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LEXICO-GRAMMATICAL PATTERNS OF THE COGNITION NOUN *IDEA* IN ABBI WAXMAN'S *THE BOOKISH LIFE OF NINA HILL*

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ABSTRACT: Research on abstract nouns has established close connections between grammatical patterning and discourse meaning, but its emphasis on academic texts and noun-complement structures leaves conversational and context-dependent uses in fiction less fully described. This study examines the lexico-grammatical environments and contextual meanings of the cognition noun *idea* in Abbi Waxman's The Bookish Life of Nina Hill. Drawing on Pattern Grammar (Hunston & Francis, 2000), it combines exhaustive retrieval of all 27 narrative occurrences of *idea* and *ideas* across 30 chapters with descriptive counts and close contextual analysis. Two recurrent pattern families predominate: *no/ any + idea* constructions, which mainly concern knowledge or understanding, and evaluatively modified singular *idea*, which foregrounds assessment. Their interpretation nevertheless depends on negation, modality, information order, and surrounding discourse: positive adjectival wording can accompany a withdrawn assessment, while *no idea* can express emphatic evaluation rather than literal ignorance. Elliptical responses and preposed content further demonstrate that specification need not follow the noun. The study contributes a lemma-first retrieval strategy and a form-first classification that retain such uses alongside canonical complementation and distinguish recurrent patterns from other configurations.

KEY WORDS: Cognition noun; idea; lexico-grammatical patterning; fictional discourse; Pattern Grammar.

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1. Introduction

Nouns enable speakers and writers to treat mental contents as entities that can be evaluated, attributed, introduced, or withheld. An idea may be presented as someone's proposal, a good course of action, an incompletely accessible thought, or an understanding that a person lacks. These readings are related, but they are not interchangeable. Their interpretation depends partly on the grammatical environment in which the noun occurs and partly on how that environment connects with the surrounding discourse. Studying a cognition noun therefore requires attention to more than its isolated dictionary meaning. It requires an account of what the wording makes available for interpretation and what readers supply from context.

This relationship is especially relevant in fiction, where narration, dialogue, and represented mental experience coexist. Characters may discuss a proposal explicitly, answer an earlier question with a fragment, or refer to thoughts without stating their propositional content. Narration may then qualify their words, contrast what they say with what they understand, or place an evaluation within an earlier perspective. Corpus stylistics provides a basis for combining systematic retrieval with close analysis of these textual circumstances (Semino & Short, 2004; McIntyre, 2015). For a lexical study, exhaustive retrieval ensures that prominent examples do not become the sole basis for an account of a word's behavior.

Research on shell nouns, signalling nouns, and stance nouns has established that abstract nouns

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participate in the organization and evaluation of discourse (Schmid, 2000; Flowerdew & Forest, 2015; Jiang & Hyland, 2015). Much influential empirical work, however, examines academic discourse and gives analytical prominence to structures in which a noun introduces or connects with explicitly stated content. This focus is productive for investigating propositional packaging and writer stance, but it does not provide a complete profile of an individual noun. A search beginning with a noun-complement construction can leave out tokens whose content is recoverable from an earlier turn, whose specifying clause is preposed, or whose grammatical role does not involve a content clause at all.

The unresolved issue is thus methodological as well as descriptive. To understand how a cognition noun operates throughout a narrative, its complete range of attested environments must remain visible before particular constructions are selected for interpretation. The question is not simply whether a previously unexamined novel contains *idea*. It is how a lexical description changes when retrieval includes conversational fragments, ordinary noun phrases, and discourse-dependent completion alongside more canonical patterns. Such a description can show where established accounts of noun-content relations remain useful and where the unit of analysis must extend beyond the immediately following clause.

This article addresses that issue through *idea* in Abbi Waxman's The Bookish Life of Nina Hill (2019). The novel offers a bounded narrative in which the same noun appears in different local circumstances, including discussions of family knowledge, practical decisions, and partially accessible thoughts. The study uses cognition noun as a semantic classification: the noun concerns mental contents, beliefs, or understanding. Shell, signalling, and stance functions are treated separately as functions that must be established for particular uses. The lexical starting point consequently does not assume that every occurrence packages a proposition or expresses an explicit evaluative position.

Accordingly, the study addresses two research questions:

RQ1: What recurrent lexico-grammatical patterns and other configurations does the cognition noun *idea* occur in across Abbi Waxman's The Bookish Life of Nina Hill?

RQ2: How do these configurations contribute to the contextual interpretation of *idea* in the novel?

The questions connect a formal inventory with contextual explanation while keeping them analytically distinct. Recurrence is established from the wording; the significance of that wording is assessed in its sentence and surrounding exchange. The contribution lies in combining lemma-first retrieval with form-first classification. Lemma-first retrieval gathers singular *idea* and plural *ideas* before deciding which grammatical environments matter. Form-first classification groups the retrieved tokens by observable features before interpreting their local effects. Together, these decisions preserve less canonical uses and make the boundary between recurrent patterns and heterogeneous configurations explicit. The resulting account is intended as a transparent lexical baseline for comparison, rather than a general model of cognition in fiction or a thematic interpretation of the novel.

2. Theoretical background and previous research

2.1. Pattern Grammar and the relation between form and meaning

Pattern Grammar treats recurrent relations between lexical items, grammatical environments, and meaning as central to language description (Hunston & Francis, 2000). Its relevance here is that *idea* enters different environments whose interpretive potential cannot be captured by listing senses independently of grammar. Determiners, modifiers, clausal relations, and the wider predicate help distinguish the knowledge-oriented use of *have no idea* from the assessment expressed through *a good idea*. These associations make the word in its environment a more informative analytical unit than either the noun alone or a construction described without reference to its lexical content.

The broader notion of lexicogrammar likewise recognizes a close relationship between lexical and grammatical choices (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The present study nevertheless uses Pattern Grammar as its principal operational framework. It asks which environments recur around the selected noun and how their meanings are realized in context. Hunston and Su's (2019) discussion of patterns, constructions, and local grammar is relevant to the subsequent mapping between formal description and

interpretation, particularly where apparently similar forms support different evaluative readings. The current analysis does not derive a local grammar of the novel or equate every observed phrase with an independently established construction.

Two descriptive levels are distinguished. A configuration is any attested grammatical arrangement involving the noun. A recurrent pattern family groups configurations that share a repeated formal core within the narrative while permitting variation in the larger clause. Thus, the *no/ any + idea* family accommodates following content, preposed content, and conversational ellipsis. Its members are not syntactically identical. Conversely, plural number alone does not establish a comparable pattern family when the plural tokens occur in different grammatical roles. This distinction makes it possible to use Pattern Grammar without overstating what recurrence in a small dataset demonstrates.

Form-meaning association also differs from a fixed mapping between expression and communicative effect. An evaluative adjective provides a recognizable cue, but the surrounding clause can question or negate the evaluation. Likewise, a negative expression of understanding can intensify an assessment of degree rather than simply report missing knowledge. The analysis therefore identifies formal regularity first and examines contextual variation within it. This procedure permits a pattern to remain stable as a descriptive category even when its local force varies.

2.2. Cognition nouns and related functional categories

A cognition noun is understood here as a noun semantically associated with mental contents, beliefs, or cognitive attitudes; *idea* belongs to this domain in Jiang and Hyland's (2015) classification. This is a lexical-semantic designation. By contrast, shell, signalling, and stance functions depend on the grammatical and discourse relations established in a particular occurrence. The distinction matters because a noun can remain semantically cognitive without encapsulating a neighboring proposition or performing the same interpersonal work on every occasion.

Schmid's (2000, 2018) account of shell nouns explains how abstract nouns can characterize and temporarily conceptualize complex information supplied by context. The relation between the noun and that information is central: the noun provides a conceptual frame, while a clause or discourse segment supplies more specific content. For the present analysis, this perspective is useful when *the idea is* introduces an explanatory clause or when a proposal is treated as a conceptual object. It does not justify classifying every plural or possessive use of *idea* as a shell-noun instance without examining the relevant content relation.

Signalling-noun research emphasizes how a noun directs interpretation toward information recoverable within or beyond the local clause (Flowerdew, 2003; Flowerdew & Forest, 2015). It therefore provides a useful perspective on cases where specification is distributed across an exchange. A conversational response can rely on a question already introduced by another character, even though no content clause follows the noun. Contextual completeness and syntactic completeness should accordingly be distinguished. Readers may understand which issue is unresolved without the wording constituting an overt noun-complement structure.

Stance-oriented research examines how nouns and associated structures express evaluation and organize interaction, particularly in academic writing (Jiang & Hyland, 2015, 2018). It helps identify the importance of attitudinal modification while leaving open the source and scope of an evaluation in fiction. A positive adjective may represent an earlier judgment that a character now rejects. These traditions therefore offer complementary questions about semantic classification, content specification, and evaluative positioning. Following the distinctions highlighted by Benitez-Castro and Thompson (2015), the present study avoids treating their terminology as a set of interchangeable labels.

2.3. Academic discourse research and the gap in fictional discourse

Studies of academic noun patterning demonstrate why grammar and discourse function should be examined together. Charles (2007) relates the *Noun + that* pattern to disciplinary stance construction, while Aktas and Cortes (2008) investigate shell nouns as cohesive resources in published and student writing. Jiang (2015) examines nominal stance in L1 and L2 student texts, including the role of

premodification. Across these studies, the noun is informative because of its grammatical and rhetorical relations, rather than because its isolated meaning uniquely determines its function.

Research has also established variation across disciplines and registers. Jiang and Hyland (2015, 2018) connect nominal structures with evaluation and interaction in research writing, and Gao, Lu, and Hu (2024) identify different signalling-noun preferences in marketing and economics articles. Fang and Dong (2021), examining cataphoric shell nouns with appositive *that*-clauses across spoken and written registers, relate their deployment to register formality and contextual configuration. This work cautions against assuming that a pattern profile established in one discourse setting supplies an automatic expectation for another.

Fiction presents a complementary descriptive problem because a single narrative can include locally conversational wording and narrator-mediated interpretation. The gap addressed here concerns the coverage of an entire lemma under those conditions. Construction-focused studies answer valuable questions about selected structures, but their retrieval criteria need not capture a fragment such as *No idea*, a preposed question followed by *have no idea*, or an ordinary plural noun phrase. Building on the integration of systematic retrieval and contextual interpretation advocated in corpus stylistics (McIntyre, 2015), the present study retains all such tokens and asks how their formal differences affect the account of the noun.

3. Research materials and method

3.1. Material and analytical scope

The research material is the English narrative of Waxman's The Bookish Life of Nina Hill (2019), comprising 30 chapters and approximately 79,300 running words. Front matter and post-narrative material, including the readers' guide, are excluded. The dataset consists of all 27 narrative tokens identified for the lemma: 23 singular occurrences of *idea* and four plural occurrences of *ideas*. Page references identify examples in the English edition used for the analysis. The unit counted is an occurrence of the noun, not the number of clauses, propositions, or interpretations associated with it.

The study combines descriptive quantitative reporting with qualitative contextual analysis. Frequencies answer how the retrieved tokens are distributed across the formal categories; close reading addresses their interpretation. The analysis does not compare the novel statistically with academic discourse. Prior research supplies conceptual distinctions and points of comparison, while the narrative supplies the evidence for the reported configuration groups. This separation prevents a theoretical contrast between discourse settings from being presented as an empirically demonstrated frequency difference.

3.2. Retrieval and coding criteria

Case-insensitive whole-word searches for *idea* and *ideas* formed the retrieval stage. Each hit was checked in its sentence and surrounding discourse to establish nominal status and narrative inclusion. Searching both forms avoided restricting the dataset to the singular and allowed number to become an analytical variable. All eligible tokens were retained, including fragments and cases without an overt following content clause. The surrounding material was used to identify the relevant proposal, question, or mental content rather than to expand the token count.

Formal coding preceded semantic interpretation. Table 1 summarizes the six dimensions used to describe each occurrence. The dimensions are related but not redundant: an adjective records modification, whereas negation in the larger clause records a separate environment that may affect the force of that adjective. Similarly, the absence of a following complement does not establish the absence of specifying content elsewhere. Recording these features separately allows the same formal core to be compared across different discourse circumstances.

Table 1. *Coding dimensions and decision criteria*

Dimension	Recorded distinction	Decision criterion
Number	Singular *idea* or plural *ideas*	Code the overt form of the noun.
Determiner or	*no*, *any*, articles, possessives,	Record the expression actually present; do

quantifier	*some*, or zero	not supply omitted material.
Modification	Evaluative adjective, other modifier, or none	Separate adjective form from endorsement of the evaluation.
Complementation or specification	Following content clause, preposed content, copular specification, or contextual recovery	Distinguish content relations from relative clauses and extraposed clauses.
Clause environment	Predicate, syntactic role, negation, modality, or fragment	Retain the larger environment relevant to interpretation.
Contextual meaning	Knowledge, assessment, attribution, emergence, or multiple mental contents	Interpret from the local passage after formal classification.

For content specification, the coding distinguished an overt clause from information inferred from the exchange. Following *wh*-content clauses were differentiated from declarative content clauses; preposed interrogative content was recorded separately from both. A declarative clause with no initial *that* was classified as an unmarked declarative complement, even where later coordinated content included *that*. A relative clause modifying an evaluative phrase was not treated as a content complement. Where introductory *it* and a following infinitive supported extraposition, the infinitive was not automatically coded as a complement of *idea* merely because it followed the noun.

3.3. Grouping and interpretation

The classification has two principal branches. Recurrent patterns comprise the *no/ any* + *idea* family and evaluatively modified singular *idea*. Other configurations comprise the remaining singular forms and the plural tokens. Within this dataset, the decision sequence is to identify number, assign singular tokens with *no* or *any* to the first family, assign the remaining evaluatively modified singular tokens to the second, and retain other singular tokens separately. The plural group is descriptive and does not imply a common construction. No overlapping category is counted twice.

A recurrent family requires a shared formal core attested more than once in the narrative. This operational criterion establishes local recurrence, not statistical salience, grammatical productivity, or conventionality in English generally. The *no/ any* grouping brings together related determination in environments concerning knowledge or understanding, but preserves subconfigurations instead of asserting complete syntactic equivalence. The evaluative family similarly groups the repeated adjective-noun core while allowing different determiners, predicates, and degrees of commitment. Contextual interpretation then examines how those surrounding features qualify the core.

All 27 tokens were coded by one analyst, who subsequently conducted a second analytic pass to check category assignments against the coding criteria. The coding table and explicit treatment of difficult cases make the basis for these decisions transparent. The implications of relying on a single coder are addressed in the limitations below.

Percentages are calculated against all 27 tokens unless another denominator is stated and are rounded to one decimal place. Counts within the *no/ any* family use its 12 tokens as the relevant subtotal. No significance tests are applied because the immediate aim is to describe a complete lexical inventory within one text. In presenting the findings, a small set of diagnostic examples illustrates each analytical issue; less distinctive tokens contribute to the counts without receiving repetitive individual commentary.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Distribution of recurrent patterns and other configurations

Table 2 organizes the dataset hierarchically. The two recurrent families account for 20 tokens, or 74.1% of the inventory. Seven tokens, or 25.9%, fall under other configurations. Within this second branch, the three singular occurrences are structurally distinct, while the four plural occurrences share

number but differ in grammatical role. The hierarchy recognizes recurrence where the wording supports it and preserves the remaining evidence without giving all groups equivalent theoretical status.

Table 2. *Distribution of recurrent patterns and other configurations*

Main group	Family or configuration	Tokens	Percentage of all tokens
Recurrent patterns	*no/any + idea*, including ellipsis	12	44.4%
Recurrent patterns	Evaluatively modified singular *idea*	8	29.6%
Other configurations	Other singular configurations	3	11.1%
Other configurations	Plural *ideas* configurations	4	14.8%
Total	**All occurrences of *idea/ideas***	**27**	**100%**

Note. Individual percentages sum to 99.9% because of rounding. Main-group percentages are calculated from the unrounded subtotals.

This distribution indicates that the noun's local profile is concentrated around knowledge-oriented and evaluative wording. It does not show that these are exhaustive semantic classes. Assessment can coexist with interpersonal positioning, and ownership can occur in either a singular possessive phrase or a plural passive clause. The categories organize grammatical evidence; they do not divide cognition into mutually exclusive psychological states. Their explanatory value emerges from comparison within and across the attested environments.

4.2. Recurrent patterns

4.2.1. The no/ any + idea family

The largest family contains 12 tokens, usually associated with *have*, including the reduced response *No idea*. The recurrent formal core directs attention toward knowledge or understanding, but the content of that understanding appears in different positions. Table 3 distinguishes following *wh*-content, initially unmarked declarative content, absence of an overt content clause, and preposed interrogative content. Ten tokens have overtly expressed content in the construction, including the two preposed cases; two rely on the surrounding exchange.

Table 3. *Content specification within the no/ any + idea family*

Subconfiguration	Tokens	Formal description
Following *wh*-content clause	6	*have no/any idea* followed by *how*, *what*, or *who* content
Following declarative content	2	Declarative clause initially lacking overt *that*
No overt content clause	2	Complete or reduced response relying on an earlier turn
Preposed interrogative content	2	*whether* or *what* content before the expression of non-knowledge
Total	**12**	**One noun token counted per occurrence**

The relationship between grammatical recurrence and contextual variability is particularly clear in the following contrast:

(1) "You have no idea how amusing that party trick is" (Waxman, 2019, p.19).

(2) "had no idea what he was talking about" (Waxman, 2019, p.66).

Both examples contain negative determination and following *wh*-content, yet they do different work. In (1), Liz's comment follows Nina's display of factual knowledge. The clause introduced by *how* presents a degree of amusement, and the expression of non-knowledge intensifies the evaluation. Its point is not simply that Nina lacks a factual answer. It positions the amusement as exceeding her appreciation of it. The expression retains a connection to understanding, but that connection serves an emphatic interpersonal assessment.

Example (2) more directly presents a failure of comprehension. The narration describes Nina as not understanding Peter, while her spoken response conveys apparent understanding. The negative

construction therefore contributes to a discrepancy between represented cognition and outward response. That discrepancy is supplied by the passage, not by the noun phrase alone. Unlike (1), the following clause identifies material whose meaning is unavailable to the character, rather than a degree whose extent is rhetorically amplified. Coding both as identical instances of ignorance would erase this difference.

The comparison also explains why *wh*-content is a useful descriptive label. A following *how*-clause in an emphatic evaluation need not function like a straightforward embedded request for information. The wider category records the overt form while allowing the analysis to distinguish degree-oriented and knowledge-oriented readings. Other tokens in this subgroup involve personal knowledge, challenged judgment, doubt about future understanding, or hypothetical non-understanding. Their shared environment narrows the field of interpretation without fixing a single discourse act.

The two declarative cases specify propositions that had not been known. One concerns the lawyer's mistaken assumption about Nina's knowledge of her paternity (p.37); the other concerns Polly's unfamiliarity with material absent from the *Harry Potter* films (p.78). Both begin with a declarative clause without overt *that*. The second continues with coordinated content containing *or that*, but remains one occurrence of *idea*. This distinction between noun tokens and attached clauses prevents the amount of specifying material from inflating the frequency of the pattern.

The third diagnostic example illustrates a different relation between expression and content:

(3) "No idea. Google it" (Waxman, 2019, p.157).

Here the unknown issue is supplied by the preceding question. The response omits the subject and verb as well as an overt content clause, yet remains interpretable in the exchange. The following imperative redirects the search for an answer. It would be misleading to treat the fragment as lacking cognitive content merely because that content is not repeated. Equally, supplying an imagined full clause in the coding would conceal the actual grammatical reduction. The other context-dependent token, on page 78, retains subject and verb but likewise depends on the preceding question. These two responses thus share contextual recovery while differing in the extent of ellipsis.

Preposed content creates another important distinction. On page 133, an alternative framed with *whether* precedes the statement that Nina had no idea; on page 211, an open question introduced by *what* precedes the corresponding first-person expression. In both cases, the unresolved content is overt in the same construction, but readers encounter it before the negative epistemic frame. These are therefore not equivalent to the responses that require content from an earlier turn. The coding gives priority to the presence and position of the expressed content, rather than treating every absence of a following clause as the same phenomenon.

Compared with noun-complement research in academic discourse, these findings make the location of specification analytically consequential. Work on shell and signalling nouns already recognizes relations between a general noun and more specific discourse content (Schmid, 2018; Flowerdew & Forest, 2015). The present family shows why a lemma-based profile must record how that relation is realized: following complementation, preposing, and contextual recovery are distinguishable routes. Their contribution is not evidence that fiction uniquely permits these resources. It is evidence that excluding them would make this noun's profile within the novel incomplete.

4.2.2. Evaluatively modified singular idea

The second recurrent family comprises eight tokens: seven modified by *good* and one by *excellent*. Its shared core is an evaluative adjective followed by singular *idea*. The larger environments include full clauses and a reduced response, and the proposal under evaluation can be stated locally or recovered from context. The recurrence is therefore strongest at the level of the modified noun phrase. It does not imply that all eight occurrences instantiate the same complementation structure or express equally committed approval.

Three examples capture the main interpretive contrasts:

(4) "Excellent idea" (Waxman, 2019, p.68).

(5) "a good idea to keep us apart" (Waxman, 2019, p.47).

(6) "was maybe not the good idea he had thought it was" (Waxman, 2019, p.174).

In (4), Peter responds to Nina's suggestion of more coffee and food. The evaluative expression accepts a proposal whose content is available from the preceding turn. As in the reduced negative response, the noun phrase is sufficient because the exchange supplies what is being discussed. The difference lies in the orientation toward that content: the adjective appraises an available course of action. The grammatical reduction is thus compatible with explicit evaluation, rather than necessarily indicating vagueness or an incomplete contribution.

Example (5) occurs when Nina asks why her mother regarded separation as a good decision. The positive adjective belongs to the evaluation being questioned, not straightforwardly to Nina's current position. In the fuller clause, introductory *it* and the following infinitive support an extraposition analysis. The infinitive identifies the action under assessment, but its linear position after *idea* does not alone establish a direct noun-complement relation. The token therefore illustrates two separate cautions: evaluative form must be distinguished from the current speaker's commitment, and adjacent clauses must be classified by grammatical relation rather than proximity.

In (6), Tom revises an earlier assessment of a plan. The adjective remains positive, but *not* retracts the evaluation and *maybe* qualifies the reassessment. The relative clause points back to what he previously thought, thereby distinguishing the earlier judgment from the current one. It modifies the noun phrase rather than supplying the proposal's content in a canonical content clause. The reading arises from the combination of adjective, negation, qualification, and temporal perspective. Counting *good* as an unqualified positive stance would therefore misrepresent the passage.

These examples show that an evaluation has a source and a scope. In a response accepting a suggestion, the source is the responding character and the scope is the immediately available proposal. In a challenging question, the positive assessment may be attributed to someone else. In retrospective correction, the text contrasts two positions held at different times. The noun phrase makes the proposal available for assessment, but the clause and exchange determine whose assessment is represented and whether it is maintained. This is why lexical positivity and discourse-level endorsement require separate treatment.

The remaining occurrences reinforce the same distinction without requiring separate extended analyses. They involve qualified approval of planning, retrospective reflection on opening a bar, a question about a proposed strategy, uncertainty about a situation, and a favorable response to a book-club proposal. Across these passages, the adjective retains its evaluative role while the surrounding wording regulates commitment. The absence of *bad idea* is consequently an observation about the retrieved adjective forms, not evidence that the narrative contains no unfavorable judgments involving *idea*.

The comparison with academic stance research concerns a shared grammatical resource used under different discourse conditions. Jiang (2015) shows the relevance of attitudinal premodification in nominal stance, while Jiang and Hyland (2015) examine how nominal structures make evaluation available within propositions. The fictional tokens likewise foreground assessment, but interpreting that assessment requires attention to attributed speech, questioning, and revised viewpoints. The present analysis therefore extends the descriptive attention from evaluative wording to its contextual ownership and commitment, without assuming that an academic functional taxonomy transfers unchanged to dialogue.

4.3. Other and non-recurrent configurations

4.3.1. Other singular configurations

Three singular tokens remain outside the recurrent families. They instantiate possession, copular specification, and the introduction of a new mental content. These are distinct configurations, not members of a third recurrent pattern. Their inclusion matters because an account restricted to the dominant families would miss ways in which *idea* functions as an ordinary nominal entity while still participating in cognitive representation.

(7) "take her idea and run with it" (Waxman, 2019, p.88).

(8) "the idea is you say..." (Waxman, 2019, p.203).

(9) "She had an idea" (Waxman, 2019, p.243).

In (7), the possessive attributes the concept to a source within an imagined scenario concerning bullet journaling and Internet uptake. The noun is the object of *take*, and the subsequent wording presents development by others. The passage construes a concept as something that can circulate beyond its originator. This interpretation concerns attribution and uptake; it does not require a claim about legal ownership or the factual history of invention. The grammatical evidence supports a relation between a conceptual entity and an attributed source.

Example (8) specifies a principle through a copular relation. The definite noun phrase establishes the topic of the explanation, while the following clause supplies what that principle involves. The content is therefore explicit, but linked through *be* rather than attached as an ordinary postnominal complement. Example (9), by contrast, introduces a newly individuated mental content through the indefinite article and affirmative *have*. Subsequent action makes its practical direction available. The two cases differ in how they sequence the identification of a concept and the elaboration of its content.

These configurations make distinct contributions to reference. Possession foregrounds origin; the definite copular form foregrounds an identifiable principle requiring explanation; the indefinite form introduces something new into the immediate narrative. None of these meanings follows from the noun alone, and none needs to be reduced to the knowledge-oriented reading of *have no idea*. In particular, affirmative *had an idea* cannot be treated as the simple semantic opposite of every negative *have no idea* occurrence: a newly emerging proposal and previously unavailable understanding are different contextual construals.

Schmid's (2000, 2018) distinction between abstract nouns and their shell-like uses helps interpret this variation. Copular specification is a clear site for examining a noun-content relation, whereas possession and emergence foreground other nominal properties. The cases complement construction-based descriptions by keeping such properties in view. Their contribution is coverage of additional grammatical possibilities within the lexical inventory, not evidence for their relative prominence across fiction.

4.3.2. Plural configurations

Four occurrences use *ideas*. They share plural morphology, but occupy different environments: a bare plural subject, coordination with another noun, a passive ownership construction, and a quantified phrase. The group therefore describes number-based variation rather than a unified recurrent pattern. Plurality allows multiple contents or a general class of contents to be construed, while the predicate and surrounding discourse determine their more specific status.

(10) "ideas would hover on the edge of her mind just out of sight" (Waxman, 2019, p.180).

(11) "where ideas are owned by companies run by algorithms" (Waxman, 2019, p.272).

(12) "despite having some ideas" (Waxman, 2019, p.312).

In (10), plural *ideas* is the subject of a spatially organized description. The wording presents mental contents as partly inaccessible entities located at the edge of awareness. The verb *hover* and the spatial expressions support this reading together. They do not by themselves establish personification, since hovering need not be a specifically human action. The analytical point is the construal of accessibility through the clause, rather than the assignment of a literary label solely from the noun or verb.

Example (11) places ideas within an imagined technological future and construes them as objects of corporate ownership. The passive predicate foregrounds their status as owned entities. This differs from the possessive singular on page 88, where origin and uptake are prominent, but it also shows that an ownership-related interpretation can cross the descriptive grouping boundary. Singular versus plural form organizes reference without rigidly determining the domain of contextual meaning.

Example (12) occurs when Nina responds to a question about the best feeling in the world. Although possible answers are available to her, she shakes her head instead of articulating them. The quantifier presents an indefinite set, while the concessive relation distinguishes possessing possible answers from making them explicit in conversation. The passage should therefore not be classified with the negative

no/any family merely because knowledge and response behavior are relevant. Its observable form and the contrast between availability and expression both matter.

The fourth plural occurrence coordinates *ideas* with *gestures* in a description of William's romantic disposition (p.269). It characterizes a tendency rather than specifying one proposition. Taken together, the plural cases demonstrate that cognitive reference can remain interpretable without a neighboring clause that states the content of each idea. Readers are told something about the contents' accessibility, ownership, availability, or dispositional character, even when those contents are not individually enumerated.

This finding clarifies the relationship with shell-noun and signalling-noun accounts. Those approaches are informative when a noun organizes or characterizes specified discourse content, but the semantic classification *cognition noun* also includes ordinary nominal uses. Treating the four plural tokens as automatically equivalent shell constructions would obscure their different predicates and referential scope. Their inclusion instead illustrates what a complete lemma profile adds: an account of cognitive entities even where explicit propositional packaging is not the main grammatical relation.

4.4. Implications for lexical description and contextual interpretation

The findings suggest that lexical descriptions of cognition nouns should distinguish recurrent grammatical form, the location of specifying content, and contextual function. This distinction builds on accounts of the relationship between pattern and meaning (Hunston & Francis, 2000; Hunston & Su, 2019). For *idea*, it allows a stable formal category to accommodate different interpretations: evaluative modification can occur within a withdrawn assessment, while *no idea* can intensify an evaluation. A lexical account should therefore describe recurring environments together with the effects of negation, modality, and surrounding discourse. This approach makes contextual variation part of the description and avoids assigning a single communicative function to every occurrence of a pattern.

A second implication concerns the scope of lexical retrieval. Academic noun-complement studies explain how writers package and evaluate propositions through selected structures (Jiang & Hyland, 2015). Retrieving all occurrences of a lemma complements this approach by retaining fragments, preposed content, and ordinary nominal uses that a construction-based search may exclude. Signalling-noun research provides a basis for examining the wider contextual links involved (Flowerdew, 2003; Flowerdew & Forest, 2015). The present study brings these links into an exhaustive account of one *cognition noun*. For future lexical descriptions, retrieval should precede classification so that the resulting inventory captures both recurrent families and less canonical uses.

Content specification should also be recorded separately from the presence of a following complement. The analysis distinguishes postnominal clauses, preposed content, copular specification, and recovery from earlier discourse. These arrangements differ in where readers encounter the information needed to interpret the noun, consistent with the attention to contextual specification in signalling-noun research (Flowerdew, 2003; Flowerdew & Forest, 2015). In dialogue, an earlier turn can supply the content of a short response; with preposing, the content is overt but precedes the epistemic frame. Recording these routes separately gives a fuller account of information sequencing than a binary distinction between complementation and its absence.

For contextual interpretation, the findings support analysing the noun within its clause and surrounding exchange. Attention to speech and thought presentation helps distinguish a narrator's account of understanding from a character's spoken response (Semino & Short, 2004). The relevant interpretive questions concern whose knowledge or assessment is represented, whether an evaluation is endorsed or withdrawn, and how earlier discourse supplies unstated content. Integrating frequency evidence with close stylistic analysis can clarify these textual effects (McIntyre, 2015). Here, *cognition noun* identifies a semantic category; the analysis concerns textual representations of cognition and provides no direct measurement of characters' mental states or readers' processing.

The treatment of low-frequency configurations has a further methodological implication. Frequent families establish the noun's recurring environments, while isolated occurrences can test the boundaries of

the classification. The copular example separates explicit content specification from postnominal complementation, and the affirmative indefinite example distinguishes the emergence of a proposal from knowledge-oriented uses. Such cases should remain visible in a lexical profile even when they cannot support claims about recurrence. Reporting them alongside the dominant families makes it possible to assess whether the classification accommodates the complete inventory without implying that every descriptive group constitutes a recurrent pattern.

These implications provide a basis for comparative research. Studies of the same lemma across novels could examine the stability of its pattern families and specification routes, while comparisons among cognition nouns within one narrative could investigate the contribution of lexical choice. Both designs should retain the distinction between formal classification and contextual interpretation. They should also distinguish token proportions within a noun's inventory from frequencies normalized by text length: the former describe its configuration profile, whereas the latter indicate its prevalence. Together, these measures would support clearer comparisons across nouns and texts.

The study is limited to one noun in one novel and lacks a matched comparison corpus. Coding was conducted by one analyst; a second analytic pass did not provide independent validation, and inter-coder agreement could not be assessed. Discourse voice and literary functions were not systematically coded. Broader corpora, independent coding, and explicit criteria for these dimensions would strengthen the scope and reliability of future analyses.

5. Conclusion

The analysis identifies two recurrent environments for *idea* in the novel The Bookish Life of Nina Hill (Waxman, 2019): negative or non-affirmative determination associated with knowledge and understanding, and evaluative modification associated with assessment. Their meanings are shaped by the larger clause and discourse. Negation, modality, attributed viewpoints, and the location of specifying content explain why similar wording can accompany different local readings. Other singular and plural configurations extend the noun's profile to attribution, emergence, specification, and multiple mental contents without constituting equivalent recurrent patterns. The methodological contribution is the combination of lemma-first retrieval and form-first classification. Beginning with every occurrence preserves conversational fragments, preposed content, and ordinary nominal uses alongside canonical complementation. Classifying their overt features before interpreting their effects makes recurrence visible without imposing a fixed relationship between pattern and meaning. The resulting account shows why an exhaustive lexical profile and a construction-focused analysis answer complementary questions.The study remains limited by its single-novel scope and reliance on a single coder. Future work can apply the same dimensions to additional novels and cognition nouns, introduce independent checking, and distinguish narrator discourse from character dialogue. Such comparisons would test the observed associations and clarify how content specification and contextual interpretation interact across a broader range of fictional discourse.

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Mô thức từ vựng - ngữ pháp của danh từ tri nhận idea trong *The Bookish Life of Nina Hill* của Abbi Waxman

Tóm tắt: Các nghiên cứu về danh từ trừu tượng đã chỉ ra mối quan hệ chặt chẽ giữa mô thức ngữ pháp và ý nghĩa diễn ngôn. Tuy nhiên, do chủ yếu tập trung vào văn bản học thuật và các cấu trúc danh từ - bổ ngữ, những nghiên cứu này chưa mô tả đầy đủ cách sử dụng danh từ trừu tượng trong hội thoại và những trường hợp phụ thuộc vào ngữ cảnh trong diễn ngôn hư cấu. Nghiên cứu này khảo sát các môi trường từ vựng–ngữ pháp và ý nghĩa ngữ cảnh của danh từ tri nhận *idea* trong tiểu thuyết The Bookish Life of Nina Hill của Abbi Waxman. Dựa trên khung Ngữ pháp Mô thức của Hunston và Francis (2000), nghiên cứu truy xuất toàn bộ 27 trường hợp xuất hiện của *idea* và *ideas* trong 30 chương, kết hợp thống kê mô tả với phân tích ngữ cảnh chuyên sâu. Kết quả cho thấy hai nhóm mô thức lặp lại chiếm ưu thế là cấu trúc *no/ any + idea*, chủ yếu biểu đạt kiến thức hoặc sự hiểu biết, và danh từ *idea* số ít được bổ nghĩa bằng yếu tố đánh giá, qua đó làm nổi bật sự thẩm định. Tuy nhiên, cách diễn giải các mô thức này còn phụ thuộc vào sự phủ định, tình thái, trật tự thông tin và ngữ cảnh diễn ngôn. Cụ thể, tính từ mang sắc thái tích cực có thể xuất hiện trong một đánh giá sau đó bị rút lại, trong khi *no idea* có thể được dùng để nhấn mạnh một nhận định thay vì chỉ biểu thị sự thiếu hiểu biết theo nghĩa đen. Các câu trả lời tỉnh lược và nội dung được đưa lên trước cũng cho thấy phần nội dung cụ thể hóa không nhất thiết phải đứng sau danh từ. Nghiên cứu đóng góp một phương pháp truy xuất lấy bổ đề làm điểm xuất phát và một cách phân loại ưu tiên hình thức, qua đó bảo toàn những trường hợp sử dụng này bên cạnh các cấu trúc bổ ngữ điển hình, đồng thời phân biệt các mô thức lặp lại với những cấu hình khác.

Từ khóa: Danh từ tri nhận; *idea*; mô thức từ vựng - ngữ pháp; diễn ngôn hư cấu; Ngữ pháp Mô thức.