

A Componential Analysis of “Fuck”

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Received: February 24, 2026

Accepted: March 02, 2026

Available online: March 07, 2026

Abstract

This study examines how effective Componential Analysis (CA), a classic semantic theory, can be used to analyze the many meanings of the English word “fuck”. Componential analysis breaks words into smaller parts called semantic components. The word “fuck” is a good test for this theory because it has a simple concrete meaning but is used in many different concrete and abstract ways. Using examples from the BFSU CQPweb corpus, the study first lists the main ways “fuck” is used. Then, it tries to break down each use into a set of components. The results show that CA works well for the simple, concrete meanings of “fuck,” such as its use for sex or damage. However, the components become too general and vague for uses where “fuck” is mainly used to express strong feelings. The study also notes some problems with the corpus and methods used, which affected the results. Beyond its theoretical evaluation, this analysis offers practical insights and suggests directions for further study. The findings imply that for language pedagogy, teaching a word like fuck effectively requires explicitly addressing its wide meanings and emotions, helping learners navigate its social impact. Methodologically, the challenges encountered, such as complex corpus queries and inconsistent data tagging, highlight the need for better technical training in corpus linguistics for students and researchers. Future research could build on this work by using larger spoken corpora or social media data to more fully capture informal and expressive uses, or by applying a similar analytical approach to other taboo words to test the generalizability of these findings.

Keywords: Componential Analysis; Semantics; Taboo Words; Polysemy; Corpus Linguistics

1. Introduction

What does a word mean? Linguists have long tried to answer this question. One influential method is called componential analysis (CA). CA proposes that the meaning of a word is composed of smaller units called semantic components or primitives [1]. However, this theory is tested when used to handle real language usage. This paper takes up one such challenge: the English word “fuck.” “Fuck” is a fascinating taboo word which is the most-used swear word, particularly among teenagers and young adults [2]. “Fuck” has a core concrete meaning of sexual intercourse, yet it is used in many other ways.

This paper asks: Is Componential Analysis effective for analyzing “fuck”? To answer this, the study applies the CA framework to examine the diverse meanings and grammatical functions of this word. Using data from the BFSU CQPweb corpus, the research first identifies and categorizes the word’s main verb, noun, adjective, and infix uses. Then, it attempts to decompose each distinct sense into a set of semantic components, after abstracting a typical entry for the word “fuck” using the form of Katzian dictionary.

Through this study, the paper aims to explore the boundaries of CA, highlighting both its strengths in clarifying concrete meaning and its potential limitations in dealing with expressive language.

2. Literature review

This section begins by introducing Componential Analysis (CA), which provides the framework for this study. Then the word “fuck”, its linguistic versatility and its special usage of expletive infix is outlined.

Cite as: Eloise Gou(2026). A Componential Analysis of “Fuck”. Panorama Scholarly Group | SILENCE, 1(1) (2026) 54-61.

<https://doi.org/10.63802/silence.V1.I1.247>



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2.1. Componential analysis

Componential analysis (CA) is defined as the method of analyzing the sense of a lexeme into its component parts. Another name for componential analysis is lexical decomposition [3, 107–108]. It is operational, intuitive, and scientific. When explaining word meanings, analyzing collocations, and distinguishing synonyms and antonyms, it can make word meanings specific and clear [4]. Componential analysis frequently employs binary features (e.g., wife [+FEMALE] [+ADULT] [+HUMAN] [+MARRIED]; bachelor [-FEMALE] [+ADULT] [+HUMAN] [-MARRIED]) and redundancy rules (e.g., HUMAN → ANIMATE, ADULT → ANIMATE) to achieve economy. A famous early theory is Katz's Semantic Theory. The theory features a dictionary where entries (e.g., for bachelor) combine semantic markers, such as like (human), (male) and (animal) with distinguishers, such as [one who has never been married], and grammatical information, such as {N} [1].

However, the method does not apply to large areas of vocabulary. It is most suited to nouns with obvious properties or tightly-defined fields, but proves difficult for words lacking clear conceptual components, such as color terms (e.g., red, yellow) or adjectives like fluffy [5].

2.2. The Linguistic Versatility of Fuck

The word “fuck” is one of the most versatile and semantically complex terms in the English language. Originally a verb denoting sexual intercourse, “fuck” first appeared in written form in 1528 in a marginal note on a Cicero manuscript: “O d fuckin Abbot” [6]. From this origin, the word has undergone remarkable semantic broadening.

“Fuck” functions across multiple grammatical categories, a key component of its linguistic utility:

- Verb: “They fuck all the time”.
- Noun: “You’re such a fuck”.
- Adverb: “He fucking screamed”.
- Interjection: “Fuck! I hit my elbow”.
- Conjunction (in pragmatic use): “I went swimming; fuck the cold” [7].

Its meanings are equally diverse, expressing aggression (“Fuck you!”), apathy (“Who gives a fuck”), confusion (“What the fuck?”), despair (“Fucked again”), and wonder (“How the fuck did you do that?”). It also forms core components of common acronyms like SNAFU (“Situation Normal: All Fucked Up”) and WTF (“What the Fuck”) [7].

2.3. Exploitive infix

Profanity is the only category of English words that can function as infixes. An infix is a grammatical unit inserted into the middle of a word, similar to a prefix appearing at the beginning, as ‘un-’ in ‘unusual’, or a suffix appearing at the end, as ‘ful’ in ‘grateful’. Many languages use infixes frequently, but English has only two: ‘fucking’ and ‘damn’ [8]. [9], however, points out that more obscene expletives or their milder variants exist as expletive infixation, such as fucking/fuckin, freaking, flipping, effing, goddamn, damn (and bloody/blooming in British and Australian English contexts). Exploitive infix goes before a stressed foot of a word, which ensures the infix integrates naturally into the rhythm of spoken English. For example, ‘abso-fucking-lutely’ is stressed on ‘lute’, and ‘fan-fucking-static’ is stressed on ‘tas’.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining componential analysis with corpus-based investigation.

BFSU CQWeb corpus, a widely-used, fourth-generation corpus analysis platform that supports powerful and flexible queries through its advanced CQP syntax [10], is used.

The data for this study were extracted from the AmE Brown Family Corpora hosted on the BFSU CQWeb, which includes four sub-corpora, namely Brown1961, Brown1992, CROWN2009, CROWN2021, totaling approximately 4 million words. Queries were executed in CQP syntax mode with no corpus restrictions, ensuring coverage across all available texts. A series of targeted CQP queries were designed to capture the various forms and grammatical functions of the target word. For example, the query [word = “fuck+”] was used to retrieve base forms, while more specific queries such as [lemma = “fuck”%c & pos = “VV.”] isolated verbal uses that are not case-sensitive.

However, a corpus limitation was encountered. The tagging scheme did not classify the forms “fucking” and “fucked” as adjectives when used as intensifiers. Consequently, queries specifically targeting their adjectival use, such as [lemma = “fuck”%c & pos = “JJ.”] and [word = “fucking”%c & pos = “JJ.”], have no results. To capture these adjectival uses that are derived from the swearword sense of “fuck” (i.e., its function as an expression of emotion, rather than its senses referring to sexual acts, damage, or interference. E.g., “a fucking mess”, “the fucked system”), the queries [word = “fucking”%c] and [word = “fucked”%c] were employed, and the results were manually screened to identify relevant adjectival instances. Other adjectival forms of “fuck” (e.g., “fuckable”) are extensions of its verbal sense referring to sexual acts, and thus are not analyzed here.

Additionally, “fuck” used as an infix (e.g., “absofuckinglutely”) is either not captured in the corpus or cannot be retrieved due to limitations in query syntax. Therefore, this study will draw on example words and sentences from dictionaries and online forums rather than corpus data for this usage.

4. Results

Based on the corpus queries, 58 matches were identified for the verbal use of “fuck” and 34 matches for its nominal use. Due to the limitations of the corpus or incorrect design of the query grammar, interjections are mostly classified as verbs, with a few being classified as nouns. The results of adjectives were manually screened to identify relevant instances. Infix forms were not found. The meanings are semantically categorized as follows.

4.1. “fuck” used as a verb

1. To have sex with somebody. e.g., We’ve both fucked her plenty of times.
2. A swear word used to express anger, disgust or surprise. e.g., Fuck yeah!
3. To damage, break or ruin something. e.g., To fuck up the program.
4. To bother, annoy, ignore, cheat, or interfere with something/someone. e.g., Don’t fuck with me.

4.2. “fuck” used as a noun

The query for nominal uses returned 34 matches. Examples include:

- You can do anything with these dumb fucks.
- An act of having sex (not found in corpus, but attested in dictionaries). e.g., He was just looking for a quick fuck.
- The fuck / a fuck/ as fuck (singular): used for emphasis, or to show anger, annoyance, surprise, or lack of care. e.g., what the fuck was that? I don’t give a fuck. I was bored as fuck.
- For fuck’s sake: An exclamation of annoyance, frustration, or impatience.

The full list of nominal matches is shown in Figure 1.

Your query [lemma="fuck"& pos="V"] returned 58 matches in 15 different texts (in 4,707,226 words [60 texts]); frequency: 12.32 instances per million words

No	Filename	Solution 1 to 50	Page 1 / 2
1	Brown_X	again in the discussion sessions. Lousy Reactionary bastards been tryin to	fuck up the Program for months... Months. Hired, hard lackeys.
2	Brown_X	of the Warmongering Capitalists. Not captured, sent here. To	up the Program. You guys remember that. Remember that
3	Brown_X	I'll bet both together did. I bet. So	them both. Goddamn. Goddamn. Just let me go home.
4	Brown_X	pricks like Caughlin run it anyway... one way or another	them. He rolled over and tried to shut out the noise.
5	CRONIN2005_G	me feed Brenda's muffler and reined the brakes... and she	him like there was no tomorrow. After a month, Brenda
6	CRONIN2005_G	semilitaristic troglodytes who prosed the viral field grunting out expletives.	fuck. I'd like to say that Deherly's sentiments are unique
7	CRONIN2005_G	said, "I ain't takin' no fish home.	her," he said. "I pay my debts.
8	CRONIN2005_L	the scene. "What about the five?"	the five. They gotta get someone up here to wait for
9	CRONIN2005_L	for prosecution. Dwight squeaked to the U.S. attorney. Wayne Junior	up his investigation. He wanted to see Wayne Junior indict
10	CRONIN2005_L	recruited Wayne. Ward's hatred of Wayne Senior grew. Ward	with Senior. He informed Wayne that his father sent him to
11	CRONIN2005_L	Wayne reeled and grabbed at air and barely stayed upright. Wayne	Janice in his father's house and made sure that Wayne Sen
12	CRONIN2005_L	clenched. "I wonder if your mother knew, since she	both of them. But, hey, it could've been
13	CRONIN2005_L	Darwin? Thinking about Mom, and how you really wanted to	her?" She did n't blink when he fucked up.
14	CRONIN2005_L	looking Bryon over carefully with a disgusted visage. "Well,	me. Police? I do n't want to burn this place.
15	CRONIN2005_L	Police? I do n't want to burn this place too.	fuck. I do n't want to do that. After all this
16	CRONIN2005_L	... We had a good deal going and now it's	up. You understand that? You understand how fucked we
17	CRONIN2005_L	might have done to her that night. "We've both	her plenty of times. What's the big deal?"
18	CRONIN2005_L	our own. If not for the rules, I would've	her ally after I introduced myself. Here we were at
19	CRONIN2005_L	interesting how some evil humans have mastered the "do n't	fuck with me." Alas used by the nefarious. Or maybe we
20	CRONIN2005_L	the question. He's recovering and needs rest."	fuck you." Sin jerked out of his grip. "I
21	CRONIN2005_L	not surrender, not evacuate... just make sure that whoever	you gets a good solid boring in return. That's called
22	CRONIN2005_L	with force, so that everyone in earshot believed me: "I	fuck you?" Even if I were scared, she said,
23	CRONIN2005_L	[Jeremy and Bones] are n't here, let's	off," the other two said and returned to Blake's.
24	CRONIN2005_L	park with "big guns." YOU DON'T KNOW WHO YOU	FUCKED HIT PUSSY MAN, Supreme posted. NIGGAZ IS COMING FOR
25	CRONIN2005_L	no flash, just hold down the tempo and do n't	fuck it up. Thankfully, it went by in a flash.
26	CRONIN2005_L	body has just created in its path. Last night I finally	him. After all these years of imagining it, never knowing
27	CRONIN2005_L	He eyed Ther. "I'm a bird, but I could	you up. There had been a young mother and Florence an
28	CRONIN2005_L	the cool people went to sea. Or traded, or	sea travelers. Maybe they craved a taste of danger, maybe
29	CRONIN2005_L	read. He sounds resigned. "Not to mention for royalty	fuck me up. "I'll make it worth your
30	CRONIN2005_L	"I almost says. "Just like you killed my boy?"	fuck you. Fuck all of you!" Put the gun
31	CRONIN2005_L	"Just like you killed my boy? Fuck you.	all of you!" Put the gun down!"
32	CRONIN2005_L	school?" I pointed to a picture. "Miss Go	yourself? The one who has some dirt on you that you
33	CRONIN2005_L	something that had been activated since the fuck had closed.	fuck not fucking anymore. I'll let the part admin feed and connect
34	CRONIN2005_L	on them not even the comms officers know about. Do n't	fuck with me. I'm here to win. "I'm sorry.
35	CRONIN2005_L	"I'd probably go there if I was drunk." Well	him, or, not really. We have an excellent campaign
36	CRONIN2005_L	to the 1970s would, as first heartbreaks go, win the	fuck You Up Olympics. Anyway, she can compartmentalize. She
37	CRONIN2005_L	"I'm almost there," Jane says, and	if August can't suppress a shiver at these words in that
38	CRONIN2005_L	from American lit or chemistry. "YOU LIKE TO GET	FUCKED, do n't you?" Mickey Johnson was seven and a
39	CRONIN2005_L	spring suit, heard fucked under one arm, no one really	fuck with you. Maybe once in a while a curious stick-up kid
40	CRONIN2005_L	barage of polypod shells and insults as best I could."	fuck you. "Fuck you." Banished and hurt,
41	CRONIN2005_L	insults as best I could. "Fuck you."	fuck you. Banished and hurt, I scuttled to the back
42	CRONIN2005_L	front of me recited the morning mantra: "I'm going to	fuck that black bitch up. I'm going to fuck that black
43	CRONIN2005_L	going to fuck that black bitch up. I'm going to	fuck that black bitch up. I'm going to fuck that black
44	CRONIN2005_L	going to fuck that black bitch up. I'm going to	fuck that black bitch up. I'm going to fuck that black
45	CRONIN2005_L	going to fuck that black bitch up. I'm going to	fuck that black bitch up. There are more cars in Los Angeles
46	CRONIN2005_L	this knife / gun / contagious skin rash? You do n't	fuck with me and I won't fuck with you, cool?"
47	CRONIN2005_L	rah? You do n't fuck with me and I won't	fuck with you, cool? I could tell from the way they
48	CRONIN2005_L	turning onto his side, tries not to think about how epically	fuck this season truly is thanks to him. Tries not to think
49	CRONIN2005_L	and raised his fist to a room full of applause."	FUCK YEAH!" Rhett said, picking him up and tailoring him
50	CRONIN2005_L	wid someone who's never had a Philly Blunt before."	fuck this. He would n't do this to anyone else. HE

Figure 1: Results for nominal uses of “fuck”

4.3. “fucking” and “fucked” as adjectives

The query for “fucking” had 61 matches, and “fucked” had 17. These uses stem from the swear-word sense of “fuck”, functioning as an emotional expression, not referring to sexual acts, damage, or interference. Their core semantic role is a vulgar intensifier that amplifies the degree of a description, with three specific functions:

1. To express strong negative emotions, such as anger, disgust, and irritation. e.g., This is just fucking stupid.
2. To express strong positive emotions, such as admiration and excitement. e.g., Let’s make you a fucking legend.
3. To amplify the degree or intensity of a description, with no distinct positive/negative bias. e.g., You’re going to be super fucking late.

The full list of “fucking” matches is shown in Figure 2.

Your query "[lemma="fuck"%c & pos="NN,*"]" returned 34 matches in 13 different texts (in 4,707,226 words [60 texts]); frequency: 7.22 instances per million words (0.117 seconds - retrieved from cache)

< << >> > Show Page: 1 Line View Show in random order New query Get

No	Filename	Solution 1 to 34	Page 1 / 1
1	Brown_K	those dumb 8-Balls croaked . You can do anything with these dumb	fucks if you know how . Anything . They 'd cut their mothers
2	CROWN2009_G	his family , and his early experimentation with " punk or gender	fuck drag " . Thus , although his music videos encourage superficial viewin
3	CROWN2009_L	buddies from the triad calls up and tells me to back the	fuck off . We 've got a leak , Lieutenant . First Chang
4	CROWN2009_L	you do it ? " " Cause I do n't give a	fuck , is why . " Anthony said . " It 's a
5	CROWN2009_L	're a cunt . " " You did n't . What the	fuck did you do that for ? " " I thought you did
6	CROWN2009_L	Talk to me ! What 's going on ? Who the	fuck are you ? " Brynn had dealt with the emotionally disturbed .
7	CROWN2009_P	But you need to avoid intimate contact . " Oh , holy	fuck . How many females had Con fed from and slept with in
8	CROWN2021_F	and chanted " OPD [Oakland Police Department] , back the	fuck up , " pointed lasers at the eyes of Oakland police officers
9	CROWN2021_G	ya learn that ? " " Cuz ... I was bored as	fuck . " After that picture was taken , he flew home and
10	CROWN2021_G	us to feel connected and maybe even have some fun , for	fuck 's sake . Let it go , I told myself . "
11	CROWN2021_G	all relaxed yet assertive , telling this guy to back the	fuck off , I thought , Wow , well , this is nice
12	CROWN2021_G	it was also true was that I no longer knew what the	fuck I wanted from Hollywood . No one in the industry knew why
13	CROWN2021_K	Reciprocation , maybe ? By which I mean , who the	fuck has ever fucking apologized to me ? Did my father apologize for
14	CROWN2021_K	One of us -- not me -- would not shut the	fuck up . And since the grandmas are prepping for the monks and
15	CROWN2021_K	suck my dick , " Maly says , still not shutting the	fuck up , her long hair rippling in the gas-tainted breeze of the
16	CROWN2021_K	's my birthright ! " " " At least Ma Eng gives a	fuck about you , " I say , my chin resting on the
17	CROWN2021_K	batting her hand away . " I thought you ' gave zero	fucks ' about this party . Why do you care if they 're
18	CROWN2021_K	if I feel inspired . I almost lie , but what the	fuck , So I say no , I feel totally out of my
19	CROWN2021_K	Lush and Old Navy while we wait for the call to go	fuck shit up . It all balances out . " I love how
20	CROWN2021_M	Balin , are you on with Supervisor Gamila ? " Who the	fuck is -- Oh , it 's the bot . Balin tilted its
21	CROWN2021_M	and she was sending a Station Security urgent assistance code . For	fuck 's sake , I knew this was a bad idea and I
22	CROWN2021_N	though it had clearly vanished just moments before . " What the	fuck was that ? " Naomi murmured . " The ship went dutchman
23	CROWN2021_N	'd probably go there if I was drunk . " What the	fuck did he just say ? I breathe in a deep breath and
24	CROWN2021_P	I wanted Tristan so bad it hurt . He constantly teased the	fuck out of me , even if he was trying to avoid me
25	CROWN2021_R	a book -- that we can turn the page and move the	fuck on . But history is n't the paper it 's printed on
26	CROWN2021_R	and a double-top-secret menu . " Mustard grilled patties ? Get the	fuck out of here ! " They sign up for open mikes at
27	CROWN2021_R	-- that 's better . I just understood an entire sentence and	FUCK ! It 's so loud ! Goddammit ! There 's a car
28	CROWN2021_R	spark up a Philly together ? " " CLICK ! What the	fuck was that , Buck ? You 'll smoke a blunt with him
29	Frown_N	and looked out . No one was in sight . Where the	fuck is everybody ? With his finger on the Thompson 's trigger ,
30	Frown_N	laying around . A chill replaced the clammy sweat . What the	fuck am I going to do now ? He was suddenly , without
31	Frown_N	A farewell present ? Merry Christmas , Sergeant Koffler ? How the	fuck long are those sweet potatoes and five , ten pounds of smoked
32	Frown_N	a dull roar far off . Fuck ' em ! What the	fuck do I care if the whole Japanese Air Corps is headed for
33	Frown_P	about the subtext of the play . Did he give a flying	fuck if Hamlet and his mom had a yen to dance the dirty
34	Frown_P	had time to have vision and to articulate it . What the	fuck , admit it , he 'd missed hearing people carry on about

Figure 2: Results for "fucking"

4.4. "fuck" used as an infix

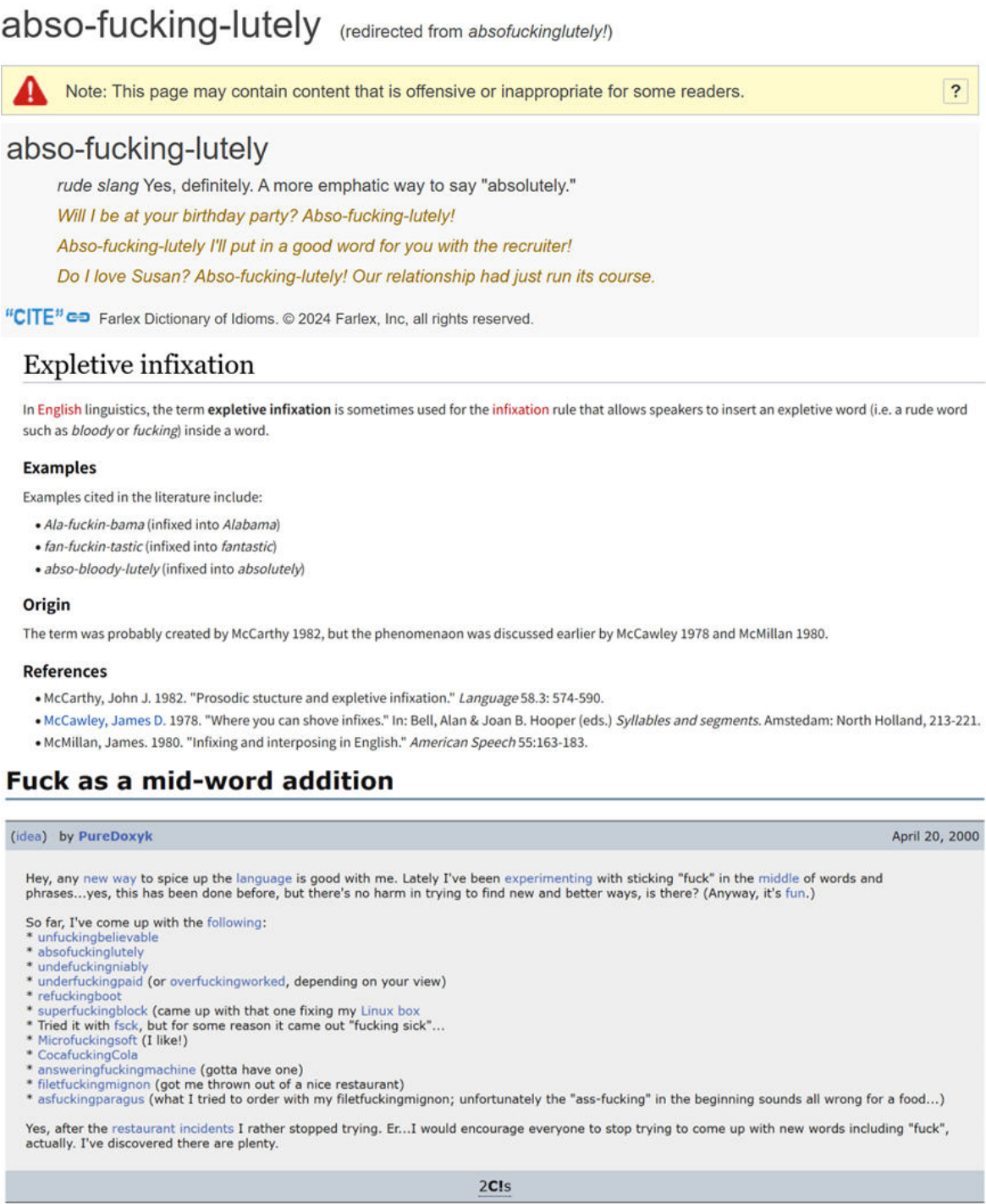
When stuck in the middle of another word, fuck is used for added emotional emphasis as an expletive infixation. Dictionary and online forum searches (e.g., The Free Dictionary, Glottopedia, Everything2) show it can be added to adjectives (e.g., "un-fucking-believable"), nouns (e.g., "Ala-fuckin-bama"), and adverbs (e.g., "abso-fucking-lutely").

When used as an infix, "fuck" does not change the host word's basic sense but makes the speaker's feeling more intense. Common emotions include excitement (e.g., "fan-fucking-static"), disbelief or frustration (e.g., "superfuckingblock"), and enthusiasm (e.g., "abso-fucking-lutely"). This usage is informal and vulgar.

Your query "[word="fucking"the]" returned 61 matches in 17 different texts (in 4,707,326 words [60 texts]; frequency: 12.96 instances per million words), ordered randomly			
No	Filename	Solution 1 to 50	Page 1 / 2
1	Edwin_1	"No, not in a sense. It's a	fucking
2	Edwin_1	That's what he said at the service. Out there	fucking
3	CR00N2021_8	Always. Be. Closing!" That's how you	fucking
4	CR00N2021_8	figures. Let's do this. Let's make you a	fucking
5	Edwin_1	do with the overt sexuality of that music. It talks about	fucking
6	CR00N2021_8	get their political themes. This summer Rhyth and Maly started	fucking
7	CR00N2021_8	But it makes me sick, it makes me sick to my	fucking
8	CR00N2021_8	are n't facts. "but I feel like my parents are	fucking
9	CR00N2020_9	others bending into scopes. "I do n't like this one	fucking
10	CR00N2020_1	"I'm dumo. "They look real. He	fucking
11	CR00N2020_1	Carlos picked his nose. "Okay, even if I'm	fucking
12	Edwin_1	He said they felt better knowing that crazy Kowalschuk was out there	fucking
13	CR00N2021_M	you can even believe the way he tells it, was Maximilian	fucking
14	CR00N2021_8	someone pulls out their piece and growls. "Get on the	fucking
15	CR00N2021_8	all away. "Go ask Ma Eng yourself. I'm	fucking
16	CR00N2021_8	just. You got that?" No, I do n't	fucking
17	CR00N2021_1	mad. He sounds resigned. Not to mention for royalty	fucking
18	CR00N2021_8	raza for gleeful, impractical experimentation. "Classical music is so	fucking
19	CR00N2021_K	maybe? By which I mean, who the fuck has ever	fucking
20	CR00N2021_1	to hear him admit it. I want someone to take some	fucking
21	CR00N2020_1	other. "What's happening?" Ruppert asked. "Fucking	fucking
22	CR00N2021_P	It's only research. Lie back and think of the	fucking
23	CR00N2021_8	n't stop until our noses were touching. He smiled that same	fucking
24	CR00N2021_8	and after testing him, "you're going to be super	fucking
25	CR00N2021_P	I am at his mercy. God, I must be	fucking
26	CR00N2020_P	Jack jammed his hands into his pockets. "This is just	fucking
27	Edwin_1	now. "I said. "I think I get the	fucking
28	CR00N2021_1	again. Say you killed my boy. "Drop the	fucking
29	CR00N2020_P	he was worried about snuffing this mystery species demon chick was really	fucking
30	Edwin_N	put them to work. With me here, they're the	fucking
31	CR00N2021_P	Joan of Arc, Greta Thunberg. Teen girls rearrange the	fucking
32	CR00N2021_8	who stole it, in the middle of 125th Street. For	fucking
33	CR00N2021_8	Seriously, I should have a say in this party's	fucking
34	CR00N2020_1	altogether. Since she was a whore. "Shut your	fucking
35	CR00N2021_8	friends actually hung out with their parents, especially not at a	fucking
36	CR00N2021_8	of the day. Now's crunch time, so do n't	fucking
37	CR00N2020_1	But Gandy was laughing. "No way. She had a	fucking
38	CR00N2021_8	was recording that and posted it online? You'd bring the	fucking
39	CR00N2021_1	night vision gear clipped to their helmets like snorkels. Looked like	fucking
40	Edwin_P	lap and the creek surging around me. "Goddamn it to	fucking
41	Edwin_N	If I was n't here, they're just a bunch of	fucking
42	CR00N2021_8	acting like a stereotype. "Are you calling me a	fucking
43	Edwin_1	and ooze. "Where's my mates? Where's my	fucking
44	CR00N2021_8	We're young and beautiful and the concept of time is a	fucking
45	CR00N2021_1	sur. "Go now! Get out of my	fucking
46	CR00N2021_P	preparation before Carolyn makes her arrival. Tempting, though, real	fucking
47	CR00N2021_K	's like a giant mystery. Piper. You're like,	fucking
48	CR00N2021_N	almost seemed genuine, but not quite. "It's a	fucking
49	Edwin_1	"We've been told he referred to them as:	fucking
50	CR00N2020_1	never looked like that, did I? When did I put	fucking
51	CR00N2020_P	Oh, Jesus. "Con rasped. "I'm a	fucking
52	CR00N2021_8	how many North Dakota miles, built to be torn down like	fucking
53	CR00N2020_1	in that file. I know your story, which is some	fucking
54	CR00N2021_P	spoken to me. Mark Darcy saying Oh, yes, they	fucking
55	CR00N2020_P	Eidolon, who stared at the door. "This is a	fucking
56	Edwin_8	any more. But I still ca n't stop the appearance of the	fucking
57	CR00N2021_G	was something along the lines of "ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR	FUCKING
58	CR00N2020_1	"Wiccans. Man, they do n't even worship a	fucking
59	CR00N2020_8	to Shoniqua as he leaned in for another hug. "Good	fucking
60	CR00N2021_P	floor. "Who tried to drown you?" The	fucking
61	Edwin_N	no one there. The fires had gone out. Even the	fucking

Your query "[word="fucked"the]" returned 17 matches in 9 different texts (in 4,707,326 words [60 texts]; frequency: 3.61 instances per million words), ordered randomly			
No	Filename	Solution 1 to 17	Page 1 / 1
1	CR00N2021_8	Sully has just created in its path. Last night I finally	fucked
2	CR00N2020_1	... We had a good deal going and now it's	fucked
3	Edwin_8	"Ditto. "Really?" "You really	fucked
4	CR00N2021_8	turning onto his side, it's not to think about how sexually	fucked
5	CR00N2020_P	her own. If not for the rules, I would've	fucked
6	CR00N2021_1	climbed. "I remember if your mother knew, since she	fucked
7	CR00N2021_G	park with "big guns. "YOU DONT KNOW WHO YOU	FUCKED
8	CR00N2021_1	for prosecution. Dwight squeaked to the U.S. attorney. Wayne Junior	fucked
9	Edwin_N	vening, do n't you?" "I think something had	fucked
10	CR00N2021_8	the cool people went to see. Or traded, or	fucked
11	CR00N2020_P	might have done to her that night. "We've both	fucked
12	CR00N2021_P	from American lit or chemistry. "YOU LIKE TO GET	FUCKED
13	CR00N2021_1	n't fucked up. You understand that? You understand how	fucked
14	CR00N2020_1	recovered Wayne. "That's a brand of Wayne Senior gone. "Not	fucked
15	CR00N2020_G	he said Brenda's muffled and relaxed the broken, and she	fucked
16	Edwin_8	he'd be able to hold you. "You think something	fucked
17	CR00N2021_1	Wayne relaxed and grabbed at air and barely stayed upright. Wayne	fucked

Figure 3: Screenshots from online dictionaries illustrating infix usage (Part 1)



fuck {N}

- e. (animate being) (negative) (pejorative) [a contemptible, terrible or foolish person, animal or plant]
- f. (situation) (negative) [an annoying or bad situation]
- g. (event) (sexual) (taboo) [an act of sexual intercourse]
- h. (expression) (intensifying) (taboo) [used in fixed phrases for emphasis or emotional expression, e.g., “what the ~”, “a ~”, “as ~”]
- i. (expressive) (taboo) [used as an exclamation to convey sudden strong emotion]

fucking {ADJ}

- a. (expressive) (intensifying) (taboo) [used as a vulgar intensifier to amplify emotional force, whether negative, positive, or neutral]

fucked {ADJ}

- a. {Adj} (state) (negative) (taboo) [in a ruined, broken, or dysfunctional state]

fucking/fuckin {INT}

- a. {infix} (expressive) (intensifying) (taboo) [inserted into another word to intensify its meaning without changing its core meaning]

This section performs a componential analysis (CA) on each meaning of the word fuck to deconstruct these meanings into their essential semantic components. All analysis maintains the same order as presented above.

5.1. CA of Verbal Senses

- **fuck** [+ACTION], [+INTERCOURSE], [+BIOLOGICAL], [+TABOO]
- **fuck** [+EXCLAMATION], [+STRONG AFFECT], [+/- POSITIVE], [+TABOO]
- **fuck** [+ACTION], [+CAUSATIVE], [+RESULT], [-POSITIVE], [+TABOO]
- **fuck** [+ACTION], [+SOCIAL INTERACTION], [-POSITIVE], [+TABOO]

5.2. CA of Nominal Senses

- **fuck** [+ENTITY], [-POSITIVE], [+TABOO] (e. and f.)
- **fuck** [+EVENT], [+INTERCOURSE], [+TABOO]
- **fuck** [+STRONG AFFECT], [-POSITIVE] [+TABOO]

5.3. CA of Adjectival Uses

- **fucking** [+STRONG AFFECT], [+POSITIVE], [+TABOO]
- **fucked** [+STRONG AFFECT], [-POSITIVE], [+TABOO]

5.4. CA of the Infix Use

- **Fucking/fuckin** [+STRONG AFFECT], [+POSITIVE/NEUTRAL] [+TABOO]

5.5. Summary of CA's Applicability to “Fuck”

Componential analysis demonstrates clear utility in decomposing the semantic structure of fuck when it bears a concrete, lexical meaning, such as in its senses referring to sexual intercourse, damage, or a contemptible person. For these usages, the method effectively isolates components, making the distinctions between different meanings explicit and objective.

However, the analysis proves less effective and insufficiently specific when applied to fuck in its purely expressive, intensifying functions. In uses where fuck functions as a general expletive, an interjection, an intensifying adjective (fucking), or an infix, it is primarily pragmatic and affective rather than referential. The resulting components, such as [+STRONG AFFECT], are overly broad and vague. They fail to capture the nuanced differences in emotions, grammatical role, or contextual impact between these uses.

6. Conclusion

This analysis aimed to examine the effectiveness of componential analysis (CA) to the polysemous English word fuck. The investigation involves a corpus-based identification of its main verb, noun, adjective, and infix uses, followed by an attempt to decompose each meaning into a set of semantic components.

It is demonstrated that CA provides an effective framework for analyzing concrete referential meaning. Components in these circumstances offer precise and economical distinctions. However, it is significantly less applicable when used to the word's expressive and grammaticalized functions. For uses where fuck operates as an exclamation, an emphatic noun in fixed phrases like “what the fuck”, an intensifier “fucking good”, or an infix, the semantic components become vague and unsatisfactory.

The limitations of the study itself must also be acknowledged. The corpus data presented challenges, such as part-of-speech tagging inconsistencies required manual filtering of adjectival instances, and the highly specialized usage of infix was not retrievable with the queries employed. This failure may be due not only to corpus limitations but also to the researcher's insufficient expertise in computer skills and CQP syntax, which could result in poor query design.

To conclude, while componential analysis proves valuable for cataloging and clarifying the concrete meanings of “fuck”, it offers only a partial explanation of the word. This study also has practical implications, such as contributing to language pedagogy for English language teachers, who can instruct students on taboo words like “fuck” to go beyond simple definitions to address their broad usages and strong emotional impact, thereby helping learners avoid serious social missteps. Additionally, the methodological challenges faced, such as complex query design and tagging inconsistencies, point to a need for enhanced training in corpus linguistics, equipping students and researchers with advanced skills in query syntax and data processing to utilize digital tools more effectively. Future work could employ larger, spoken-language corpora, which may contain more examples, or social media datasets to better capture the full usage of “fuck”.

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