *towards* defines where *a woman* is in relation to *London Bridge*. Especially in *towards* constructions, the trajector is often an entity which is moving or which is involved in some kind of process.

The entities representing the trajector and the landmark are normally described by nominal phrases, like in the examples above, while different types of relations between them are described by verbs, prepositions and adjectives. In examples (14) and (17), the clause preceding the preposition describes a scene in which two participants are closely related through a verb. In example (14) the participants *he* and *her* are related through the verb *was*

dragging, and in example (17) the participants *Guy* and *her* are related through the verb *rocked*. In cases like these it may be possible to view both participants as a complex trajector, including the verb designating their relationship. In this essay though, the trajector is viewed as consisting only of the entity more closely involved in the spatial relation described by the preposition, and the verb describing the motion or activity of the trajector is seen as a contributor to the relation between the trajector and the landmark.

3. Analysis and results

In Table 1 below, the statistical survey of concrete, spatial and abstract, non-spatial meanings of *towards* and *against* that have been possible to distinguish is presented.

Table 1: Concrete and abstract meanings of *towards* and *against*

	Towards	Against
Concrete meaning	physical path, 17 (28 %)	physical relation, 11 (18 %)
	stative relation, 9 (15 %)	
Abstract meaning	conceptual path, 19 (32 %)	non-physical opposition, 43 (72 %)
	conditional relation, 12 (20 %)	contrast, 6 (10 %)
	not defined, 3 (5 %)	
Total	60	60

As a first step to defining different meanings of the prepositions, their semantic restrictions have been examined. The *domains*, or the conceptual content, of the prepositions' e-sites have been categorized and placed on a continuum from concrete to abstract. According to Langacker, *domains*, or cognitive domains, function as a sort of foundation of linguistic meaning. He defines them as "any kind of conception or realm of experience" (Langacker 2008: 44). Since the first e-site is often involved in a kind of activity, the character of this situation has been examined and categorized as well. See appendixes A and B for a survey of the example sentences and phrases and the domain categorization.

Then, the spatial scenes associated with the prepositional constructions and the spatial relation between the trajector and the landmark have been examined. One or more examples have been chosen to illustrate each type of meaning of *towards* and *against*.

3.1 Concrete, spatial meanings of *towards*

In 26 (43%) of the 60 example sentences and phrases, *towards* has a concrete, spatial meaning (see examples 1-26 in Appendix A). In these prepositional constructions the second e-site, representing the landmark, is concrete and denotes a place, an object, or people. According to Langacker, the landmark is used as a point of reference by means of which the location of the trajector can be specified. In this way, geographical places, larger physical objects as well as smaller movable objects can be understood as landmarks (Langacker 2009: 24). The first e-site, representing the trajector, is also concrete and denotes an animate being or an object that is physically moving, or an object being moved by someone else. The verb of the clause either denotes physical movement or an activity that is closely connected to direction and orientation.

Towards representing a physical path between two entities

This concrete meaning of *towards*, which has been found in 17 example sentences and phrases (see examples 1-17 in Appendix A), has certain semantic restrictions on the first and second e-sites. The second e-site denotes a geographical place, a concrete object, or people. The first e-site describes people, animals, or vehicles that are moving. They might *walk*, *go*, *come*, or *head*. It can also describe people or concrete objects which other people are moving by *dragging* or *pulling*, for instance. Example (19) illustrates this concrete meaning of *towards*:

- (19) Angel walked **towards** a ruined church
TR LM

The prepositional construction describes a spatial scene in which the trajector physically moves along a path in the direction of the landmark. This spatial scene is likely a prototypical scene associated with the primary, spatial meaning of *towards* (Linstromberg 1997: 26-27). It corresponds to the *path* image schema which includes a source point and a goal connected through a path (Evans & Green 2006: 185).

***Towards* representing a stative relation construed by means of a path conception between two entities**

This concrete meaning of *towards*, which has been found in 9 example sentences and phrases (see examples 18-26 in Appendix A), has slightly different semantic restrictions on the e-sites. The second e-site still denotes a geographical place, a concrete object, or people. The first e-site describes someone who is changing position, like *turning* the head. It can also describe someone who is *staring*. Example (20) illustrates this concrete meaning of *towards*:

(20) the guard stared [...] **towards** the monastery
TR LM

In the associated spatial scene, the trajector has a defined spatial relation to the landmark even if it is not physically moving in this direction. The act of seeing performed by the guard can be viewed as an imaginary movement along a path in the direction of the monastery.

3.2 Concrete, spatial meaning of *against*

A concrete use of *against* has been identified in 11 of the 60 example sentences and phrases (see examples 1-11 in Appendix B). In these prepositional constructions the second e-site, representing the landmark, is concrete and denotes a physical object, or people. The first e-site, representing the trajector, usually denotes people who are exerting force, with their bodies for instance. The verb describing the action of the trajector mainly denotes physical movement that involves the exertion of force and entails contact with other objects.

***Against* representing a physical relation between two entities**

This is the only type of concrete use of *against* that has been found. The semantic restrictions which this meaning has on the e-sites are described in general above. More specifically the second e-site describes concrete objects that have a large surface or are firmly fixed, like a glass window or a tree. It can also describe a person or a part of the body. The first e-site describes mainly people exerting force by, for instance, *pressing* or *leaning* themselves (see

examples 1-11 in Appendix B). It can also denote a concrete object on which someone else is exerting force. In examples (21-22) *against* represents this physical relation between two entities:

(21) she leant **against** him
TR LM

(22) Nutty pressed her face **against** the glass
TR LM

In the spatial scenes associated with these constructions the trajector is exerting force on the landmark. In example (22) the two entities directly involved in this relation seem to be *her face* and *the glass* even though the whole clause preceding the preposition, *Nutty pressed her face*, could be seen as a complex entity or trajector. A couple of meanings are entailed in the scenes which these examples describe. There is physical contact between the trajector and the landmark and the force is moving from the former in the direction of the latter. In this way the preposition actually represents both a physical relation and a path between the two entities. The primary, spatial sense of *against* is presumably associated with spatial scenes like the ones described by (21) and (22), in which someone or something is physically exerting force on another firm or fixed concrete object. The spatial scene associated with this meaning shares characteristics with the *force* image schemas, and more specifically with the *blockage* image schema. (Evans & Green 2006: 187–188).

3.3 Abstract, non-spatial meanings of *towards*

An abstract use of *towards* has been found in 34 of the 60 example sentences and phrases (see examples 27-60 in Appendix A). The second e-site denotes mainly abstract concepts, but it can also denote people. In 15 examples *towards* is preceded by a whole clause. In this case the first e-site denotes people who are, for instance, *feeling* or performing other activities that can be seen as mental activities. It can also denote abstract concepts which are collocated with verbs of motion or position. The clause can also describe more concrete scenarios, as *they made moves* in example (23).

In 19 examples the preposition is only preceded by a noun phrase, as in example (24) below. By means of concepts associated with motion, direction or position, even these noun phrases usually describe a type of situation but in a more “compact” way than a clause does.

***Towards* representing a conceptual path between two entities**

This abstract meaning of *towards* is manifest in 19 of the example sentences and phrases (see examples (27-45 in Appendix A). The second e-site is mainly abstract, denoting different types of domains, such as *healing* and *monopolization* in examples (23-24) below. In clauses preceding the preposition the first e-site denotes someone who is moving, as in example (23), or something being moved. In noun phrases preceding the preposition, the first e-site also denotes a type of movement or direction such as *trend* in example (24). In examples (23-24) *towards* represents a conceptual path:

(23) they made moves **towards** healing
TR LM

(24) the trend **towards** monopolization
TR LM

In the spatial scene associated with example (23) the entity representing the trajector, *they*, is moving in the direction of the entity representing the landmark, *healing*, even if the landmark is not a real physical place or object. This is done by means of a conceptual path, designated by *towards*, between the two entities.

In example (24) the entity representing the trajector, the *trend*, is abstract and denotes metaphorical movement. The entity representing the landmark, *monopolization*, is also abstract. In the associated spatial scene one can view a path between the trajector and the landmark but the former is not necessarily moving in the direction of the latter, as in example (23). For this reason it might be possible to distinguish these abstract uses of *towards*, but here they are viewed as descriptions of the same type of spatial relation.

***Towards* representing a conditional relation between two entities**

This meaning of *towards* has been found in 12 example sentences and phrases (see examples 46-57 in Appendix A). The second e-site is usually concrete, denoting people, such as *pupils* in example (25) below. It can also denote abstract concepts, such as *marketing*. The first e-site is either a clause that describes someone's feelings, or a nominal description of feelings, states of mind or behaviour, such as *attitude* in example (25). Actually, in the total collection of text

samples of the BNC, the most frequent word to precede *towards* is *attitude* or *attitudes* (BNC, online). In example (25) *towards* represents a conditional relation between two entities:

(25) a positive attitude **towards** pupils
TR LM

In this example the second e-site, *pupils*, is concrete while the first e-site, *a positive attitude*, is abstract. The first e-site can be viewed as a description of a position, rather than of an object with a certain direction or movement. Therefore, the trajector neither seems to be oriented nor be moving in the direction of the landmark in the associated spatial scene. The participating entities of the scene can be seen to have a kind of conditional non-spatial relation instead, meaning that a positive attitude is true in relation to pupils. This “in relation to” meaning of *towards* may be an extension from the primary spatial meaning due to a transformation or metaphorical extension of the preposition’s underlying path schema.

Abstract, non-spatial meaning of *towards* not defined

Towards seems to be used in a meaning similar to the conceptual path-meaning in three example sentences and phrases (examples 58-60 in Appendix A), but it is nevertheless hard to clearly define the associated spatial scene. Examples (27-29) illustrate this use of the preposition:

(27) they make efforts **towards** this

(28) you have contributed **towards** your own dismissal

(29) a contribution **towards** the cost of the item

In these examples the trajector seems to consist of the entire actions “to make efforts” and “to contribute”. In example (29) the noun phrase *a contribution* is viewed as a nominalisation of “to contribute”. The landmark can be viewed as a type of goal or destination as in the conceptual path-meaning. In the spatial scene associated with these prepositional constructions the trajector moving in the direction of the landmark is represented by a process that is not a kind of movement or orientation. Therefore, this use of *towards* differs from the

conceptual path meaning. In order to define this meaning of *towards* further the trajector's relationship to the landmark would need to be investigated more thoroughly.

3.4 Abstract, non-spatial meanings of *against*

An abstract meaning of *against* was found in 49 of the example sentences and phrases (see examples 12-60 in appendix B). In the subsections below a meaning of *against* representing non-physical opposition and a meaning representing contrast are presented. The semantic restrictions on the prepositional constructions are described in relation to each meaning.

***Against* representing non-physical opposition between two entities**

Out of the 49 example sentences and phrases in which *against* has an abstract meaning, this meaning is found in 43 (see examples 12-54 in Appendix B). In these *against* constructions the second e-site can be concrete and abstract. When it describes concrete things, these are usually an individual, such as *him* in *the military were plotting against him* (example 28 in Appendix B), or a specific group of people like a sports team. The abstract concepts denote various things, from matters related to authority, like *the law*, to different mental forces, like someone's *interest* or *will* (see examples 41-42 and 49-50 in Appendix B). The first e-site is either a whole clause or a noun phrase. The clauses describe situations in which people carry out rather unspecific actions like *being* or *doing*, as in *I am not doing anything against the law* (example 41 in appendix B). The clauses can also describe more concrete actions like scoring goals as in *Wigan notched seven tries (scored a certain number of points) against luckless Leigh* (example 16 in Appendix B). The noun phrases are mainly abstract concepts which can be related to competition, protection, someone's opinion and law for instance, such as *their independent rights* in *their independent rights against the Austrian Hapsburgs* (example 22 in Appendix B). Examples (30-32) illustrate *against* constructions with the semantic restrictions described above:

(30) The Lothorn Sea Guard guard **against** sea-borne invaders
TR LM

(31) the arguments **against** their management styles
TR LM

(32) Swindon won a penalty **against** Aston Villa
process TR LM

In these examples, *against* represents non-physical opposition between two entities. In example (30) the entity representing the landmark, *sea-borne invaders*, can be viewed as concrete individuals or as a source of danger. The entity representing the trajector, *The Lothorn Sea Guard*, can also be seen as concrete individuals as well as a larger kind of body, with the role of defending. The verb, *guard*, denotes an activity that can be seen as non-physical, as well as physical. Here it is viewed as a non-physical activity which describes “protection from danger especially by watchful attention” (*Merriam-Webster*, online). Therefore there is a non-spatial, non-physical relation between the trajector and the landmark in the spatial scene associated with this construction.

In example (31) the landmark, *their management styles*, and the trajector, *the arguments*, are abstract. Since the trajector is a kind of verbal, non-physical act, the preposition represents more of a mental oppositional relation between the trajector and the landmark in the associated spatial scene.

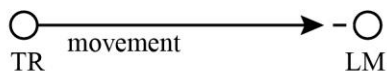
In general terms, *against* has the same sense in (32) as in (30) and (31). One thing that distinguishes this example from the others is that it is possible to view the trajector as the whole process described by the clause preceding the preposition, that is, *Swindon won a penalty*. This type of trajector can be compared to the *process TR* described by Evans and Green. In this case a whole clause elaborates the trajector of the preposition phrase (2006: 597). As processes often have a more abstract character than objects, the trajector in example (32) can be seen as abstract and the landmark, *Aston Villa*, as more concrete. Despite some differences *against* can be considered to represent non-physical opposition between the participating entities in all of these examples. The spatial scene associated with this meaning is similar to the *counterforce* schema which is one of the *force* schemas (Evans & Green 2006: 187–188).

***Against* representing contrast between two entities**

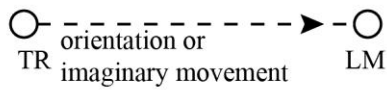
This abstract meaning of *against* was found in 6 example sentences and phrases (see examples 55-60 in Appendix B). The second e-site in contrastive uses of *against* is of an

Towards

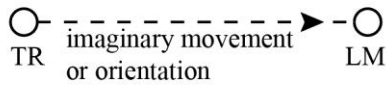
physical path, 17



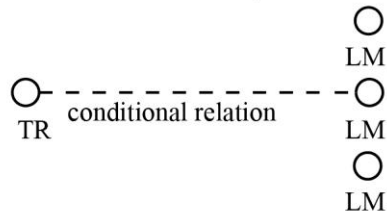
stative relation, 9



conceptual path, 19



conditional relation, 12



undefined sense, 3

the *path* image schema

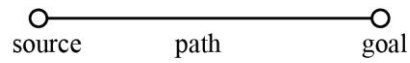
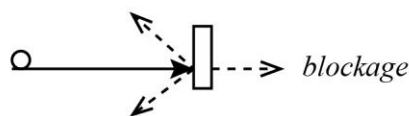
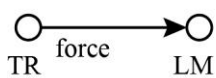


Figure 1 - The spatial scenes and image schemas associated with the different meanings of *towards*.

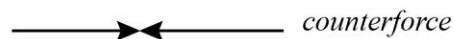
Against

force image schemas

physical relation, 11



non-physical opposition, 43



contrast, 6



Figure 2 – The spatial scenes and image schemas associated with the different meanings of *against*.

understood in terms of a relation based on a path while the meaning of *against* in terms of a relation based on opposition.

5. The Swedish equivalents of *towards* and *against* in the ESPC

In this section the semantic overlap between the English prepositions *towards* and *against* and the Swedish preposition *mot* is examined by means of data from the ESPC. More exactly the semantic overlap is studied by looking at instances in which *mot* is used and not used as the equivalent of *towards* and *against* in all the text samples of English original texts (700, 000 million words) and their Swedish translations (700, 000 million words).

5.1 The Swedish equivalents of *towards*

In the category of English original fiction texts there are 95 sentences with *towards*. The Swedish equivalent of *towards* is *mot* in 68 of these sentences, which corresponds to 72 %. In the non-fiction text category there are 105 sentences with *towards*. The Swedish equivalent is *mot* in 53 sentences, which corresponds to 50 %. A closer look at the empirical data shows that the uses of *towards* are mainly concrete in the fiction category while they are mainly abstract in the non-fiction category. In Table 2 the use of *mot* and other frequent Swedish equivalents is correlated with the type of use of *towards* being translated:

Table 2: The Swedish equivalents of *towards* in the fiction and the non-fiction text categories

Equivalent for <i>towards</i>	Fiction		Non-fiction	
	Concrete use	Abstract use	Concrete use	Abstract use
<i>mot</i>	59 (80 %)	9 (43 %)	24 (69 %)	29 (41 %)
<i>rewording</i>	3 (4 %)	5 (24 %)	4 (11 %)	18 (26 %)
<i>till</i>	4 (5 %)	3 (14 %)	2 (6 %)	8 (11 %)
<i>för</i>				6 (9 %)
<i>emot</i>	4 (5 %)		1 (3 %)	
<i>i</i>		1 (5 %)		2 (3 %)
<i>gentemot</i>				2 (3 %)
<i>framemot</i>		2 (10 %)		
<i>efter</i>	1 (1 %)			1 (1 %)
<i>åt</i>		1 (5 %)		

<i>på</i>	1 (1 %)			
<i>i trakten av</i>			1 (3 %)	
no equivalent	2 (3 %)		3 (9 %)	4 (6 %)
Total	74	21	35	70

The different types of meanings defined in the cognitive analysis are grouped in Table 2 as concrete and abstract types. The concrete types have been described as physical path and stative relation and the abstract types as conceptual path and conditional relation. As Table 2 shows, there are more abstract uses of *towards* in the non-fiction category (70 of 105 = 67 %) than there are in the fiction category (21 of 95 = 22 %). Table 2 also shows that *mot* is used as the equivalent of *towards* more often when the latter has a concrete meaning: in 80 % of the example sentences in the fiction category and in 69 % of the example sentences in the non-fiction category.

Both the physical path meaning and the stative relation meaning of *towards* are translated as *mot*, as in examples (36-37):

(36) We crept out of the shrinehouse, **towards** the canoe.
Vi kröp ut ur gudahuset ner **mot** kanoten.

(37) He looked **towards** the bedroom.
Han tittade **mot** sovrummet.

In example (36) *towards* describes the direction in which a group of people is moving (physical path meaning), and in example (37) the direction in which someone is looking (stative relation meaning).

For concrete uses of *towards* the most frequent Swedish equivalents other than *mot* are the prepositions *emot* and *till*. The former is used as an equivalent of *towards* representing a physical path in four example sentences (5 %) in the fiction category and in one example sentence (3%) in the non-fiction category. Example (38) illustrates this use:

(38) ...it [...] floated **towards** me...
...den [...] flöt **emot** mig...

In this example the Swedish sentence would express more or less the same meaning with the preposition *mot*. A possible difference though is that *emot* enhances the aspect of a meeting between the trajector, *den*, and the landmark, *mig*.

The preposition *till* is used as the equivalent of *towards* representing a physical path in four example sentences (5 %) in the fiction category and in two example sentences (5 %) in the non-fiction category. Example (39) illustrates this use:

- (39) ...I started back **towards** the main road.
...jag begav mig tillbaka **till** landsvägen.

In expressions like this, in which *towards* represents a physical path, *till* seems to represent an alternative equivalent for *towards*. However, it is not a frequently used equivalent, and unlike *mot* it conveys the endpoint of a path (*Norstedts ordböcker*, online).

As Table 2 shows, the abstract uses of *towards*, conceptual path and conditional relation, are translated as *mot* in nine example sentences (43 %) in the fiction category and in 29 example sentences (41 %) in the non-fiction category. Both of these meanings are translated as *mot*, as in examples (40-41):

- (40) ...that these elections should be a constructive step **towards** democracy.....
...att dessa val kommer att bli en (sic) konstruktivt steg **mot** demokrati...
- (41) He was courtly **towards** women and appears to have been a good dancer, but reserved.
Han var hövlig **mot** kvinnor och tycks ha varit en god dansör, om än reserverad.

In example (40) *towards* describes conceptual movement in the direction of a certain goal, namely *democracy* (conceptual path meaning), and in example (41) a person's behaviour in relation to other people, namely *women* (conditional relation meaning).

The most frequent equivalents of these uses other than *mot* are the prepositions *till* and *för*. However, the prepositional constructions with *towards* are more often changed and expressed in other ways (see the *rewording* cells in Table 2). *Till* is used as the equivalent of different abstract uses of *towards* in three example sentences (14 %) in the fiction category and in eight example sentences (11 %) in the non-fiction category. Example (42-43) show two different uses of *towards* that are translated as *till*:

- (42) She gave him a hundred pounds once **towards** a centre for alcoholics...
En gång gav hon honom hundra pund **till** ett behandlingshem för alkoholister...
- (43) ...its aim is to help those nations and their people **towards** a richer, more secure future.
...dess målsättning är att hjälpa kontinentens nationer och folk **till** en rikare och säkrare framtid.

The meaning of *towards* in example (42) is closely related to one of the definitions of *towards* in the *Oxford Dictionary of English*: “contributing to the cost of” (*Oxford Reference*, online). In this example and in the other example sentences expressing the act of contributing, *till* is used. Thus, it seems that *mot* cannot convey this specific meaning. This type of use of *towards* corresponds to the meaning that is similar to the conceptual path meaning but that could not be clearly defined in terms of spatial scene (see section 3.3).

In example (43) *towards* relates the figurative movement of human agents, that is *those nations* and *their people*, to a certain goal, *a richer, more secure future*. This meaning of *towards* is defined in the *Oxford Dictionary of English* as “getting closer to achieving (a goal)” (*Oxford Reference*, online). The use of *towards* in example (43) can be related to the conceptual path-meaning, that is, *towards* representing a conceptual path between two entities in a scene. The Swedish *till* as its appropriate equivalent in this case.

The Swedish preposition *för* is used as the equivalent of *towards* representing a conceptual path and a conditional relation in six example sentences (9 %) in the non-fiction category. Examples (44-45) illustrate this:

(44) ...those APC nations struggling **towards** democracy.
...de AVS-länder som kämpar **för** demokrati.

(45) ...a binding moral responsibility **towards** her.
...ett bindande moraliskt ansvar **för** henne.

In example (44) *towards* represents a conceptual path and conveys a meaning similar to the dictionary definition in example (43), namely “getting closer to achieving (a goal)”. According to *Norstedts svenska ordbok* the preposition *för* expresses the meaning “in advantage of (a certain goal)” for instance if it is preceded by the verb *kämpa*, ‘fight, struggle’, as in example (44) (*Norstedts ordböcker*, online). The preposition *mot* would actually represent the opposite meaning, namely the non-physical opposition-meaning of *against*, if preceded by the verb *kämpa*. Thus, *mot* cannot convey the conceptual path-meaning of *towards* in the context of example (44).

In example (45) *towards* represents a conditional relation between *a binding moral responsibility* and *her*. The use of *för* to represent this meaning is probably decided by the preceding noun *ansvar*, ‘responsibility’, since *för* is the most common word to follow *ansvar* (*Språkbanken*, online). In this context *för* expresses to whom or what the responsibility in question is directed (*Norstedts ordböcker*, online).

There are cases when the equivalents of abstract uses of *towards* are categorized as *rewordings*. To judge from Table 2, in the fiction category there are five rewordings (24 %) and in the non-fiction category there are 18 rewordings (26 %). Rewordings of *towards* mainly represent a conceptual path but also a conditional relation. In example (46) a rewording of *towards* represents a conceptual path:

(46) Community action **shall be directed towards** the prevention of diseases...
Gemenskapens insatser **skall inriktas på** att förebygga sjukdomar...

In this example the Swedish verb phrase *skall inriktas på* can be seen as the equivalent of the English verb phrase *shall be directed towards*. When translating, the translator needs to divide the source text into units of translation in order to find equivalents in the target text. Vinay and Darbelnet suggest that the focus when translating is on the meaning of the text and not the form (1995: 21). Thus the unit of translation, or the unit of thought, can be considered either as a single word, several lexical elements or the whole text. In example (44) the translation unit for which the translator has found a Swedish equivalent includes several words. If a translator has chosen to reformulate the source text, even though a literal translation is possible, as in this case, this might depend on several factors such as stylistic preferences or a need of a more suitable or idiomatic expression in the target language (Vinay & Darbelnet 1995: 36-37).

5.2 The Swedish equivalents of *against*

In the category of English original fiction texts there are 168 sentences with *against*. In 115 (68 %) of the corresponding Swedish sentences *mot* is used as the equivalent of *against*. In the non-fiction text category *mot* is used as the equivalent of *against* in 135 (67 %) out of 201 sentences. Thus, the two categories show nearly no difference regarding the frequency of *mot*. As in the case of *towards*, the uses of *against* have been divided into concrete and abstract uses (see Table 3).

Table 3: The Swedish equivalents of *against* in the fiction and the non-fiction text categories

Equivalent for <i>against</i>	Fiction		Non-fiction	
	Concrete use	Abstract use	Concrete use	Abstract use
<i>mot</i>	66 (78 %)	50 (60 %)	3 (60 %)	132 (67 %)
<i>rewording</i>	8 (9 %)	17 (20 %)	1 (20 %)	24 (12 %)
<i>emot</i>	2 (2 %)	7 (8 %)		9 (5 %)
<i>gentemot</i>		2 (2 %)		4 (2 %)
<i>på</i>	2 (2 %)			3 (2 %)
<i>i</i>	1 (1 %)	1 (1 %)	1 (20 %)	2 (1 %)
<i>för</i>		2 (2 %)		2 (1 %)
<i>intill</i>	2 (2 %)			
<i>vid</i>	2 (2 %)			
<i>trots</i>				2 (1 %)
<i>över</i>		1 (1 %)		1 (< 1 %)
<i>med</i>				2 (1 %)
<i>i motsats till</i>				2 (1 %)
<i>hos</i>				1 (< 1 %)
<i>i jämförelse med</i>				1 (< 1 %)
<i>I förhållande till</i>				1 (< 1 %)
<i>under</i>		1 (1 %)		
no translation				1 (< 1 %)
no equivalent	2 (2 %)	2 (2 %)		9 (5 %)
Total	85	83	5	196

Table 3 demonstrates the use of *mot* and the other Swedish equivalents in correlation with the type of *against* uses. Thus the type of meaning, concrete or abstract, in use of *against* does not seem to affect how often *mot* is used as the equivalent. It is also notable that the percentage of the use of *mot* is rather high both in the fiction and the non-fiction categories. However, since there are only five concrete uses of *against* in the non-fiction category, each use of a certain equivalent in this subcategory corresponds to a high percentage.

The physical relation meaning of *against* can be rendered by *mot* as in example (47):

- (47) I'm leaning **against** the doorframe of the motel cabin.
 Jag lutar mig **mot** motellstugans dörrkarm.

In this example *against* describes physical contact between two entities, namely *I* and *the doorframe of the motel cabin*.

Regarding this concrete meaning of *against* there are also other equivalents other than *mot*; these are the prepositions *emot*, *intill*, *på* and *vid* which all convey the meaning of contact or closeness. Each of these prepositions are used as the equivalent of *against* expressing a physical relation; examples (48-49) illustrate this use of *emot* and *intill*:

- (48) In my movement toward the door, I bumped **against** him, and he gripped my arm to help me get my balance.
 När jag vände för att gå mot dörren stötte jag **emot** honom, och han grep tag i min arm för att hjälpa mig att få balansen igen.
- (49) He lay with (...) one arm crushing Teddy **against** his chest...
 Han låg med (...) Nalle tätt tryckt **intill** bröstet under ena armen.

In example (48) the expression *bumped against* is translated as *stötte emot*. This and similar expressions such as *springa emot* and *gå emot* are set expressions in Swedish in which there is an understood noun representing the object being bumped *against* (*Nordstedts ordböcker*, online). In the case of these verbs of motion the preposition *emot* (e- + mot) seems to distinguish the meaning of physical contact from that of direction of in *mot*.

In example (49) *intill* conveys the physical relation or physical contact represented in English by *against*. Since *mot* also conveys physical contact the two Swedish prepositions are interchangeable in this context.

There are also a number of rewordings of the concrete use of *against*, eight (9 %) in the fiction category and one (20 %) in the non-fiction category. Example (50) illustrates the reformulation of a construction with *against*:

- (50) **Propped up against a large square pillow** (...) I would sit making notes...
Med en stor fyrkantig kudde som stöd i ryggen (...) brukade jag sitta och göra anteckningar...

In this example, the entire introductory adverbial in the source text is handled as a translation unit in the target text, and the translator has found a Swedish equivalent in which there is no direct equivalent of *against*.

For the abstract uses of *against*, non-physical opposition and contrast, the most common equivalent is *mot* and the second most common equivalents are *emot*, *gentemot* and different types of rewordings. Examples (51-52) show the non-physical opposition and contrast meanings translated as *mot*:

- (51) It was the charge brought **against** Aristotle that caused him to flee Athens the year before his death.
 Det var samma anklagelse som gjordes **mot** Aristoteles och som fick honom att fly från Athen året före sin död.

(52) If the animal is seen **against** a pale background, the pale patches blend in with the environment...

Ser man djuret **mot** en ljus bakgrund försvinner de ljusa banden mot denna...

In example (51) *against* conveys opposition directed at a person, *Aristotle*, in the context of law (non-physical opposition meaning) and in example (52) the visual contrast between *the animal* and *a pale background* (contrast meaning).

Emot is used as the equivalent in seven example sentences (8 %) in the fiction category and in nine example sentences (5 %) in the non-fiction category. In these sentences *emot* functions as the equivalent of *against* representing non-physical opposition in the context of for instance negative opinion and law, as in example (53):

(53) "It's **against** bank regulations"

"Det är **emot** bankens bestämmelser"

The Swedish equivalent of *against* in expressions such as "to have something against someone" is commonly *emot* (*Norstedts ordböcker*, online), as in this example. Therefore, *emot* seems preferable to *mot* when it comes to expressing non-physical opposition in contexts such as negative opinion.

The preposition *gentemot* is used as the equivalent of abstract uses of *against* in two example sentences (2 %) in the fiction category and in four example sentences (2 %) in the non-fiction category. Examples (54-55) illustrate the use of *gentemot* as the equivalent of *against* representing non-physical opposition and contrast:

(54) Mattie was trying desperately to work up a righteous anger **against** Butch.

Mattie kämpade förtvivlat för att arbeta upp en rättfärdig vrede **gentemot** Butch.

(55) ...the appreciation of the Swedish crown **against** the Euro.

...en förstärkt SEK **gentemot** EUR.

In example (54) *against* is used to describe negative feelings *towards* some person, and this non-physical opposition meaning is close to the conditional relation meaning of *towards*. In example (55) *against* describes comparison between two currencies. This use can be related to the spatial scene representing the contrast meaning of *against* (see the drawing of this spatial scene in Figure 2 in section 4.). According to *Norstedts svenska ordbok*, the preposition *gentemot* is used to describe the attitude of someone towards someone else, or to express the meaning "in comparison with" (*Norstedts ordböcker*, online). These meanings of *gentemot*

can be viewed as two specific meanings of *mot*, the former being close to the “in relation to” meaning of *towards* and the latter to the contrast meaning of *against*. Thus, *gentemot* illustrates that there are no sharp borders between the meanings of *mot* representing those of *towards* and *against*.

A relatively large number of constructions with *against* representing abstract meanings are expressed by means of rewording. In the fiction category there are 17 rewordings (20 %) and in the non-fiction category there are 24 rewordings (12 %). Below are examples of Swedish equivalents of the uses of *against* representing non-physical opposition as well as contrast:

(56) Preston could not **hold that against** him
Preston kunde inte **klandra** honom för det.

(57) ...cost savings of \$ 130 million were delivered **against** the \$ 100 million target for 1999.
...kostnadsbesparingar på 130 miljoner USD har uppnåtts, **vilket kan jämföras med** målet för 1999 på 100 miljoner USD.

In example (56), the translator uses the verb *klandra*, instead of a prepositional construction with *mot* to express non-physical opposition, which seems to be a more appropriate idiomatic expression in the given context. Example (57), as well as other examples of rewordings, shows that there are numerous ways of rendering the prepositional meaning by restructuring the original sentence, for example, by adding a clause as in this example.

5.3 Summary

In the given selection of examples from the ESPC, the Swedish preposition *mot* appears to be the most frequently chosen equivalent of *towards* and *against*. It is reported as the equivalent of *towards* in 72 % of the example sentences in the fiction text category and in 50 % of the example sentences in the non-fiction text category. When it comes to *against*, *mot* is used as the equivalent of this preposition in 68 % of the example sentences in the fiction category and in 67 % of the example sentences in the non-fiction category. A division of the uses of *towards* and *against* in terms of concrete and abstract shows that concrete uses of *towards* are translated as *mot* more often than abstract uses (78 % and 69 % of concrete uses as compared to 43 % and 41 % of abstract uses). The most noticeable equivalents apart from *mot* of these

abstract uses are the prepositions *till* (14 % and 11 % in the fiction and non-fiction category respectively), *för* (9 %) and different types of rewordings (24 % and 26 % in the fiction and non-fiction category respectively). In eight out of the eleven sentences in which *till* is used as the equivalent of abstract uses of *towards*, the latter is used in the meaning of contributing to something or representing a conceptual path in the context of getting closer to a goal.

Regarding *against* there is no tendency of concrete uses being translated as *mot* more often than abstract uses. Also, *mot* is a relatively frequent equivalent of both concrete and abstract uses of *against* (representing 78 % and 60 % of concrete uses and 60 % and 67 % of abstract uses, in the fiction and non-fiction category respectively). The most noticeable equivalents other than *mot* are of the abstract uses of *against*, namely the preposition *emot* (8 % and 5 % in the fiction and non-fiction category respectively) and different types of rewordings (20 % and 12 % in the fiction and non-fiction category respectively). In certain idiomatic expressions, such as “att ha något emot någon”, “to have something against someone” *emot* is preferred to *mot*. In this case it is the non-physical opposition meaning of *against* that is represented by *emot*. By contrast, the Swedish rewordings rendering *against* represent both the non-physical opposition and contrast meanings. These rewordings often seem to be caused by translation aspects such as stylistic choice or idiomatic preferences. Regarding the concrete uses of *against*, it is notable that there are cases when Swedish prepositions such as *på*, *vid* and *intill*, which can denote the physical contact or closeness between two entities, are used as equivalents of the physical relation meaning of *against*. Another interesting observation is made concerning the preposition *gentemot*. This preposition sometimes replaces *mot* to represent a meaning similar to the conditional relation meaning of *towards* and the contrast meaning of *against*.

Brorström's (1987) observation that *towards* corresponds to the directional meanings of *mot* and *against* to the physical contact and opposition meanings of this Swedish preposition is confirmed by the analysis of the data from by the ESPC. On the other hand, the analysis also shows that *mot* is used as the Swedish equivalent for the abstract conditional relation meaning of *towards* and the abstract contrast meaning of *against*. The fact that another Swedish preposition, *gentemot*, is used as the equivalent for both of these specific meanings shows that the meanings of *mot* cannot be easily identified as those corresponding to meanings of *towards* and *against*.

6. Conclusion

In this essay, semantic differences between the English prepositions *towards* and *against* have been examined from a cognitive linguistics perspective. Based on the analysis of the data provided by the BNC, it is possible to find general distinctions between the spatial scenes associated with *towards* and *against* have been classified and described. Thus in the spatial scenes associated with the concrete meanings of *towards* the trajector is physically moving along a path in the direction of the landmark (physical path meaning), or is oriented in that direction (stative relation meaning). The abstract meanings of *towards* represent a trajector moving along an imaginary path in the direction of the landmark (conceptual path meaning), or a trajector with a position that is only true in relation to a certain landmark (conditional relation meaning). In the spatial scenes associated with *against* the trajector and the landmark are bound by a relation of force. The trajector either exerts physical force on the landmark (physical relation meaning) or a non-physical force (non-physical opposition meaning). The relation between the trajector and the landmark can also represent visual or conceptual contrast (contrast meaning). These findings could be useful in teaching situations, particularly if the L2 learners tend to confuse the uses of the prepositions. The presumption that Swedish learners of English tend to confuse the use of *towards* and *against* since the two prepositions share meanings with the Swedish preposition *mot* was tested against the data provided by the ESPC. The data analysis has confirmed the fact that *mot* is chosen as the equivalent of both *towards* and *against* in a relatively high percentage of the example sentences in the parallel corpus. Thus *towards* is translated as *mot* in 72 % of the sentences in the fiction text category and in 50 % of the sentences in the non-fiction text category. *Against* is translated as *mot* in 68 % of the sentences in the fiction text category and in 67 % of the sentences in the non-fiction category.

The contrastive analysis of parallel examples has also showed that all types of meanings of *towards* and *against* described in terms of cognitive linguistics are rendered by *mot*; this certifies that fact of a significant semantic overlap between these prepositions. At the same time the analysis has revealed that particularly abstract uses of *towards* tend to have other equivalents than *mot*. For instance, the meaning of *towards* defined in the dictionary as “contributing to the cost of” is not represented by *mot* in the given data. This particular meaning, when described in terms of cognitive linguistics, corresponds to the undefined meaning similar to the conceptual path meaning. The Swedish preposition *till* is used in this

case. Regarding the equivalents of abstract uses of *towards* the analysis also showed that other prepositions and reformulations can be preferred to *mot*. For instance if there is a risk that *mot* will represent a meaning of opposition in the context of achieving a goal, other Swedish equivalents are chosen such as *till* and *för*. In other cases when prepositions and expressions other than *mot* are chosen to represent the meanings of *towards* and *against*, this may be motivated by the possibility of varied use which can be of stylistic value; a need to use an appropriate idiomatic expression in the target language can also be a reason of avoiding to choose *mot*.

The empirical material for the present analysis in terms of cognitive linguistics is rather limited: 60 example sentences and phrases with *towards* and 60 example sentences and phrases with *against* randomly selected from the BNC. A more comprehensive study of a larger number of example sentences is likely to provide more elaborate and representative definitions of semantic contrasts between these prepositions. It is also probable that more senses of each preposition would be identified. For instance, the undefined abstract meaning of *towards* requires a more thorough investigation. At the same time, the general distinctions characterising the spatial scenes associated with *towards* and *against* may help to interpret their semantic differences in sentences in which they are used in a seemingly identical way.

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Appendix A: The categorization of the domains in the example sentences and phrases with *towards*

Item	Domain	First e-site, situation	Preposition	Second e-site	Domain
1	people , movement	a woman walked	towards (physical path)	London Bridge	geographical place/physical object
2	object , movement	his car sped	towards	Scotland Yard	geographical place/physical object
3	people , movement	Angel walked	towards	a ruined church	geographical place/physical object
4	people , movement	Devlin crossed	towards	a café	geographical place/physical object
5	people , movement	I turned left	towards	an outside terrace	geographical place/physical object
6	people , movement	you go	towards	the village	geographical place/physical object
7	individual , movement	a female flies	towards	the territory of...	geographical place/physical object
8	people , movement	people were heading	towards	one of the tree gates	physical object
9	people , movement	he was dragging her	towards	the door	physical object
10	people , movement	Ace pulled Defries	towards	the stanchion	physical object
11	object , movement	a gap pushes them	towards	the sides	place/position
12	people , movement	Joe came	towards	Harriet Shakespeare	people/individual/object
13	people , movement	Shanti walked	towards	us	people/individual/object
14	object , movement	the lorry came	towards	me	people/individual/object
15	object , movement	she had pulled the phone	towards	her	people/individual/object
16	people , movement	I was moving	towards	him	people/individual/object
17	people , movement	Philip ran	towards	it	people/individual/object
18	concept , view	the Prince's views looked	towards (stative rel.)	the Champs Elysées	geographical place/physical object
19	people , view	the guard stared down	towards	the monastery	geographical place/physical object
20	body part , movement	he jerked his head	towards	the door	physical object
21	body part , movement	the male pions his bill	towards	his back feathers	physical object
22	object , movement	the strips bend	towards	each other	physical object
23	people , movement	John turned	towards	Karen	people/individual/object
24	body part , movement	Shelley swung his face	towards	me	people/individual/object

Item	Domain	First e-site, situation	Preposition	Second e-site	Domain
25	people , movement	he turned	towards	her	people/individual/object
26	people , movement	he turned	towards	her	people/individual/object
27	concept, view	the view	towards (conceptual path)	the lake	geographical place/physical object
28	position , direction	The mid seems biased	towards	the upper part of...	place/position
29	concept , movement	a force was hastening	towards	them	people/individual/object
30	concept, movement	some important steps	towards	that	action/concept
31	concept, direction	our natural tendency	towards	deviation	action/concept
32	action , movement	the development of play leads	towards	involvement in games	action/concept
33	concept, direction	the trend	towards	monopolization	action/concept
34	concept, movement	a momentum	towards	use	action/concept
35	concept, movement	a move	towards	their increasing use	action/concept
36	people/group , movement	they are moving	towards	American politics	action/concept
37	people/group , movement	police inclined	towards	a simple robbery motive	action/concept
38	concept , direction	he directed his research	towards	syntax information	action/concept
39	concept, movement	Wigan's progress	towards	their third championship	action/concept
40	concept, movement	recent progress	towards	a ceasefire agreement	action/concept
41	people/group , movement	they made moves	towards	healing	action/concept
42	people , movement	she has made a move	towards	alternative methods...	action/concept
43	concept, movement	a vital step	towards	the day when...	action/concept
44	concept, direction	the tendency	towards	thinness of tone	action/concept
45	concept , direction	they are tilting government	towards	openness	action/concept
46	concept, behaviour	US policy	towards (conditional rel.)	the Middle East	geographical place/physical object
47	concept, behaviour	HMG policy	towards	Hong Kong	geographical place/physical object
48	people, emotion	I feel resentful	towards	my ex-wives	people/individual/object
49	concept, behaviour	a positive attitude	towards	pupils	people/individual/object
50	people, emotion	you feel resentment...	towards	users of public transport	people/individual/object
51	people, emotion	you feel gentle	towards	me	people/individual/object

Item	Domain	First e-site, situation	Preposition	Second e-site	Domain
52	concept, emotion	hostility	towards	them	people/individual/object
53	concept, behaviour	social attitudes	towards	infant care	action/concept
54	concept, behaviour	attitudes	towards	marketing	action/concept
55	concept, communication	Bordieu implies antipathy	towards	abstraction	action/concept
56	concept, behaviour	their attitude	towards	giving you access	action/concept
57	concept, emotion	a degree of scepticism	towards	their own forms of thought	action/concept
58		they make efforts	towards (undefined sense)	this	
59		you have contributed	towards	your own dismissal	
60		a contribution	towards	the cost of the item	

Appendix B: The categorization of the domains in the example sentences and phrases with *against*

Item	Domain	First e-site, situation	Preposition	Second e-site	Domain
1	people , movement	The dragon's master leaned	against (physical rel.)	a tree	physical object/surface
2	body part , movement	I pithched my foot	against	a stone	physical object/surface
3	body part , movement	Nutty pressed her face	against	the glass	physical object/surface
4	object , movement	my loose hair pressed	against	the sheet	physical object/surface
5	body part , movement	he felt her lips	against	his throat	physical object/surface
6	people , movement	I leaned back	against	the five-star pump	physical object/surface
7	body part , movement	his hand pressed	against	the frantic pulse beneath...	physical force/ surface
8	people , movement	Guy rocked her	against	him	people/individual/group/obj
9	people , movement	she leant	against	him	people/individual/group/obj
10	object , movement	it backed up	against	it	people/individual/group/obj
11	individuals , movement	they rub	against	each other	people/individual/group/obj
12	concept, competition	the first match	against (opposition)	Riyad	sports team/competitor
13	sports team, action	Swindon won a penalty	against	Aston Villa	sports team/competitor
14	concept, competition	the first match	against	the New Zealand XV	sports team/competitor
15	competitor	England's reserve	against	Scotland	sports team/competitor
16	sports team, action	Wigan notched seven tries	against	luckless Leigh	sports team/competitor
17	sports team, competitor	the Buffalo Bills	against	the Dallas Cowboys	sports team/competitor
18	competitor, passive action	he had not a prayer	against	Desert Orchid	sports team/competitor
19	concept, competition	the solitary Test	against	Tom Grace's Irishmen	sports team/competitor
20	concept, law	the death sentence	against	Robert S Minnick	people/individual/group/obj
21	concept, law	evidence	against	Escobar	people/individual/group/obj
22	concept, law	their independent rights	against	The Austrian Hapsburgs	people/individual/group/obj
23	concept, law	two charges	against	him	people/individual/group/obj
24	concep, opinion	destructive prejudices	against	ethnic minorities	people/individual/group/obj

Item	Domain	First e-site, situation	Preposition	Second e-site	Domain
25	individuals , defense	The Lothorn Sea Guard guard	against	sea-borne invaders	people/individual/group/obj
26	concept , defense	a protection	against	predators	people/individual/group/obj
27	people , action	you can use it	against	weevil fly	people/individual/group/obj
28	concept , competition	competition	against	itself	people/individual/group/obj
29	concept	a real plot	against	him	people/individual/group/obj
30	individuals , action	the military were plotting	against	him	people/individual/group/obj
31	individuals , passive action	the assembly is not protected	against	itself	people/individual/group/obj
32	people , action	they can use the problems	against	them	people/individual/group/obj
33	people , action	you use the same tactics	against	each one	people/individual/group/obj
34	people , communication	Frank had to speak against	against	them	people/individual/group/obj
35	people, emotion	ecclesiastics showed resentment	against	the Danes	people/individual/group/obj
36	people, emotion	you bear grudge	against	her	people/individual/group/obj
37	concept , law	a lawsuit	against	NMSF	people/individual/group/obj
38	people , competition	Butch Reynolds won a claim	against	the IAAF	people/individual/group/obj
39	people , fight	he fights	against	a sedative chemical	substance
40	state of being	it is	against	the rules	concept, authority
41	people , action	I am not doing anything	against	the law	concept, authority
42	state of being	it is	against	the law	concept, authority
43	concept , law	grant of immunities	against	antitrust laws	concept, authority
44	concept , fight	the struggle	against	the Act	concept, authority
45	concept , opinion	presumption	against	policies	action/concept
46	people , communication	union activists protested	against	the government's plans	action/concept
47	concept , communication	the arguments	against	their management styles	action/concept
48	movement	it does not run	against	the idea of a moral economy	action/concept
49	people , communication	Wilson murmured	against	her interest	action/concept
50	people , action	they ended up in her county	against	her will	action/concept
51	object , defense	you protect the tools' blades	against	damage	action/concept

Item	Domain	First e-site, situation	Preposition	Second e-site	Domain
52	concept, communication	a period of campaigning	against	the change	action/concept
53	state of being	Most organizations are not	against	the proposal	action/concept
54	state of being	the Nation is dead	against	intervention	action/concept
55	concept, amount	a los of...dollars	against (contrast)	a profit of...dollars	concept, amount
56	amount, competition	he scored only one win	against	Phillip McCallen's five	concept, amount
57	people, action	young people can do this	against	explicit criteria	concept, measure
58	concept, view	they plotted the values	against	the mean risk rating	concept, measure
59	people, comparison	she measured any other man she met	against	his standard	concept, measure
60	people, action	we drank our tea	against	a panorama of peaks	concept, image