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English binominal noun phrases as seen through their Czech counterparts

Gabriela Brůhová — Kateřina Vašků (Charles University, Prague)

ABSTRACT

This paper provides an analysis of 300 English binominal noun phrases (BNPs) and their Czech translation counterparts, using data from a parallel English-Czech corpus. BNPs, characterized by the N1-of-N2 structure, have distinct syntactic and semantic properties, where N2 typically functions as the semantic head, and N1 conveys an attributive quality. The study aims to identify Czech structures performing similar functions and to specify the roles of BNPs through their Czech translations. The methodology involves manual extraction of BNPs from a corpus, classifying Czech translations into eight categories, and analyzing their evaluative, descriptive, or intensifying functions. Findings highlight the prevalence of adjectival premodification in Czech translations, the nuanced roles of BNPs, and the cultural and linguistic adaptations in translation. The research underscores the complexity of translating expressive constructions and offers insights into linguistic typology and translation strategies.

KEYWORDS

binominal noun phrases, contrastive linguistics, expressivity, evaluative function, semantic head

DOI

https://doi.org/10.14712/18059635.2025.2.4

1 INTRODUCTION

Based on the data from a parallel English-Czech corpus, the present paper offers an analysis of 300 English binominal noun phrases (BNPs) as seen through their Czech translation correspondences. BNPs constitute a distinctive category of syntactic constructions characterized by the combination of two nouns linked by the preposition *of*. These N^1-of-N^2 constructions are described as "a special case of prepositional apposition" (Quirk et al., 1985, p. 1284), exemplified by phrases such as *a hell of a problem*, *that idiot of a prime minister*, *her nitwit of a husband*, *the fool of a policeman*, and *an angel of a girl* (Aarts, 1998). BNPs are notable for their unique syntactic and semantic properties. Syntactically, according to prior research, it is the second noun that functions as the head, with the first noun and the preposition *of* acting as a modifier in the chunk [N^1 of a], e.g. *hell of a* (Aarts, 1998; Kim and Sells, 2015).[1] Semantically, the first noun [N^1] conveys a property or quality attributed to the referent of the second noun [N^2] (Aarts, 1998, p. 118). This predicative aspect of the first noun manifests itself in two main ways: the potential for paraphrasing BNPs as copular constructions (e.g., *the fool of a policeman* becomes *the policeman is a fool*) and the ability to substitute

1 The modifier construction can therefore be seen as being embedded in a larger nominal construction.

[N^1 + of + a] with an adjective (e.g., *the fool of a policeman* transforms into *the foolish policeman*). This dual paraphrasing capability underscores the semantic flexibility and richness of BNPs in English. This paper has a twofold aim: a) to identify and describe the Czech means which perform the same functions as the English BNP, b) to further specify the functions of the construction as seen through the Czech counterparts.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

English binominal noun phrases exhibit a range of properties that have been the subject of linguistic analysis in works such as those by Aarts (1998), Keizer (2007), Kim and Sells (2015), and ten Wolde (2022). These properties provide insights into the structure and semantics of BNPs in English.

One fundamental characteristic of English BNPs is the obligatory use of the preposition *of*. This preposition is integral to the complex chunk [N^1 of a], which as a whole functions as a modifier (Aarts, 1998, p. 119; ten Wolde, 2022, p. 291; Napoli, 1989, p. 224). For example, in the phrase jewel of a city in "*And it introduced her to Budapest, a jewel *(of) a city.*", the omission of the preposition *of* would render the phrase grammatically incorrect.

The canonical determiner of the first noun in these phrases is typically an indefinite article. However, variations are possible (Keizer, 2007, p. 88ff), including demonstrative pronouns (***that*** *idiot of a boy*), possessive pronouns (***her*** *nitwit of a husband*), and indefinite pronouns like *one* (***one*** *hell of a beating*) or *some* (***some*** *dragon of a receptionist*) (Kim and Sells, 2015, p. 44). This flexibility in the choice of Det^1 allows for a range of nuances in BNPs.

The second determiner, on the other hand, is invariably an indefinite article, e.g., *her stupid nitwit of* ***a*** *husband*. (Huddleston and Pullum, 2002, p. 442), or *a hell of* ***a*** *day* (Kim and Sells, 2015, p. 44–45), with other determiners not being possible (cf. *a hell of *some/*any/*one day*). However, in some cases, especially with plural nouns, the article may be omitted, as in *jewels of villages like West Burton and Askrigg* (Kim and Sells, 2015, p. 44–45).

A key aspect of BNPs is that it is the second noun (N^2) that typically functions as the semantic head, contributing to the core meaning of the BNP. For instance, in *She's a frightened little mouse of a woman*, the phrase essentially means *She is a frightened woman*, not *She is a frightened little mouse*. However, there are instances where both N^1 and N^2 can serve as semantic heads, as seen in *She doesn't want to talk to this idiot of a prime minister*, where *idiot* and *prime minister* both hold semantic weight: *She doesn't want to talk to this idiot.* or *She doesn't want to talk to a prime minister.*[2] (Kim and Sells, 2015, p. 45).

Interestingly, the first determiner can extend its scope to encompass not only the first noun but also the second noun. This is evident in phrases like *your fool of a father* (Kim and Sells, 2015, p. 47) or *our miserable sod of a cleaner* (Aarts, 1998, p. 131), where

2 However, a more suitable paraphrase would contain a definite determiner: *She doesn't want to talk to the / this prime minister* in this case.

the evaluation applies to the person denoted by the second noun (*father*, *cleaner*): *Your father is a fool*. or *Our cleaner is a miserable sod*.

From the pragmatic standpoint, BNPs are described as invariably evaluative. One common characteristic of BNPs is that they often involve negative assessments of the referent of N^2 or are used as insults (Aarts, 1998, p. 121). Examples like *a fool of a driver, a bitch of a secretary*, and *a slut of a schoolteacher* demonstrate the negative evaluative nature of BNPs. By combining N^1 with N^2, these phrases intensify the negative judgment or derogatory nature of the description. However, it is important to note that BNPs can also be used for positive assessment when an appropriate N^1 is employed (Aarts, 1998, p. 121). For instance, phrases like *an angel of a girl, a pearl of a job*, and *a wonder of a city* express positive evaluations. In these cases, BNPs create a sense of admiration or emphasize the exceptional qualities of the described person or thing.

In terms of meaning, "there does seem to be a core of 'expressive' meaning in all BNP examples, and this expressive nature is presumably how the construction is functionally motivated in actual usage" (Kim and Sells, 2015, p. 51). BNPs offer a valuable means to express evaluations or judgments of persons and things, particularly in fiction. They are typically used for the description of individuals and things to convey a strong evaluative meaning and create vivid imagery. Thus, BNPs allow speakers or writers to convey their subjective evaluations with added emphasis and intensity, evoking a particular emotional or descriptive effect. Den Dikken (2006, p. 162) distinguishes two subtypes of the construction: a comparative (*a jewel of a village*) and an attributive subtype *(an idiot of a doctor)*.

In summary, English BNPs are characterized by their obligatory use of the preposition *of*, flexibility in determiner choice, the typical role of N^2 as the semantic head, the potential for both N^1 and N^2 to have premodifiers, and their invariably evaluative nature.[3] These properties contribute to the rich expressive potential of BNPs in English.

3 MATERIAL AND METHOD

The study focuses on examining English BNPs and their Czech counterparts. This comparative analysis seeks to deepen our understanding of the structural and functional characteristics of English BNPs by exploring how they are translated into Czech, thereby shedding light on the semantics of the English construction through its Czech counterparts. Since there is no direct counterpart to the BNP in Czech, our main aim is to investigate how this specific construction is translated into Czech and how its expressivity is reflected. The primary methodology involves extracting examples of BNPs from a parallel English-Czech corpus and analysing their translation equivalents in Czech.

The data for this study were sourced from the InterCorp parallel English-Czech

3 For a detailed discussion of the BNP properties see Kim and Sells (2015) and ten Wolde (2022).

corpus, specifically focusing on English originals from the fiction genre. To identify English BNPs, we used the following query:

[tag = "N."][word = "of"][lemma = "a"][tag = "JJ"]{0,1}[tag = "N."].

However, this approach resulted in numerous false positives, making manual selection essential for accurately identifying and extracting authentic BNPs. Consequently, we chose a random set of authors and titles and processed the query results until we compiled 300 examples of BNPs. The final sample contains 48 titles by 36 authors.

The manual selection process for extracting BNPs was guided by two primary criteria. The first criterion was reformulation by predication, where the BNP allows paraphrasing through a copular predication (e.g. *a giant of a man* translating to *the man is a giant*), or a paraphrase by a simile (e.g. *a honey of a house* translating to *the house is like honey*). The second criterion was that the second noun (N^2) in the BNP structure should be the semantic head.

This approach, however, presented challenges, particularly with problematic examples. For instance, in the phrase *shadow of a,* different contexts led to varying interpretations. In *she was the shadow of a girl*, it aligns with BNP criteria ("the girl is a shadow"), but in *she saw the shadow of a girl*, ambiguity arises—it could mean "she saw the girl" (BNP) or "she saw the girl's shadow" (not a BNP). In the case of *she stepped into the shadow of a girl*, the structure doesn't meet the BNP criteria. These nuanced contexts necessitated careful manual analysis to ensure accurate identification of genuine BNPs.

The extracted data were then classified into eight categories based on the translation counterparts in Czech. These categories include premodification, postmodification, clausal counterpart, synthetic counterpart, apposition, intensifier, adjectival phrase and other means. This classification allows for a detailed analysis of how the structural and semantic properties of English BNPs are conveyed in Czech.

Within each category, we determined the function the [N^1 of a] sequence with respect to the following noun. We identified three different functions: evaluative, descriptive or intensifying. In the case of evaluative function, the [N^1 of a] expresses a positive or negative evaluation of N^2 (*that fat nightmare of a girl, a honey of a house*). The descriptive function is used when the [N^1 of a] sequence describes the size, shape or appearance of the N^2 referent (*a pink-faced, gold-haired, overgrown cherub of a man*) and, lastly, the [N^1 of a] sequence can be used to intensify a property which is either expressed by a modifier of N^2 (*a hell of a strong word* "a very strong word") or which can be inferred (*hell of an accident* "a very serious accident").

Our hypothesis is that the primary type of the Czech counterpart will differ according to the function of the BNP construction. The research is expected to provide insights into the translation strategies used for BNPs in Czech, revealing the linguistic and cultural considerations that influence these translations. Additionally, the research aims to deepen our understanding of the functional motivations driving the use of BNPs in English.

4 ANALYSIS

4.1 VARIABILITY OF N^1

The sample of 300 examples of the construction contains 121 different types at the N^1 position. The following figure displays the most prominent types with their frequency in the corpus[4]:

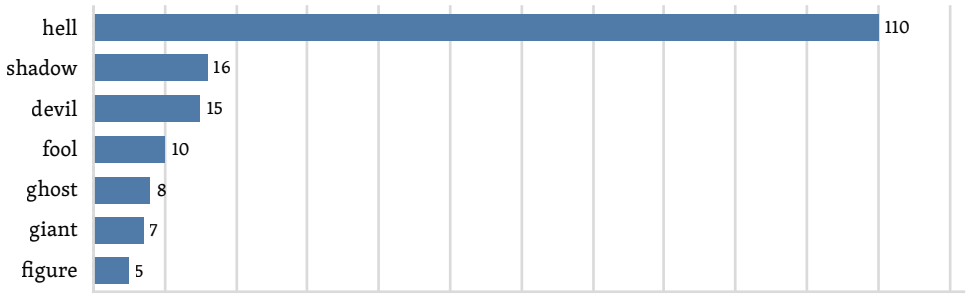

FIGURE 1: Most frequent nouns in the N^1 position

The dataset exhibits a marked constructional preference for the noun *hell* (e.g. *a hell of a party*). Additionally, a fairly strong preference is observed for several other nouns, such as *shadow, devil, fool, ghost, giant* (e.g. *a shadow of a frown, a devil of a situation, that fool of a constable, a giant of a lad*). However, the N^1 position within these constructions also exhibits a high degree of lexical diversity, as evidenced by the inclusion of a wide array of other low-frequency types, suggesting a versatile pattern of noun incorporation.

4.2 VARIABILITY OF N^2

The sample contains even more different types at the N^2 position, that is 172 different nouns. Nouns with statistically significant frequency are presented in Figure 2.

We can reveal a discernible pattern in the distribution of nouns occupying the N^2 position within our constructional framework. Unlike the N^1 position, which is dominated by a conspicuous outlier, *hell*, the N^2 position showcases greater variation with no single noun disproportionately frequent. This suggests a more dynamic and flexible utilization of nouns in the N^2 slot. The nouns *man* and *time* appear most frequently, but with counts of 24 and 23 respectively, they do not overshadow other nouns significantly. This is indicative of a construction that integrates typically general nouns such as *man*, *woman*, and *thing*, reflecting a tendency towards general rather than specific descriptions in the N^2 position.

4 We applied a binomial probability model to assess the statistical significance of linguistic variant frequencies of both N^1 and N^2. We chose to limit our discussion to types with 4 and more occurrences, as nouns with lower frequencies displayed lower confidence interval bounds of zero, indicating insufficient statistical evidence to conclusively differentiate their presence from random chance within the given confidence level ($p>0.05$).

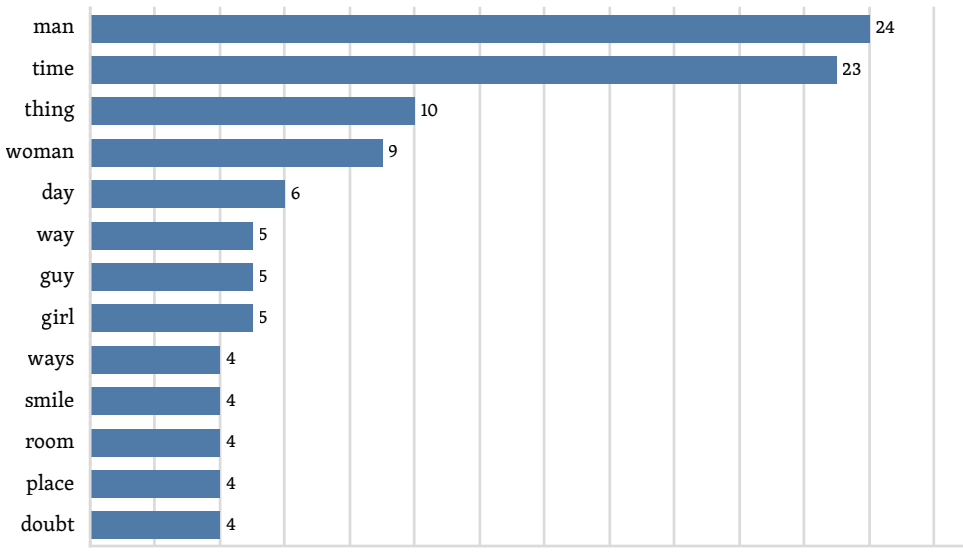

FIGURE 2: Most frequent nouns in the N^2 position

Based on the examples of the construction provided in literature we expected that most N^2 referents will be animate, but 66% of the dataset display an inanimate N^2 referent.

As for the typical semantics of N^2, the most frequent referents include a person (*a hawk of a man, an imperious whirlwind of a woman, a hell of a guy*), time (*a hell of a time, a hell of a day; a nightmare of a year*), place or location (*this dull hot brute shit of a street; the tall, derelict bird's nest of a house; some tourist trap of a hotel*) or nouns describing human looks or characteristics (*her squashed-tomato of a nose; Goyle's low rasp of a voice; a bitter tinkle of a laugh; a big crinkled U of a smile*). The N^2 is often a general, semantically redundant noun, the main function of which is mainly to fill in the grammatical slot in the construction.

4.3 TRANSLATION COUNTERPARTS

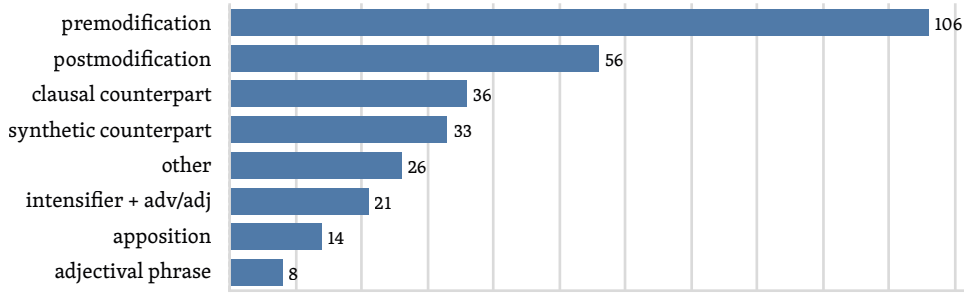

FIGURE 3: Distribution of Czech translation counterparts of the English BNP

4.3.1 PREMODIFICATION BY AN ADJECTIVE

The most frequent counterpart of the English BNP in our study is premodification, observed in 106 instances, accounting for over a third of our data. Consistent with prior research, these Czech counterparts corroborate that N^1 attributes a property to N^2 (Aarts, 1998; Kim and Sells, 2015), a role typically fulfilled by adjectival premodification in Czech.

From the semantic perspective, the [N^1 of a] sequence primarily serves three functions: evaluative, descriptive, and intensifying. In Czech translations, these are rendered through corresponding evaluative, descriptive, or intensifying adjectives. As depicted in Figure 4, the evaluative function is markedly more prevalent in this category than the descriptive and intensifying functions.

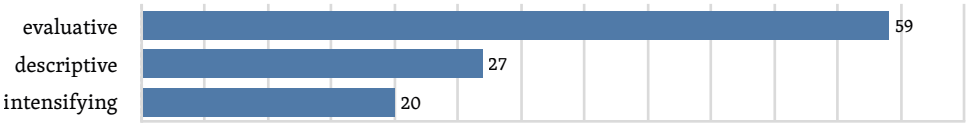

FIGURE 4: Functions of [N^1 of a] corresponding to Czech premodification

Evaluative function

Both N^1 in the English BNP and the adjective in the Czech counterpart ascribe an evaluative property to the semantic head (N^2 in English, head of NP in Czech). Evaluation is a function which is frequently described as the main function of BNPs (cf. Aarts, 1998).

Examples from our dataset include:

(1) a. your fool of a mother
její praštěná matka [her foolish mother]
b. her arsehole of a husband
její kreténský manžel [her cretinous husband]
c. a real prince of a man
vážně skvělý chlap [a really great guy]

The examples above represent purely evaluative function, involving either negative (exx. 1a and 1b) or positive (ex. 1c) assessment of the referent of N^2.

Descriptive function

Contrary to our initial assumptions, our data include 27 instances where the BNP serves a purpose other than evaluation, with the [N^1 of a] sequence being more descriptive. Here, the primary role of the first noun is to describe the size, shape, or appearance of the N^2 referent. Therefore, we decided to categorize them separately.

(2) a. a giant of a man
obrovitý muž [a huge man]

b. a formidable barrel of a man
takový dobře udělaný, mohutný chlapík [a well-built, large man]
c. a pudding of a fellow
rosolovitý chlapík [a jelly-like fellow]

Intensifying function
In certain instances, both the English N^1 and the Czech equivalent exhibit an intensifying function, amplifying a property associated with N^2, which can be deduced from the context.

(3) a. one hell of a noise
šílený rachot [an insane noise]
b. one hell of an achievement
zatracený úspěch [a damn achievement]

Examples 3a and 3b demonstrate that the position of the first determiner typically occupied by the indefinite article can instead be filled by the indefinite pronoun *one*. As ten Wolde (2022, p. 289) notes, this represents an emphatic use of *one*. Furthermore, Keizer (2007, p. 89) highlights that *one* serves a reinforcing role, thereby amplifying the intensity of the phrase *hell of*.

4.3.2 POSTMODIFICATION

The second most frequent translation counterpart in our study is the use of a Czech postmodifying phrase or clause (19% of sample data). Postmodification differs from premodification in that it allows for more expressive and verbose descriptions, which are particularly suitable for depicting the appearance of the N^2 referent. The distribution of the three functions of the [N^1 of a] sequence is completely different in this category. It seems that the evaluative function in Czech is more associated with the adjectival premodification than with postmodification. The different distribution of the descriptive and evaluative function in premodification and postmodification counterparts is statistically significant.

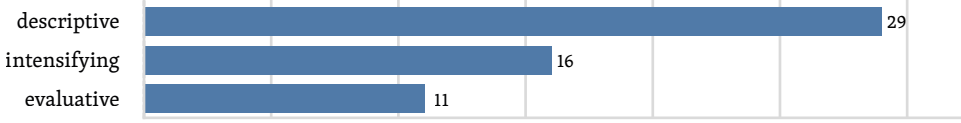

FIGURE 5: Functions of [N^1 of a] corresponding to Czech postmodification

Postmodification takes various forms, ranging from a relative clause (exx. 4a, 5a), prepositional phrase (exx. 4b, 5) or an adjectival phrase (ex. 4c). In several instances the Czech translation counterparts contain a metaphor (*s jestřábí tváří* in ex. 4b) or a simile (*jako těsto* in ex. 4c), creating a comparison between the described person or thing and the noun used in N^1. The translation may also make use of an idiomatic ex-

pression with a corresponding function, e.g. an intensifying [N^1 of a] is translated as an intensifying idiom into Czech (ex. 6). This translation approach appears more apt for complex semantic relationships than a premodifier, especially in the descriptive functions of N^1.

Descriptive function

(4) a. her squashed-tomato of a nose
nos, který připomínal rozmačkané rajče [a nose that looked like a squashed tomato]
b. a thin, shabby, ragged hawk of a man
vyzáblý, ošuntělý, zpustlý muž s jestřábí tváří [a thin, shabby, ragged man with a hawk face]
c. the fat pudding of a girl
ta dívka nakynutá jako těsto [the girl risen like dough]

Evaluative function

(5) a. the ruin of an old woman
žena, z níž zbyla jen stařičká troska [a woman who remained just an old wreck]
b. Well, you're one hell of a doctor!
Teda vy jste opravdu doktor za všechny prachy! [You are really a doctor for all the money! = You are a terrible doctor!]

Intensifying function

(6) one hell of a crack
puklina jako hrom [a crack like thunder = a huge crack]

4.3.3 CLAUSAL COUNTERPART

Another relatively frequent means how to deal with the BNP in the Czech translation is substituting the semantically dense nominal construction by a clausal counterpart (12% of sample data). In these instances, the translator opts for a more explicit, and often more verbose, manner of expression (exx. 7 a, b) to reflect the expressivity of the original BNP. These cases show that Czech tends to explicitly express what English only implies, thus providing a more vivid description of the referent of N^2.

In many of these instances, the Czech use of a lexical verb corresponds to an English construction with a semantically weak verb like *have, take,* or *make* complemented by an object (exx. 8 a, b).

The typological difference in the choice of nominal and verbal means in Czech and English was already described by Mathesius (1975, p. 104), who noticed that "[i]n Czech, one almost invariably encounters a purely verbal predication, i.e. the action is expressed by the finite verb-form. This is also quite common in English, but in addition, a very frequent type appears to be the verbo-nominal predication, i.e.

a predication that combines a verb and a noun to express what Czech denotes by the verb alone."

(7) a. he is sure a hell of a good worker
práce vám nadělá jako žádnej druhej [he will do work like no other]
b. they had a hell of a time
pěkně si to užili [they enjoyed it a lot]
c. Villafranca put up a devil of a squawk.
Villafranca začal pořádně ječet. [Villafranca started to scream loudly.]

Almost a half of all examples of this category correspond to constructions with *a hell/devil of a time/place*, which can be considered as idioms (corresponding often to other, clausal, idioms in Czech as in ex. 7b.), and therefore, the substitution of a BNP by a clausal counterpart is to a large extent due to Czech and English phraseological choices.

The [N¹ of a] sequence is almost exclusively evaluative or intensifying (see Figure 6).

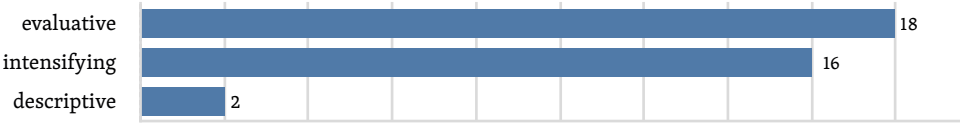

FIGURE 6: Functions of [N¹ of a] corresponding to Czech clausal counterpart

In addition, the variability of N¹ is quite low with *hell* or *devil* being used in 29 instances. This is probably due to the important phraseological aspect in these translations. A deeper investigation of one common expression in this group, *a hell of a time*, reveals an interesting ambiguity of this expression. There are at least three semantically different translation counterparts (exx. 8a, 8b and 9):

Evaluative function

(8) a. The Germans are supposed to have had a hell of a time here during the war.
Němci si tu prý během války pěkně užili. [The Germans had a great time here during the war.] — positive evaluation
b. Harry's had a hell of a time lately.
Harry dostává poslední dobou od života pořádný kapky. [Harry has been having a terrible time lately.] — negative evaluation

Intensifying function

(9) You sure took a hell of a time to get to it, buddy.
Hele, to ti ale, kruci, trvalo, nežs na to přišel. [Hey, it took you a while to figure that out.]

As can be seen from examples (8) and (9), the expression itself is very vague and it is the context that determines its actual function and meaning.

4.3.4 SYNTHETIC COUNTERPART

This category involves instances where the original BNP construction is transformed into a single-word nominal equivalent in Czech. It is noteworthy that 19 out of 33 examples (11% of sample data) contain a general N^2: *man*, *lad*, *girl*, *woman*, *thing*, etc. In the Czech translations this general noun is often omitted, suggesting that a synthetic counterpart can be viewed as a convenient means to avoid redundancy. From a different perspective, the use of single-word equivalents to the BNP construction reflects the typological differences between English and Czech. In addition, the intensifying function can be expressed by a diminutive affix *-íček* in Czech (ex. 12b).

As for the functions of the [N^1 of a] sequence in the English original, it had predominantly either a descriptive (exx. 10a, b), or evaluative function (exx. 11a-c), the intensifying function being only marginal (exx. 12a, b).

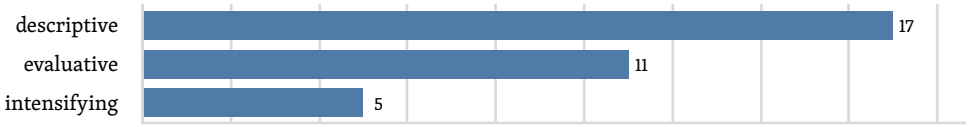

FIGURE 7: Functions of [N^1 of a] corresponding to Czech synthetic counterpart

Descriptive function

(10) a. a giant of a lad
habán [a giant man]
b. a cherub of a man
cherub [a cherub]

Evaluative function

(11) a. a fool of a man
hlupák [stupid]
b. a failure of a man
nekňuba [loser]
c. a hell of a thing
mizérie [misery]

Intensifying function

(12) a. one hell of a brain
kapacita [expert]
b. a small figure of a man
drobný mužíček [a small fellow — diminutive suffix]

4.3.5 INTENSIFIER

The following type of translation, namely using a Czech intensifying adverb, occurs in cases where the English original exhibits the structure [N^1 + of + a] + ADJ + N^2, i.e. a structure where the second noun is modified by an adjective. In this type of translation, the English [N^1 + of + a] structure was almost invariably represented by *hell of a* (exx. 13a, b and 14a, b), performing the function of an intensifier. The intensifying function of *hell of a* was first noted peripherally by Bolinger (1972, p. 59), and later examined in greater detail by ten Wolde (2022). According to ten Wolde, "[*hell of a*] as an intensifier functions as a booster, meaning 'to a high degree', and is similar to, but more emotive and stronger than *very*" (ten Wolde, 2022, p. 299). This suggests that the phrase *hell of a* has bleached in meaning and has undergone a process of grammaticalization. In addition to *hell of a*, there was one example with a different noun in the N^1 position, performing the same intensifying function, namely *whale of a* (ex. 13c).[5]

The intensifying function of the [N^1 + of + a] sequence is also reflected in the Czech translations, the intensifying *hell of* and *whale of* invariably being translated by a Czech intensifier. Overall, the approach varies between using an intensifier with an adjective (exx. 13a-c) and an intensifier with an adverb (exx. 14a-b). The intensifier with an adverb occurs typically in those BNPs that describe time or place.

(13) a. a hell of a good novel
sakra dobrý román [a damn good novel]
b. a hell of a nice fella
moc dobrej kluk [a very nice fellow]
c. a whale of a sad play
ukrutně smutná hra [a cruelly sad play]

(14) a. a hell of a long time ago
tak strašně dávno [so long ago]
b. a hell of a long way
pěkně daleko [very far]

4.3.6 APPOSITION

Although not predominant (comprising only 14 instances, accounting for 5% of the data), this translation counterpart demonstrates the appositive nature of English BNPs. Regarding the functions of the [N^1 of a] sequence in the English originals, it predominantly served an evaluative role (exx. 15a-b). Alternatively, it had a descriptive function as seen in ex. 15c, where the N^1 "octopus" is employed not for evaluation but to depict the city's complexity, likening it to a labyrinth.

(15) a. your loser of a husband
ten ubohý ztroskotanec, váš pan manžel [that poor loser, your husband]

5 The intensifying function of *whale of* was also noted by ten Wolde (2022, p. 295).

b. Aunt Petunia's masterpiece of a pudding
mistrovské dílo tety Petunie, její pudink [Aunt Petunia's masterpiece, her pudding]
c. this octopus of a city
tahle chobotnice, tohle město [this octopus, this city]

4.3.7 ADJECTIVAL PHRASE

The adjectival counterpart corresponds to BNP only marginally, in 8 instances. The omission of N^2 referent is possible in two cases. Example (16a) represents a BNP with a general N^2, which does not carry any informative value, whereas (16b) represents a noun expressing a quality, the meaning of which can be easily substituted by an adjective:

(16) a. It was a hell of a thing.
Bylo to neuvěřitelné. [It was unbelievable.]
b. What a hell of a nuisance!
Jak je to strašně nesmyslné! [How terribly pointless it is!]

4.3.8 OTHER COUNTERPARTS

A relatively large group of other counterparts includes examples which cannot be described easily. The expressivity of BNP can be reflected in the chosen idiomatic expression (*you taught him a hell of a lesson* — dostal pořádně za vyučenou) or by other means. In some cases, the translation is either very loose or does not provide any counterpart to the BNP of the original. What is noteworthy, although the representation in the sample is marginal, is the use of specific expressive particles in Czech which can be used for the speaker's subjective evaluation of the content of the sentence:

(17) What a hell of a surprise this is!
To je mi **ale** překvapení. [It is to me but surprise.]

5 CONCLUSIONS

The comprehensive analysis of Czech counterparts to English BNPs, particularly focusing on the [N^1 of a] construction, has highlighted the complexity and diversity of translation practices between English and Czech. This study has confirmed that the most frequent strategy employed in Czech translations of English BNPs is premodification by an adjective, highlighting the adjectival nature of the [N^1 of a] sequence and its function in ascribing properties to the semantic head. This finding aligns with existing linguistic research and emphasizes the adaptability of Czech translation practices to convey the expressive depth of English BNPs.

One of the significant revelations from this study is the versatile role that BNPs play in English, serving not just evaluative and intensifying functions as traditionally noted but also a descriptive function that had been less acknowledged. This aspect

	pre-modification	post-modification	clausal counterpart	synthetic counterpart	intensifying + adv/adj	apposition	adjectival phrase	other
descriptive	25.5%	51.8%	5.6%	51.5%	0.0%	42.9%	0.0%	15.4%
evaluative	55.7%	19.6%	50.0%	33.3%	0.0%	57.1%	25.0%	34.6%
intensifying	18.9%	28.6%	44.4%	15.2%	100.0%	0.0%	75.0%	50.0%
total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

FIGURE 8: BNP and its Czech counterpart — summary

of BNPs enriches our understanding of how language can be manipulated to convey nuanced meanings and emotions, extending beyond the mere informational content to include evaluative and descriptive dimensions.

The analysis further revealed a preference in Czech for employing more explicit and sometimes more verbose translation strategies, particularly through clausal counterparts and postmodification. This trend suggests a linguistic and cultural inclination towards clarity and explicitness in Czech, contrasting with the often implicit and densely packed information in English BNPs. Such findings point to the importance of considering both linguistic and cultural dimensions in translation, where choices are influenced not only by grammatical and syntactic considerations but also by the communicative norms and expectations of the target language audience.

Moreover, the study highlighted the critical role of context in determining the function and meaning of BNPs, especially in instances where the expressions are inherently vague or ambiguous. This underscores the necessity for translators to possess not only a deep grammatical knowledge of both the source and target languages but also a sensitivity to contextual cues that guide the interpretation and translation of nuanced phrases.

Looking forward, this research opens several avenues for further exploration. There is a clear opportunity for comparative studies that examine how BNPs are translated into other languages, which could reveal universal translation strategies or highlight unique linguistic features. Future studies could also delve into the pedagogical implications of these findings, exploring how insights from translation analysis can inform language teaching and translator training programs.

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Acknowledgements
This paper was supported by Cooperatio Program, research area Linguistics.

Gabriela Brůhová
Department of Linguistics, Faculty of Arts, Charles University
nám. Jana Palacha 2, 11638 Praha
ORCID ID: 0000-0001-5014-796
gabriela.bruhova@ff.cuni.cz

Kateřina Vašků
Department of Linguistics, Faculty of Arts, Charles University
nám. Jana Palacha 2, 11638 Praha
ORCID ID: 0000-0002-0169-082X
katerina.vasku@ff.cuni.cz