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**VAGUE NON-NUMERICAL QUANTIFIERS
IN ENGLISH**

Vágní nenumerické kvantifikátory v angličtině

Master's Thesis

by

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Prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou práci vytvořila samostatně s využitím uvedených písemných a elektronických zdrojů.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CNK	Český národní korpus (Czech National Corpus)
BNC	The British National Corpus
N	noun
NP	noun phrase
OED	The Oxford English Dictionary
Q	quantifier
Q _A	universal quantifier
Q _{GEN}	existential quantifier
Q _N	group noun
S	number of solutions
T	number of texts
VnQ	vague non-numerical quantifier

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ABSTRACT

The paper deals with the linguistic phenomenon of vague quantification, specifically with vague non-numerical quantifiers expressing low quantity which are used in their figurative meaning. The basic concept of the study follows the previous research as it was described in “Bags of Talent, a Touch of Panic, and a Bit of Luck: The Case Study of Non-Numerical Vague Quantifiers” by Jarmila Tárnyiková in 2010. A similar approach is applied, the examined data are gained from the British National Corpus and Czech National Corpus (Český národní korpus), and the detailed English-Czech comparison is carried out with respect to the following linguistic characteristics: frequency of occurrence, paradigmatic alternations of quantifiers and diversity of nominal collocates, premodification, and negation.

Despite obvious structural differences of quantifiers which result from the typologically heterogenous nature of the two languages, the research shows several analogous tendencies appearing with English as well as Czech quantifiers, which are grouped in etymologically related chains. Wide variation of following nominal collocates, prevalence of verb negation with some quantifiers, and comparable frequency distribution prove cross-linguistic and cross-cultural similarities. On the contrary, different approach to premodification together with structural differences of quantifiers demonstrate cross-linguistic and possibly cross-cultural divergence.

1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis deals with vague non-numerical quantifiers in English, and, to a lesser extent, their Czech counterparts. The linguistic phenomenon of non-numerical quantifiers belongs to the wider field of study of vague language. The present work is primarily based on research done by prof. Jarmila Tárnyiková. The research was described in the article “Bags of Talent, a Touch of Panic, and a Bit of Luck: The Case Study of Non-Numerical Vague Quantifiers” (Tárnyiková 2010).

Our current objectives are: i) to extend the scope of the pilot study with a special interest in the quantifiers expressing low quantity, ii) to compare data collected in the British National Corpus and the Czech National Corpus, the comparison will be carried out with respect to both syntagmatic and paradigmatic alternations. The overall intention is to shed light on cross-linguistic and cross-cultural similarities and differences in the usage of vague non-numerical quantifiers which express low quantity, and, additionally, to explore whether conclusions about possible speakers’ tendencies in the two languages can be drawn from this research.

The research will focus on vague non-numerical quantifiers when they occur in a figurative meaning only. Their qualitative as well as quantitative features will be considered. From the lexicological point of view, we will explore their syntagmatic relations and also paradigmatic possibilities. The major part of the research will be conducted with the help of the British National Corpus, Czech expressions will be studied in the Czech National Corpus (Český národní korpus). The results will be summarised, and the deduced differences, similarities, and tendencies will be outlined in the end.

1.1 Vague Language

Non-numerical quantifiers represent a manifestation of vague language, therefore vague language should be commented on before we focus on the quantifiers. The necessary background for the present work was provided by the monography *Vague Language* (1994), which was written by Joanna Channell.

Vagueness is a natural feature of languages in general, it cannot be avoided. Besides, “vagueness of content and vagueness of expression” (Tárnyiková 2010, 71) is often used intentionally in human communication. The view that language usage should

be precise and unambiguous has been overcome in linguistic circles. As Channell puts it, vagueness is “intrinsic” and “important, in the language system of English” (1994, 9) and “what matters is that vague language is used appropriately” (1994, 3). Languages are instruments of human communication and vagueness serves a speaker’s aims, mainly in informal situations. Carmody, in the abstract of his paper “Vagueness and Communication: A Minimally-contextualist Approach” (Carmody 2008, 2), explains that the “mutual understanding” between a speaker and a listener is possible because “we exploit their plasticity (plasticity of vague expressions) to bring ourselves into a state of ‘communicative harmony’ where the level of harmony or mutual predictability is determined contextually by our needs.”

Channell (1994, 8) mentions four reasons for the vagueness which occurred in Crystal and Davy’s *Advanced Conversational English* (1975), these are: “(a) memory loss – the speaker forgets the correct word; (b) the language has no suitable exact word, or the speaker does not know it; (c) the subject of the conversation is not such that it requires precision, ... (d) the choice of a vague item is deliberate to maintain the atmosphere.” As we can conclude from these four points, pragmatics plays an important role in a speaker’s decision.

1.2 Vague quantification in English-Czech comparison

As was mentioned above, this paper was inspired primarily by the research that was conducted by Jarmila Tárnyiková and described in the article “Bags of Talent, a Touch of Panic, and a Bit of Luck: The Case Study of Non-Numerical Vague Quantifiers” (Tárnyiková 2010). To continue with possible reasons why vagueness appears in human communication Tárnyiková (2010, 73) adds another argument in favour of vague language. It “can contribute to the vividness of our encounters.” This remark is related to the usage of vague non-numerical quantifiers which are often applied when speakers exaggerate, boast, or make compliments. In such a case vague non-numerical quantifiers expressing a large quantity would be used. On the other hand, to express disgust, sarcasm, or criticism language users choose some of the vague non-numerical quantifiers expressing small quantities (2010, 73). This is a general statement that applies to both languages, English and Czech.

Some other common features that Tárnyiková describes in an outline of English-Czech interface are, firstly, that vague quantification belongs to “peripheral means” within a language system (2010, 81), and, secondly, that informal encounters are the “primary domain” of vague quantification usage (2010, 82).

However, due to the typologically different nature of the two languages, and, more importantly, “due to different socio-cultural norms, different language users’ preferences and strategies,” vague non-numerical quantification is realised in different ways in English and Czech (2010, 81). Tárnyiková claims (2010, 82):

“Czech...has a considerably higher saturation of the (- for quantity) domain. In Czech, as an inflectional language, the possibility to express subtle nuances within the (- for quantity) space, is enabled by a whole battery of inflectional endings or productive processes of diminutive formation offering gradable subtleties (cf. *drobek/drobet* [crumb] > *drobeček, drobínek...*)”

The quoted statement is crucial for the present study because, apart from the extension of the research in the British National Corpus (BNC) within English vague quantification, in the search for Czech (- for quantity) quantifiers our intention is to prove whether such chains of etymologically related vague non-numerical quantifiers can be found in the Czech National Corpus (CNK).

Except for the typological differences and their consequences, another perspective that will be taken into account is understatement, a well-known phenomenon in the English language.

1.3 Understatement

Polish-born Anna Wierzbicka, who has specialized in semantics in her wide linguistic research, brings a valuable view on English language in the context of other languages in her book *English: Meaning and Culture* (2006). In the chapter “The Anglo Ideal of ‘Accuracy’ and the Practice of ‘Understatement’” the term *understatement* is defined as “an Anglo speech practice expressing oneself in such a way that one’s words say less than what one wants to say with these words” (Wierzbicka 2006, 28). English is compared with several other languages and the most striking contrasts can be seen when English is compared to highly exaggerated Syrian.

However, Wierzbicka disputes with those who claim that “the penetration of scientific ways of thinking and speaking into ordinary language is a ‘Western’ rather than ‘Anglo’ phenomenon” (2006, 31). Despite the general view that all the European languages have been influenced equally by empiricism and the emergence of exact sciences since the 17th century, Wierzbicka finds examples that support her theory that accuracy and closely related understatement is “a predominantly English linguistic pattern of behaviour” (2006, 29). Within all the different varieties of English understatement is most characteristic in British English. This fact will be considered in our research, because it will be conducted in the British National Corpus, and we expect that the cross-linguistic comparison with Czech will lead to a discovery of the differences between Czech and English vague non-numerical quantifiers and also how they reflect the practice of understatement.

1.4 Aims of the thesis

The research will be conducted in several phases. In the first part we will take the “Gradient of vague reference to non-numerical quantification” from Tárnyiková’s paper, we will use the quantifiers marked (- for quantity), and we will contribute with several extra quantifiers that could be located at the same pole of the gradient. After creating an extended set of (- for quantity) vague non-numerical quantifiers, we will search in the British National Corpus for samples containing the quantifiers in their figurative meaning. We will collect data containing information about frequency of occurrence, paradigmatic and syntagmatic alternations.

In the second stage a similar process will be repeated with a set of Czech vague non-numerical quantifiers, this time in the Czech National Corpus. We will focus on the same kind of information.

In the final phase of the research we will compare the collected data which should enable us to draw conclusions about a whole range of English (-for quantity) vague non-numerical quantifiers, about their distribution and preferred usage in British English. Specifically, in the final comments we will pay attention to:

- i) paradigmatic alternations of VnQs
- ii) following nominal collocates
- iii) premodifiers and negation
- iv) frequency of occurrence

The comparison with equivalent Czech expressions should highlight prevailing similarities and differences not only in their formal features, but also in speakers' attitudes towards the usage of non-numerical quantifiers as a manifestation of vague language with regard to previously mentioned typical characteristics.

We are well-aware that the involved data is highly context-bound and pragmatically sensitive, but we will strive to make the research as objective as possible, and we will also try to minimise deviations that can emerge during the data collection.

2 METHODS AND DATA COLLECTION

2.1 English vague non-numerical quantifiers

2.1.1 Basic division of quantifiers

We adopt Channell's approach towards the division of vague non-numerical quantifiers (VnQs) in which she distinguishes 3 basic kinds of quantifiers depending on quantity which they express (1994, 95): a) + for quantity

b) – for quantity

c) neutral

In fact, we will use a scale ranging from (+ for quantity) to (- for quantity) that represents distribution of VnQs (1). The gradient was created by Tárnyiková in “Bags of Talent, a Touch of Panic, and a Bit of Luck: The Case Study of Non-Numerical Vague Quantifiers” (2010, 75). The gradient enables us to indicate finer distinctions in the distribution of individual quantifiers. In our research we will study the VnQs that were classified as (- for quantity) VnQs in the gradient.

1. Tárnyiková's gradient

(+ for quantity)	antonyms of gradability		(– for quantity)
oceans of	ocean of	a bit of	a pinch of
seas of	sea of	a drop of	a dash of
mountains of	mountain of	a touch of	an atom of
galore	umpteen	a scrap of	a spot of
masses of	mass of	an atom of	an iota of
lots of	lot of	a pat of	a morsel of
heaps of	heap of	a trace of	a sprinkle of
piles of	pile of	a shred of	a smidgen of
hordes of	horde of	a sprinkle of...	
lashings of	oodles of...		
rafts of	raft of		

Fig. 1. Gradient of vague reference to non-numerical quantification.

Our aim is not only to replicate the previous research, but to contribute with our own VnQs to extend the scope of the study, therefore several more (- for quantity) VnQs will be added. These VnQs were gained from various British media, dictionaries, and online sources. We collected 14 VnQs that we intend to study in the British National

Corpus (BNC) together with those listed in the gradient under the heading of (- for quantity) VnQs. The new VnQs are named in the figure below (2):

2. **A list of added VnQs**

A crumb of	A patch of
A dollop of	A scruple of
A dribble of	A snip of
A fleck of	A snippet of
A grain of	A speck of
A handful of	A sprinkling of
A jot of	A trifle of
A mite of	

Altogether we will probe 30 (- for quantity) VnQs, and the description of their data collection in the BNC will appear in alphabetical order in the section 2.3 **English VnQs and its collocates, data collected in the BNC.**

Apart from some of the VnQs from the previous study, we will also replicate some of the procedures in the current research. We will comment on the features of VnQs according to their occurrence in the BNC. Only the quantifiers appearing in their figurative meaning will be probed, and because this approach limits the number of studied samples it therefore increases the exactness of the research and provides us a better chance to explore VnQs with a higher degree of expressivity. A similar approach was used by Tárnyiková.

The structure of the VnQs will be considered, whether the quantifier occurs in its singular or plural form and what the proportion between them is. We will also activate “the syntagmatic axis of co-occurrence” (Tárnyiková 2010, 76). Attention will be paid to expressions preceding the quantifiers as well. They can be either determiners or adjectival premodifiers, and we will be especially interested in those highlighting the expressed quantity, such as *little*, *small* etc. If negation represents a significant, reappearing pattern within the samples, we will comment on it. Also, collocates that follow a specific VnQ will be assessed, and we will focus on nominal collocates.

Samples where the collocate following the VnQ is composed of a sub-clause, a proper name, an abbreviation, or a pronoun where we cannot identify the antecedent will be excluded from the data collection.

Our intention is to qualify whole chunks of language as they appear in the BNC, because we are well-aware that the wider context of the samples, and, subsequently, the overall meaning of them, contribute to the vagueness of language. However, the main emphasis will be placed on the quantifiers and the expressions in their immediate proximity.

2.1.2 *Structural characteristics of VnQs*

A significant part of the non-numerical vague quantifiers to be questioned in the work belongs to the category of open-class quantifiers according to Quirk's terminology (Quirk 2008, 264). These phrasal quantifiers consist of a noun of quantity followed by *of*, and their basic structure is similar to the formal structure of partitive constructions, therefore they can be called 'pseudopartitives' (Channell 1994, 99).

Channell distinguishes three kinds of syntactic structures in which the quantifiers occur:

A) the quantifier is singular, preceded by the indefinite article *a*, and followed by *of* and the noun whose quantity is being expressed

a _____ of _____ *a bag of humbugs* [BNC CAS 1298]

B) the quantifier is plural, and the preposition *of* and a specific noun follow

_____s of _____ *bags of talent* [BNC ACE 2135]

C) the quantifier precedes the noun without any preposition, and it occupies the determiner slot (Channell 1994, 99)

_____ _____ *umpteenth films* [BNC CEK 6937]

2.2 **The British National Corpus**

The research is based on the data gained from the British National Corpus (BNC). The BNC represents a 100 million word corpus containing samples of British

English from the latter part of the 20th century. The samples have been obtained from many different sources in order to create an extensive, thus representative, language corpus. The BNC comprises of samples of written and spoken language. The written samples constitute approximately 90 percent of the corpus, the remaining part was taken from spoken language ranging from informal conversation to very formal speech. The work on the BNC was finished in 1994, the latest third edition BNC XML was released in 2007.¹ The research of vague quantifiers will be performed with the usage of Xaira (XML Aware Indexing and Retrieval Architecture). Xaira is a tool developed to search and display linguistic information from the corpus.

2.2.1 *Creating a query in the corpus*

Most of the studied quantifiers appear in the following structure: VnQ + of, therefore, in the majority of cases, we form the phrase query, e.g. *atom of*, that helps us to avoid utterances where the certain word, e.g. *atom*, occurs but not in the function of a quantifier. We will search for both forms of the quantifier, first the singular, e.g. *atom of*, and then its plural version, e.g. *atoms of*. We decided for such a form of the phrase query to gain as many samples as possible, therefore we do not copy the structure of the VnQ in singular that Channell describes, e.g. *an atom of*, as it would automatically exclude the samples where there is some premodifier between the indefinite article and the VnQ itself.

After inserting *VnQ of* into the phrase query box, a search throughout the whole corpus starts. We abandoned the original idea to do the research only within the spoken mode, because after a few attempts it was realised that the acquired data would be too scarce to base any objective results on it. Therefore the mode is set to “all”, and the number of total occurrences and the number of texts are noted down, so that, in the end, we can compare the proportion between the frequency of the phrase in the corpus and its occurrence as a VnQ with a figurative meaning.

In the next phase of the data collection we use the “sort keys” tool to create an alphabetical list of samples according to the nominal collocates that follow the particular VnQ. When this step is finished we are able to start a manual selection of appropriate

¹British National Corpus. 2009. “What is the BNC?” Accessed 11th Feb 2011.
<http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/corpus/index.xml>

samples, i.e. VnQs appearing in a figurative meaning. Afterwards we count how many times the VnQ occurred with a specific nominal collocate.

In the case that a VnQ is followed by a pronoun we try to reveal what the pronoun refers to, and if it complies with our requirements for selected VnQs, we include such a sample in our data collection. This approach does not always show the original noun that the pronoun represents, so it is necessary to be aware of a possible deviation in the number of results. The samples where a VnQ collocates with a proper noun are also excluded from the research, as well as the cases where a VnQ is followed by a clause. We believe that such limitations will bring reliable data that will reflect the phenomenon of vague quantification objectively.

2.2.2 Listing selected VnQs and research data

Each VnQ is described in a paragraph which comprises of a definition of the quantifier from the online Oxford English Dictionary (OED). The definition should help us to distinguish deviations from the literal meaning of the VnQs. A short comment on the particular VnQ and its data collection is included, and specific features that seem typical for the particular VnQ are described. An important component of each comment is a list of nominal collocates that appear during the research. However, it is necessary to bear in mind that our intention is not to present an exhaustive list of all occurring collocates. Such an approach would be unnecessarily demanding, especially in the case of those VnQs with the highest rate of occurrence, e.g. *a bit of*, and it would also not be beneficial, for it would be redundant. The objective is to note down valuable observations that will help us to reach a conclusion. Therefore each paragraph is different, and its scope is dependent on the number and nature of selected samples.

Then there are usually two tables. The first ‘Frequency survey’ compares the number of total occurrences of the phrase and the number of texts containing the phrase in the corpus, and, most importantly, the number of VnQs in their figurative meaning, both in plural and singular. The proportion between the total number of occurrences and the number of selected VnQs is provided in the same table. The second table ‘Collocates of a VnQ’ lists nominal collocates appearing together with the VnQs. This chart highlights which of the collocates are most frequent and which appear with a singular or plural form, or together with both.

2.3 English VnQs and its collocates, data collected in the BNC

2.3.1 Atom/atoms of

The first VnQ on our list is an *atom*. The OED defines an *atom* as follows: “Originally... each of the particles of which matter is ultimately composed, aggregates of which constitute material objects.”²

We selected 11 samples representing the singular form of the VnQ in its figurative meaning. The list of the nominal collocates can be found in the second chart of this section (2). The most frequent collocate with “*atom of*” is “*her being*”. There are 5 phrases with the structure: *every atom of her* ___ (*being, charm, will-power*), the other 5 samples contain a combination of some form of negation that is followed by the indefinite article *an* or the determiner with a similar meaning to *one*. If we want to schematise the pattern we would get this formula: NEG *an/one atom of* ___ . Negation appeared in various forms (*hardly, didn't have, wasn't, shall not have*).

One of the VnQs is premodified by an adjective that highlights very low quantity:

- i) *the minutest atom of good manners* [BNC JY3 389]

Despite the higher number of occurrences of the plural form, only one sample was considered to match the set criteria:

- ii) *that would record the atoms of experience* [BNC FBD 992]

1. Frequency survey *atom/atoms of*

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Atom of</i>	39	33	11	1:3.54
<i>Atoms of</i>	85	42	1	1:85
Ratio <i>atom:atoms</i>	0.45:1	0.78:1	11:1	

² Oxford English Dictionary. 2008. “atom” Accessed 11th Nov 2012. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/12566?rskey=kcyWzu&result=1#eid>

2. Collocates of *atom/atoms of*

Phrase Query	Noun collocates	being(3)	truth(2)	charm (1)	interest (1)	manners (1)	strength (1)	will-power (1)	tenderness (1)	experience (1)
<i>atom of</i>		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-
<i>atoms of</i>		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+

2.3.2 *Bit/bits of*

The extended meaning of a *bit* that has been derived from the original meaning, “the portion of food bitten off at once,” is described in the OED as: “A small piece formed by cutting, breaking, or other process.”³ The definition of the term determines which of the samples were selected for further research. We excluded all samples where the nominal collocate refers to concrete, material substance that could be literally torn from the base.

Also, such samples where the phrase refers to a certain kind of person or somehow qualifies the situation instead of expressing quantity were removed (i), in order to collect only data representing the VnQs in their figurative meaning.

i) *I am a **bit of** a bastard* [BNC K22 3279]

As it was expected, a *bit* belongs to the most frequently used VnQs, and the BNC also showed many replies when our query was formed by the singular form of the VnQ. From all the samples we selected there were almost 3,000 cases which matched our criteria. The equally high number of nominal collocates, which followed the VnQ, varied a lot as well. So we decided to name only those whose occurrence exceeded 10 samples. They can be seen in the chart below (2).

The number of examples with the plural form of the VnQ was significantly lower. Obviously, this fact plays an important role in the number of reoccurring nominal collocates. *Information* was by far the most frequently appearing collocate, having been found in 53 selected samples. However, it would be a mistake if we had counted all the

³ *Oxford English Dictionary*. 2012. “*bit*” Accessed 3rd Dec 2012.
<http://oed.com/view/Entry/19517?rskey=7qXy0l&result=2&isAdvanced=false#eid>

samples containing the phrase *bits of information*, because *bit/bits* can be either a VnQ or the unit in which information is measured, in which case it expresses a very precise amount. Although we paid attention to context in the samples, a deviation in the collected data is possible. All the other collocates that appeared in combination with both singular and plural VnQ are noted in the second table (2).

Negation did not seem to be a typical feature of the selected utterances. On the other hand, the vast majority of the VnQs in their singular form was preceded by the indefinite article *a* or *an*. If we have a closer look at premodifiers, *little*, with its 318 samples, is definitely the most common one (i). The second most frequent premodifier was *wee* with 21 occurrences (ii). All other premodifiers occurred less than 10 times: *slight/slightest*, *tiny*, *small*, *least*, *teeny*. A very similar proportion applied to the plural form of the VnQ. *Little* was again the most common premodifier contributing to the expressed quantity, its number of appearances was followed by *small/smaller* and *least*.

Interestingly, in all the collected data we noticed 4 samples where the VnQ was premodified with an adjective that represents the opposite on an imaginary scale of intended meaning. Three of those samples included the adjective *great* (iii), the third one contained a pair of such adjectives – *great* and *big* (iv). We consider this finding quite peculiar as the combination contradicts the basic meaning of the VnQ. A possible explanation could be that the adjective *great* in these cases does not express quantity but quality, and that the speakers meant “very good” by *great*.

- i) *should be a little **bit of** interest* [BNC KSS 2938]
- ii) *have a wee **bit of** patience* [BNC CHG 1364]
- iii) *a great **bit of** advice* [BNC FSW 908]
- iv) *a great big **bit of** publicity* [BNC JP0 1058]

1. Frequency survey *bit/bits of*

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Bit of</i>	7088	1697	2956	1:2.40
<i>Bits of</i>	1190	692	219	1:5.43
Ratio <i>bit:bits</i>	5.96:1	2.45:1	13.50:1	

2. Collocates of *bit/bits of*

Phrase Query	Noun collocates	Luck (117)	Fun (107)	Money (108)	Problem (64)	Shock (62)	Information (104)	Help (39)	Trouble (34)	News (41)	Work (40)	Pain (31)	Joke (26)	Business (30)	History (25)	Difference (24)	Peace (24)	Practice (24)	Mystery (22)	Laugh (21)
<i>Bit of</i>		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
<i>Bits of</i>		+	-	+	-	-	+	+	-	+	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	+	-	-
Phrase Query	Noun collocates	Pressure (20)	Change (20)	Rest (18)	Good (17)	Advice (21)	Attention (16)	Surprise (16)	Cash (15)	Excitement (15)	Effort (14)	Interest (14)	Nuisance (14)	Break (13)	Job, jobs (17)	Sense (13)	Shame (13)	Support (13)	Strain (12)	Care(11)
<i>Bit of</i>		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
<i>Bits of</i>		-	+	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
Phrase Query	Noun collocates	Experience (11)	Headache (11)	Notice (11)	Stir (11)															
<i>Bit of</i>		+	+	+	+															
<i>Bits of</i>		-	-	-	-															

2.3.3 *Crumb/crumbs of*

OED's definition of a *crumb* is: "A small particle of anything; a grain, as of dust."⁴

The most frequent nominal collocate accompanying both the singular and plural form of the VnQ is *comfort* (i), which suggests that it is a commonly used phrase among language users. We found 12 samples composed of the VnQ and this collocate, in most cases the reappearing determiner was either *a* or *one*. What is worth noticing for our research is a double repetition of the premodifier *small*:

- i) *offering one small crumb of comfort* [BNC K5C 758]

⁴ Oxford English Dictionary. 2012. "crumb" Accessed 11th Nov 2012.

<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/45186?rskey=AQtMZL&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>

As was mentioned in the previous paragraph, the majority of the collected samples consist of the VnQ followed by *comfort*, all the other collocates occurred only once. One of the samples provided us with another example of monitored premodification:

ii) *those modest crumbs of comfort* [BNC CHC 445]

1. Frequency survey crumb/crums of

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Crumb of</i>	27	27	15	1:1.8
<i>Crums of</i>	39	37	19	1:2.05
Ratio <i>crumb:crums</i>	1:1.44	1:1.37	1:1.27	

2. Collocates of crumb/crums of

Phrase Query	Noun collocates	comfort(25)	funds(1)	life (1)	sense (1)	advantage(1)	approval(1)	education(1)	consideration (1)	resources(1)	Information (1)
<i>crumb of</i>		+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>crums of</i>		+	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+

2.3.4 Dash/dashes of

The OED mentions several definitions, one of them is “a violent blow, stroke, impact, or collision”⁵, but this is not relevant to its usage as a VnQ. Therefore, in our research, we count only the samples which include the figurative extension of the following meaning: “A small quantity (*of* something) thrown into or mingled as a qualifying admixture with something else; an infusion, touch, tinge.”⁶

Occurrences of this VnQ are rather rare. Also, most of the collocates appeared only once, this fact refers to both forms, singular and plural. As is obvious from the

⁵ Oxford English Dictionary. 2012. “dash” Accessed 12th Nov 2012.
<http://oed.com/view/Entry/47366?rskey=JNfOfI&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>

⁶ Oxford English Dictionary. 2012. “dash” Accessed 12th Nov 2012.
<http://oed.com/view/Entry/47366?rskey=JNfOfI&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>

collocation chart (2), there were only two reappearing collocates, and they combined with the singular form.

1. Frequency survey *dash/dashes of*

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Dash of</i>	96	80	26	1:3.69
<i>Dashes of</i>	12	12	5	1:2.4
Ratio <i>dash:dashes</i>	8:1	6.66:1	5.2:1	

2. Collocates of *dash/dashes of*

Phrase Query	Noun collocates	desperation(2)	personality(2)
<i>Dash of</i>		+	+
<i>Dashes of</i>		-	-

2.3.5 *Dollop/dollops of*

The OED defines the term as: “A patch, tuft, or clump of grass, weeds, etc. in a field.”⁷ Nowadays the word refers mainly to a small amount of food.

From the 10 extensions of the literal meaning of the VnQ in singular, 4 of them were premodified by an adjective expressing great size (*big, generous, liberal, great*):

- i) *a generous dollop of hype* [BNC K5F 1542]

The occurrence of the plural form was even scarcer. *Money* is the only collocate that was connected with both singular and plural VnQ, altogether 3 times. We noted one sample with the singular and 2 samples with the plural form.

1. Frequency survey *dollop/dollops of*

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Dollop of</i>	41	39	10	1:4.1
<i>Dollops of</i>	22	22	5	1:4.4
Ratio <i>dollop:dollops</i>	1.86:1	1.77:1	2:1	

⁷ Oxford English Dictionary. 2012. “dollop” Accessed 12th Nov 2012. <http://oed.com/view/Entry/56608?rskey=O86yqz&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>

2.3.6 *Dribble/dribbles of*

The OED describes a *dribble* as: “A small trickling and barely continuous stream; a small quantity or drop of liquid.”⁸

As is obvious from the first chart (1), this VnQ is very rare. The group of samples did not display any striking common features. The only reappearing item in the structures is the word *only* that preceded the VnQ in two cases:

- i) *only a dribble of money finds its way* [BNC CKW 255]

1. Frequency survey *dribble/dribbles of*

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Dribble of</i>	9	9	3	1:3
<i>Dribbles of</i>	7	6	0	7:0
Ratio <i>dribble:dribbles</i>	1.28:1	1.5:1	3:0	

2. Collocates of *dribble/dribbles of*

Phrase Query	Noun collocates	money(1)	statements(1)	tail-lights (1)
<i>Dribble of</i>		+	+	+
<i>Dribbles of</i>		-	-	-

2.3.7 *Drop/drops of*

The OED provides us with the definition: “The smallest quantity of liquid that falls or detaches itself, or is produced, in a spherical or pear-shaped form; a globule of liquid.”⁹ During the data collection we excluded all the samples containing the phrase “drop of” referring to a decrease in number.

⁸ Oxford English Dictionary. 2012. “dribble” Accessed 11th Nov 2012. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/57699?rskey=gN0Sie&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>
⁹ Oxford English Dictionary. 2012. “drop” Accessed 24th Nov 2012. <http://oed.com/view/Entry/57881?rskey=46ptLu&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>

The single form of the VnQ collocates more often with human feelings and abilities, e.g. *sympathy, intuition, cruelty*, less often we found collocates referring to more concrete entities such as *credit* or *money*. However, what both these groups share is the premodifier of the VnQ *last* that appeared 8 times in various modifications, e.g. *every last, that last, the last possible*. The only nominal collocate that had more than a single occurrence is *hatred*, such a combination was present two times:

- i) *spare him a **drop of** real hatred* [BNC HJC 1954]

Despite quite a great number of samples containing the phrase *drop of*, we found only 4 that would comply with the set criteria for a VnQ with a figurative meaning. None of the nominal collocates (*aid, revenue, serenity, sunlight*) follows the singular VnQ.

Negation appeared in 4 cases, all of which contained the singular form of the VnQ. Verbal negation prevailed in 3 samples (*couldn't spare, do not suppose, must not expend*) contrasting with the usage of “no” in only one case:

- ii) *troubled by no **drop of** imagination* [BNC HA2 276]

1. Frequency survey drop/drops of

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Drop of</i>	481	346	18	1:26.72
<i>Drops of</i>	269	149	4	1:67.25
Ratio <i>drop:drops</i>	1.79:1	2.32:1	4.5:1	

2.3.8 Fleck/flecks of

The OED brings this definition: “A patch, spot, or streak of colour, light, etc.”¹⁰

From the 7 samples where the singular form appears, there was one that was counted among our data:

- i) *there was a **fleck of** amusement* [BNC CJT 1919]

¹⁰ Oxford English Dictionary. 2012. “fleck” Accessed 25th Nov 2012.
<http://oed.com/view/Entry/71352?rskey=jo9gNQ&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>

Although the number of solutions is much higher in the case of the plural form of the VnQ, the number of suitable samples is just one, as it is in the singular. The results suggest that this VnQ occurs very rarely disregarding if it is singular or plural.

- ii) *vision with **flecks of** interpretative fancy* [BNC BMC 1125]

1. Frequency survey *fleck/flecks of*

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Fleck of</i>	7	6	1	1:7
<i>Flecks of</i>	40	37	1	1:40
Ratio <i>fleck:flecks</i>	1:5.71	1:6.17	1:1	

2.3.9 *Grain/grains of*

The term *grain* has many different meanings, the basic one is, according to the OED, following: “A single seed of a plant, esp. one which is small, hard, and roundish in form.” We looked for the figurative deviations of this meaning. We also excluded samples containing the word expressing the following meaning: “Quality, nature, temper; inclination, tendency.”¹¹ Samples with such a meaning were quite frequent:

- i) *against the natural **grain of** childhood* [BNC EVH 1341]

From 40 chosen samples, the following nominal collocates appeared only once in the combination with the VnQ in singular: *ambiguity, art, changes, comfort, content, excitement, humour, intelligence, jealousy, malice or hatred, sensitivity, socialism, trouble, unit*. More than a half of the group consists of the samples with *truth* as a nominal collocate, precisely 24 samples.

- ii) *more than a **grain of** truth* [BNC JXV 2312]

Majority of the VnQs is preceded by the indefinite article “a”, there are 33 such samples. Another premodifier that occurs in front of the VnQ, that is interesting for us, is the superlative form of the adjective *small*, which again emphasises the small quantity:

¹¹ Oxford English Dictionary. 2012. “grain” Accessed 25th Nov 2012.
<http://oed.com/view/Entry/80508?rskey=hUnKIP&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>

iii) *the smallest grain of humour* [BNC G13 407]

The plural form of the VnQ is less frequent, we found only 5 samples. *Truth* is again the most common collocate, it reappeared 3 times. A single occurrence was noted with the collocates *fight* and *genius*.

iv) *the last grains of fight* [BNC AC4 3429]

Negation appeared in 4 samples, therefore it created a minor group. *Truth* was collocated with the VnQ in 2 of those samples (*there is/was not a grain of truth*), in one case a preposition was used as a means of negation:

v) *without a grain of malice* [BNC HGG 1996]

1. Frequency survey *grain/grains of*

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Grain of</i>	179	152	40	1:4.48
<i>Grains of</i>	72	61	5	1:14.4
Ratio <i>grain:grains</i>	2.49:1	2.49:1	8:1	

2. Collocates of *grain/grains of*

Phrase Query	Noun collocates	Truth (27)	Sense (2)
<i>Grain of</i>		+	+
<i>Grains of</i>		+	-

2.3.10 *Handful/handfuls of*

This VnQ is in the OED defined as: “A quantity that fills the hand; as much or many as the hand can grasp or contain.”¹² In this case, the distinction between a figurative and literal meaning was rather straightforward, the context made the selecting process unambiguous.

¹² Oxford English Dictionary. 2012. “handful” Accessed 19th Nov 2012.

The singular form of the VnQ, in most cases, copied the structure with the indefinite article “*a*” immediately preceding the VnQ. We found only 88 samples that differed from this pattern, the VnQ was either preceded by the definite article “*the*” or the combination of “*a*” and another premodifier. If we focus on these premodifiers they create a group expressing very low quantity. Reappearing adjectives preceding the VnQ are: *small* (11 samples), *mere* (9 samples), and *tiny* (4 samples). Due to the high number of occurrences of the singular form, we decided to illustrate the nature of the most common collocations by naming here only the collocates that appeared 6 or more times, these are to be seen in the collocates chart (2). A striking feature of the collocates of the singular form is that a big proportion of them is represented by nouns referring to human beings. If we focus only on those examples from the chart, at least a half of them can refer to people. With some collocations there are more possibilities, e.g. *authorities* can either refer to people or institutions. A similar pattern is typical for all the collocates, even the less frequent ones.

On the other hand, the number of occurrences of the plural form is much smaller. We identified only 4 samples that contained the VnQ in its figurative meaning. Within these, all of the collocates were unique: *faithfuls*, *sleet*, *sunlight*, *utterances*.

1. Frequency survey *handful/handfuls of*

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Handful of</i>	1143	722	787	1:1.45
<i>Handfuls of</i>	73	63	4	1:18,25
Ratio <i>handful:handfuls</i>	15.66:1	11.46:1	196.75:1	

2. Collocates of *handful/handfuls of*

Phrase Query	Noun collocates	People (25)	Men (24)	Players (14)	Companies (11)	Sites (9)	Games (9)	Members (8)	Authorities (6)	Farmers(6)	Films (6)	Friends (6)	Countries (6)
<i>Handful of</i>		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
<i>Handfuls of</i>		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

2.3.11 *Iota/iotas of*

Here we quote the OED definition of an *iota* in its figurative meaning, because the literal meaning the dictionary mentions is a Greek letter. The VnQ is described as: “The least, or a very small, particle or quantity; an atom. (Mostly with negative expressed or implied.)”¹³

From the samples that the BNC showed after inserting the query, we excluded two of them (a clause that followed and *dust*) to gain data valuable for our research. More than a half of the selected samples, 5 samples, is composed of the following structure: MAKE AN/ONE IOTA OF DIFFERENCE. Other nominal collocates appeared only once (*abandonment, evidence, inconsistency, pain*). Despite the statement about the usual negative usage of the VnQ in the OED, we found only one such an example among the 9 samples:

- i) *there is not an iota of evidence* [BNC CR9 357]

1. Frequency survey *iota/iotas of*

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>iota of</i>	11	11	9	1:1.22
<i>iotas of</i>	0	0	0	0
Ratio <i>iota:iotas</i>	11:0	11:0		

2.3.12 *Jot/jots of*

The OED also describes the later version of the word that developed from an *iota*, which is a *jot*. The definition states: “The least letter or written part of any writing; hence, generally, the very least or a very little part, point, or amount; a whit. Often in the phrase jot or tittle...(Usually with negative expressed or implied.)”¹⁴

If we first focus on the singular form of the VnQ we find 2 nominal collocates with a double occurrence. Both of these collocates appeared also in the presence of the previous VnQ, *iota*, which only proves the fact that both VnQs are etymologically related. These reappearing collocates are *difference* and *evidence*. All the other

¹³ Oxford English Dictionary. 2012. “iota” Accessed 25th Nov 2012.
<http://oed.com/view/Entry/99349?redirectedFrom=iota#eid>

¹⁴ Oxford English Dictionary. 2012. “jot” Accessed 25th Nov 2012.
<http://oed.com/view/Entry/101701#eid40447892>

collocates appeared only once (*feelings, humour, information, legislation, self-pity, sympathy, training*). In 9 cases, the singular form was accompanied either by “a” or “one”. The only sample containing the definite article “the” also included a premodifier expressing small quantity:

- i) *the smallest **jot of** sympathy for me* [BNC H0F 2056]

This time we recognised 7 cases in which negation was somehow present, either in the verbal form (ii), or in the preposition “without” (iii), or in the determiner “no” (iv), or in the conjunction “nor”(v).

- ii) *have made not a **jot of** difference* [BNC AHN 986]
- iii) *without a **jot of** formal marketing* [BNC K59 1226]
- iv) *displayed no **jot of** his inner feelings* [BNC H8A 792]
- v) *nor one **jot of** self-pity* [BNC BN6 541]

The only sample complying with our criteria for the plural form of the VnQ is:

- vi) *in that web were **jots of** evidence* [BNC FS8 1062]

1. Frequency survey *jot/jots of*

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Jot of</i>	11	11	11	1:1
<i>Jots of</i>	2	2	1	1:2
Ratio <i>jot:jots</i>	5.5:1	5.5:1	11:1	

2. Collocates of *jot/jots of*

Phrase Query	Noun collocates	Evidence (3)	Difference (2)
<i>Jot of</i>		+	+
<i>Jots of</i>		+	-

2.3.13 *Mite/mites of*

The OED defines a *mite* in its literal meaning as: “Any small coin of low value, an extremely small unit of monetary value.”¹⁵ We selected only those samples that

¹⁵ Oxford English Dictionary. 2002. “mite” Accessed 2nd Mar 2013. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/120249?rskey=oIOeuo&result=2&isAdvanced=false#eid>

conformed with the definition of its figurative meaning: “a modest contribution of help, advice, etc.”¹⁶

The singular form of the quantifier appeared 6 times, it was always accompanied with a different nominal collocate: *deception, discipline, persuasion, sense, sentimentality, tribute*. All the collocates are united by the fact that they denote some abstract quality. Neither negation nor premodification were noted when searching for samples containing the singular quantifier. The quantifier was in most cases preceded by an indefinite article and once it was preceded by a possessive pronoun:

- i) *leave my mite of tribute* [BNC B1N 419]

The plural form can be found in the whole corpus twice, even though none of these samples complied with the set criteria for a vague non-numerical quantifier appearing in the figurative extension of its meaning.

1. Frequency survey *mite/mites of*

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Mite of</i>	12	10	6	1:2
<i>Mites of</i>	2	2	0	0
Ratio <i>mite:mites</i>	2:1	5:1	6:0	

2.3.14 *Morsel/morsels of*

OED describes a *morsel* as: “A bite or mouthful; a small piece of food, esp. of a specified kind.”¹⁷

The quantifier appeared only once in all different combinations with its collocates. Its usage is quite wide, it ranges from concrete items through a group of human beings to rather abstract matters: *advice, consolation, hope, scandal, story, support, warmth and finery*. Neither premodifiers that could be included in our research nor samples containing any negation were found. The only reappearing pattern which appeared were two samples containing the following structure: EVERY MORSEL OF _____

- i) *every morsel of support* [BNC B2T 1240]

¹⁶ Oxford English Dictionary. 2002. “mite” Accessed 2nd Mar 2013.
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/120249?rskey=oIOeuo&result=2&isAdvanced=false#eid>

¹⁷ Oxford English Dictionary. 2002. “morsel” Accessed 11th Nov 2012.
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/122421?rskey=2S5DrL&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>

The group of samples with the plural form is as various as the previous one. None of the nominal collocates reappears: *experience, intelligence, humanity, recollection, spending*. The same finding applies to premodifiers and negation.

ii) *the finer morsels of experience* [BNC EDJ 211]

1. Frequency survey *morsel/morsels of*

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Morsel of</i>	41	37	7	1:5.86
<i>Morsels of</i>	14	13	5	1:2.33
Ratio <i>morsel:morsels</i>	2.92:1	2.84:1	1.4:1	

2.3.15 *Pat/pats of*

The OED describes the meaning of a *pat* as: “A blow, a stroke, esp. with a flat or blunt implement or with the hand.”¹⁸

This VnQ is very rare, at least according to the data of our research. The only occurrence that we found was the singular form in the following sample:

i) *the most successful pat of the book* [BNC CCP 1449]

The plural form of the VnQ appeared 4 times, but only with a literal meaning, therefore we cannot count it among the selected data.

1. Frequency survey *pat/pats of*

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Pat of</i>	5	5	1	1:5
<i>Pats of</i>	4	4	0	0:4
Ratio <i>pat:pats</i>	5:4	5:4	1:0	

2.3.16 *Patch/patches of*

The OED defines the term simply: “A piece of material.”¹⁹ From our research we excluded all samples where the term referred to a particular piece of land, material etc.

¹⁸Oxford English Dictionary. 2005. “pat” Accessed 19th Nov 2012.
<http://oed.com/view/Entry/138661?rskey=SsthJt&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>
¹⁹Oxford English Dictionary. 2005. “patch” Accessed 26th Nov 2012.

We also excluded samples containing the idiomatic expression HIT A PATCH OF ___ (i). Subsequently, all the samples where a *patch of* referred to a period of time were discarded from our list.

- i) *hit a patch of impressive form* [BNC AKM 728]

The selection process left us with the following data. The VnQ in its singular form appeared in 4 cases. None of the nominal collocates was repeated (*atmosphere, consolidation, disappointment, sanity*). In one of the samples the VnQ was premodified by the adjective *small*:

- ii) *one small patch of disappointment* [BNC CDA 1474]

The occurrence of the plural form of the VnQ was even rarer. We assessed only 3 samples as suitable, these samples contain the following nominal collocates: *happiness, heaven, chaos*.

As the collected data suggest, a *patch* or *patches* in the function of a VnQ constitute rather a marginal group within all the occurrences of the word in the BNC.

1. Frequency survey *patch/patches of*

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Patch of</i>	429	290	4	1:107.25
<i>Patches of</i>	276	194	3	1:92
Ratio <i>patch:patches</i>	1.55:1	1.49:1	1.33:1	

2.3.17 *Pinch/pinches of*

The OED defines a *pinch* as: “A place or part at which something is or appears to be pinched.”²⁰ During the primary research we found 13 samples containing the following reappearing structure: FEEL/FEELING/FELT THE PINCH OF ___ , the nominal collocate usually refers to an economic term, e.g. *economic decay, economic policy, rationing*. Such phrases were discarded from the research because the expression *pinch* does not refer to quantity but refers to a painful period or experience. Even though it cannot be perceived as literal usage, the meaning of the term is connected with the physical act of pinching:

<http://oed.com/view/Entry/138685?rskey=yA4z4t&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>

²⁰Oxford English Dictionary. 2006. “pinch” Accessed 19th Nov 2012.

<http://oed.com/view/Entry/144067?rskey=zuekAE&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>

- i) *to feel the **pinch of** a national economic recession* [BNC EBT 314]

The second pattern which was spotted three times is: WITH A PINCH OF ____ (*logic, ingenuity, subjectivity*). In this case the expression *pinch* is used in the function of a VnQ. Together with the remaining samples there is no unifying area the collocates would refer to, the only common feature they share is that the nominal collocates are of abstract nature: *style, censorship, intrigue, cleverness and knowledge, pleading, inspiration*.

- ii) *with a **pinch of** igenuity* [BNC CH1 1278]

The only sample with the plural form of the VnQ is:

- iii) *add several **pinches of** disdain* [BNC A8X 790]

Negation does not occur among the samples, but premodification is present in two cases. Both samples share the same premodifier *large*, which, unlike the primary meaning of the VnQ itself, expresses big quantity:

- vii) *a large **pinch of** subjectivity* [BNC HRD 219]

1. Frequency survey *pinch/pinches of*

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Pinch of</i>	140	96	9	1:15.55
<i>Pinches of</i>	13	11	1	1:13
Ratio <i>pinch:pinches</i>	10.77:1	8.73:1	9:1	

2.3.18 *Scrap/scraps of*

OED's explanation of the entry says: "A remnant; a small detached piece; a piece very small by comparison with the whole; a fragmentary portion. Often with negative context = (not) the least piece."²¹

This VnQ tends to occur more often with certain nominal collocates, these can be found in the chart that follows this section (2). Those that occurred only once are named here: *agression, behaviour, criticism, dread, encouragement, fight and anger, help, integrity, intelligence, past, power and majesty, protest, self-confidence, trouble, understanding, value, vandalism*.

²¹Oxford English Dictionary. 2012. "scrap" Accessed 12th Nov 2012.

Approximately one third of the samples (14 entries) combining the singular form of the VnQ and a nominal collocate occurs in a negative sentence, which proves what the online dictionary states about the frequent negative occurrence.

i) *but it had not made a scrap of difference* [BNC ACW 343]

Premodifiers *every* or *each* form, together with the singular VnQ, another remarkable group within the collected results. There were 24 such samples found.

The samples containing the plural VnQ are more variable, it does not seem that there would be any reappearing pattern. Undoubtedly, *information* is the most common collocate, we noted 14 samples with the singular and 9 samples with the plural.

1. Frequency survey *scrap/scraps of*

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Scrap of</i>	178	147	50	1:3.74
<i>Scraps of</i>	203	164	32	1:6.34
Ratio <i>scrap:scraps</i>	0.87:1	0.89:1	1.56:1	

2. Collocates of *scrap/scraps of*

Phrase Query	Noun collocates	information(23)	evidence (9)	attention(2)	courage(2)	dialogue(4)	difference(2)	knowledge (2)	news (2)	life (2)
<i>Scrap of</i>		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-
<i>Scraps of</i>		+	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	+

2.3.19 *Scruple/scruples of*

The original meaning of the word is described in the OED as: “A small unit of weight or measurement.”²² In our research we looked for the figurative meaning that deviated from this original one. However, another meaning is worth bearing in mind when searching for samples, and that is: “A thought or circumstance that troubles the

<http://oed.com/view/Entry/173314?rskey=B9VfYt&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>

²² Oxford English Dictionary. 2012. “scruple” Accessed 26th Nov 2012.

<http://oed.com/view/Entry/173743?rskey=92JMEt&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>

mind or conscience; a doubt, uncertainty or hesitation in regard to right and wrong, duty, propriety.”²³

Even though there appeared only 2 samples containing the phrase *scruple of*, one of these was excluded, because it was a clear example of the second above-mentioned meaning, therefore it cannot be counted among our results, as there is no shift in its meaning from literal to figurative. The disqualified sample states:

- i) *without any scruple of doubt* [BNC HPW 1463]

On the other hand, the sample that enriched our list of VnQs is:

- ii) *an extra scruple of endurance* [BNC CCS 419]

Despite the higher number of solutions of the phrase query containing the plural form of the term, none of the samples presented the function of a VnQ.

1. Frequency survey *scruple/scruples of*

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Scruple of</i>	2	2	1	1:2
<i>Scruples of</i>	8	7	0	0:8
Ratio <i>scruple:scruples</i>	1:4	1:3.5	1:0	

2.3.20 *Shred/shreds of*

The OED defines a *shred* as: “A fragment or strip of textile material cut or torn off; one or more fibres torn from a piece of cloth; a small piece of cloth, a fragment of clothing.”²⁴

There is a wide range of different nominal collocates that appeared only once: *belief, case, claim, content, decency, defiance, detachment, embarrassment, feeling, help, humanity, justification, obligation, reputation, self-pity, self-preservation, sleep, sympathy, temperament, thought, truth, use*. Those collocates that were more frequent are listed in the second table (2). The structure “A SHRED OF EVIDENCE” and its varieties

²³ Oxford English Dictionary. 2012. “scruple” Accessed 26th Nov 2012.
<http://oed.com/view/Entry/173744?rskey=92JMEt&result=2&isAdvanced=false#eid>

²⁴ Oxford English Dictionary. 2012. “shred” Accessed 11th Nov 2012.
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/178806?rskey=ubxyAO&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>

are by far the most frequent collocations, except for one single occurrence, all of the combinations “VnQ of evidence” appeared within a negatively formulated sentence.

- i) *he had not a **shred of** evidence* [BNC H92 3530]

While the singular form of the VnQ shows us two premodifiers that emphasise the expressed small quantity, these are *merest* and *slightest* (this premodifier appeared twice and both times with the collocate *evidence*), the plural form was not accompanied by any premodifier that would be interesting for our research. Occurrences of negation with the plural were not significant, we found only one such an example:

- ii) *He had no **shreds of** status clinging to him* [BNC CBN 1257]

1. Frequency survey *shred/shreds of*

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Shred of</i>	69	60	57	1:1.6
<i>Shreds of</i>	63	53	26	1:2.42
Ratio <i>Shred:shreds</i>	1.09:1	1.13:1	2.30:1	

2. Collocates of *shred/shreds of*

Phrase Query	Noun collocates	evidence(26)	hope(3)	doubt (3)	proof (2)	truth(2)	Dignity (3)	Life (2)
<i>Shred of</i>		+	+	+	+	+	-	-
<i>Shreds of</i>		-	-	+	-	-	+	+

2.3.21 *Smidgen/smidgens of*

The OED definition of a *smidgen* is very simple: “A tiny amount, a trace; a very small person or thing.”²⁵ In our research we chose only those samples containing a nominal collocate referring to some abstract rather than concrete or material quality. This criterion led us to a collection of 5 samples with the singular VnQ. The BNC did not show any sample with the plural form of the VnQ.

²⁵Oxford English Dictionary. 2012. “smidgen” Accessed 25th Nov 2012.

Within the 5 chosen samples all of the nominal collocates appeared only once: *counterinductivism, intelligence, repartee, power, tact*, and all of these follow the pattern where the VnQ is immediately preceded by the indefinite article “a”.

- i) *only a smidgen of intelligence* [BNC ABH 3155]

1. Frequency survey *smidgen/smidgens of*

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Smidgen of</i>	7	7	5	1:1.4
<i>Smidgens of</i>	0	0	0	0
Ratio <i>smidgen:smidgens</i>	7:0	7:0	5:0	

2.3.22 *Snip/snips of*

The OED defines a *snip* as: “A small piece or slip, esp. of cloth, cut off or out; a shred.”²⁶

The only sample matching our criteria with the singular form of the VnQ follows this paragraph (i). We did not notice any example with the VnQ in its plural. This VnQ belongs to the group of rare VnQs.

- i) *this unwelcome snip of observation* [BNC GUE 1064]

1. Frequency survey *snip/snips of*

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Snip of</i>	9	9	1	1:9
<i>Snips of</i>	1	1	0	0:1
Ratio <i>snip:snips</i>	9:1	9:1	1:0	

2.3.23 *Snippet/snippets of*

This word is a diminutive derived from the word *a snip*, which we focused on in the previous section. This time the OED describes the meaning as: “A small piece cut off; a small fragment or portion.”²⁷

<http://oed.com/view/Entry/182587?redirectedFrom=smidgen#eid>

²⁶ Oxford English Dictionary. 2013. “snip” Accessed 2nd Mar 2013.

<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/183279?rskey=MkWtAT&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>

²⁷Oxford English Dictionary. 2013. “snippet” Accessed 26th Nov 2013.

<http://oed.com/view/Entry/183297?redirectedFrom=snippet#eid>

We found 11 samples where *snippet* appears as a VnQ, 5 times the VnQ combined with *information*. This phrase is also mentioned in the OED entry. The other samples are of various natures, the nominal collocates refer to different entities (*conversation, history, intelligence knowledge, sight, theme*). We cannot find any reappearing premodifiers which would form a specific group within the samples. The only finding worth-mentioning in our research is an adjectival premodifier that highlights the small quantity that is expressed by the VnQ:

i) *that little snippet of knowledge* [BNC HWM 543]

The occurrence of the VnQ in its plural form is more frequent, there are 35 samples that can be involved in our research. The nominal collocate *information* is again the most common one, the combination occurred 16 times. There are several collocates that appear twice, all of these are named in the second chart (2), A single occurrence was spotted in the case of the following nouns: *activities, banter, ethnography, folk lore, law, science, stories, talk, vocal, words*. The same premodifier *little* appears twice. No other patterns within this group are significant.

ii) *little snippets of their talk* [BNC C8D 3303]

1. Frequency survey *snippet/snippets of*

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Snippet of</i>	15	15	11	1:1.36
<i>Snippets of</i>	50	47	34	1:1.47
Ratio <i>snippet:snippets</i>	1:3.3	1:3.13	1:3.09	

2. Collocates of *snippet/snippets of*

Phrase Query	Noun collocates	Information (21)	Conversation(3)	Humour (2)	News and gossip (2)	Things (2)
<i>Snippet of</i>		+	+	-	-	-
<i>Snippets of</i>		+	+	+	+	+

2.3.24 *Speck/specks of*

The OED defines a *speck* as: “A small spot of a different colour or substance to that of the material or surface upon which it appears; a minute mark or discoloration.”²⁸

We found 9 examples with the figurative meaning of the VnQ. In 5 of these samples, exactly the same phrase reappeared (i). All of them come from the same source, therefore they cannot be assessed as a commonly used phrase.

- i) *frogs had not a speck of luck* [BNC KBW 16302]

The rest of the nominal collocates (*accent; nothingness; sense, experience or knowledge; trouble*) were in 3 cases a part of a sentence with some kind of negation present (verb, adjective, or adverb). This brings us to the conclusion that in the case of this VnQ negatively formed sentences prevail over semantically unmarked positive sentences.

- ii) *we won't have a speck of trouble* [BNC G3G 422]

1. Frequency survey *speck/specks of*

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Speck of</i>	50	43	9	1:5.55
<i>Specks of</i>	37	35	0	0:37
Ratio <i>speck:specks</i>	1.35:1	1.23:1	9:0	

2.3.25 *Spot/spots of*

The OED defines a *spot* in its figurative meaning as: “A moral stain, blot, or blemish; a stigma or disgrace.”²⁹ This is the first entry that appears when a *spot* is looked up. From our research we excluded those samples where a *spot* represented a place in its physical meaning, and we also excluded two idiomatic expressions that reappeared several times, i.e. *a high spot of, a blind spot of*:

- i) *high spot of many a visitor's trip* [BNC CAU 1113]
ii) *You have a blind spot of some kind* [BNC EV1 2289]

²⁸ Oxford English Dictionary. 2012. “speck” Accessed 25th Nov 2012.
<http://oed.com/view/Entry/186027?rskey=Xgqnto&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>

²⁹ Oxford English Dictionary. 2012. “spot” Accessed 6th Dec 2012.
<http://oed.com/view/Entry/187518?rskey=tomo3h&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>

Another samples that were disqualified from the data collection were again highly idiomatic set expressions that do not represent the function of vague quantifying, their meaning is very similar:

iii) *He's run into a **spot of** trouble* [BNC APU 2012]

iv) *There's a **spot of** bother at the moment* [BNC GWB 253]

We found only two nominal collocates that reappeared together with the singular VnQ, in the case of the collocate *work* it happened 6 times, *lunch* was repeated 4 times. In almost all samples the VnQ was immediately preceded by the indefinite article *a*. All the samples that were shown when we searched for the plural form represented a literal meaning, therefore none of them was chosen.

v) *Other queries involve a **spot of** detective work* [BNC A16 1293]

vi) *have a **spot of** lunch if you'd like* [BNC KP8 2839]

1. Frequency survey *spot/spots of*

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Spot of</i>	282	231	68	1:4.15
<i>Spots of</i>	97	83	0	0:97
Ratio <i>spot:spots</i>	2.91:1	2.78:1	68:0	

2. Collocations of *spot/spots of*

Phrase Query	Noun collocates	Work (6)	Lunch (4)
<i>Spot of</i>		+	+
<i>Spots of</i>		-	-

2.3.26 *Sprinkle/sprinkles of*

The OED defines a *sprinkle* as “an (or the) act of sprinkling; a quantity which is sprinkled.”³⁰

Just one sample containing the VnQ in its figurative meaning was found, which implies that the VnQ occurs only very seldom.

- i) *fiction with a **sprinkle of fact*** [BNC B7D 1291]

1. Frequency survey *sprinkle/sprinkles of*

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Sprinkle of</i>	6	6	1	1:6
<i>Sprinkles of</i>	1	1	0	0:1
Ratio <i>sprinkle:sprinkles</i>	6:1	6:1	1:0	

2.3.27 *Sprinkling/sprinklings of*

Obviously, this VnQ has been derived from the verb “sprinkle” as well as the previous entry. The OED’s description of the word states: “A small quantity sprinkled or to be sprinkled.”³¹

From all the selected samples with the singular form of the VnQ the amount of those preceded by the indefinite article “a” prevails, only 6 occurrences use the definite article “the”. A minor number of VnQs is premodified by an adjective (*fair, generous, liberal, good, great*). Nominal collocates vary, but, generally, we can claim that apart from inanimate objects and abstract entities, a significant proportion of the collocates refers to a group of people:

- i) *with a **sprinkling of manufacturers*** [BNC CLN 1052]

The plural form appeared only once. However, it did not match our criteria for a VnQ in its figurative meaning, therefore it was excluded from the research:

- ii) *there were **sprinklings of silver at this temples*** [BNC JYD 853]

³⁰ Oxford English Dictionary. 2012. “sprinkle” Accessed 24th Nov 2012.
<http://oed.com/view/Entry/187790?rskey=PNxNKM&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>

³¹ Oxford English Dictionary. 2012. “sprinkling” Accessed 24th Nov 2012.
<http://oed.com/view/Entry/187797?rskey=rCQ9Uc&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>

1. Frequency survey *sprinkling/sprinklings of*

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Sprinkling of</i>	113	101	53	1:2.13
<i>Sprinklings of</i>	1	1	0	0:1
Ratio <i>sprinkling:sprinklings</i>	113:1	101:1	53:0	

2. Collocates of *sprinkling/sprinklings of*

Phrase Query	Noun collocates	Hair, hairs (5)	Men (4)
<i>Sprinkling of</i>		+	+
<i>Sprinklings of</i>		-	-

2.3.28 *Touch/touches of*

The OED defines a *touch* as follows: “The action or an act of touching (with the hand, finger, or other part of the body); exercise of the faculty of feeling upon a material object.”³²

The selected samples are only those that appeared in the figurative meaning of the VnQ, therefore we excluded all samples containing a nominal collocate that would imply physical touching. As is obvious from the number of collected samples, this VnQ appears frequently. A large majority of the samples consists of the VnQ preceded by the indefinite article “a”, we found only 73 samples that differ from such a structure. Most of such VnQs are preceded by the definite article “the”, then also by possessive and demonstrative pronouns. Apart from other premodifiers, we noted several ones that diminish the small quantity expressed by the VnQ, these adjectives are: *faint*, *light* (2), *little* (6), *slight* and *wee*.

- i) *a wee touch of the flu* [BNC H5R 16]

³² Oxford English Dictionary. 2012. “touch” Accessed 24th Nov 2012.
<http://oed.com/view/Entry/203876?rskey=jBHBN6&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>

Otherwise, the group of the samples was numerous, and the samples varied a lot, in the collocation chart (2) we display only the collocates whose occurrence exceed 4 samples in the BNC. The plural form of the VnQ is rarer in comparison with the singular, we selected 35 utterances containing the VnQ. *Humour* is the most frequently reappearing nominal collocate, there are 6 such samples. Similarly, there also occurred some of the premodifiers that we mentioned in the previous article, *little* is the most common one with 2 repetitions, then there is a single occurrence of *light* and *subtle*.

ii) *there's little touches of humour* [BNC K60 1921]

1. Frequency survey *touch/touches of*

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Touch of</i>	976	577	470	1:2.08
<i>Touches of</i>	66	53	35	1:1.89
Ratio <i>touch:touches</i>	14.79:1	10.89:1	13.43:1	

2. Collocations of *touch/touches of*

Phrase Query	Noun collocates	Class (28)	Luxury (13)	Humour (18)	Glamour (11)	Elegance (10)	Irony (10)	Frost (8)	Style (8)	Flu (7)	Pride (6)	Magic (6)	Melancholy (5)
<i>Touch of</i>		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
<i>Touches of</i>		+	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	+

2.3.29 *Trace/traces of*

The literal meaning of the word *trace* is described as: “The track made by the passage of any person or thing, whether beaten by feet or indicated in any other way.”³³

In our search we looked for the VnQs with the following figurative meaning: “A non-

³³ Oxford English Dictionary. 2012. “trace” Accessed 6th Dec 2012.
<http://oed.com/view/Entry/204174?rskey=wX5aQ0&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>

material indication or evidence of the presence or existence of something, or of a former event or condition; a sign, mark.”³⁴

If we focus on the singular form, in the table with nominal collocates (2) there are included those collocates whose frequency was 4 samples or more. The range of the collocates is really wide as is the variety of premodifiers. From those premodifiers that we are interested in, the adjective *faint/faintest* appeared 9 times, *slight/slightest* 5 times, *little* 3 times, and a single occurrence of *smallest and barely noticeable* was noticed.

i) *Without the slightest **trace of** uncertainty* [BNC JY2 2279]

Negation plays an important role in the samples with *trace of*. From all the 248 occurrences, almost a half of them, i.e. 119 samples, are represented by some form of a negative utterance: *is/was not, never, with no, without a/any, can't find*. Also, two samples contain *scarcely* whose meaning is very close to a negative one.

ii) *to see no **trace of** sympathy* [BNC JY5 281]

iii) *with scarcely a **trace of** an Algerian accent* [BNC C8S 2378]

The number of plural forms of the VnQ is quite high, a similar finding about the wide range of nominal collocates applies again. Differences that we found in comparison with the singular form are, firstly, that samples with negative meanings are rare, they did not create any significant group, and, secondly, that no adjectives premodifying and contributing to quantification did occur.

iv) ***traces of** wantonness persist* [BNC AB3 354]

1. Frequency survey *trace/traces of*

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Trace of</i>	542	351	248	1:2.19
<i>Traces of</i>	561	370	119	1:4.71
Ratio <i>trace:traces</i>	1:1.04	1:1.05	2.08:1	

³⁴ Oxford English Dictionary. 2012. “trace” Accessed 6th Dec 2012.
<http://oed.com/view/Entry/204174?rskey=wX5aQ0&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>

2. Collocations of *trace/traces of*

Phrase Query	Noun collocates	Accent (22)	Smile (13)	Irony (8)	Cynicism (5)	Humour (6)	Emotion (4)	Identity (4)
<i>Trace of</i>		+	+	+	+	+	+	+
<i>Traces of</i>		+	+	-	-	+	+	+

2.3.30 *Trifle/trifles of*

The original meaning of the word is described in the OED as: “A false or idle tale, told (a) to deceive, cheat, or befool, (b) to divert or amuse; a lying story, a fable, a fiction; a jest or joke; a foolish, trivial, or nonsensical saying.” We looked for the samples containing the word in the function of a VnQ that are derived from the following OED definition: “A matter of little value or importance.”³⁵

There was only one sample with the singular form of the VnQ found:

- i) *the trifle of the gesture was ingored* [BNC CJT 1017]

Within the group containing the plural form, two samples matched our criteria. What is worth mentioning is that the proportion of the plural and singular form is in favour of the plural, which does not happen very often. Usually the samples with singular forms of the VnQ are more frequent. The two samples we selected are:

- ii) *unreported trifles of this Important Democratic Process* [BNC A81 25]
 iii) *unconsidered trifles of archaeology* [BNC BNK 517]

1. Frequency survey *trifle/trifles of*

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Trifle of</i>	2	2	1	1:2
<i>Trifles of</i>	4	4	2	1:2
Ratio <i>trifle:trifles</i>	1:2	1:2	1:2	

³⁵ Oxford English Dictionary. 2012. “trifle” Accessed 25th Nov 2012.
<http://oed.com/view/Entry/205961?rskey=PAHR3E&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>

2.4 The Czech National Corpus

Before we proceed to the description of the data collection of Czech VnQs, it is necessary to introduce the Czech National Corpus (Český národní korpus, CNK) where the second part of the research continues.

The basic concept of the CNK is very similar to the BNC. The institution that is responsible for the establishment of the CNK, Ústav českého národního korpusu, started its project in 1994, and since that year they have been building the corpus. Interestingly, in the same year the main work on the BNC finished, which clearly shows that the Czech initiative is significantly younger than its British predecessor. The project is a part of an academic activity of the Philosophical Faculty of Charles University in Prague.

The whole corpus is composed of several sub-corpora, such as: synchronic corpora of written and spoken language, diachronic corpora, and a parallel corpus. Every section of the CNK contains a different number of words, the greatest part is represented by the synchronic corpus of written language SYN which comprises of 130 million³⁶ words, but, because it is a collection of previously established corpora, it is not a referential corpus, in other words, the proportion of various texts is not balanced, therefore data gained from there would not create a representative sample of language. In our research we will work in the corpus SYN 2005 which contains approximately the same number of words as the BNC - 100 million³⁷. Another reason for this decision is that Tárníková also used this corpus in her research. We are aware of the drawback that results from this decision - SYN 2005 represents only written language, unlike the BNC. Unfortunately, the CNK does not provide us with a better option where we could conduct our research to make the research more similar to the one in the BNC.

As Xaira enabled us to collect data from the BNC, the CNK team developed a searching tool, its name is Benito and it looks up and displays answers to inserted queries. We should not forget to stress that the author of this paper is registered in the CNK, therefore we have full access to the corpus. Unregistered users are limited in their access.

³⁶ Český národní korpus. 2012. "Dostupné korpusy." Accessed 7th Dec 2012. <http://ucnk.ff.cuni.cz/struktura.php>

³⁷ Český národní korpus. 2012. "Dostupné korpusy." Accessed 7th Dec 2012. <http://ucnk.ff.cuni.cz/struktura.php>

2.5 Czech vague non-numerical quantifiers

2.5.1 *Extension of the Czech part of the research*

To extend the scope of the original study we focus on the vague non-numerical quantifiers expressing (– for quantity) domain also within the Czech part of the research. The VnQs we search for are gained from the 4 volumes of *English Czech dictionary (Velký anglicko-český slovník)* by Karel Heis and Břetislav Hodek. The primary procedure is to look up the VnQs we studied in the first English part in the dictionary and search for their possible translations in the CNK. As the author of the present paper is a native speaker of Czech, it is possible that the dictionary entries are enriched by derived diminutives and other derived forms that the author knows. Our intention is to create chains of Czech VnQs that are etymologically related and study such forms in the CNK.

As was mentioned above, some differences between the two languages may be predicted on the basis of their typological nature. English belongs to the category of analytic languages in comparison to more synthetic Czech. Nevertheless, we are fully aware that both languages share some features which cannot be classified as strictly analytic or synthetic. We expect that Czech contains more quantifiers which are derived from one expression due to the abundance of applicable suffixes, we will attempt to find such chains of related quantifiers. Tárnyiková admits that this phenomenon is related to the typological nature but she emphasises that “a considerably higher saturation of the (– for quantity) domain” should be attributed to “shared preferences of language users” (Tárnyiková 2010, 82).

2.5.2 *Morphological and syntactic characteristics of Czech VnQs*

Differences between the two languages are manifested also in the formal realisation of VnQs. As was described in section 2.1.2 *Structural characteristics of VnQs*, English VnQs usually follow the structure of pseudopartitives:

- i) a _____ of _____ *a bag of humbugs* [BNC CAS 1298]
- ii) _____s of _____ *bags of talent* [BNC ACE 2135]

Such a structure consists of a complex noun phrase which contains a prepositional phrase. Czech VnQs conform to a different structural pattern. Ludmila

Veselovská in her paper “Agreement Patterns of Czech Group Nouns and Quantifiers” (2000) and in the related note “Poznámka k charakteristice nominálních kvantifikátorů” (2001) provides their readers with an elaborate background and classification of group nouns and quantifiers. She also describes structural characteristics of Czech nominal quantifiers, therefore we will use these papers to outline basic classification and morphological and syntactic features of group nouns and quantifiers.

Veselovská (2010, 1) distinguishes three classes of quantifiers in Czech. All of these are complex nominal structures that are all also characterised as pseudo-partitive constructions, here we can see a similarity with English VnQs. The first class is called “group nouns” Q_N (this class is labelled “nominal quantifiers” in the above-mentioned note from 2001 which is written in Czech). Group nouns are differentiated from lexical nouns mainly by their function of vague quantification. Unlike lexical nouns, group nouns are perceived as a closed class, which limits the number of nouns which appear in this function, therefore not a great deal of language creativity in unusual collocations can be expected. Examples from the paper clearly illustrate that this class of expressions is what we look for in our research: *trocha* ‘a bit of’, *spousta* ‘plenty of’, *většina* ‘most of’, *hromada* ‘a pile of’, *řada* ‘a number of’, *pár* ‘a few’, *fůra* ‘a heap of’ (2000, 1).

Apart from the group nouns, there are two other classes defined, the first are “existential quantifiers” Q_{GEN} (e.g. *mnoho* ‘many/much’, *málo* ‘little/few’, *dost* ‘enough’). The second are “universal quantifiers” Q_A (*všichni* ‘all’, *oba* ‘both’, cardinals). The classification in this extent is sufficient for our current needs.

In this paragraph attention is paid to some morphological and syntactic characteristics of group nouns as they are described in the paper “Poznámka k charakteristice nominálních kvantifikátorů” (Veselovská 2001). This work brings a very detailed comparison of group nouns/nominal quantifiers with the other two types of quantifiers in a range of various morphological, syntactic, and semantic processes. Veselovská states that, due to the function of indefinite quantification, primarily nominal expressions lose their denotative character (2001, 1). Most of the quantifiers can also be used as standard nouns, however some of the relations within a higher unit, such as a sentence, can vary according to the current function. This statement can be exemplified by a comparison of a complex noun phrase (NP) expressing quantity with a NP in its nominal function. In both cases the initial element, the head of a NP, represents the

complex externally, for example it governs the morphological form of a predicate (specifically, the morphological ending in the following examples):

- i) věž *hradu se tyčí-la* věž – a head, nominal function
(a tower of castle dominated)
- ii) láhev *vína stá-la* láhev – a head, quantitative function
(a bottle of wine sat)

The head also determines the nominal case of the whole complex, and, secondly, the head shapes the case of the postmodifier of the following noun. In both examples (i), (ii) it is genitive. Another area that is studied in connection with the formal and semantic characteristics of quantifiers is the discrepancy between formal and semantic valency of a verb. While the formal properties of a verb are ruled by the head, semantically it can be the following noun, the post-Q, which determines the interpretation of the complex that is linked with the verb (2001, 3):

- iii) *Vypili jsme láhev rumu* ([we] drank a bottle of rum)

The relation between *vypili* and *láhev* is formal, it involves the formal valency of a verb, the predicate determines which case of the head is needed. However, semantic valency of a verb determines that liquid must be present to make the sentence complete and meaningful.

Not to cause confusion regarding used terminology, it is primarily Tárnyiková's terminology that is used in the following chapters, as it is also in the chapters dealing with English VnQs. Veselovská's papers bring some linguistic terms describing grammatical categories which refer to the same units as terms used by prof. Tárnyiková, e.g. a post-quantifier – a collocate. However, Tárnyiková's terminology is preferred in order to keep coherence between the original and the current study.

2.5.3 *Search in the CNK and criteria for VnQs*

Due to the above-mentioned characteristics of Czech quantifiers that are closely related to the different typological nature of Czech, the search in the CNK is also affected by these factors. The structure of a phrase query in the CNK is adapted to Czech VnQs. The original form of a phrase query in the BNC *VnQ of* is abandoned, because a prepositional phrase that would follow a VnQ is not typical for Czech VnQs, unlike

the pseudopartitive structures containing VnQs in English. A Czech query consists only of the expression that is being studied, the specific VnQ, and also of the term *lemma*, because the search programme Benito enables us to look up a lemma of a certain word, which means that samples containing all different forms (singular and plural, different cases) of VnQs are displayed. The whole query bears the following structure in Benito:

[lemma= "VnQ"]

Then the procedure is very similar to our approach in the preceding English part. We manually select samples which match our criteria on the figurative usage of VnQs. Subsequently we focus on similar features which we also noticed when we dealt with the English samples:

- 1) paradigmatic alternations of VnQs
- 2) following nominal collocates
- 3) premodification and negation
- 4) frequency of occurrence

We do not expect to reveal many adjectival premodifiers that would influence vague quantification, because this function is substituted by the usage of suffixes in Czech. Nevertheless, we want to keep the research objective, therefore we endeavour not to be influenced by false presumptions.

2.6 Czech VnQs and their collocates, data collected in the CNK

2.6.1 *Drobek, drobet, drobeček, drobínek, drobítek*

The literal translation of the word *drobek* is a crumb. The chain of words that underwent our research in the CNK is composed of 5 different forms. *Drobet* showed to appear most frequently in the corpus, even though it is the form *drobek* which had the highest ratio when comparing number of solutions with the number of VnQs.

Again, we focused only on those samples where the VnQ appeared in its figurative meaning, therefore all the nominal collocates were either abstract entities, such as *láska* (love), *kuráž* (courage), or entities that usually does not appear in the shape of a crumb, such as *vzduch* (air), *světlo* (light). Not many of the collocates reappeared, all the reoccurring ones are listed in the chart below.

No distinct negative pattern was found among the samples. If we look closely at adjectival premodifiers, we found one sample where the premodifier indicates almost an imperceptible quantity:

- i) *nejnepatrnější drobečky vůle* (imperceptible crumbs of will) [CNK adresa0:7:38]

1. Frequency survey *drobek / drobet / drobeček / drobínek / drobítek*

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Drobek + N</i>	29	-	7	1:4.14
<i>Drobet + N</i>	76	-	34	1:2.24
<i>Drobeček + N</i>	29		10	1:2.9
<i>Drobínek + N</i>	2		2	1:1
<i>Drobítek + N</i>	1		0	0:1

2. Collocations of *drobek / drobet / drobeček*

Phrase Query	Noun collocates	Lásky (3)	Rozumu (3)	Informací (2)	Vzduchu (2)	Života (2)
<i>Drobek +N</i>		+	-	+	+	-
<i>Drobet + N</i>		+	+	+	+	+
<i>Drobeček +N</i>		-	-	-	-	-

2.6.2 *Hrst, hrstka, hrstička*

Our next entry contains three different forms, two of them were derived from the basic form *hrst* which means a handful in English.

Hrst and *hrstka* again shows the discrepancy between the number of solutions and the number of VnQs, *hrst* usually occurred in its literal meaning while *hrstka* was much more frequently used as a VnQ.

The range of nominal collocates was very wide. In most cases, *hrst* was combined with collocates denoting inanimate objects. On the other hand, vast majority of samples with *hrstka* was collocated with different expressions for human beings.

- i) *ale celé hrsti naděje* (but whole handfuls of hope) [CNK vzdech:1:5114]
- ii) *dobyla hrstka vojáků* (conquered a handful of soldiers) [CNK zeme00:52:9]

This time we noticed some premodifiers. The basic form *hrst* was premodified by the adjectives *plná* (full) and *celá* (whole), which, to a certain extent, retains the original meaning of a hand full of something. The most common adjectival premodifier preceding the form *hrstka* was *malá* (little), we noticed at least 6 occurrences. Another premodifier contributing to the quantity expressed was *nepatrná* (imperceptible). On a scale ranging from small to great quantity, we also found one opposite to the previously described adjectives which is *velká* (big), such a sample was unique in the research of this chain of related VnQs:

- iii) *pěkně velká hrstka ufonů* (a pretty big handful of aliens) [CNK refl0147:64:1]

1. Frequency survey *hrst / hrstka / hrstička*

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Hrst</i> + N	607	-	25	1:24.28
<i>Hrstka</i> + N	476	-	389	1:1.22
<i>Hrstička</i> + N	5		2	1:2.5

2. Collocates of *hrst* / *hrstka* / *hrstička*

Phrase Query	Noun collocates	Lidi (76)	Diváků (12)	Mužů (12)	Intelektuálů (8)	Naděnců (6)	Vojáků (6)	Přátel (5)	Jedinců (4)	Rebelů (4)
<i>Hrst</i> +N		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Hrstka</i> + N		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
<i>Hrstička</i> +N		+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

2.6.3 *Kapka, kapánek, kapička*

The present set of VnQs literally refers to a drop of liquid. Due to the very high number of samples containing the phrase *kapka* + N, we studied only a random set 500 pieces, as our main intention is not to quote here a full list of all possible collocates but to collect data which will enable us to outline a valid comparison with English VnQs.

The list of nominal collocates is diverse, only in the case of the word *kapka* we noticed reappearing collocates, these are named in the table below (2). All the three forms in their figurative meaning collocate with either abstract qualities or with concrete entities which usually do not appear in a liquid state.

- i) *kapka* peněz za koláčky (a drop of money for cakes) [CNK čtyřicet:1:2675]
- ii) *se zachvěla kapička* vzdoru (a drop of defiance shivered) [CNK hyeny:1:4680]

Neither negative utterances, nor adjectivally premodified samples form any significant group within the data collection.

1. Frequency survey *kapka/kapánek/kapička*

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Kapka</i> + N	1427		37 from 500	1:13.51
<i>Kapánek</i> + N	13	-	2	1:6.5
<i>Kapička</i> + N	226		6	1:37.67

2. Collocates of *kapka/kapánek/kapička*

Phrase Query	Noun collocates	Peněz (3)	Štěstí (3)	Života (3)	Energie (2)	Ironie (2)	Světla (2)	Rozumu (2)
<i>Kapka +N</i>		+	+	+	+	+	+	+
<i>Kapánek + N</i>		-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Kapička+N</i>		-	-	-	-	-	-	-

2.6.4 *Krapet, krapítek, krapánek, krapínek*

Krapet and its diminutives have a very similar meaning to the previous entry *kapka*, a drop. Although, in comparison with *kapka*, it appears rather rarely in the function of a VnQ. Only the basic form *krapet* complied with our requirements in 19 cases. Its collocates were mainly abstract entities, and there were only 2 nominal collocates that reappeared twice. These are: *šťěstí* (luck) and *kuráž* (courage).

Premodification did not occur at all and negation was found in 2 out of 19 samples, in both samples negation occurred in the verbal form and was accompanied by the conjunction *ani* which emphasises the negative meaning .

- i) *alkohol mi nenaděluje ani krapet štěstí* (alcohol does not give me a drop of luck) [CNK ostrov:1:4755]
- ii) *nebylo ani krapet ironie* (was not a drop of irony) [CNK laska:1:380]

1. Frequency survey *krapet/krapítek/krapánek/krapínek*

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Krapet + N</i>	50	-	19	1:2.63
<i>Krapítek + N</i>	2	-	0	0:2
<i>Krapánek</i>	6		0	0:6
<i>Krapínek</i>	1		0	0:1

2.6.5 *Kus, kousek, kousíček, kousínek*

The meaning of the Czech word *kus* is closest to a *bit* or a *piece* in English. Due to the fact that the meaning is so general, a high number of occurrences was expected.

The actual number of solutions for both the basic form *kus* and its derivative *kousek* exceeded 4 thousand samples therefore we opted for a shortened representative research based on a set of 500 random samples.

Reappearing collocates are described in the table below, in the samples there were also two very common set phrases that are often used in colloquial Czech, the nominal collocates are *práce* (work) and *řeč* (chat):

- i) *ohromný kus práce* (a huge bit of work) [CNK zazrak:1:577]
- ii) *se stavil na kus řeči* (stopped for a bit of chat) [CNK pochyb:1:3033]

While the neutral form *kus* is premodified by adjectives expressing big quantity, such as *velký* (big), *ohromný* (huge), *obrovský* (giant), the diminutive *kousíček* is premodified by adjectives from the opposite pole of a semantic scale, such as *malý/sebemenší* (little), *nepatrný/sebenepatrnější* (imperceptible).

The VnQ *kousek* is significant for its high number of negative utterances. In 16 out of 21 samples negation was present, following different varieties of the structure: NEMÍT *kousek/kouska* _____ (NOT HAVE *a bit of* _____). Negation in these samples was not usually accompanied by *ani* (not even), which happened in the case of negative samples containing *špetka, zrnko, krapet*.

- iii) *ty nemáš kouska studu* (You don't have a bit of shame) [CNK popel:2:906]
- iv) *nemá v sobě kousek citu* (he does not have a bit of feeling) [CNK bl011211:72:25]
- v) *Nemáte kouska důkazu* ({you} do not have a bit of evidence) [CNK mrtvola:1:4250]

1. Frequency survey *kus/kousek/kousíček/kousínek*

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Kus</i> + N	5785	-	42 from 500	1:11.9
<i>Kousek</i> + N	4200	-	21 from 500	1:23.81
<i>Kousíček</i> + N	222		29	1:7.66
<i>Kousínek</i> + N	2		0	0:2

2. Collocates of *kus/kousek/kousíček/kousínek*

Phrase Query	Noun collocates	Práce (18)	Řeči (10)	Pravdy (6)	Cítu (3)	Naděje (3)	Soukromí (3)	Informací (2)	Kouzel (2)	Nostalgie (2)	Odvahy (2)	Pochyb (2)	Rozumu (2)
<i>Kus + N</i>		+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
<i>Kousek + N</i>		-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	+
<i>Kousíček + N</i>		-	-	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	-

2.6.6 *Smítko, smítečko*

This set of expressions belongs to the group of minor VnQs, the most suitable translation to English would be a *mote* or a *speck*. The 3 samples that matched our criteria contained different nominal collocates: *narcismu* (narcisism), *pochyb* (doubts), *života* (life). However, all of the samples express very low or no quantity, in two cases negation was present, which shows that the VnQ in its extension of literal meaning is commonly linked with some form of negation.

- i) *Nenajdeme smítko narcismu* (we will not find a speck of narcissism) [CNK tydn0413:71:88]
- ii) *nikde ani smítko života* (nowhere a speck of life) [CNK zuzanka:1:1233]

1. Frequency survey *smítko/smítečko*

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Smítko + N</i>	30	-	3	1:10
<i>Smítečko</i>	2		0	0:2

2.6.7 *Špetka, špetička, štipec*

The word *špetka* in Czech means a *pinch*. This VnQ proved to appear quite often, therefore we repeated the procedure that decreases number of probed samples.

Occurring nominal collocates usually expressed some abstract entity, a short list of the most frequent collocates follows below, we also included there the collocate *šťěstí* (luck), as it was the only collocate that was combined with the form *štipec*.

Negation plays an important role in combination with this set of VnQs. More than 130 samples containing *špetka* also included some form of negation, Firstly, verb

negation was present (*not have, not be*), ex. (i), (ii), within this group a significant proportion of samples contained conjunction *ani* (not even) which highlights the negative meaning of the whole utterance. Secondly, the usage of the preposition *bez* (*without*) was demonstrated in some samples, ex. (iii). 3 negative samples were noted in the case of the diminutive form *špetička*, ex. (iv).

- i) *není ani špetka naděje* ({there} is not a pinch of hope) [CNK heller:1:7181]
- ii) *nebyla špetka humoru* ({there} was not a pinch of humour) [CNK hailey:1:2332]
- iii) *bez špetky strachu* (without a pinch of fear) [CNK droga:1:148]
- iv) *nemá ani špetičku tušení* (he does not have a pinch of an idea) [CNK meyrink:10:118]

Also premodification, that is a part of our study, was present in samples containing *špetka*. Although no new premodifiers appeared. We again noticed the adjective *malý* (little) and *sebemenší* (slightest).

- i) *cítili sebemenší špetku lítosti* (they felt the slightest pinch of regret) [CNK casotres:2:1747]

1. Frequency survey *špetka/špetička/štipec*

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Špetka + N</i>	1520	-	287 from 500	1:1.74
<i>Špetička + N</i>	27	-	13	1:2.08
<i>Štipec + N</i>	10		1	1:10

2. Collocates of *špetka/špetička/štipec*

Phrase Query	Noun collocates	Naděje (18)	Rozumu (11)	Humoru (7)	Fantazie (6)	Lásky (6)	Soucitu (6)	Víry (6)	Citu (5)	Úcty (5)	Štěstí (2)
<i>Špetka +N</i>		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-
<i>Špetička + N</i>		+	-	-	+	-	-	+	-	+	+
<i>Štipec +N</i>		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+

2.6.8 *Trocha, troška, trošička, trošinka*

Trocha and the rest of the chain of VnQs is similar to the above-described VnQ *kus*, because its meaning is very general, therefore it can refer to a wide variety of entities. *Trocha* can be translated as a *bit* in English.

As the described quantity expressed by the VnQs diminishes, from *trocha* through *troška* to *trošinka*, also the number of solution drops. The selected samples were collocated with various nouns, most of them referred to feelings and other non-material entities. Apart from these, we also noticed nominal collocates referring to people, even though such samples were rare.

- i) *jeden z té trošky poslanců* (one of the bit of members of parliament) [CNK marsicek:1:2185]

1. Frequency survey *trocha/troška/trošička/trošinka*

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Trocha</i> + N	3564	-	216 from 500	1:2.31
<i>Troška</i> + N	517	-	147	1:3.52
<i>Trošička</i> + N	10		6	1:1.67
<i>Trošinka</i> + N	0		0	-

2. Collocates of *trocha/troška/trošička/trošinka*

Phrase Query	Noun collocates	Štěstí (51)	Nadsázky (30)	Peněz (15)	Vůle (10)	Fantazie (8)	Rozum (7)	Pohybu (7)	Klid (6)	Zábavy (6)	Snahy (5)
<i>Trocha</i> +N		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
<i>Troška</i> + N		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-
<i>Trošička</i> +N		+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

2.6.9 *Zrno, zrnko, zrníčko, zrněčko*

An English equivalent of the Czech word *zrno* is a *grain*. This time it was not the basic form *zrno* that would be most frequent among all the other forms. The form

zrnko displayed most answer to our query. On the other hand, the more formal variety of the diminutive *zrníčko* which is *zrněčko* occurred in the function of a VnQ only once.

i) *to zrněčko sebeironie* (the little grain of self-irony) [CNK radost2:1:1147]

Pravda (truth) was, by far, the most common nominal collocate, and the gap between the number of occurrences of this collocate and all the others is significant. However, we did not notice any sample where the VnQ would be followed by this most frequent nominal collocate.

Negation in combination with the form *zrnko* is worth mentioning, examples (iii), (iv), (v), as there are at least 10 samples with some negative form, one negative sample appeared also in the case of *zrno* (ii). All the samples where the form *zrnko* appeared in combination with negation followed the pattern: NEG VERB *ani zrnko* _____, the expression *ani*, which is similar to English adverb *even*, in this case clear similarity to *not even* in English, emphasises negative meaning.

ii) *neměl v sobě zrno lakomství* (he did not have a grain of stinginess in him) [CNK hraci:1:514]

iii) *není ani zrnko pravdy* (is not a grain of truth) [CNK scortia:1:1753]

iv) *kdo neměl ani zrnko představivosti* (who did not have a grain of imagination) [CNK kortooms:1:3033]

v) *neměl obsahovat ani zrnko propagandy* (should not have contained a grain of propaganda) [CNK pnin:1:960]

1. Frequency survey *zrno/zrnko/zrníčko/zrněčko*

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Zrno + N</i>	169	-	6	1:28.17
<i>Zrnko + N</i>	529	-	93	1:5.69
<i>Zrníčko + N</i>	102		14	1:7.29
<i>Zrněčko + N</i>	5		1	1:5

2. Collocates of *zrno/zrnko/zrníčko*

Phrase Query	Noun collocates	Pravdy (57)	Humoru (4)	Informace (3)	Moudrosti (3)	Reality (3)	Naděje (2)	Smyslu (2)
<i>Zrno +N</i>		-	-	-	+	-	-	-
<i>Zrnko + N</i>		+	+	+	+	+	+	+
<i>Zrníčko +N</i>		+	-	+	-	-	-	-

2.6.10 *Ždibec, ždibeček, ždibet*

The whole set of the VnQs was expected to be rather minor, and the number of solutions to our query matches our expectations. The meaning expresses a very small quantity, and could be translated again as a *pinch*, or Hais and Hodek uses this term as a Czech equivalent of mainly American expression - a *smidgen* (N-S 1992, 670).

Ždibec with its highest number of solutions within this set had altogether 3 nominal collocates that reappeared, these are: *pravda* (truth) 5 times, and a double occurrence of *ironie* (irony) and *světlo* (light).

We did not notice any special samples that would be beneficial for our research of negation or premodification.

1. Frequency survey *ždibec/ždibeček/ždibet*

Phrase Query	No of solutions (S)	Number of texts (T)	No of VnQs (VnQs)	Ratio VnQs:S
<i>Ždibec + N</i>	49	-	21	1:2.33
<i>Ždibeček + N</i>	1	-	1	1:1
<i>Ždibet</i>	2		1	1:2

3 ASSESSMENT OF RESULTS

3.1 Extended gradient of vague reference

As was already stated, this study combines the original quantifiers expressing (- for quantity) from the ‘Gradient of vague reference to non-numerical quantification’ (1) in Tárnyiková’s study with 14 new VnQs from the same pole of the gradient. Now, when the basic research has been done, we are able to place the new quantifiers on the gradient. It is obvious that all the new quantifiers have to be placed on the pole marked (- for quantity), however, the choice between the two possible options is not so straightforward. Even in the previous paper some of the VnQs appeared in both classes, which are quantifiers expressing low and extremely low quantity, e.g. *an atom*, *a sprinkle*. These quantifiers can fulfil both roles depending on the collocates they combine with, their context, etc. These features also seemed important in our choice, and the placement on the gradient reflects the prevailing general meaning that we drew from the collected samples.

1. Original gradient of vague reference to non-numerical quantification

(+ for quantity)	antonyms of gradability		(- for quantity)
oceans of	ocean of	a bit of	a pinch of
seas of	sea of	a drop of	a dash of
mountains of	mountain of	a touch of	an atom of
galore	umpteen	a scrap of	a spot of
masses of	mass of	an atom of	an iota of
lots of	lot of	a pat of	a morsel of
heaps of	heap of	a trace of	a sprinkle of
piles of	pile of	a shred of	a smidgen of
hordes of	horde of	a sprinkle of...	
lashings of	oodles of...		
rafts of	raft of		

2. Extension of the original gradient

a dollop of	a dribble of
a mite of	a speck of
a handful of	a trifle of
a patch	a sprinkling of
a crumb of	a jot of
a snip of	a snippet of
a grain of	a speck of
a scruple of	

3.2 Frequency survey of English VnQs

Firstly, we are going to assess the results the frequency survey brought. The most basic criterion that we chose for the qualification of VnQs is their number of occurrences in a singular form, this is the category labelled as “No of VnQs” in the frequency survey charts in section 2.3 **English VnQs and its collocates, data collected in the BNC**. In setting this criterion we opted for the singular form of VnQs, because it is the unmarked form within the linguistic dichotomy singular – plural. Naturally, the number of VnQs in their plural form was lower in the case of almost all VnQs. There appeared only a few exceptions that will be mentioned later.

The limit which we apply divides the whole group of VnQs into three subgroups. The first subgroup contains only the most frequent VnQs whose singular form exceeded the number of 100 samples which were selected among the hits in the BNC. The second subgroup is composed of such VnQs whose frequency ranges between 100 and 11 matches in the BNC. The last subgroup includes the VnQs that appeared only rarely, to be more specific, less than 11 times in their singular.

We are aware that such a categorisation does not create three entirely distinct subgroups, especially since boundaries between the second “medium” subgroup and the third subgroup containing only the least frequent VnQs overlap, as the difference between 10 and 11 occurrences in the BNC is of minor importance. However, the criterion serves its purpose and divides all the VnQs into three subgroups according to their frequency in the BNC, which helps us to deduce common features of the individual VnQs within the three subgroups.

3.2.1 *The most frequent VnQs*

The first subgroup of the most frequent VnQs involves 4 items: *a bit*, *a handful*, *a touch*, *a trace*. These quantifiers are very common, their usage is versatile due to the fact that their meaning is wide and therefore does not limit language users as much as the others do. However, the quantifier *a handful* is exceptional in this regard, because a great proportion (approximately a half) of the samples contains a collocate referring to a group of people, which is a unique feature among other quantifiers from this subgroup.

A trace stands out of the group because it often appears in sentences with some kind of negation. Any other quantifier does not occur so often in sentences where negation is present. Based on this observation we dare to say that *a trace* implies the smallest quantity if we compare the four quantifiers from this subgroup.

What seems to be an interesting fact is that the original meaning of all the four quantifiers is very closely related to human beings and basic human activities, such as manipulation with food (biting, taking in hands), non-verbal communication (touching), or movement (leaving traces). Of course, this is just a pure observation, not a scientifically proven theory. Nevertheless, there might be a possibility that the proximity between the expressions and everyday human life has affected the high frequency of these quantifiers in today's language.

1. Frequency survey: The most frequent English VnQs

VnQ	singular	plural
<i>Bit/bits</i>	2956	219
<i>Handful/handfuls</i>	787	4
<i>Touch/touches</i>	470	35
<i>Trace/traces</i>	248	119

3.2.2 Less frequent and rare VnQs

The two subgroups with less frequent and rare VnQs, whose number of occurrences range between 100 and 1, significantly predominate in the number of various quantifiers over the above-described subgroup of the most frequent VnQs which consists of four VnQs. On the other hand, the two subgroups are very similar in the number of items included. The group of rare VnQs is richer by four pieces (15 VnQs) than the other group (11 VnQs).

What applies to both subclasses semantically is that they are very diverse. On the other hand, as was mentioned in the previous section of the paper, in the data collection there appear several expressions that are etymologically related. These are presented by the following pairs: *a sprinkle – a sprinkling*, *a snip – a snippet*, *an iota – a jot*. As is obvious from the frequency survey chart (2), none of these pairs remained in the same subgroup. The slightest difference in the singular form is between *a jot* (11 occurrences) and *an iota* (9 occurrences). However, the criterion was set clearly and the limit

intersects these two quantifiers. Inequality between the other two pairs is even more evident. *A sprinkling* (53 occurrences) reaches the top of the less frequent VnQs while its counterpart *a sprinkle* (1 occurrence) appears at the very bottom of the rare VnQs chart. The number of 10 samples divides the last pair of quantifiers *a snippet* (11 occurrences) and *a snip* (1 occurrence).

The absence of a quantifier in its plural form is quite typical for the rare VnQs, it happened in 9 cases, but two of the quantifiers from the less frequent subgroup also show this feature, these are *a spot* and *a sprinkling*, both are listed high in the chart (2).

Another discrepancy that should be commented on when describing the number of occurrences of singular and plural forms is the situation when a plural form prevails over a singular form. As was mentioned before, the singular form is perceived as the unmarked one in the dichotomy singular – plural, therefore one of the expectations in the research, specifically that there would always be more occurrences in singular than in plural, turned out to be false, or, at least, not entirely applicable in all cases. Three VnQs proved a different tendency where their plural prevailed over their singular. These quantifiers are *a crumb*, *a snippet* and *a trifle*.

2. Frequency survey: Less frequent and rare English VnQs

VnQ	singular	plural
<i>Spot /spots</i>	68	0
<i>Shred/shreds</i>	57	26
<i>Sprinkling/sprinklings</i>	53	0
<i>Scrap/scraps</i>	50	32
<i>Grain/grains</i>	40	5
<i>Dash/dashes</i>	26	5
<i>Drop/drops</i>	18	4
<i>Crumb/crumbs</i>	15	19
<i>Snippet/snippets</i>	11	34
<i>Atom/atoms</i>	11	1
<i>Jot/jots</i>	11	1

VnQ	singular	plural
<i>Dollop/dollops</i>	10	5
<i>Iota/iotas</i>	9	0
<i>Pinch/pinches</i>	9	1
<i>Speck/specks</i>	9	0
<i>Morsel/morsels</i>	8	5
<i>Mite/mites</i>	6	0
<i>Smidgen/smidgens</i>	5	0
<i>Patch/patches</i>	4	3
<i>Dribble/dribbles</i>	3	0
<i>Trifle/trifles</i>	1	2
<i>Fleck/flecks</i>	1	1
<i>Pat/pats</i>	1	0
<i>Scruple/scruples</i>	1	0
<i>Snip/snips</i>	1	0
<i>Sprinkle/sprinkles</i>	1	0

3.3 Frequency survey of Czech VnQs

Due to a slightly different method of data collection in the CNK within the Czech part of the research, also the criteria for evaluation of Czech VnQs diverge from the approach in the previous section. Whole sets of etymologically related forms are treated as units when their frequency is compared. In listing Czech quantifiers we compare the total number of occurrences in the research. The total number is gained by adding up all the figures from the column marked ‘No of VnQs’ in a frequency survey.

Such a procedure leads to creation of two major classes which are accompanied by a minor chain of VnQs with the lowest frequency. The limit for the classes is based on the same number of occurrence in the research as it was in the case of English quantifiers, therefore the number of 100 selected samples divides the two main groups: the most frequent VnQs which appeared more than 100 times and less frequent VnQs with frequency not exceeding 100 samples.

However, it is necessary to highlight that 2 sets which are listed in the chart (1) with less frequent VnQs, specifically the set *kus/kousek/kousíček* and *kapka/kapánek/kapička*, were deliberately manipulated during the research. This fact is stated in the detailed description of each VnQ in the section 2.6 **Czech VnQs and their collocates, data collected in the CNK**. As they both showed to bring too many samples containing the required expression, the number of studied samples was reduced to 500 random samples, therefore it is probable that if the whole number of samples had been studied, they would have been listed among the most frequent quantifiers. Same procedure was applied in the case of the sets involving *špetka* and *trocha*, but the frequency of VnQs in all their samples was so high that not even such a limitation prevented them from appearing among the most common Czech VnQs.

When comparing individual frequency surveys of the Czech VnQs one tendency appears to be typical for all related chains of expressions. If we focus on the separate expressions which are distinguished by different degree of diminutiveness within each set of quantifiers, there usually occur one or two forms, depending on how plentiful the set is, which dramatically prevail over other forms in the chain. In other words, the category “Number of VnQs” usually consists of one or two forms with significantly higher number of occurrence. It is usually the most basic form that dominates the group, such

as *kapka, krapet, smítko, špetka, trocha, ždibec*. An exception to this rule, where a VnQ is represented more often by the form derived from the basic expression, can be found in the case of *hrstka, zrnko*. The research clearly proved that in these two cases the connection between the basic form (*hrst, zrn*) and the literal meaning is stronger than the relation between the form and the figurative meaning. Thus the basic forms *hrst, zrn* appear more commonly as quantifiers which do not diverge from their literal usage. In the English part of the research, a similar situation is exemplified by the proportion of VnQs in the case of a *snip - a snippet, and a sprinkle - a sprinkling*, where the latter from each pair overshadows the basic form.

Another fact that distinguishes the VnQ *hrstka* from the other quantifiers is that it most commonly collocates with nouns referring to human beings. All the other quantifiers more often collocate with some inanimate entities. This realisation shows a clear link between the Czech *hrstka* and its English equivalent *a handful*.

It does not seem that there are many features that the individual sets of related VnQs share within the two groups of most frequent and less frequent Czech VnQ. *Smítko* which expresses very small quantity, even in its basic form, is the least frequent quantifier whose only present form in the research is *smítko*, its diminutive *smítečko* did not occur at all.

Otherwise, the scope of meanings and possible nominal collocations is very wide for all quantifiers, their meaning is usually rather general and does not limit the choice of nominal collocates. Disregarding the forms *drobek, hrst, zrn* which appear in the function of a VnQ rarely, and usually retain their literal meaning, we can see a clear tendency within the etymologically related chains, that the higher the degree of diminutiveness is the lower the number of VnQs is.

1. Frequency survey: Most frequent and less frequent Czech VnQs

VnQ	Total number
<i>Hrst/ hrstka/ hrstička</i>	416
<i>Trocha/troška/trošička</i>	369
<i>Špetka/špetička/štipec</i>	301
<i>Zrno/zrnko/zrníčko/zrněčko</i>	114

VnQ	Total number
<i>Kus/kousek/kousíček</i>	92
<i>Drobek/drobet/drobeček/drobínek</i>	53
<i>Kapka/kapánek/kapička</i>	45
<i>Ždibec/ždibeček/ždibet</i>	22
<i>Krapet/krapítek/krapánek</i>	19
<i>Smítko/smítečko</i>	3

3.4 Alternation of paradigms in English – Czech perspective

In this section a detailed comparison of Czech and English collocates expressing vague quantity in its figurative meaning is carried out. In the procedure, a specific VnQ is looked up in one of the four volumes of English – Czech dictionary written by Hais and Hodek. The aim is to check whether the dictionary offers Czech expressions which could be used in translation of phrase with figurative meaning. If so, possible Czech expressions together with relevant collected data are compared with their English counterparts. Special attention is paid to those phrases which contain the same collocate, or rather equivalent expressions in both languages. The overall intention is to demonstrate possible paradigmatic alternations which appeared in the research.

An explanation should be given to a different style of quoting in the following paragraphs. Unlike the previous English and Czech data collection sections 2.3, 2.6, the selected phrases play only an illustrative role here. Most of these examples appeared in the corpora several times in various slightly different forms. This section represents the core of the most commonly appearing collocations and was based mainly on the charts labelled “Collocations of VnQ” and some other notes which the author gathered during the research. Consequently, the following examples are not accompanied by corpus details, as they represent simplified skeletons of real, usually more complicated, collocations.

3.4.1 *Bit*

Due to the great versatility of this expression, also the dictionary brings several possible Czech equivalents (Hais – Hodek, A-E 1991, 192). Primarily, it is *kousek* for the literal meaning. Secondly, *trocha*, *trošička*, and *kapánek* also appear in the entry, even though they appear in rather specific phrases, such as *a little bit*, *a bit much*. Also the negative phrase *not a bit (of)* is mentioned followed by Czech *ani trochu*, *ani za mák*. The extensive entry guides us to a comparison with 3 Czech word chains that appeared in the paper. The group containing *kapka*, *kapička*, *kapánek* is the first one to be probed. The list of equivalent phrases of *bit* and the *kapka* group contains 14 phrases, their full list can be seen in the attachment in the section 5.1.1. What is worth highlighting is the fact, that both VnQs in English and Czech share the same most frequent collocate *luck – štěstí*:

- i) *A bit of luck – kapka/kapíčka štěstí*
- ii) *A bit of fun – kapka veselí, kapánek srandy*
- iii) *A bit of money – kapka peněz*
- iv) *A bit of sense – kapka rozumu*

The other two examined chains of Czech quantifiers share equivalent nominal collocates, among the most common ones belong *štěstí* (luck), *rozum* (sense), *zábava/legrace* (fun). As is obvious from the following examples, all the three possible forms are present in the case of both Czech chains. For more examples see the attachment 5.1.1. The research brought several equivalent samples which suggest that any of these Czech quantifiers might serve as a Czech counterpart to the English VnQ. The concrete choice depends on other factors, such as context, style etc.

- v) *A bit of luck – kousíček štěstí*
- vi) *A bit of sense – kus/kousek rozumu*
- vii) *A bit of truth – kus/kousek/kousíček pravdy*

- viii) *A bit of luck – trocha/troška/trošička štěstí*
- ix) *A bit of fun – trocha/troška zábavy*
- x) *A bit of money – trocha/troška peněz*
- xi) *A bit of sense – trocha/troška rozumu*

3.4.2 *Crumb*

Apart from the equivalent *drobek* which bears literal meaning, the dictionary offers two possible Czech expressions which can be used in figurative language. These are *drobet* and *špetka*, the dictionary also provides its readers with two examples of figurative usage of the English expression (A-E 1991, 485): ‘*a few crumbs of information, a crumb of comfort*’. In accordance with the remark in the dictionary, our research proved that *comfort* is the most frequent collocation appearing with the VnQ *crumb(s)*, there were 25 such samples in the BNC.

If collocations of *crumb(s)* are compared with collocations following the group containing *drobet*, there are 4 cases which can be perceived as equivalent. As is obvious from the examples, *drobek* which is in the dictionary used for expressing literal meaning of the form does not appear in the list, which supports the suggestion that *drobet* or the

diminutive *drobeček* corresponds with *crumb* when its used as a VnQ in its figurative meaning.

- i) *A crumb of life – drobet života*
- ii) *A crumb of sense – drobet rozumu*
- iii) *A crumb of education – drobet vzdělání*
- iv) *A crumb of comfort – drobeček útěchy*

If we look at the comparison of collocations with the second suggested Czech equivalent which is *špetka* and its etymologically related group, there is only one matching pair of phrases. The lower frequency of parallel phrases could be a sign of the fact that the literal meaning of the English expression *crumb* is far from the meaning of Czech *špetka*, a *pinch*.

- v) *A crumb of sense – špetka rozumu*

3.4.3 *Dash*

The phrase *dash of* is in the dictionary translated, among other options, as *kapka* or *trocha* (A-E 1991, 512). The given example shows only its literal meaning: ‘*tea with a dash of milk*’. While the group of expressions connected with *kapka* shows only one corresponding pair with VnQs in their figurative meaning (i), a surprisingly high number of samples suggests certain equivalency between *dash(es)* and *trocha* or *troška*, especially if we consider that a *dash* is not a VnQ with a very high frequency of occurrence. The Czech expressions *trocha/troška/trošička* seem to be a more appropriate choice for translation.

- i) *A dash of irony – kapka ironie*
- ii) *A dash of irony – trocha ironie*
- iii) *A dash of romance - trocha romantiky*
- iv) *A dash of invention – troška vynalézavosti*
- v) *A dash of courage - troška odvahy*
- vi) *A dash of cynicism –troška cynismu*
- vii) *A dash of style – troška stylu*

3.4.4 *Dollop*

This expression can be translated as *kus* (A-E 1991, 615) that is usually collocated with food. For the figurative meaning there are stated different expressions which are not a part of the current research therefore we focus on comparison of a *dollop* with the chain of expressions *kus*, *kousek*, *kousíček*. Even in the case of this minor English VnQ, two Czech phrases are rather equivalent. However, we should not neglect the fact that other factors, such as modification, context etc., contribute to the final meaning of the phrase, and therefore the whole phrase ‘*a great dollop of confidence*’ is not so close to the Czech phrase ‘*kousíček víry*’.

- i) *A dollop of luck – kousíček štěstí*
- ii) *A dollop of confidence – kousíček víry*

3.4.5 *Dribble*

In this case it is claimed in the dictionary that the Czech expressions *kapka* and *kapička* can be used also in figurative meaning, an example illustrates it (A-E 1991, 639): ‘*information issued in dribbles ... vydávané po kapkách*’. Despite the very rare occurrence of the English expression in the function of a VnQ, one corresponding pair of phrases is present among the collected data:

- i) *A dribble of money – kapka peněz*

3.4.6 *Drop*

This is one of the VnQs which has its closest Czech equivalent present in the Czech part of the research. The dictionary mentions *kapka* as an equivalent for both literal and figurative meaning, the latter is exemplified by the following phrase (A-E 1991, 643): ‘*only a drop in the bucket / ocean – pouhá kapka v moři*’. In the data there are two English phrases which have their Czech counterparts. These phrases again prove that collocations of a VnQ with *money* and *fun* belong among the most common ones.

- i) *A drop of money – kapka peněz*
- ii) *A drop of fun – kapka veselí / kapánek srandy*

3.4.7 Fleck

The dictionary entry describes only expressions which can represent *a fleck* in its literal meaning. The only Czech group of VnQs which approximates the English expression and is included in the dictionary is *zrníčko* (F-M 1992, 76). The two English phrases that matched our criteria for selection of VnQs do not have Czech equivalents in the list of collocations within the group *zrno/zrnko/zrníčko*. Such a finding only highlights the fact that this VnQ is very rare and its usage seems limited.

3.4.8 Grain

The literal translation of this expression is very similar to the previous VnQ, the dictionary mentions all the three Czech forms *zrno*, *zrnko*, *zrníčko* and adds to it, for the figurative meaning, *troška* and *špetka* whose possible usage is illustrated in the example: ‘*a grain of comfort*’. Negation also appears in the entry: ‘*did not have a grain of sense*’ and ‘*left him no grain of hope*’. There is an agreement of the most frequent nominal collocate that follows both the English VnQ as well as the Czech forms *zrnko/zrníčko* (iii), and it is the collocate *truth – pravda*.

- i) *A grain of comfort – zrnko/zrníčko útěchy*
- ii) *A grain of humour – zrnko humoru*
- iii) *A grain of truth – zrnko/zrníčko pravdy*
- iv) *A grain of truth – trocha pravdy*
- v) *A grain of sense – trocha/troška rozumu*
- vi) *A rain of jealousy – trocha žárlivosti*
- vii) *A grain of intelligence – trocha inteligence*
- viii) *A grain of excitement – troška vzrušení*
- ix) *A grain of sense – špetka rozumu*
- x) *A grain of humour – špetka humoru*

Even though the examples above represent only a small part of the selected samples, it is clear that *trocha* or *troška* are equally relevant as equivalents of a *grain* as is the most literal Czech translation *zrnko/zrníčko*. Whereas *špetka* might be a suitable equivalent for English phrases where a *grain* appears in combination with negation, originally examples (ix), (x).

3.4.9 *Handful*

The distinction between an expression used for literal and figurative meaning is straightforward from the dictionary description (F-M 1992, 275). While the basic form *hrst* is used literally, the diminutive form *hrstka* is used figuratively, an example shows such a situation: ‘*only a handful of people*’.

What the dictionary states is proved by our research, because *hrst* appears in combination with nominal collocates denoting people, but mainly with nominal collocates referring to inanimate objects. On the other hand, *hrstka* collocates predominantly with expressions referring to people.

- i) *A handful of people – hrstka/hrstička lidí*
- ii) *A handful of friends – hrst kamarádů/hrstka přátel*
- iii) *A handful of men – hrstka mužů*

3.4.10 *Iota*

The dictionary comments on the expression in its literal meaning as the Greek letter, and then in the figurative meaning as *písmenko* (a letter). *Písmenko* was not a part of the research of VnQs, however, the definition which does not neglect its usual appearance in negative context (F-M 1992, 471) helps to choose Czech VnQs for comparison: ‘*there’s not an iota of truth in the story*’.

The two chains that we selected are the groups derived from *zrno* and *špetka*. Both of these quantifiers, especially the forms *zrnko* and *špetka*, refer to a very small quantity as well as an *iota* does. Secondly, in both of Czech groups of VnQs negation plays a significant role in the collected samples.

The collocations found among the samples containing an *iota* offer only five nominal expressions, and none of these has its equivalent among the samples of *zrnko* or *špetka* therefore we are not able to prove our suggestion from the previous paragraph. However, it clearly shows that an *iota* is a minor English VnQ which is used only rarely.

3.4.11 *Jot*

As was already written above, a *jot* is etymologically linked with the previous expression, also the dictionary reflects it in the entry, where it is described, firstly, as *písmenko*, but, secondly, as *zrnko* or *zrníčko*, and a similar example is present to

illustrate frequent negative usage (F-M 1992, 500): ‘*there’s not a jot of truth in the story*’.

In this case, the comparison brings some parallels that are worth-mentioning. Bearing in mind that neither a *jot* is a very common VnQ, the 5 equivalent collocations that were found seem to be a proof of a certain equivalency between the English and the Czech VnQ. The last example (v) is not an exact equivalent, however, *pity* and *self-pity* are very close in its meaning, therefore it was decided to involve the collocations among other examples.

- i) *A jot of evidence – zrníčko důkazů*
- ii) *A jot of feelings – zrnko pocitu*
- iii) *A jot of humour – zrnko humoru*
- iv) *A jot of information – zrnko informace/zrníčko informací*
- v) *A jot of self-pity – zrnko lítosti*

3.4.12 Mite

The English – Czech dictionary mentions two expressions (F-M 1992, 736) that can be studied in our comparison and these are *troška*: ‘*offer a mite of comfort*’, and *drobeček*, the dictionary describes this Czech equivalent especially when referring to a small child: ‘*what a mite of a child*’.

When we compare the collocations of a *mite* with collocation of the group including *trocha*, we get 3 nominal collocates that the VnQs share. Within these collocates one is also shared by the other Czech quantifier *drobet*.

- i) *A mite of sense – trocha/troška rozumu*
- ii) *A mite of sentimentality – trocha sentimentality*
- iii) *A mite of tribute – trocha/troška úcty*
- iv) *A mite of sense – drobet rozumu*

3.4.13 Morsel

The offered Czech equivalent from the dictionary is *kousek* in the case of figurative language. Only the smallest unit from the triad of Czech VnQs which is *kousíček* showed concordance with the English quantifier:

- i) *A morsel of hope – kousíček naděje*

3.4.14 *Pat*

This VnQ belongs among the rarest forms that appear in the research. None of the Czech expression from the paper is close to the meaning of a *pat*, the dictionary does not contain any Czech form to which a *pat* could be related in the research (N-S 1992, 139) Moreover, it also occurred only once in the function of a VnQ in the BNC. For these reasons, we cannot match a *pat* with a suitable Czech equivalent.

3.4.15 *Patch*

The only Czech quantifier involved in the study that appears in the *patch* entry in the dictionary is *kousek*, even though in the publication the example shows the literal meaning (N-S 1992, 139): ‘*patches of bare earth*’. Comparison brings one English – Czech pair of phrases:

- i) *A patch of happiness – kousíček štěstí*

3.4.16 *Pinch*

The dictionary mentions several Czech expressions that cover similar role in the language system as a *pinch* in English, some of them are the following (N-S 1992, 187): *špetka*, *ždibec*, *štípec*, the possible negative connotation is translated as *nedostatek*, *nouze* – not enough: ‘*pinch of labour*’. Two sets of Czech quantifiers emerge for the comparison.

The first chain of Czech VnQs *špetka*, *špetička*, *štípec* shares only a single similar collocate. The adjective ‘similar’ should be highlighted here as the meaning of the collocates in the two languages is rather approximate, but we think that they demonstrate sufficient closeness to include them in this section:

- i) *a pinch of cleverness and knowledge – špetka rozumu*

The second set *ždibec*, *ždibeček*, *ždibet* does not offer any collocate which would be comparable with nominal collocates of the English VnQ.

3.4.17 Scrap

The dictionary offers a list of possible equivalents, the following ones belong among them and also among the studied Czech VnQs (N-S 1992, 524): *drobek, kousek, kousíček, ždibec*.

The latter Czech equivalent does not share any nominal collocates with its English counterpart. The other two Czech sets prove some similarity with the English VnQ. Only the form *drobet* appear in the equivalent pairs of phrases:

- i) *A scrap of understanding – drobet pochopení*
- ii) *A scrap of encouragement – drobet kuráže*

The third set of Czech VnQs shows all the three different forms that are equivalent with the English phrases:

- iii) *A scrap of behaviour – kousek vychování*
- iv) *A scrap of past – kus minulosti*
- v) *A scrap of self-confidence – kousíček sebevědomí*

3.4.18 Scruple

Kousíček is the only Czech VnQ which appears in both, our research and also the dictionary entry dealing with a *scruple* (N-S 1992, 531). Due to the fact that the study contains only one sample with the English VnQ, it is not unexpected that none of Czech samples matches it.

3.4.19 Shred

The dictionary brings several Czech expressions which are equivalent in figurative language (N-S 1992, 616), these are *trocha* and *špetka*, and also the common negative usage of the VnQ is not neglected: ‘*not a shred of doubt*’.

The comparison of the first set of Czech VnQs shows that all the three different forms of the VnQ, *trocha, troška, trošička*, and their nominal collocates can be related to the English VnQ a *shred* with its collocates.

- i) *A shred(s) of doubt – troška pochyb(ností)*
- ii) *A shred of truth – trocha pravdy*
- iii) *A shred of dignity – trocha důstojnosti/troška vážnosti*
- iv) *A shred of feeling – troška citu/trocha pocitu*

v) *A shred of humanity – troška lidskosti*

vi) *A shred of hope – trošička naděje*

The second set of Czech VnQs *špetka, špetička, štipec* proved to contain similar number of samples where an English equivalent can be found. However, the very rare form *štipec* does not occur among those samples.

vii) *A shred of hope – špetka/špetička naděje*

viii) *A shred of dignity – špetka úcty*

ix) *A shred of belief - špetka/špetička víry*

x) *A shred of feeling – špetka citu*

xi) *A shred of self-pity – špetka lítosti*

xii) *A shred of sympathy – špetka soucitu*

3.4.20 Smidgen

Apart from *troška*, which belongs among the most versatile VnQs in the research, the dictionary also offers the expression *ždibec* as a possible equivalent of the English expression a *smidgen* (N-S 1992, 670).

However, the comparison of samples containing *ždibec* with its related forms does not lead to any equivalent phrases. A *smidgen* is a very rare VnQ and *ždibec* is not too common either. On the other hand, there are 3 equivalent pairs of samples in the two languages where the very scarce English expression is compared with the rather universal Czech VnQ *trocha* and its derived forms.

i) *A smidgen of intelligence – trocha inteligence*

ii) *A smidgen of power – trocha síly*

iii) *A smidgen of tact – troška taktu*

3.4.21 Snip

The closest equivalent that the dictionary states (N-S 1992, 678) and that also appears in the research is *kousek*. Even though the Czech set of VnQs can be defined as profuse, the single sample containing the English VnQ does not have any Czech counterpart.

3.4.22 *Snippet*

Due to the fact that the dictionary (N-S 1992, 678) provides only expressions which are not present in the current paper, it was decided to examine the line of expressions *kus*, *kousek*, *kousíček*, because a *snippet* is etymologically related to a *snip*, therefore we intend to probe the same Czech VnQ that appeared in the case of the preceding VnQ. The following samples were found during the search:

- i) *A snippet of information – kousíček informací*
- ii) *A snippet of conversation/talk – kus řeči*

3.4.23 *Speck*

Apart from the two very frequent Czech quantifiers including *trocha* and *kapka*, the dictionary (N-S 1992, 712) gives us an opportunity to probe one less frequent VnQ *smítko*. According to the dictionary, all three of these VnQs can also be used in figurative language as the following example suggests: ‘*to arouse a speck of interest*’.

Both the expressions *smítko* as well as a *speck* occur rarely in the research, therefore it is not surprising that there is no matching pair of English - Czech samples. The comparison with the remaining two sets of Czech VnQs brings two English samples whose equivalents are parallel in Czech:

- i) *A speck of luck – trocha/trošička štěstí/štěstička*
- ii) *A speck of sense, experience or logic – trocha/troška rozumu*
- iii) *A speck of luck – kapka/kapička štěstí*
- iv) *A speck of sense, experience or logic - kapka rozumu*

3.4.24 *Spot*

In the case of this VnQ the dictionary offers a whole range of possible Czech expressions (N-S 1992, 730): *kousek*, *kousíček*, *trocha*, *troška*, *kapka*, *krápek*. What these VnQs, except for *krápek*, have in common is their universality and subsequently their relatively high frequency.

No sample appears that would actually link *krápek* with the English expression. All the other studied Czech quantifiers showed some degree of similarity with the English nominal collocates.

- i) *A spot of luck – kousíček štěstí*

- ii) *A spot of luck - troška/trošička štěstí/štěstička*
- iii) *A spot of luck - kapka/kapička štěstí*
- iv) *A spot of luck - krapet štěstí*

- v) *A spot of work/labour – kus práce*
- vi) *A spot of work/labour - trocha/troška práce*

- vii) *A spot of money/cash – trocha/troška peněz*
- viii) *A spot of money/cash - kapka peněz*

- ix) *A spot of nostalgia – kus nostalgie*
- x) *A spot of nostalgia - troška nostalgie*

- xi) *A spot of information – kousíček informací*
- xii) *A spot of rest – trocha odpočinku*
- xiii) *A spot of will – troška vůle*
- xiv) *A spot of charm – trocha kouzel*
- xv) *A spot of reality – kapička skutečností*

3.4.25 Sprinkle

Although the dictionary offers several options for the translation of the English term (N-S 1992, 737): *kapka, kapička, špetka, troška, ždibec*; none of them is described as an equivalent for figurative usage. For a single sample containing the English VnQ there occurs only one suitable phrase in Czech representing a connection between a *sprinkle* and *kapička*:

- i) *A sprinkle of fact – kapička skutečností*

3.4.26 Sprinkling

Despite the wide range of possible equivalents that the dictionary offers (N-S 1992, 737), such as *trocha, ždibec, špetka, pár kapek, pár zrněk*, only one Czech VnQ from the research finds a match within the collection of samples. The only Czech VnQ are forms of the rather universal expression *trocha*.

- i) *A sprinkling of imagination – troška představivosti*

- ii) *A sprinkling of nostalgia – trocha/troška nostalgje*

3.4.27 Touch

The dictionary highlights the negative connotation of a *touch* (T-S1993, 107), the two Czech quantifiers that are stated in the entry *trocha* and *špetka* are also exemplified in a negative phrase: ‘*not a touch of sense*’.

The set including *trocha* brings more solutions than the set with *špetka*. However, it should be stressed that the meaning of *trocha* is far less specific than the meaning of *špetka* and its derived forms. This can be one of the reasons why samples with the set of *trocha* VnQ prevails over those equivalent samples with the VnQ *špetka*.

- i) *A touch of irony – trocha ironie*
- ii) *A touch of style – troška stylu*
- iii) *A touch of pride – trocha pýchy*
- iv) *A touch of magic – trocha kouzel*
- v) *A touch of fear – trocha strachu*
- vi) *A touch of extravagance – trocha extravagance*
- vii) *A touch of humanity – troška lidskosti*
- viii) *A touch of sadness - trocha smutku*

- ix) *A touch of humour – špetka humoru*
- x) *A touch of sarcasm – špetička sarkasmu*

3.4.28 Trace

Another very common VnQ can be translated into Czech using one of these expressions: *špetka, kapka, kousíček*. The dictionary provides an example of the figurative usage of the VnQ (T-S 1993, 112): ‘*he has no trace of humour*’.

Due to the extensive occurrence of the English VnQ, for the comparison we use only those nominal collocates that appeared in the frequency survey in the previous section of the paper (2), because our intention is only to illustrate the language situation, not to reveal here a detailed list of all possible combinations. As is obvious from the English – Czech pairs, the set *kus, kousek, kousíček* seems to appear more often in combination with expressions equivalent to the English ones.

- i) *A trace of irony – kapka ironie*
- ii) *A trace of bitterness – kapka hořkosti*

- iii) *A trace(s) of humour – špetka humoru*
- iv) *A trace of sarcasm - špetička sarkasmu*
- v) *A trace of sympathy – špetka soucitu*

- vi) *A trace of arrogance – kus nadutosti*
- vii) *A trace of truth – kus/kousek/kousíček pravdy*
- viii) *A trace of emotion – kousek citu*
- ix) *Traces of evidence – kousek důkazů*
- x) *A trace(s) of evidence – kus/kousek/kousíček bytí/živobytí*
- xi) *A trace(s) of grin – kousíček úsměvu*
- xii) *A trace(s) of influence – kousíček vlivu*

3.4.29 Trifle

This dictionary entry mentions *špetka* and *trocha* as possible expressions in Czech, even though it is in its literal meaning only (T-S1993, 137). An example accompanies the description: ‘*put just the merest trifle of sugar in my tea*’.

The three English samples that were collected in the previous phase of the research do not have any equivalent Czech phrases in this paper.

3.5 Premodification

After comparing nominal collocates which appeared in the samples selected in the BNC and CNK, we can proceed to the next feature of the English-Czech contrasting. Premodification significantly contributes to the function of VnQs as it can modify expressed quantity. In the following paragraphs, we will rather focus on the variety of expressions than on the frequency with which they appeared in the research.

In the research, attention was paid to adjectival premodifiers which appeared in front of a VnQ, more specifically to those adjectival expressions which referred to and modified required quantity. Thus, adjectives which belong to the grammatical group of premodifiers but express some other quality of the VnQ were discarded from this

section. This rule applies to both languages. Examples illustrate such dismissed adjectives:

- i) *a dreary bit of singer-songwriter earnestness* [BNC K97 321]
- ii) *je v tom hezký kousek pokrytectví* (there is a nice piece of hypocrisy in it) [CNK bl04063:46:58]

As was already stated, in congruence with Tárnyiková's study it is expected that English quantifiers offer a wider range of premodifiers referring to quantity, as slight differences in quantity cannot be expressed in the form of the quantifier, unlike Czech where the language system allows the form of an individual quantifier to accept a suffix which appropriately alters its meaning. However, this does not mean that Czech VnQs always occur without such a premodifier. After summarising English premodifiers, Czech premodifiers will be discussed as well.

Some of the selected English quantifiers do not bring any observation about premodifiers, because a relevant quantifier did not appear in any of their samples. These are *a dribble, a drop, a fleck, an iota, a mite, a morsel, a pat, a scruple, a smidgen, a snip, a spot, a sprinkle, a trifle*.

On the other hand, the adjective *small* together with its comparative *smaller*, and superlative form *smallest* seems to be one of most common premodifiers, which is understandable when its versatility is considered. It is the only adjective which occurred in all three possible forms expressing different degrees of gradability. The premodifier appears across a whole spectrum of quantifiers ranging from those very frequent, such as *a bit*, to those very specific, such as *a patch*. *Small* with its comparative and superlative was combined with the following VnQs in the research: *a bit, a crumb, a grain, a handful, a jot, a patch, a trace*.

Two grades of the adjective *slight*, the positive and superlative form, follow *small* in its frequency of collocating with VnQs. Either form occurred together with *a bit, a scrap, a shred, a touch, a trace*.

Another similar, rather universal, adjective is represented by *little*. This adjective formed a numerous group when collocated with *a bit*, then it also preceded *a snippet, a touch, a trace*.

Adjectives which appeared with two different quantifiers are named in the following chart:

Adjective	VnQ
<i>wee</i>	<i>A bit, a touch</i>
<i>tiny</i>	<i>A bit, a handful</i>
<i>faint, faintest</i>	<i>A touch, a trace</i>
<i>mere, merest</i>	<i>A handful, a shred</i>
<i>generous</i>	<i>A dollop, a sprinkling</i>
<i>liberal</i>	<i>A dollop, a sprinkling</i>

Unique combinations that were noted only between one VnQ and one adjective are: *a minutest atom, a teeny bit, a modest crumb, a large pinch, an insignificant speck, a light touch, a subtle touch, a barely noticeable trace*. Most of these adjectives highlight the very small quantity expressed by the VnQ.

However, some of the above-mentioned adjectives express rather large quantity which, to a certain degree, contradicts the basic meaning of the studied VnQs which are placed on the (- for quantity) pole of the VnQ gradient.

- i) *a large **pinch** of subjectivity* [BNC HRD 219]
- ii) *a generous **dollop** of hype* [BNC K5F 1542]
- iii) *a liberal **sprinkling** of show business and sports stars* [BNC K4L 383]
- iv) *a great **dollop** of confidence* [BNC G2D 1674]

These examples prove that language is flexible and its users are free to choose means to convey what they want. Even if the quantifiers inherently express small quantity, there is space to modify the desired quantity as the meaning of individual quantifiers can stretch between almost zero quantity (v) to rather great quantity within its scope (vi). On the other hand, what seems to slightly limit the choice of adjectival collocates is the original meaning of the VnQs. To put it simply, while a *dollop* can be *generous* and such a collocation is very common and natural, it would sound awkward if a *touch* was premodified by *generous*. The choice is always context-bound and also dependant on the particular meaning of the VnQ.

v) *the barely noticeable **trace** of the influence* [BNC G1N 1076]

vi) *a great big **dollop** of gratitude* [BNC H7P 720]

In the Czech part of the research, attention was paid to features similar to those appearing in the English part. Nevertheless, the formal properties of Czech VnQs inherently modifies the degree of quantity which is expressed, therefore an adjective in the function of a premodifier is not always necessary to imply a specific difference in quantity. Suffixes which are an integral part of VnQs represent this role (viii), while in English adjectival premodification is used (vii).

vii) *a little **bit** of luck* [BNC A3K 163]

viii) *kousíček štěstí* [CNK zimauzko:3:746]

In only 4 out of 10 sets of Czech VnQs some form of the relevant adjectival premodification was present. However, the adjectives, and subsequently the examples, are disparate. They show diverse tendencies. While those forms which express very small quantity such as *drobeček*, *kousíček*, *špetka*, are premodified by adjectives which highlight small quantity (*malý*, *sebeměší*, *nepatrný*, *sebenepatrnější*, *nejnepatrnější*), examples (ix), (x), (xi), the VnQ *kus* referring to somewhat bigger quantity, is premodified by adjectives implying great amount (*velký*, *ohromný*, *obrovský*), examples (xii), (xiii), (xiv).

ix) *nejnepatrnější **drobečky** vůle k životu* (imperceptible crumbs of will to live)
[CNK adresa0:7:38]

x) *malý **kousíček** lidského citu* (a little piece of human feeling)
[CNK styron:1:10056]

xi) *sebeměší **špetka** obyčejné představivosti* (the slightest pinch of common imagination) [CNK horaduch:1:1257]

xii) *velký **kus** života* (a big piece of life) [CNK vdova:1:509]

xiii) *ohromný **kus** práce* (a huge piece of work) [CNK refl0138:54:205]

xiv) *obrovský **kus** nechutné ironie* (a giant piece of disgusting irony)
[CNK ikariec:76:184]

The only quantifier which collocates with adjectives from opposite poles of semantic spectrum ranging from *plný* (full), example (xvi), *celý* (whole), example (xv), to *malý* (little), *nepatrný* (imperceptible) is the set *hrst*, *hrstka*, *hrstička* (handful). The derived form *hrstka* is premodified by semantically contrasting adjectives *malá* (xvii), *nepatrná* (xviii) versus *velká* (xix).

xv) *celé hrsti naděje* (whole handfuls of hope) [CNK vzdech:1:5114]

xvi) *plné hrsti jisker* (full handfuls of sparks) [CNK kroutvor:3:42]

xvii) *malá hrstka křesťanů* (a little handful of Christians) [CNK frohlich:1:947]

xviii) *nepatrná hrstka obyvatel* (an imperceptible handful of inhabitants) [CNK podbrdsk:1:564]

xix) *velká hrstka ufonů* (a big handful of aliens) [CNK refl0147:64:1]

Czech VnQs do not provide such a numerous batch of adjectival premodifiers as the English quantifiers do. It can be argued that the reason for this can be the smaller number of Czech VnQs, if we count whole sets as units, altogether 10 chains, comparable with English pairs of quantifiers composed from singular and plural forms, altogether 30 pairs. However, we dare to claim that it is only partly true. The different typological character of Czech definitely plays its role in the outcome of the conducted comparison. While Czech enables its user to distinguish even small nuances of meaning, in this case in the expressed quantity, by utilisation of various suffixes which become an inseparable part of particular VnQs, English tends to apply an analytic approach by adding adjectival expressions that precede VnQs.

3.6 Negation

Negation is another linguistic phenomenon which can be used for the comparison of vague quantification, and in consequence for the comparison of the two languages. Firstly, we will focus on the appearance of negation in English samples.

Samples containing some form of negation were important in the case of the following VnQs: *an atom, a drop, a grain, a jot, a scrap, a shred, a speck, a trace*. A list of samples containing different kinds of negation can be seen in the appendices in the section 5.1.2.

In agreement with Quirk's approach (Quirk 1985, 778), there are two basic kinds of negation distinguished, both of them are present in the current research. The dominant negation which appeared most often is 'verb negation' which follows this basic pattern: VERB NOT a/an/one VnQ of _____.

- i) *Shall not have one **atom of** strength* [BNC CMJ 2110]
- ii) *Couldn't spare him a **drop of** real hatred* [BNC HJC 1954]
- iii) *Had not a **grain of** socialism in it* [BNC FB1 1440]
- iv) *There was not a **jot of** humour* [BNC CLD 1433]
- v) *Not seen a **shred of** proof* [CKU 47]

Even though the verb negation prevailed, there were many cases which exemplified 'negation of other elements' (Quirk 1985, 778), among these elements belong: *no, nor, nobody, never, neither*. Some of the examples are stated below:

- vi) *no **trace of** expression* [BNC ADS 1411]
- vii) *nor one **jot of** self-pity* [BNC BN6 541]
- viii) *nobody could find a **scrap of** positive criticism* [BNC ART 1306]
- ix) *have never given a poor girl a **scrap of** encouragement* [BNC GUE 1416]
- x) *neither with a **scrap of** medical or scientific knowledge* [BNC K5C 1807]

The last category which must not be neglected in the overview of negation is 'words negative in meaning but not in form' (1985, 780), in the case of this paper there appeared two such expressions, the adverb *scarcely* and preposition *without*:

- xi) *without a **grain of** malice or hatred* [BNC HGG 1996]
- xii) *With scarcely a **shred of** genuine folk content* [BNC GVT 2671]

Some of the collocates appear to be repeated rather often in combination with negation. *Truth*, especially, is often used in negative samples collocating with *an atom, a grain, a shred*. Also, *difference* behaves in a similar way and collocates with *a scrap* or *a jot*. The last of these common expressions is *evidence* following *a scrap* and *a shred*.

Czech VnQs also brought some samples containing negation, their list is located in the appendices in the section 5.1.3. The presence of negation played an important role

in the case of the following forms of VnQs: *krapet*, *kousek*, *smítko*, *špetka*, *špetička*, *zrnko*. It is necessary to stress here the fact that the distribution of negation was not equal within the etymologically related chains, therefore only those forms named in the previous sentence are significant when negation is regarded.

A similar tendency which appears with English VnQs, preference of verb negation, applies to Czech quantifiers too. A prevailing majority of samples where some form of negation was present used verb negation. The most typical structure which appeared was: NEMÍT (ani) VnQ _____ (HAVE NOT {even} a VnQ _____), example (xiii) . Also, other verbs were possible, e.g. *nebýt* (not to be), ex. (xiv), *nemoci* (not be able to), ex. (xv), *nenajít* (not to find), ex. (xvi).

xiii) *ty nemáš kouska studu* (You don't have a bit of shame) [CNK popel:2:906]

xiv) *nebylo ani krapet ironie* (was not a drop of irony) [CNK laska:1:380]

xv) *nemůžete mít kouska ohledu* ({you} cannot have a bit of respect) [CNK kolaps:10:128]

xvi) *Nenajdeme smítko narcismu* (we will not find a speck of narcissism) [CNK tydn0413:71:88]

A minor part of samples involving negation used a different negative element, such as the adverb *nikde* (nowhere), ex. (xvii), or the preposition *bez* (without), ex. (xviii). However, this type of negation occurred only scarcely. The dominant verb negation shows another characteristic which both languages have in common.

xvii) *nikde ani smítko života* (nowhere a speck of life) [CNK zuzanka:1:1233]

xviii) *bez špetky strachu* (without a pinch of fear) [CNK droga:1:148]

Despite some similar points of negation in Czech and English, the research brought divergent features. When nominal collocates were compared, some of them reappeared, but the frequency was not so high that a single collocate could be found across a wide spectrum of Czech quantifiers. None of Czech nominal collocates proved a very strong tendency to be combined with VnQs, such as *truth* or *evidence* in English, collected Czech samples offered a great number of various nominal collocates.

4 CONCLUSION

The diploma thesis is focused on the linguistic phenomenon of vague language, specifically on the demonstration of vague quantification. The basic concept of the current paper follows the approach to vague quantifiers and their comparison in English and Czech as it was described in the article “Bags of Talent, a Touch of Panic, and a Bit of Luck: The Case Study of Non-Numerical Vague Quantifiers” by Jarmila Tárnyiková in 2010. In accordance with Tárnyiková’s approach, only those quantifiers which deviated from their literal meaning were taken into account. Unlike the original study, the current work dealt exclusively with (- for quantity) vague, non-numerical quantifiers, that is vague, non-numerical quantifiers expressing low quantity.

The data collection process in the British National Corpus (BNC) and in the Czech National Corpus (Český národní korpus, CNK) provided the study with a sufficient amount of samples containing (- for quantity) vague, non-numerical quantifiers. Newly-gained English quantifiers were positioned on the original ‘gradient of vague reference to non-numerical quantification’, which was introduced by Tárnyiková. The recently added quantifiers are distributed evenly in the two groups on the (-for quantity) pole of the gradient.

As far as the frequency of vague, non-numerical quantifiers is concerned, English quantifiers showed greater diversity in their occurrence than Czech quantifiers, when they created 3 distinct groups of quantifiers ranging from the most frequent to rare quantifiers with a proportionately comparable volume of items. However, this can be partly caused by unification of etymologically related chains of Czech quantifiers, which resulted in a lack of representatives in the class of rare quantifiers.

Another area of interest was paradigmatic alternation of vague, non-numerical quantifiers. While in English there was a contrast between a singular and plural form of an individual quantifier, the Czech part of the research put into opposition a basic form with its derivatives. The disparity of the applied approach was caused by differences in the research process in the BNC and the CNK. Most English samples showed a tendency to prioritise singular over plural forms, there were only a few exceptions present. The Czech part suggested that within the related chains of quantifiers, there was usually one leading form which appeared in the function of a vague quantifier in its figurative

meaning with a much higher frequency than other members of the group. This statement applied to either the very basic form or to the first derived form. In fact, forms which were more remote from the basic one never dominated the group.

Nominal collocates which followed quantifiers share many features in both languages. It is more than probable that the criterion of extension of literal meaning affected the nature of selected samples, consequently of selected nominal collocates. A great proportion of collocates denoted abstract entities. Another significant class of collocates consisted of nouns referring to human beings, both languages possess particular quantifiers which are predominantly collocated with such substantives. Still, no specific nominal collocate seemed to stand out from all the collected data. The performed comparison brought many equivalent samples which proved that vague language is exploited in a very similar way in both languages.

It was found out that our approach to vague non-numerical quantifiers did not bring suitable material for a contrastive examination of understatement or speakers' attitudes in a bilingual environment. The role of wider context was considered to be vital for assessment of understatement or speakers' attitudes. Bearing on mind the abundance of studied samples, the scope of the research would broaden immensely, which would not contribute to the research in a positive way.

No fundamental differences were noticed in the comparison of the collocability of quantifiers, which was one of the main characteristics for the examination of cross-linguistic, mainly cross-cultural, differences.

On the contrary, premodification is an area which led to contrasting perspectives in the two languages due to their typologically diverse nature. While Czech users often take advantage of diminutive forms by adding various suffixes to quantifiers, English speakers apply their linguistic creativity by inserting adjectival premodifiers in front of quantifiers. Although the frequency of some Czech diminutives was very low, they were still present in the research, therefore the hypothesis about derived chains of quantifiers was proved. Similar chains of English quantifiers were found very rarely in the research, but the need to express nuances of quantity was compensated by a rich supply of possible premodifying adjectives.

The last contrastive point to be considered is negation. Negation appeared to be a typical feature of certain quantifiers both in Czech and English. The distribution of negation was not even throughout the whole group of studied quantifiers. Both languages tend to express negation by verbal means. Verb negation was the main type of negation which appeared in the negative samples. Naturally, verbs which were affected by negation differed. ‘Negation of other element’ or presence of ‘words negative in meaning but not in form’ (Quirk 1985, 778) occurred as well but with lower frequency. This statement applies to both languages. On the other hand, English displayed a stronger connection between negation and collocability with a specific nominal expression. While in English there were several reappearing patterns of a negative verbal form followed by a quantifier with a certain nominal collocate found, Czech did not provide so many samples which would serve as evidence of a similar tendency.

Although the original research of vague non-numerical quantifiers in the English-Czech perspective was extended by the current examination, vague language is such a comprehensive linguistic phenomenon that this analysis has not exhausted all possible directions for the study of vague quantification in English and Czech. Hopefully, the research contributed with some new observations in the study area.

5 APPENDICES

5.1.1 List of equivalent collocations of bit/bits of

Phrases are stated in the following section without brackets specifying their position in the BNC and CNK, because their function here is illustrative and they usually represent samples which appeared several times in the research, therefore they are also simplified (premodifiers of the VnQs and of the nominal collocates were omitted).

- 1) Collocations with *kapka/kapička/kapánek*
 - i) *A bit of luck – kapka/kapička štěstí*
 - ii) *A bit of fun – kapka veselí, kapánek srandy*
 - iii) *A bit of money – kapka peněz*
 - iv) *Bit of sense – kapka rozumu*
 - v) *A bit of energy – kapka energie*
 - vi) *A bit of life – kapka života*
 - vii) *A bit of charity – kapka dobročinnosti*
 - viii) *A bit of bitterness – kapka hořkosti*
 - ix) *A bit of chance – kapka náhod*
 - x) *A bit of determination – kapka odhodlání*
 - xi) *A bit of confidence – kapka sebejistoty*
 - xii) *A bit of decency – kapka slušnosti*
 - xiii) *A bit of wisdom – kapička moudrosti*
 - xiv) *A bit of reality – kapička skutečnost*

- 2) Collocations with *kus, kousek, kousíček*
 - xv) *A bit of luck – kousíček štěstí*
 - xvi) *A bit of sense – kus/kousek rozumu*
 - xvii) *A bit of truth – kus/kousek/kousíček pravdy*
 - xviii) *A bit of courage – kus/kousek odvahy/kuráže*
 - xix) *A bit of existence – kus/kousek živobytí*
 - xx) *A bit of proof – kousek/kousíček důkazu*
 - xxi) *A bit of respect – kousek úcty/ohledu*
 - xxii) *A bit of work – kus práce*

- xxiii) *A bit of talk – kus řeči*
- xxiv) *A bit of nostalgia – kus nostalgie*
- xxv) *A bit of past – kus minulosti*
- xxvi) *A bit of responsibility – kus zodpovědnosti*
- xxvii) *A bit of feeling – kousek citu*
- xxviii) *A bit of shame – kousek studu*
- xxix) *A bit of evidence – kousek svědectví*
- xxx) *A bit of support – kousek zastání*
- xxxi) *A bit of magic – kousíček kouzel*
- xxxii) *A bit of hope – kousíček naděje*
- xxxiii) *A bit of doubt – kousíček pochyb*
- xxxiv) *A bit of privacy – kousíček soukromí*
- xxxv) *A bit of flirt/flirtation – kousíšek flirtu*
- xxxvi) *A bit of weakness – kousíček slabosti*
- xxxvii) *A bit of freedom – kousíček svobody*
- xxxviii) *A bit of faith – kousíček víry*
- xxxix) *A bit of influence – kousíček vlivu*

3) Collocations with *trocha/troška/trošička*

- xl) *A bit of luck – trocha/troška/trošička štěstí*
- xli) *A bit of fun – trocha/troška zábavy*
- xl ii) *A bit of money – trocha/troška peněz*
- xl iii) *A bit of sense – trocha/troška rozumu*
- xl iv) *A bit of hyperbole – trocha/troška nadsázky*
- xl v) *A bit of fantasy – trocha/troška fantazie*
- xl vi) *A bit of movement – trocha/troška pohybu*
- xl vii) *A bit of quiet – trocha/troška klidu*

5.1.2 Negation: Examples of English samples from the BNC

1) **An atom**

- i) *Shall not have one **atom of** strength [BNC CMJ 2110]*
- ii) *There is hardly an **atom of** truth [BNC EW8 517]*
- iii) *There wasn't an **atom of** truth [BNC H8Y 1404]*
- iv) *Didn't have an **atom of** real interest [BNC H9H 2499]*
- v) *There wasn't an **atom of** tenderness [BNC HH8 2388]*

2) **A drop**

- vi) *Couldn't spare him a **drop of** real hatred [BNC HJC 1954]*
- vii) *Not one **drop of** hatred left [BNC HGK 3869]*
- viii) *Troubled by no **drop of** imagination [BNC HA2 276]*
- ix) *I do not suppose a single **drop of** fun [BNC FU3 217]*
- x) *Must not expend every last **drop of** sympathy [BNC CBJ 4]*

3) **A grain**

- xi) *Not a **grain of** truth [BNC CH3 4280]*
- xii) *Had not a **grain of** socialism in it [BNC FB1 1440]*
- xiii) *Without a **grain of** malice or hatred [BNC HGG 1996]*

4) **A jot**

- xiv) *Have made not a **jot of** difference [BNC AHN 986]*
- xv) *Nor one **jot of** self-pity [BNC BN6 541]*
- xvi) *Aren't going to make a **jot of** difference [BNC C94 554]*
- xvii) *There was not a **jot of** humour [BNC CLD 1433]*
- xviii) *Displayed no **jot of** his inner feelings [BNC H8A 792]*
- xix) *Without a **jot of** formal marketing training [BNC K59 1226]*

5) **A scrap**

- xx) *Had not made a **scrap of** difference [BNC ACW 343]*
- xxi) *Didn't make a **scrap of** difference [BNC H9D 2792]*
- xxii) *Nobody could find a **scrap of** positive criticism [BNC ART 1306]*
- xxiii) *There was not a **scrap of** worthwhile evidence [BNC CDS 338]*
- xxiv) *Without a **scrap of** evidence [BNC EB7 1020]*
- xxv) *Wasn't a **scrap of** evidence [BNC H0D 2527]*
- xxvi) *Have never given a poor girl a **scrap of** encouragement [BNC GUE 1416]*

- xxvii) *Not paying the slightest **scrap of** attention* [BNC H8H 837]
- xxviii) *Has never given a **scrap of** trouble* [BNC HPC 347]
- xxix) *Did not have a **scrap of** vandalism* [BNC J3R 375]
- xxx) *Was not a **scrap of** aggression* [BNC JY1 2114]
- xxxi) *Neither with a **scrap of** medical or scientific knowledge* [BNC K5C 1807]

6) **A shred**

- xxxii) *Without a **shred of** embarrassment* [BNC AAF 336]
- xxxiii) *There wasn't a **shred of** self-pity* [BNC H9N 2122]
- xxxiv) *Not a **shred of** guilty feeling* [BNC HW8 3107]
- xxxv) *Not a **shred of** evidence* [BNC K5M 9742]
- xxxvi) *Not a **shred of** help* [BNC K5M 5754]
- xxxvii) *Not a **shred of** truth* [BNC HHX 823]
- xxxviii) *Won't have a **shred of** reputation* [BNC H9D 909]
- xxxix) *With scarcely a **shred of** genuine folk content* [BNC GVT 2671]
- xl) *Not seen a **shred of** proof* [CKU 47]
- xli) *He had no **shreds of** status* [BNC CNB 1257]

7) **A speck**

- xliv) *With not a **speck of** Indian sense* [BNC ALX 440]
- xlvi) *Won't have a **speck of** trouble* [BNC G3G 422]
- xlvii) *Had not a **speck of** luck* [BNC KBW 16302]

8) **A trace**

- xlv) *Without a **trace of** selfconsciousness* [BNC A73 2024]
- xlvi) *Was not a **trace of** bitterness* [BNC ABW 1058]
- xlvii) *No **trace of** expression* [BNC ADS 1411]
- xlviii) *Contained not a **trace of** the spirit* [BNC B0H 1125]
- xlix) *With scarcely a **trace of** an Algerian accent* [BNC C8S 2378]

5.1.3 Negation: Examples of Czech samples from the CNK

1) **Kousek**

- i) *nemá v sobě kousek citu* (he does not have a bit of feeling) [CNK bl011211:72:25]
- ii) *nemáš kouska odvahy* ({you} do not have a bit of courage) [CNK petka21:2:1504]
- iii) *kluk nikdy neměl kouska rozumu* (a boy never has {not} a bit of sense) [CNK graftonf:1739]
- iv) *na tom není kousek pravdy* (there is not a bit of truth) [CNK posner:3:141]
- v) *nemáte v sobě kouska ctižádosti* ({you} do not have a bit of ambition) [CNK kraladvo:2:79]
- vi) *nemáte kouska důkazu* ({you} do not have a bit of evidence) [CNK mrtvola:1:4250]
- vii) *Jack nemá kouska kuráže* (Jack does not have a bit of courage) [CNK upfield1:1:4279]
- viii) *copak nemáš kouska ohleduplnosti* (Do you not have a bit of respect) [CNK dumschod:1:4575]
- ix) *ty nemáš kouska studu* (you do not have a bit of shame) [CNKpopel:2906]
- x) *nemáte kousek víry* ({you} do not have a bit of faith) [CNK bellona:1:311]
- xi) *nemají kouska vychování* ({they} do not have a bit of manners) [CNK frybort2:1:13270]
- xii) *já nemám kouska zastání* (I do not have a bit of support) [CNK arabela:11:33]

2) **Špetka, špetička**

- xiii) *není ani špetka naděje* ({there} is not a pinch of hope) [CNK heller:1:7181]
- xiv) *nebyla špetka humoru* ({there} was not a pinch of humour) [CNK hailey:1:2332]
- xv) *nemá ani špetičku tušení* (he does not have a pinch of idea) [CNK meyrink:10:118]

3) **Zrno, zrnko**

- xvi) *neměl v sobě zrno lakomství* (he did not have a grain of stinginess in him) [CNK hraci:1:514]
- xvii) *není ani zrnko pravdy* (is not a grain of truth) [CNK scortia:1:1753]

xviii) *kdo neměl ani **zrnko** představivosti* (who did not have a grain of imagination)

[CNK kortooms:1:3033]

xix) *neměl obsahovat ani **zrnko** propagandy* (should not have contained a grain of propaganda) [CNK pnin:1:960]

SHRNUTÍ

Diplomová práce se zabývá vágními nenumerickými kvantifikátory v angličtině a jejich srovnáním s češtinou. Vychází přitom ze studie Jarmily Tárnyikové z roku 2010 pojmenované *Bags of Talent, a Touch of Panic, and a Bit of Luck: The Case Study of Non-Numerical Vague Quantifiers*. V obou jazycích byly zkoumány pouze kvantifikátory, které, zaprvé, vyjadřují pouze malé množství, a, zadruhé, se v obou použitých korpusech (The British National Corpus a Český národní korpus) objevily v přeneseném smyslu.

Nově zkoumané anglické kvantifikátory byly umístěny na gradient vágní reference, který ve své studii uvádí Tárnyiková, čímž byl původní rozsah práce rozšířen, zejména část věnovaná kvantifikátorům vyjadřujícím malé množství.

Některé rozdíly mezi kvantifikátory byly patrné už z typologické různorodosti dvou jazyků. Strukturní rozdílnost musela být uvažena při zadávání dotazu do jazykových korpusů. Zatímco v British National Corpus hledaná formule obsahovala formu jednotného nebo množného čísla kvantifikátoru spolu s předložkou *of*, v rámci hledání v Českém národním korpusu byly zadávány vzorce pro lemma příslušného kvantifikátoru. Dále byly v české části výzkumu vyhledávány celé řetězce deminutivních kvantifikátorů odvozených od jediného základního tvaru.

Vzhledem k většímu množství zkoumaných anglických kvantifikátorů je pochopitelná i větší různorodost frekvence, se kterou se jednotlivé kvantifikátory objevovaly, byly vytvořeny 3 třídy: nejfrekventovanější (nad 100 výskytů), se střední frekvencí a s nízkou frekvencí (méně než 10 výskytů včetně). Do určité míry může být tento jev přisouzen sjednocení českých kvantifikátorů do etymologicky příbuzných skupin, což zakrylo velké rozdíly ve frekvenci výskytu některých forem.

Paradigmatické alternace v obou jazycích ukázaly preferenci nepříznačkové formy singuláru u většiny kvantifikátorů v porovnání s příznačkovou formou plurálu. České kvantifikátory dále vykázaly, že se obvykle ve skupině objevovala jedna forma, která ve funkci vágního kvantifikátoru převládala nad ostatními podobami. Tato problematika úzce souvisí s premodifikací, která byla také zkoumána. Obecně se dá tvrdit, že zatímco čeští mluvčí používají spíše deminutivní formy pro vyjádření menších rozdílů kvantifikace, britští uživatelé, kterým jazyk neumožňuje vyjádření nuance ve významu

aplikací příslušné přípony, realizují tuto potřebu formou adjektivní premodifikace. Tudíž bylo nalezeno větší množství různých adjektivních premodifikátorů vyjadřujících požadované množství mezi anglickými vzorky.

Během zkoumání negace bylo zjištěno, že v obou jazycích převládá slovesná negace. V obou jazycích se vždy vyskytovalo několik kvantifikátorů, v nichž hrála negace významnou roli. Tyto kvantifikátory byly velmi často využívány k vyjádření nedostatku. Uživatelé jimi vyjadřovali určitý negativní postoj, negativní skutečnost.

Dalším společným rysem srovnávaných struktur v obou jazycích bylo široké spektrum substantiv, jejichž množství bylo určeno kvantifikátory. Pro tato substantiva se nepodařilo najít společný jednotící sémantický rys. Často se jednalo o abstraktní entity, aby bylo dodrženo kritérium přeneseného významu kvantifikátoru. Podrobným srovnáním anglických a českých kolokací byla prokázána ekvivalence kvantifikátorů v obou jazycích, a to nejen ekvivalence forem, ale i ekvivalence funkcí a jejich využití pro vágní kvantifikaci.

Z pozorování vyplývá, že zatímco premodifikace a frekvence jednotlivých vágních kvantifikátorů ukázaly spíše rozdílné tendence v užití vágního jazyka britskými a českými mluvčími, oblasti negace a kolokace se substantivy svědčí o podobných interjazykových rysech vágní kvantifikace, kde může být nalezeno mnoho paralel v obou jazycích.

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ANNOTATION

The thesis deals with vague non-numerical quantifiers in English which belong to the wider study field of vague language. The work is based on the research described in the article “Bags of Talent, a Touch of Panic, and a Bit of Luck: The Case Study of Non-numerical Vague Quantifiers” by Jarmila Tárnyiková in 2010. Vague non-numerical quantifiers expressing low quantity in their figurative meaning are examined with the help of the British National Corpus. Collected English samples are compared with etymologically related chains of Czech vague non-numerical quantifiers. The Czech part of the research is conducted in Czech National Corpus (Český národní korpus). Selected data are compared in the following perspectives: frequency of occurrence, paradigmatic alternations, diversity of nominal collocates, negation, and premodification. The comparison demonstrates cross-linguistic and cross-cultural similarities and differences in the usage of non-numerical vague quantifiers in English and Czech.

Key words: vague language, vague non-numerical quantifiers, corpus, non-literal meaning, cross-language perspective, equivalence

ANOTACE

Diplomová práce se zabývá vágními nenumerickými kvantifikátory v angličtině, obecně se tedy týká studia vágního jazyka. Tato práce je založena na výzkumu Jarmily Tárnyikové, která jej popsala v článku *‘Bags of Talent, a Touch of Panic, and a Bit of Luck: The Case Study of Non-Numerical Vague Quantifiers’* z roku 2010. S pomocí Britského národního korpusu (British National Corpus) jsou zkoumání podrobeny vágní nenumerické kvantifikátory vyjadřující malou kvantitu, které se objevují v přeneseném smyslu. Anglické příklady jsou potom porovnány s etymologicky příbuznými řetězci českých vágních nenumerických kvantifikátorů. Sběr dat pro českou část výzkumu je proveden v Českém národním korpusu. Vybraná data jsou detailně porovnána v následujících oblastech: frekvence výskytu, alternace paradigmatu, různorodost substantiv v kolokacích, negace, premodifikace. Srovnání ukazuje lingvistické i kulturní podobnosti a rozdíly v užití vágních nenumerických kvantifikátorů v angličtině a češtině.

Klíčová slova: vágní jazyk, vágní nenumerické kvantifikátory, korpus, přenesený význam, mezijazykový pohled, ekvivalence