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The Pragmatics of Luxury

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Abstract. This paper investigates the lexical items used in online automobile advertising to characterize the motorcar as a luxury product. The main questions examined are, firstly, how certain words are interpreted as denoting luxury concepts by potential readers, and, secondly, whether luxury and non-luxury marques differ in the use of these units. The issues here are addressed from a double theoretical framework: a theory of luxury, which allows for the identification and classification of the vocabulary of luxury, and Relevance Theory, a pragmatic model which explains how words are subject to pragmatic modulation during interpretation, leading to the construction of ad hoc concepts.

Keywords: lexical adjustment; luxury vocabulary; hypernyms; hyponyms.

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1. Introduction

This paper studies the lexical items that can be used to convey luxury in the design-related descriptions of online automobile advertising. Thus it has its origins in two distinct fields of research: linguistics and advertising. On the one hand, linguists are currently exploring the fact that the meaning of lexical words in context often differs from the meaning assigned to them by the grammar. In a burgeoning area of recent work, studies have sought to understand this behavior either from a purely grammatical perspective (Asher, 2011; Booij and Audring, 2018; García Velasco, 2016; Pustejovsky, 2011, *inter alia*) or from a pragmatic viewpoint, one falling outside the scope of grammar proper (Falkum, 2017; Recanati, 2004; Wilson and Carston, 2007, *inter alia*). On the other hand, in response to the growth in the luxury market over the last few years, the advertising of luxury has been recognized as an emerging field, one in need of attention from scholars and practitioners alike (Taylor, 2016:389). My purpose here is to contribute to these concerns by focusing on the identification, classification and possible interpretation of the luxury terms that are used in the design-related descriptions of online automobile advertising, and to see how they might ultimately characterize the car as a luxury product. Such an aim implies a commitment to the pragmatic perspective on word meaning; more specifically I will adopt the pragmatic approach of Relevance Theory (henceforth, RT) (Sperber and Wilson, 1995, 2015; Wilson and Sperber, 2012; Wilson, 2017). According to this model, words encode pro-concepts that, on the basis of their associated encyclopedic information, and together with situational factors, can originate ad hoc or occasion-specific concepts. I will argue that this theoretical approach provides the necessary tools to offer a principled account of the possible interpretation of those lexical terms found as denoting luxury concepts in the advertising of cars.

As for the advertising of luxury itself, my methodology has been conditioned by two main factors. First, to the best of my knowledge, existing studies on luxury advertising have been framed largely within marketing issues (e.g. consumer behavior and motivations). It seems to me, however, that in an area such as advertising, where everything is planned out to the last detail, there is much to be gained from a reflection on the language employed to promote luxury. I therefore ask the following research questions: Do luxury marques employ specific terms to promote their products? Do these terms differ from those used for non-luxury marques? How can lexical items contribute to a luxury characterization of the product?

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Second, the decision to consider cars as a specific type of product is apt for several reasons. To begin with, it allows us to avoid excessively general and vague perceptions relating to the advertising of luxury. Also, the motor-car has traditionally represented a visible means of social distinction. Since distinction can be a value associated to luxury (Mortelmans, 2005), it is expected that cars might thus offer a valid and fruitful basis for analysis. Additionally, the automobile industry constitutes a highly diversified market, one which affords ample opportunity for distinguishing between luxury brands (henceforth, LBs) and non-luxury brands (henceforth, NLBs), thus ensuring the right conditions to meet the targets of the present investigation. Finally, existing studies on automobile advertising (marketing analyses excluded) have addressed such varied matters as the car's relationship to the environment (Aupers et al., 2012; García Martín, 2018; Garland et al., 2013; Gunster, 2004), values within or across cultures (Martin, 1997; Morris and Waldman, 2011; Wang and Praet, 2013), and safety (Burns et al., 2005; Watson et al., 2010); they have also explored the metaphorical value of the car (Gill, 2008; Piller, 1999) and looked at the persuasive strategies employed by copywriters here (Jaganathan et al., 2014; Ruiz Medina, 2015). The present study aims to enrich this already diverse picture, by turning to the language of luxury in automobile advertising, an area which has thus far not been explored in the literature.

This paper might also be considered in terms of its choice of medium and data analysis. Luxury firms appear to have shown some initial reluctance to use the web as a distribution channel for advertising (Mosca and Gallo, 2016:xviii). Nevertheless, owing to rapid technological development, digital platforms have become a communication channel in their own right and luxury manufacturers could not continue to ignore them. Therefore, the study of luxury in online advertising is another area in need of exploration. Regarding its methodology, the present paper adopts the approach of corpus pragmatics, 'a relative newcomer on the pragmatic scene' (Rühlemann and Aijmer, 2015:1). Corpus pragmatics integrates the vertical reading (the occurrences of forms), typical of corpus linguistics, with a horizontal reading (the functions of these forms in contexts) characteristic of pragmatic analysis. Initially, a vertical reading has been used here to identify the expressions that fall within the category of luxury. Subsequently, the range of forms has been examined horizontally for their pragmatic functions from a relevance-theoretic perspective. Through this combined practice, it will be possible to address another key issue of the present research, namely, how can words come to be interpreted as denoting luxury concepts? The data were gathered from sixteen UK car manufacturers' websites during the year 2017, eight LBs (Aston Martin, Audi, Bentley, BMW, Jaguar, Lexus, Maserati and Mercedes Benz) and eight NLBs (Citroën, Ford, Mini, Nissan, Renault, Vauxhall, Volkswagen and Volvo). The selection process took as reference the 2016 list of best-selling car brands (Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders), which has led to a total of 124 texts, sixty-two texts from each type of brand, and a total corpus of 53,045 words. Even though the categorization of most of these brands as falling either into the LB or the NLB group may offer little doubt, in some other cases it might be a matter of opinion. On behalf of objectivity and clarity, the division presented here is based on price as a variable for luxury. If, according to the UK's Office for National Statistics, the value of median income for non-retired households for the financial year ending 2017 can be rounded off at 30,000 sterling pounds, allocating an annual 30% of such income to automobile expenditure would mean that an estimate of 5.6 years would be necessary to pay for a car costing 50,000 pounds. To assume an economic risk over an extended period of time does not appear to compensate for the depreciation of the vehicle, because, as noted by Cagan and Vogel (2002:254), it is difficult to find a market similar to the automotive industry 'where competition is as fierce, the product is as complex, and the challenge of constant refinement and innovation is as great'. Therefore, for the working purposes of this paper, brands that sell several of their models starting from 50,000 sterling pounds have been classified as luxury.

The paper is organized as follows. In Section 2 I introduce and justify the definition of luxury used throughout the work. Section 3 sets out the foundations of RT, with special emphasis on the notions of lexical pragmatics and metarepresentation. Section 4 describes the empirical analysis of a selection of the terms identified as denoting luxury. Finally, Section 5 presents some concluding remarks.

2. The definition of luxury

This section discusses the approach to the definition of luxury taken in the current study. Given that part of the aim of this paper is to determine whether the vocabulary employed in the design-related descriptions of online automobile advertising can contribute to a characterization of both LB and NLB vehicles as items of luxury, we need to adopt an approach to luxury that allows for the identification and categorization of such lexical material. There seems to be a general consensus in the literature (Berry, 1994; Kurnaz, 2017; Vigneron and Johnson, 2004) that the concept of luxury is constantly changing appearance and hence that it remains elusive. By attempting to minimize this drawback, I will use an adapted version of the theory of luxury developed by Mortelmans (2005) as a model for analysis. In what follows, I will detail how this theory is articulated and its advantages in terms of the present investigation.

Mortelmans frames his concept of luxury from a double standpoint: on the one hand the cultural embedded idea of luxury, and on the other the cultural process of value assignment. For the purposes of the present paper, the advantage of the cultural embedded view is that it supports the existence of a constant set of characteristics associated with luxury. Mortelmans (2005:507) uses this viewpoint to postulate a "narrow definition of luxury", a stable concept that

hinges on four basic principles, drawn from the quality standards promoted by the *Comité Colbert*, a French luxury watchdog. These are: rarity, symbolism, extraordinariness, and the great cost of the product. It is at this point, however, that I have adapted Mortelmans's proposal, replacing these regulatory parameters with the ones of the *Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne*. Created in 1868, this French commission decides which fashion companies can officially call themselves haute couture, the highest distinction in the fashion worldwide (Pouillard, 2016). Haute couture can be defined by the following features (de Ferrière le Vayer, 2007; Grau, 2000; Pena González, 2008): exclusive custom-fitted clothing, made by hand, sewn with extreme care by the most expert artisans, using time-consuming techniques, and made from high quality and often unusual fabric. The motivations for my decision here are threefold. Firstly, the specificity of the parameters that delineate haute couture makes them self-explanatory. This appears to contrast with Mortelmans's scheme, whose intrinsic generalization demands supplementary interpretation (i.e. What makes a product scarce? What is meant by symbolism? What requisites should be met by good quality?). Next, the defining features of haute couture may in fact provide a practical and direct way of classifying the vocabulary used to describe the design of cars. Finally, some studies have already noted a relationship between the advertising of automobiles and the fashion industry (Diez-Arroyo, 2018; Martin, 1997), which may offer additional support for the decision to connect these two seemingly disparate worlds.

The second perspective, that of value assignment, offers a more flexible, shifting notion of luxury. What moves Mortelmans to integrate a second cultural dimension of luxury into his theory is the fact that those cases where "impoverished groups can enjoy products that can be viewed – in their social context – as luxury" (Mortelmans, 2005:508) cannot be covered by the notion of narrow luxury. Starting from Baudrillard's (1981:66) four logics or meanings (i.e. use-value, exchange-value, symbolic-value and sign-value) as attributed to objects, Mortelmans focuses on sign-value. He unchains the logic of sign-value from Baudrillard's status-seeking motivation, since, according to Mortelmans's conception, consumers may purchase luxury objects for many other reasons, such as those of social distinction or emotional pleasure, the search for happiness, beauty, aesthetic delight, and so on. The immediate consequence of this idea is that 'the precise content of their [the objects'] sign-value is underdetermined' (Mortelmans, 2005:509), or, even more significantly, that luxury products can embody different meanings for different social groups (Mortelmans, 2005:510). This suggestion resonates well with the idea developed in the theoretical part of the current paper from the viewpoint of RT, namely, that lexical meanings are not stable but vary constantly according to the occasion of use, a point that will be discussed in Section 3 and which supports the core of the present research.

Exploring further the social dimension in the assignment of sign value, Mortelmans (2005:511-516) situates this on two opposing but complimentary axes, vertical and horizontal. Vertical stratification relates to people occupying higher or lower positions on the social scale. Assuming that there is a general tendency for upwards mobility, luxury, which is associated with an aura of distinction around the high classes (Brun and Castelli, 2013; Kurnaz, 2017:109), tends to produce a trickle down effect, according to which luxury products will be imitated. To Mortelmans (2005:513), then, imitation appears to be a socio-cultural attitude, a kind of driving force, as it were, that leads people to simulate the luxury objects of the social classes above them. Meanwhile, the horizontal axis in the assignment of sign value refers to social boundaries functioning to demarcate in-group and out-group distinctions (Mortelmans, 2005:514-516). Mortelmans notes that these should be regarded as lifestyle borders rather than stratificational ones. Membership of a group is determined by the sharing of certain basic rules and codes; accordingly, members know the special qualities that products should have and this knowledge is what makes the object work as an item of luxury. Hence, 'in processes of horizontal distinction, luxury is being used as social indicator of excellent membership' (Mortelmans, 2005:516).

The notion of luxury as described in this section will allow us to identify and classify the luxury terms employed in the online advertising of automobiles. The next step, to delineate a cognitive approach that can explain how potential readers are able to interpret these lexical elements as luxury concepts, is the purpose of the following section.

3. Relevance theory, lexical pragmatics and metarepresentation

In this section, I set out the pragmatic tools that will allow us to explain how the potential addressee can interpret as examples of luxury (some of) the lexical units included in the design-related descriptions of automobile advertising. The use of RT as a pragmatic framework for this analysis is justified on the following grounds. First, RT does not distinguish between spontaneous uses of language and other uses which, like advertising texts, result from a careful and well-planned organization (Sperber and Wilson, 2012a:96). Therefore, we can address advertising texts as simply as another example of ordinary communication. Also, from a theoretical perspective, RT does away with the presumption of literalness, postulating, rather, a continuum of cases, from the most to the least specific ones, both at sentence and word level. Thus it follows that there can exist examples "where the speaker's intention is much vaguer, and what is implicitly conveyed might best be described as an "impression" rather than a speaker's meaning" (Wilson and Kolaiti, 2017:150). Such an approach seems advantageous for the study of advertising in general – offering a useful assessment of the claim that in advertising there is a shift of responsibility for interpretations away from the copywriter (Tanaka, 1994) –, as well as for the particular purpose of this paper, where, as already noted, the concept of luxury is not always stable and can acquire different senses for different recipients. RT, then, is particularly

useful in its application to advertising communication, where the potential addressee has customarily been seen as enjoying some freedoms in accommodating the interpretation of the message to his inclinations and preoccupations (del Saz-Rubio, 2018; Tanaka, 1994), strengthening those assumptions that, as a consequence of the act of communication, can become more cognitively relevant and yield more contextual effects. But how can all this be achieved? The relevance-theoretic perspective on communication relies on two fundamental notions: lexical pragmatics, and metarepresentation. I will deal with these two concepts in turn.

Lexical pragmatics explores the semantic/pragmatic divide at the level of words and phrases (rather than at that of whole utterances) and as involving the construction of ad hoc or occasion-specific concepts (Wilson and Carston, 2007). Well-known processes that participate in the construction of ad hoc concepts are lexical narrowing and lexical broadening, that is, the use of a word or phrase to convey a concept with a narrower/broader denotation than the linguistically encoded meaning. Lexical adjustment results from the “interaction among encoded concepts, contextual information and pragmatic expectations or principles” (Wilson and Carston, 2007:230) and yields a range of ad hoc concepts, conventionally represented with one or more stars to the right (e.g. RIGHT*, RIGHT**, RIGHT***, etc.).

On this relevance-theoretic account, when a lexical concept is decoded, the encyclopedic information associated with it is activated. Encyclopedic information consists of a repository of general knowledge in the form of conceptual representations. This is different from linguistic knowledge, which is the abstract meaning independent of the speaker. Depending on the discourse situation and/or sentence situation, some elements of the encyclopedic entry will be more highly activated than others. The resulting interpretation will consist of an explicature (the basic propositional content of which the ad hoc concept forms part) and an array of implicatures, which are implicitly communicated. The issue of how far the potential addressee will have to go in the derivation of implicatures to recover the intended meaning is guided by relevance-comprehension heuristics, that is, following a path of least effort, he will have to test interpretive hypotheses in the order of accessibility, and to stop when there are enough implications to satisfy expectations of relevance (Sperber and Wilson, 1995, 2012b:276). RT postulates that relevance is the outcome of an asymmetrical relationship between cognitive effects and processing effort: the greater the cognitive effects, the greater the relevance of the input; yet the greater the processing effort, the lower the relevance of the input (Sperber and Wilson, 1995:125-132). Because of the effort involved, information processing ‘will only be undertaken in the expectation of reward’ (Sperber and Wilson, 1995:49). The reward comes in the form of cognitive effects, which result from altering the strength of already existing beliefs, cancelling them, or adding new ones (Sperber and Wilson, 1995:266-271, 2012a:88).

For the working purposes of this paper, it will be assumed that in the construction of an ad hoc concept, the encyclopedic entry of the encoded concept plays a central role. I nonetheless adhere to the view that ‘all words behave as *if* they encoded pro-concepts: that is, whether or not a word encodes a full concept, the concept it is used to convey in a given utterance has to be contextually worked out’ (Sperber and Wilson, 1998:185). The second notion to be specified is that of metarepresentation. Wilson (2012:230) defines this as the use of one representation to represent another one embedded within it. This can be illustrated in:

(1) The BBC reports that more than 12,000 people have signed a petition to save a city pub famous for its links with the rock band Pink Floyd from being knocked down. https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment_and_arts&link_location=live-reporting-story (accessed 27 June 2019).

Example (1) is a case of overt metarepresentation, because by using *The BBC reports* the speaker indicates that she is reproducing what someone else (i.e. the BBC service) said. All metarepresentations can be analyzed in terms of representation by resemblance (Wilson, 2012:244), that is, the sharing of features between representation and original. Two types of resemblance may be identified: a metalinguistic one, which emphasizes formal or linguistic features, and an interpretive resemblance, which highlights semantic or logical similitudes between the two representations. As Wilson (2012:244-247) notes, resemblance is a question of degree, since linguistic metarepresentations can range from the fully explicit to the fully tacit. In the sample analyzed in this paper, most of the lexical items and phrases used by advertisers to describe the design-related aspects of their motorcars do not appear in sentences that qualify as overt or explicit metarepresentations. By contrast, it will be the potential addressee’s task to determine the source of such elements, as well as the degree of resemblance to the original representation, in an inferential process guided by the principle of relevance, encyclopedic knowledge, and contextual procedures. Recovering the communicator’s intention will lead him to trigger implicated premises and conclusions that are not encoded as part of the semantic representation, and hence need to be accessed inferentially.

Moreover, RT also predicts that by metarepresenting what someone said or thought, the speaker is showing her attitude towards it. Utterances that can attain relevance in this way are referred to as echoic (Sperber and Wilson, 2012a:93). Given that RT does not distinguish between the interpretive processes that apply to utterances and those that should apply to words or phrases, it appears reasonable to conclude that words and phrases can also be echoic. Furthermore, based on the active role played by (high) fashion and luxury in present-day society, it seems likely that the automobile advertisers use these items in order to show approval, respect and even authority, with the intention ‘to command greater acquiescence than if she were merely to speak in her own voice’ (Sperber and Wilson, 2012a:93). This attitude, however, will largely have to be inferred by the addressee.

Thus far I have outlined two fundamental notions that appear intertwined in the relevance-theoretic perspective on communication: lexical pragmatics and metarepresentation. The next step is to analyze how such notions may

interplay with the definition of luxury established in Section 2, as a means of asking whether certain lexical items may acquire an occasion-specific luxury interpretation.

4. The empirical analysis of the data

This section addresses the practical analysis of the corpus. The data here has been organized according to the parameters that define haute couture, as described in Section 2. There are three broad subsections: the ‘custom-fitted’ automobile, the ‘hand-made’ automobile, and the automobile and high quality fabrics. The second of these features, relating to workmanship, has been subdivided: one category analyses the terms that indicate the time-consuming techniques that characterize handiwork here, and the other includes lexical units alluding to the skilled craftspeople who carry out this specialized work. The purpose of the analysis is twofold. At a fairly specific level, it seeks to identify the lexical items that might match the defining features of haute couture, comparing and contrasting their likely meaning in the advertising of LB and NLB cars. On a more general level, the analysis will make it possible to draw conclusions about potential similarities and differences in the use of the terms examined, and hence about the way in which the notion of luxury is handled in the advertising of the two groups of automobiles here. In the following section, I consider the lexical units that automobile copywriters have used to present the vehicle as a custom-fitted item.

4.1. The ‘custom-fitted’ automobile

An haute couture garment is made-to-measure in two essential senses: it is designed to fit the clients’ body and also their aesthetic criteria (Pena González, 2008:17). Thus, it exudes exclusivity and individualism. As for automobiles, sociological studies (Gartman, 2009; Gossling, 2017; Inglis, 2004, *inter alia*) have noted that car owners typically find in the possession of a vehicle a means of satisfying their desire to differentiate themselves from others. One of the most recent examples of this long-standing desire is captured in the term *mass customization*, which amalgamates the contrasting ideas of mass production and customization, something that has been ‘enabled by advances in manufacturing and information technology as well as new management methods’ (Graessler, 2003:566). Along with vehicle configuration, a traditional prerogative of the wealthy that now becomes available to a wide variety of buyers, technology also fosters customer empowerment (Acar and Puntoni, 2016), a term that denotes the active role of potential clients who, by means of input tools, are encouraged to take their own decisions. I hypothesize that the parallelism between custom-fitted clothes and vehicle configuration may be at the base of how modern automobiles are regarded, and thus how they are conceived of as an exemplification of luxury. The next step is to see how this idea takes shape lexically in online automobile advertising and how it may be possible for the potential addressee to arrive at an interpretation of luxury.

Table 1 shows the verbs in LBs and NLBs texts that have been identified in the sample in relation to the feature of the made-to-measure automobile, as defined above. As can be observed, all the terms except *tweak* (an informal word) can be found in the two text types under study with a relatively similar frequency of occurrence. Arguably, this can be attributed to the effect of mass customization alluded above having a direct bearing on lexical choice.

Table 1. Terms for the made-to-measure automobile and number of occurrences.

Terms	LBs texts	NLBs texts
Choose	37	32
Create	19	14
Customize	7	10
Personalize	8	9
Tailor	10	6
Tweak	–	1

The point now is to explain how these terms can be interpreted as exemplifying luxury. Since space limitations make it impossible to offer an exhaustive description of each element, I have selected the term ‘create’ to illustrate the discussion. It enjoys a high level of occurrence, in both LBs and NLBs texts, and its discourse situation may lead to interesting lexical adjustments. Consider the following sets of examples, where (2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10) belong to texts drawn from LBs and (5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13) to texts from NLBs.

(2) (...) with just a few choices you can begin to create the Audi you’ve always imagined. <https://www.audi.co.uk/content/dam/audi/production/PDF/PriceAndSpecGuides/A6-S6-Saloon-Avant-allroad.pdf> (accessed 4 April 2017).

- (3) Create your own Continental GT with our car configurator. <https://www.bentleymotors.com/en/models/new-continental.html> (accessed 5 October 2017).
- (4) With a choice of three color themes, you can create your perfect XE interior. <http://www.jaguar.co.uk/jaguar-range/xe/xe-models/xe-se.html> (accessed 29 November 2017).
- (5) Create the Volvo of your choice (...) with a wide range of options, trim levels and personal expressions. <http://ipaper.ipapercms.dk/Volvocars/GB/V60GBen/> (accessed 4 May 2017).
- (6) Create a look with your choice of color. <http://www.ford.co.uk/Cars/Galaxy> (accessed 24 March 2017).
- (7) Create your very own Vauxhall Corsa. Take your pick from a brilliant range of colors and patterns for seats and décors. <http://www.vauxhall.co.uk/vehicles/vauxhall-range/cars/corsa-5-door/overview.html> (accessed 24 March 2017).
- (8) (...) some of the options open to create a car that bears a distinctive personal hallmark. <http://www.aston-martin.com/q-by-aston-martin> (accessed 12 May 2017).
- (9) (...) your perfect opportunity to create a space that reflects your individual style. <https://www.jaguar.co.uk/jaguar-range/f-pace/index.html> (accessed 30 April 2017).
- (10) (...) using our configurator to create a Flying Spur that is uniquely yours. <https://www.bentleymotors.com/en/models/flying-spur.html> (accessed 13 October 2017).
- (11) The Volvo V60 allows you to create a sportswagon that's really you. <http://ipaper.ipapercms.dk/Volvocars/GB/V60GBen/> (accessed 4 May 2017).
- (12) (...) you can create an up! that's truly yours. <http://www.volkswagen.co.uk/new/up-pa/explore> (accessed 25 March 2017).
- (13) (...) allowing you the freedom to create a Volvo that perfectly matches your style and personality. <http://ipaper.ipapercms.dk/Volvocars/GB/V60GBen/> (accessed 4 May 2017).

The adjustment of the pro-concept CREATE in the course of interpretation seems influenced by a sentence situation where the executor of the action can be interpreted as the potential addressee, appearing either as the grammatical subject *you* (4, 12) or as the notional subject of either imperative verbal forms (3, 5, 6, 7) or non-finite sentences (2, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13). Encyclopedic information about the automotive industry may give access to contextual assumptions about the car manufacturing process, the complexity of the decisions taken by the various types of highly-skilled people involved, etc. If only qualified professionals can be involved, when the potential addressee is invited to take part in the process (i.e. is empowered through technological tools), according to the principle of relevance and following a path of least effort, he may understand the claims in (2, 3, 4, 11, 12, 13) metarepresentationally. In other words, he could understand that the sender of the advertising messages has entertained a thought whereby he may belong to the professional team. Moreover, RT predicts that metarepresented thoughts are paired with the attitude that the sender shows towards that thought. Once again, in agreement with relevance-theory comprehension heuristics, the potential addressee may interpret that the invitation to participate has been issued because the addresser holds a high opinion of him. Thus, the potential buyer would be entitled to derive implications about himself as a person who is technologically wise, ready to meet challenges, who has creative, original ideas and good taste. Therefore, customer empowerment through technology can result in the flattering of potential clients. All of these implications will be incorporated into the meaning of the ad hoc concept CREATE*.

Also, as noted at the beginning of this section, encyclopedic information indicates that vehicle differentiation has traditionally been a privilege of the high classes, concerned with the aesthetics and beauty of the products they enjoy as much as with (and occasionally over) their functionality. This encyclopedic knowledge will make more accessible assumptions such as ‘including selected features in your vehicle reinforces your sense of possession over the motorcar’ or ‘your artistic decisions contribute to change the vehicle into a distinctive, aesthetically pleasing object’. I argue that, in accordance with the theory of luxury used here, and more specifically with the notion of ‘excellent membership’, regular users of high-end products know the characteristics that these goods should conform to (i.e. aesthetic indulgence, bespoke details). Thus, potential readers of (2, 3, 4) and (8, 9, 10), working in agreement with the principle of relevance, may understand the claims in these extracts metarepresentationally, that is, as bearing a logical resemblance to the thought or utterance that regular consumers of luxury products have entertained or made. Copywriters may seek in this echoic interpretation a kind of authoritative voice to warrant the reliability of the brand, as well as to enhance their commitment to the prospective buyers’ needs and wishes. Consequently, this situation may render a narrow meaning of this pro-concept, that is, one that denotes the type of tailoring expected and enjoyed by the upper classes. All of this information would yield the narrowly adjusted concepts CREATE**.

Conversely, potential readers of NLBs excerpts, such as those in (5, 6, 7) and (11, 12, 13), are likely to access a different metarepresented interpretation. Mortelmans’s notion of the ‘trickle down effect’ may explain why possible addressees of these examples, in trying to recover the meaning intended by the advertiser and working according to relevance-theoretic comprehension heuristics, may be able to find a logical resemblance between the claims in (5, 6, 7) and (11, 12, 13) and the made-to-measure claims that luxury brands usually offer to their prospective buyers. Even though this echoic interpretation might not be exempt from more processing effort, it will be rewarded with extra contextual effects, encouraging the possible addressee to trigger implications about the high quality of the non-luxury brand, its level of flexibility, and its concern with the consumers’ demands and wishes. Therefore, potential address-

ees may come to regard these marques as alleged luxury marques, the vehicles thus advertised as alleged objects of luxury, and they themselves as alleged upper class drivers. All of this information will give rise to the broadened ad hoc concept CREATE***.

Additionally, examples (8, 9, 10) and (11, 12, 13) may exemplify how the concept CREATE can be further adjusted to highlight the prospective buyer's individuality through vehicle configuration. Research on marketing practices (Gossling, 2017:23) has noted that individualism and the expression of self are often targeted to the point of verging on narcissistic personality traits. In this respect it is interesting to observe that, in the extracts under examination, the pro-concept CREATE is repeatedly followed by the syntactic pattern NP + that-clause (underlined for ease of reference), where the various verbs in the that-clauses (i.e. *bears, reflects, is, matches*) seem to build a personal relationship between the vehicle (represented by the NP) and the distinctive qualities of its prospective owner (specified in the that-clause). With such a sentence situation, potential addressees, in an attempt to recover the message intended by the copywriter, may have easy access to assumptions about himself as someone special, who thus deserves admiration and preferential treatment. By assuming that he belongs to this class of special people, the potential addressee, following the relevance-theoretic comprehension heuristics, can trigger implications about a sense of self-importance, self-esteem, and an image of perfection, characteristics that may be reflected in the vehicle he deserves to drive. Hence, the automobile becomes its potential owner's elongated self. Metarepresentationally, this new adjustment of the pro-concept CREATE could be understood as a type of creation that may resemble the biblical story of creation in Genesis: "Let us make mankind in our image, after our likeness" (1:26) or "So God created mankind in his own image" (1:27). The outcome of the adjustment process would, then, be the ad hoc concept CREATE****, which is broader in meaning than the pro-concept CREATE and whose agent is a god-like figure who 'gives life' to a product (the car) which is equal to the task here.

So far I have discussed four possible lexical adjustments of the pro-concept CREATE as used in relation to vehicle configuration in online automobile advertising. Their motivation stems from three main sentence situations, the customer empowerment through technology, the aesthetic decisions that potential readers are encouraged to take, and the praise for individualism; these three situations serve to explain why the lexical unit 'create' may be understood as various luxury concepts in motorcar advertising. Even though most of the resulting lexical adjustments seem to apply to the interpretation of the pro-concept CREATE in both LBs texts and NLBs texts, yielding broadened ad hoc concepts, I have also argued that there is a distinction between the concepts used in the two text types. The notions of 'excellent membership' and 'trickle down effect' proposed in Mortelmans's theory of luxury are at the base of this distinction, which will yield a narrow occasion-specific concept CREATE** in LBs texts and a broadened ad hoc concept CREATE*** in NLBs texts. The next step is to examine the lexical elements that may fall into the second characteristic of the definition of luxury, that of workmanship.

4.2. The 'hand-made' automobile

Luxury products can be differentiated by their exclusivity in terms of production methods. These usually involve a high degree of manufacturing complexity that relies on handwork, but also on other significant aspects, such as the dedication required or the craftspeople themselves, characteristics that are decisive in distinguishing an haute couture garment from a ready-to-wear piece (Martin and Koda, 1995:74). As we will see, these features also seem to be relevant in the online advertising of cars. Accordingly, this section has two parts: workmanship, time-consuming techniques, and experts.

4.2.1. Workmanship

Data reveal that the general concept of 'workmanship' in online automobile advertising rests on the use of the lexical units summarized in Table 2. Even though all of the terms appear in both text types, their frequency of occurrence is significantly reduced in NLBs texts; observation that becomes particularly evident in the case of the units *hand made / made by hand*. This could reinforce the conclusions arrived at in Section 4.1: lexical adjustment in LBs texts would yield narrow occasion-specific concepts, more in keeping with the traditional idea of luxury enjoyed by upper-classes. Since space restrictions make it impossible to offer a detailed analysis of each term, I will focus on the item 'crafted', whose balanced distribution in the two text types might lead to interesting and useful conclusions on its use and interpretation.

Table 2. Terms for workmanship and number of occurrences.

Terms	LBs texts	NLBs texts
Crafted	26	16
Craftsmanship	32	13
Hand made / made by hand	43	6

The pro-concept CRAFTED can be understood in a general sense of ‘Y made with skill, possibly using one’s hands’. Encyclopedic information about manual work activates assumptions relative to the high degree of dexterity needed, the patience and time invested in its execution, and the quest for perfection (interestingly, the imperfections that hand-made work often contains, rather than reduce perceived quality, prove its quality). But it is the value of Y that will provide the sentence situation to help the potential reader recover the meaning intended by the copywriter. In the data here, the adjective/participle *crafted* appears accompanied by the words detailed below, with specification of the text type and token frequency in brackets:

(14) accessories (LBs 2), cabin (LBs 1, NLBs 1), comfort (LBs 1), each feature (LBs 1), each part (LBs 1), every detail (LBs 1), design (NLBs 1), everything you see and touch (NLBs 1), finishes (LBs 1), head lamps (LBs 1), interior (LBs 3, NLBs 8), leather (LBs 1), sports seats (LBs 2), materials (LBs 3, NLBs 2), sophistication (LBs 1), space (NLBs 1), steering wheel (LBs 3, NLBs 1), veneers (LBs 2), wheels (NLBs 1), woods (LBs 1), world (LBs 1).

At first glance, the units that collocate with the item *crafted* and their distribution reveal a distinction between those that are specific or hyponyms (e.g. *accessories, each feature / part, every detail, finishes, head lamps, leather, sports seats, steering wheel, veneers, wheels, woods*), and those that are more general and inclusive, that is, hypernyms (e.g. *cabin, design, everything you see and touch, interior, materials, space*). Moreover, whereas the former appear to be more popular in texts taken from the advertising of LBs, the latter seem favored choices in texts from NLBs. The question now is to determine how these observations may influence the meaning of ‘crafted’ to be recovered by the potential reader, who may be well aware that the complexity and technology involved in the manufacturing process of *steering wheels, headlamps, cabins, interiors*, and so on, necessarily imposes limits on manual labor. Yet, the advertiser’s choice in singling out specific elements (or doing so by using the determiner forms *each* and *every*) can be regarded as relevant to the potential addressee, in so far as the manufacturing of these may suggest a distance from a merely serial, automated process, making production more akin to the painstaking technique and dedication typically associated with the process of producing hand-made objects. This situation may lead the reader to activate implications about the highest degree of supervision, precision and excellence in the car’s production. Additionally, as the theory of luxury establishes, these can be legitimate and reasonable expectations held by the usual consumers of luxury products and may constitute an indication of the type of quality and lifestyle that characterizes the upper classes. All of this information will yield the narrow ad hoc concept CRAFTED*, whose denotation would indicate a type of detailed, precise and dedicated work that is typically found in luxury products and which identifies in-group membership.

What happens to the element *crafted*, however, when it co-occurs with the hypernyms mentioned above? As already argued, encyclopedic information about the automotive industry can give access to assumptions about the limits to artisan work imposed by the leading-edge technology employed in this type of industry; hence, it is likely that, in trying to make sense of the term ‘crafted’ in the company of general, inclusive words, the potential reader understands that the concept has been used loosely and, thus, following a path of least effort, he may trigger implications about the careful planning of the car’s cabin/interior/space, etc., its excellent and beautiful design, or its successful and stylish execution. From this information the broadened ad hoc concept CRAFTED** would result, pointing to the process of designing/planning/making with great care, but leaving unspecified whether or not manual work is in fact involved. Moreover, taking into account that CRAFTED** appears in the sample mainly associated with advertising texts from NLBs, its interpretation within these texts could further be adjusted as a result of a metarepresented reading. In other words, as postulated by Mortelmans (2005), if workmanship is identified as one of the features that defines the luxury surrounding the lifestyle of the upper classes, the use of ‘crafted’ in NLBs texts would bear a logical resemblance to the description or the inherent properties of high-end goods. Such a resemblance might then help the prospective buyer to activate extra contextual effects about the car in question as being a product that has been as carefully and exquisitely produced as upmarket motorcars are, that represents luxury in its own right, that symbolizes prestige and provokes admiration, that dignifies its owner, and so on. These implications would originate the broadened occasion-specific concept CRAFTED***.

Finally, in the data there are also three single uses of the pro-concept CRAFTED modifying *comfort, sophistication, and world*, respectively, in advertising texts for LBs. I contend that this sentence situation may respond to a loose, hyperbolic use of CRAFTED, where, similarly to what happened with CRAFTED**, the copywriter seems to avoid a straightforward meaning of the adjective/participle, but rather encourages the prospective buyer to activate an array of weak implications related to a vehicle that exists within an atmosphere of perfection, extreme sensuality, ease and relaxation, apt only for demanding people who appreciate and can afford perfection, well-made things, impeccable work, and so on. This information would give rise to a new adjustment of the item ‘crafted’, yielding the broadened ad hoc concept CRAFTED****.

So far, the analysis of luxury through workmanship has centered on *crafted*, a term that conceptualizes the idea of manual work itself. But artisan work also implies other significant aspects, such as the meaningful amount of time it takes or the skilled people who participate in the production process. The remainder of the section will examine these two related issues, which have some bearing on the online advertising of automobiles and which will ultimately allow us to draw new conclusions about how the notion of luxury is approximated from LBs and NLBs texts.

4.2.2. Time-consuming techniques

General encyclopedic information tells us that activities associated with a manufacturing process require careful, slow methods in order to ensure the best possible outcome. Often, the procedure followed is the result of a considerable amount of time, effort and patience, which in the sample examined can be captured in the pro-concept QUANTITY OF. Consider the next group of examples, which in fact include all the instances in the data, with the relevant expressions underlined:

(15) A million stitches go into every Vanquish, along with over 100 years of history. <http://www.astonmartin.com/cars/the-new-vanquish> (accessed 12 May 2017).

(16) (...) in an embroidered 'AML' logo there are over five thousand stitches applied to create the desired finish. <http://www.astonmartin.com/cars/rapide-s> (accessed 10 May 2017).

(17) No wonder it takes 138 hours to build a Flying Spur from start to finish. To give you an insight into the time and craftsmanship that goes into creating a truly luxurious finish, it takes 26 hours to cut, stitch and trim the seats, another 25 hours are spent contrast stitching the entire cabin, with 15 hours on the steering wheel alone. <https://www.bentleymotors.com/en/models/flying-spur.html> (accessed 13 October 2017).

(18) It takes more than 150 hours to create the Mulsanne's sumptuous leather interior. <https://www.bentleymotors.com/en/models/mulsanne.html> (accessed 12 October 2017).

(19) New C3 seats are the result of a lot of work. <http://www.citroen.co.uk/new-cars-and-vans/citroen-range/citroen-c3#DESIGN> (accessed 28 April 2017).

In excerpts (15-18) from the advertising of LBs, as well as in (19) from NLBs, the sequences *over 100 years of history* (15), *to create the desired finish* (16), *the time and craftsmanship that goes into creating a truly luxurious finish* (17), *to create the Mulsanne's sumptuous leather interior* (18) and *New C3 seats are the result of* (19) generate a sentence situation that permits the potential reader to have easy access to assumptions about the importance of well-done work, how this type of work requires dedication, how such dedication is a prerequisite for excellent quality, and how excellent quality couples with satisfactory work. These assumptions, in turn, will help the potential consumer, working in accordance with the principle of relevance and following a path of least effort, to recover the meaning intended by the copywriter and interpret the underlined expressions in (15-18) and (19) as giving rise to implications about the well-defined tasks that the production of the car in question goes through, the meaningful amount of time that its manufacturing process demands, the belief that the brand shows an absolute commitment to quality, and so on. Nevertheless, to be complete, the interpretation of (15-18) and (19) will probably lend itself to a metarepresented reading. Quantifying the dedication is characteristically found in the making of special gowns as well as in the haute couture sector, which frequently translates into garment descriptions that include the number of embellishing elements a dress has, the meters of cloth used or the amount of time taken to make it. To illustrate this point, consider the following news item from *The Telegraph* newspaper about a fashion exhibition to commemorate the 90th birthday of Queen Elisabeth II in 2016. Relevant expressions here have been underlined:

It [The dress worn by the Queen on her US visit in 1957] will be one of the highlights of "Fashioning a Reign: 90 Years of Style From The Queen's Wardrobe" (...). Caroline de Guitaut, the curator of the exhibition, described the outfit as "a work of art". She said: "It was such a complicated process to make this dress, with seamstresses, embroiderers and Hartnell himself working on it for days at a time. It has layers of crinoline, silk chiffon, silk tulle and lace, with timbre embroidery and hundreds and hundreds of beads". <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/queen-elizabeth-II/12140672/How-the-Queen-conquered-America-in-a-stunning-Norman-Hartnell-dress.html> (accessed 26 October 2018).

Therefore, aided by the sentence situation of expressions such as *stitches* (15, 16), *to cut, stitch and trim* and *contrast stitching* (17) or *leather* (18), the potential buyer may find the highly specific quantity expressions in (15-18) relevant enough to trigger assumptions such as 'some techniques used in the car are typical of dress making', 'this kind of work is intricate and rich in detail', 'elaborate dresses need time-consuming techniques', 'time-consuming sewing methods are usually quantified in hours of work'. Once the addressee, proceeding in accordance with relevance-comprehension heuristics, is able to identify the specific quantity expressions in (15-18) as echoic, he may arrive at an interpretation along the lines of the vehicle as an element of high-end fashion, as an exclusive and exquisite piece of art. What is more, thanks to this metarepresented reading, copywriters can make such claims as if others (e.g. haute couture designers) were describing their product, thus achieving a degree of objectivity. Simultaneously, because of the cherished dedication, subtlety and refinement that the sort of manual labor involved in haute couture is renowned for (Martin and Koda, 1995:74), potential addressees might attribute to these metarepresented claims the copywriters' endorsing attitude. Consequently, the quantity expressions in (15-18) become broadened ad hoc concepts: MILLION STITCHES*, OVER FIVE THOUSAND STITCHES*, 138 HOURS*, and so on.

In (19) the situation appears quite different. The presence of the sequence *a lot of work*, made up of two unspecific parts, the broad quantifying expression *a lot of* and the superordinate noun *work*, in stark contrast to the detailed items

just signaled in (15-18), is unlikely to be relevant enough to guide the potential addressee directly to an haute-couture metarepresented reading. Nonetheless, assuming a certain degree of familiarity with the time-consuming techniques claimed by advertisers of LB vehicles, this ideal receiver could interpret the sequence *a lot of work* as having logical resemblance with those in (15-18) and, consequently, understand it metarepresentationally. This would mean that the C3 could be regarded, to a certain extent, as a luxury automobile, in as much as the elaboration process of its seats has taken a great deal of time and effort and, hence, resembles the careful, time-consuming methods employed in high range vehicles. All of this information would yield the occasion-specific concept A LOT OF WORK*.

Once again the analysis has made it clear that the online automobile advertising of NLBs shows a preference for hypernym forms. Their general nature leads the potential addressee to take more responsibility in the recovery of the intended message, relying more on the activation of weak implications. Hyponymy, in contrast, reveals itself as a preferred choice of copywriters for LB vehicles, a technique that is likely to enhance the activation of strong, more grounded implications during the interpretation process.

To round off this section on the ‘hand-made’ automobile, the final step is to address the role of the experts who make the final product possible, which we will do in what follows.

4.2.3. The experts

In their book on haute couture, Martin and Koda (1995:47, 73) explain that even though high-end fashion houses are governed by designers, they also depend on many ateliers of specialized fashion trades (e.g. glovers, costume jewelers, enamel and nacre workers). It is this relationship between couture specialists and couture designers that develops and strengthens the mastery and subtlety characteristic of the haute couture world. The question now is whether the online advertising of automobiles incorporates any reference to knowledgeable, highly qualified people responsible for the design-related aspects of the motorcar and, if so, how they may contribute to the luxury characterization of the product.

According to the sample, the items denoting the concept of ‘skilled professional(s)’ would be those shown in Table 3. As can be observed, the number and variety of these items is significantly higher in LBs texts. The data here reveals that in the advertisements of LBs the wide range of items that refer to these specialists belong to the group of hyponyms, in sharp contrast to the superordinate nature of the smaller number of expressions employed only in NLBs texts, in particular, *designers* and *experts*. This realization seems to be in line with observations already made in this paper and, therefore, may lead to the obvious conclusion that LBs tend to state more openly their commitment to workmanship and, hence, to encourage the activation of strong implications here. However, the NLBs texts, constrained by inherent limitations, can only rely on general terms that seem to invite implications related to workmanship more weakly, placing the focus instead on the importance of matters of design and planning.

Table 3. Terms for types of experts and number of occurrences.

Terms	LBs texts	NLBs texts
Artisan	2	-
Craftsmen	4	-
Craftspeople	7	-
Commissioning dept.	1	-
Designers	-	4
Design team	9	1
Expert	-	1
Expert team	1	-
Representatives	-	1

Assuming that patience, extraordinary ability and large doses of creativity are defining features of experts working on design-related issues, items grouped in Table 3 can give rise to the retrieval of assumptions as ‘highly qualified professionals have extensive experience and aptitude’, ‘traditional artistry uses techniques that have been passed from generation to generation’, ‘team work creates interaction and engagement’, ‘interaction promotes the sharing of ideas’, ‘sharing ideas can warrant that all details are overseen’, and so on. In accordance with the principle of relevance, the potential addressee, in an attempt to recover the meaning that the copywriter sought to transmit, may derive implications about how the exceptional artistry of traditional craftsmanship is passed on to the motorcar, how the love and mastery that these professionals bring to their work results in vehicles of exceptional quality and good

taste, how interest in design allows for elegance and delicacy, or how the creation and assembly of components is governed by careful, rigorous methods geared to an aesthetically pleasing outcome. Despite implications of this type, more strongly or weakly retrieved depending on the concepts in Table 3 that the potential reader would come across, there seems to be an interesting additional meaning that arises from a metarepresentational and echoic interpretation.

When copywriters decide to include in their claims expressions such as those in Table 3, they probably demand of the addressee a supplementary processing effort, which will be rewarded with the activation of extra contextual effects. In admitting that professionals of this sort enjoy social recognition in design and artistry, reference to them may be a means of seeking credibility and approval. If they have allegedly participated in the manufacturing of the vehicle, this would automatically become a piece of art. Moreover, the claims made about it would be taken to echo these experts' thoughts or pronouncements. Under this echoic interpretation, the items in Table 3 would be enriched with a meaning of authority and reliability, which, added to the implications derived above, would give rise to the broadened ad hoc concepts ARTISAN*, CRAFTSPEOPLE*, DESIGNERS*, and so on. In light of this explanation, I would like to go back to the item listed in the table, *representatives*, whose full interpretation may need some clarification. Let us consider the example from which it was extracted:

(20) Ford Vignale representatives can assist you in tailoring a selection of exclusive materials, colors and technologies to your needs. They're on call to attend to your every vehicle need, too, providing a dedicated service that's designed around you. <http://vignale.ford.co.uk/en-GB/> (accessed 24 March 2017).

The assistance and dedication that Ford claims in (20), which provides the appropriate sentence situation to interpret the pro-concept REPRESENTATIVE, can bear a formal resemblance to the experience that the clients visiting a *maison d'haute couture* may go through. In accordance with Martin and Koda (1995:47), upon their arrival, these clients will be welcome by highly skilled *vendeuses*, specially trained counseling staff, who work in intimate connection with the designer and other managing personnel. Some familiarity with the functioning of the haute couture sector will allow the prospective buyer to activate an echoic interpretation, according to which the potential experience of buying a Ford Vignale may be equivalent to that enjoyed at a high fashion house, where he or she will be escorted and aided by the best professionals, surrounded by special treatment. This situation will encourage further implications about this vehicle as an exclusive piece, its equipment being as exquisite and attractive as a high fashion creation, and so on. Consequently, the concept REPRESENTATIVE would be understood as the external authority that sanctions the brand's engagement with quality, design, and luxury. All of this information would originate the broadened ad hoc concept REPRESENTATIVE*.

So far, this section has shown how the characterization of the vehicle as an article of luxury is reflected in the use of terms related to workmanship, as well as to those about the associated time and effort required and the professionals involved. The work done by these professionals also finds a natural extension in the type of materials employed in the production process. This will be addressed in the next section.

4.3. The automobile and high quality fabrics

Here I will consider how the materials used in the motorcar may contribute to present the vehicle as a piece of luxury. The haute couture sector finely illustrates that the superior quality of the end product depends largely on its fabrics, not only because their handling often demands the dexterity of skilled professionals, but equally, and interestingly, because the fabrics may themselves have an associated high value due to complexity in their manufacture, their limited availability, or their durability. As the analysis will show, these ideas will also be relevant to the online advertising of automobiles.

Given that this paper focuses on the design-related aspects of the vehicle, only those materials employed in the interior of cars have been considered, that is, the items shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Terms for types of materials and number of occurrences.

Terms	LBs texts	NLBs texts
Cloth	19	12
Hide	31	–
Leather	145	65
Material	72	40

More specifically, in virtue of its high frequency in the two text types, the unit *leather* has been selected to illustrate the discussion. This pro-concept denotes a high quality material, traditionally from animal origin, which is greatly appreciated for its softness, suppleness and durability. Owing to the ample distribution of LEATHER, it has

been possible to isolate four sentence situations here: its type (21), its quality (22), the sort of work performed on it (23), and its location within the car (24).

(21) Type: Artico (LBs 10), Caithness (LBs 1), Cloth (NLBs 1), Cross Punch (NLBs 2), Dakota (LBs 3), full-grain (LBs 1), genuine (LBs 1), grain (NLBs 1), graphite (NLBs 1), Jasmine (NLBs 2), leatherette (NLBs 3), Lounge (NLBs 4), man-made (NLBs 1), Milano (LBs 8), Nappa (LBs 8; NLBs 4), natural (LBs 1), Nubuk textile (NLBs 1), partial (NLBs 3), Salerno (NLBs 1), semi-aniline (LBs 4), synthetic (NLBs 1), Valcona (LBs 12), Windsor (LBs 3).

(22) Quality: exquisite (LBs 1), fine quality (NLBs 1), finest (LBs 2), glove-soft (LBs 2), hand-picked (LBs 1), hardwearing (NLBs 1), highest quality (LBs 1), luxurious (LBs 2, NLBs 1), premium (LBs 1, NLBs 4), smooth (NLBs 2), soft-feel (NLBs 2), soft-touch (LBs 2), standard (NLBs 2), sumptuous (LBs 6), supple (LBs 3), tactile (LBs 1), ultimate (LBs 1).

(23) Work performed: brogued (LBs 1), crafted (LBs 3), diamond patterned stitching (NLBs 1), diamond quilted (LBs 2), embossed (LBs 2), hand stitched (LBs 4), handcrafted (LBs 1), indented (LBs 1), perforated (LBs 6; NLBs 6).

(24) Location: appointments (NLBs 1), dashboard (NLBs 1), finish (LBs 1), handles (NLBs 2), handbrake grip (LBs 1), handbrake (NLBs 1), headlining (LBs 3), interior (LBs 4), seats (LBs 13; NLBs 5), steering wheel (LBs 13; NLBs 6), trim (LBs 6; NLBs 2), upholstery (LBs 9; NLBs 3).

Interestingly, a dominant feature that appears to characterize the data in the various groups is the neat distinction between the units included in texts drawn from LBs and NLBs. This becomes immediately obvious in (21), which might give rise to two different occasion-specific concepts. On the one hand, items such as *genuine* and *natural* or words that include (or resemble the English translation of) names of places with an environmental or historical tradition (e.g. *Artico*, *Caithness*, *Dakota*, *Milano*, *Windsor*) might lead the potential reader to have easy access to assumptions about the authenticity, natural origin, prestige, and elegance of this material. In an attempt to recover the meaning intended by the copywriter, and following a path of least effort, the possible addressee may trigger implications about the excellence and superior quality of the vehicle, the ultimate comfort and beauty that can be enjoyed within it, and so on. Implications of this kind are likely to satisfy the heightened expectations held by demanding prospective buyers of top-range vehicles, giving rise to an occasion-specific concept LEATHER* with the narrow meaning of animal origin and typically found in high-end products. Note that the use of the item *hide*, exclusive to LBs texts, argues in favor of this interpretation.

On the other hand, in NLBs texts, terms such as *cloth*, *graphite*, *leatherette*, *man-made*, *Nubuk textile*, *partial*, or *synthetic* may guide the potential addressee to activate implications about a kind of material that, despite retaining the principal features of real leather (i.e. resistance, softness, and beauty) does not make the end product so costly. It is possible that this lexical adjustment of LEATHER would be further enriched with a metarepresentational reading relative to the social imitation effect predicted by Mortelmans's theory of luxury: leather is a material typically employed in the manufacturing of top-range vehicles, and when it becomes part of other, more modest vehicles, it dignifies them, upgrading their category and prestige, together with that of their owners. All of this would give rise to the broadened ad hoc concept LEATHER**.

I propose that these two readings of the pro-concept 'leather' receive increasing support from the sentence situations in (22) and (23). Thus, in the case of LBs texts, most modifying adjectives indicating quality can be classified as non-gradable or superlative forms, adding to this the diversity of specialized terms used for the manipulation of the leather. All of these elements may guide the prospective consumer to yield strong implications about a material of the highest quality, handled by experts with years of specialist experience, and capable of the most excellent and delicate work. This is how LEATHER* may originate. In contrast, the quality of the material denoted by the ad hoc concept LEATHER** is characterized by more generic terms: for example, *fine* or *standard* versus *finest* or *highest quality*; *soft-feel* versus *glove-soft*, *soft-touch*, or *tactile*. As for the manipulation of the material, NLBs texts only allude to perforation, which seems to be a relatively common technique in the automotive industry in order to increase the breathability of the leather (https://www.leather-dictionary.com/index.php/Perforated_leather (accessed 28 June 2019)). This point leads us to the sentence situation in (24), which will contribute to the final shape of the pro-concept LEATHER.

As is evident in (24), hypernyms (e.g. *interior*, *upholstery*) are far less frequently used in NLBs texts than in LBs texts, while specific expressions appear to be definitely preferred options (e.g. *seats*, *steering wheel*) in both text types. These observations, however, seem to be in conflict with previous observations. How, then, can the details in (24) be assessed? Should they be treated as the exception to the rule? Do they obscure previous findings? I contend that the circumstances shown in (24) are really in keeping with former reasoning, and also possibly with the advertisers' intention to avoid misinterpretations. The expression *leather interior* contains the proposition 'the inside of the car is covered in leather'. Since this proposition can be accommodated within the potential reader's encyclopedic knowledge about the beauty, comfort, and luxury that top-range vehicles are known for, it may be possible to have easy access to assumptions like upmarket brands' commitment to excellence, their abundant use of quality materials, or their concern with the consumers' sense of satisfaction. In trying to recover the copywriter's informative intention,

the potential reader may activate strong implications about an interior that is comfortable, pleasing to sight and touch, well insulated, and so on. Arguably, then, the generic item *interior* guides the inferential phase of comprehension, helping the potential reader to achieve a meaning of completeness, absoluteness, and pure luxury in the interpretation of the pro-concept LEATHER. In fact, this analysis seems to be backed by the following claim from Bentley:

(25) The finest soft-touch leather graces virtually every interior surface that isn't metal or wood within a Bentley. <https://www.bentleymotors.com/en/models/new-continental.html> (accessed 5 October 2017).

In contrast, placing the pro-concept LEATHER in the vicinity of hyponyms can be relevant enough for the potential reader to trigger implications about the good quality of the motorcar in general. Besides, since leather is a traditional symbol of prestige, wealth, and status, the reference to particular leather items in NLBs vehicles can have an emulating effect and, as argued above, can originate a metarepresentational reading. This is how the elements indicating location of materials contribute to guiding the potential reader towards a characterization of the vehicle as a luxury product.

5. Concluding remarks

In this paper I have analyzed the use of luxury vocabulary in the design-related aspects of online automobile advertising. In so doing, I have attempted to fill a gap in the literature: to gain some knowledge about the way in which the promotion of luxury is approached, placing the emphasis on the type of language that copywriters choose to advertise luxury. My additional intention has been to determine whether the type and use of lexical items employed in LBs texts differed from those in NLBs ones. Using Mortelmans's (2005) approach to luxury, I have approximated the well-defined parameters that govern the luxury world of haute couture to the automobile industry. This has allowed us to identify and organize the various lexical items into three main categories: the 'custom fitted' automobile, the 'hand-made' automobile, and the materials in the automobile. All in all, the results of the analysis reveal that the terms chosen in LBs and NLBs texts to transmit the idea of luxury in online automobile advertising are rather similar in the category of 'custom fitted' automobile, while they differ significantly in the category of the 'hand-made' automobile. This similitude has been attributed to the effect of such contemporary notions as mass customization and customer empowerment, directly related to the Internet channel where the advertisements appear, which would ultimately blur distances between LBs and NLBs. In contrast, the broad differences between terms in the 'hand-made' category indicate a clear gap in the manufacturing of non-luxury automobiles, situation that, to some extent, is confirmed by the type of terms used in the category of materials. Additionally, using the notions of lexical pragmatics and metarepresentation developed in RT, I have been able to demonstrate that there seems to be considerable divergence in the way copywriters seek to convey the idea of luxury in the two texts types. The discussion has shown that pro-concepts in LBs texts tend to be surrounded by sentence situations rich in specific and non-gradable terms. This leads potential readers to trigger strong implications, with cognitive effects that would strengthened previously held assumptions, and would give way to narrow ad hoc concepts. Such concepts would bear logical resemblance to the long-established notion of luxury that the upper classes have traditionally enjoyed, which denotes distinction and excellence. Sentence situations in NLBs texts, however, appear to favor general or superordinate expressions that may encourage the prospective buyer to draw weak implications, with a corresponding increase in processing effort and a considerable reward in the form of cognitive effects. This would originate broad ad hoc concepts, which could also be enriched by a metarepresentational interpretation, that is, the result of the imitating effect that social classes show towards those above them. Generally, all of these processes may offer an explanation as to why and how advertising makes room for the accommodation of the final interpretation of its message aimed at the ambitions and dreams of potential readers and, hence, qualifies as a successful type of communication.

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