

Text analysis 9

“Spain’s Most Expensive Wines, Claire Adamson

- 1 You can pick up a decent glass of local wine for as little as one euro in Spain's bars, but the country is also home to a number of producers **whose** wines command some pretty hefty prices. Collectors and wine lovers are going nuts over top offerings from Rioja, Ribera del Duero, Priorat, and the relatively unknown Bierzo region.

Dominio de Pingus, Ribera del Duero

- 2 Spain’s most pricey wine comes from a tiny plot of extremely low-yielding tempranillo in the middle of the prestigious Ribera del Duero region. Pingus is considered a cult wine due to its elusiveness. You need to have some pretty decent connections to get your hands on a bottle.

Descendientes de J. Palacios, La Faraona, Bierzo

- 3 The number-two spot goes to a relative newbie. Palacios makes a selection of high-end, single-vineyard wines. These include our second most-expensive Spanish wine, La Faraona. It is grown on barely more than an acre of land, with the vines yielding just a single barrel of wine each year (average price of \$614).

Alvaro Palacios L’Ermita, Priorat

- 4 Alvaro Palacios strikes again. Unfortunately, wines to try before you die come at a price. Palacios jokes that he and Pingus owner Peter Sisseck are having a competition as to who can make the most expensive Spanish wine.

Answer the following questions:

1. Explain the word *home* in *the country is also home to a number of producers* (par. 1). Is it an example of a figure of speech? If so, which one?
2. Explain the meaning of the adjectives *decent* (par. 1 and 2), *hefty* (par. 1) and the expression *going nuts* (par. 1).
3. Comment on the adjective *tiny* (par. 2). Then provide the “strong adjectives” for the following words: *big, hungry, afraid, angry, funny, cold, hot*.
4. Comment on the morphology of *prestigious* (par. 2), *newbie* and *unfortunately* (par. 4).
5. Provide at least two synonyms for the words *pricey* (par. 2) and *barely* (par. 3).
6. Study the following sentence: *[...] are having a competition as to who [...]* (par. 4). Why is that sentence grammatically correct, but not **I’m having a car*?

SUGGESTED ANSWERS:

1. Explain the word *home* in *the country is also home to a number of producers* (par. 1). Is it an example of a figure of speech? If so, which one?

Topic 46

A figure of speech is a word or phrase that possesses a separate meaning from its literal definition. In this case, it would be a clear example of “metaphor”, in which a comparison is drawn between two dissimilar things that have something in common (in this case, *country* and *home*. Another revealing example would be *all the world’s a stage*). Note that this comparison is done without the use of any connective element (*as, like*). Otherwise, it would be a case of *simile*.

In this case *home* means that the country is the place where these producers live and develop their work.

2. Explain the meaning of the adjectives *decent* (par. 1 and 2), *hefty* (par. 1) and the expression *going nuts* (par. 1).

Decent: on the two occasions in which this adjective is used in the text, the meaning is that of “something which is considered to be of an acceptable standard or quality”: *a decent glass of wine, decent connections*. *Decent* may also be used to “describe something which is morally correct or acceptable” (e.g. *please, use decent language in front of your grandmother*), or “people who are honest and behave in a way that most people approve of” (e.g. *decent people don’t steal, even if they have the opportunity to do so without getting caught*).

Hefty: this adjective means “large in size, weight or amount”: *Richard is a really hefty bloke; hefty prices; the worker lifted the hefty box into the truck*.

Going nuts: the colloquial phrase *to go nuts (over something)* means “to become extremely angry, crazy, insane”: *collectors and wine lovers are going nuts over top offerings in La Rioja; when my dad found out I’d been out all night, he went completely nuts*.

3. Comment on the adjective *tiny* (par. 2). Then provide the “strong adjectives” for the following words: *big, hungry, afraid, angry, funny, cold, hot*.

Topic 42

Tiny is the strong adjective corresponding to *small*. “Weak”/ “base” vs. “strong”/ “extreme” is a semantic classification of adjectives which has syntactic implications, as it affects the type of modification the adjective allows.

Very can only be employed with “weak” adjectives (*very small*, but **very tiny*), whereas the adverbs *absolutely, totally, completely* apply to “strong” adjectives only (*absolutely tiny*, but **absolutely small*). *Really*, in turn, may combine with both of them (*really small, really tiny*).

Below we include some other strong adjectives:

“Weak” / “base” adjective	“Strong” adjective
<i>big</i>	<i>huge, enormous</i>

<i>hungry</i>	<i>starving</i>
<i>afraid</i>	<i>terrified/horrified/petrified</i>
<i>angry</i>	<i>furious / seething / enraged</i>
<i>funny</i>	<i>hilarious</i>
<i>cold</i>	<i>freezing</i>
<i>hot</i>	<i>boiling / scorching</i>
<i>noisy</i>	<i>deafening</i>
<i>dirty</i>	<i>filthy</i>
<i>tall</i>	<i>towering</i>

4. Comment on the morphology of *prestigious* (par. 2), *newbie* and *unfortunately* (par. 4).

Topic 45

Prestigious: this is an adjective derived from the noun root *prestige*, plus the addition of the suffix *-ous*, which is a highly productive denominal suffix for adjective formation in English (noun → adjective): *dangerous, cautious, adventurous, ambitious*.

Newbie: the morphological origin of this word is quite uncertain.

- **Affixation**: some linguists argue it started to be used as US military slang, adding a diminutive or derogatory suffix to the adjective *new* (*newbie*). Originally, it would have been *newie*, and then evolved to *newbie* after the insertion of a .
- **Clipping**: another possible origin comes from the British public school slang “new boy” or “new blood”. In both cases we would have a special type of clipping, since this word-formation process is generally applied to polysyllabic words, and not combinations of words, as would be the case here. The process consists in the subtraction of one or more syllables to show familiarity. The clipped word still keeps the same meaning and belongs to the same word-class. Some words add the ending *-ie* after being clipped, as would be the case of *newbie*, and also of other words like *hankie* (*handkerchief*), *budgie* (*budgerigar*), *barbie* (*barbecue*), *brekkie* (*breakfast*), *sunnies* (*sunglasses*) – particularly common in Australian English.

Unfortunately: this is a clear case of a word in which multiple affixation has taken place. The stem root is *fortune*, from which the adjective *fortunate* is derived by means of the suffix *-ate* (this suffix is not particularly productive, but we may find other instances in words like *passionate*).

Afterwards, two parallel affixation processes have taken place; in which order they happened is largely irrelevant, since both existing words exist: (i) the addition of the negative prefix *-un*, and (ii) the adjectival suffix *-ly* to form adverbs (*unfortunate; fortunately* → *unfortunately*).

5. Provide at least two synonyms for the words *pricey* (par. 2) and *barely* (par. 3).

Synonyms for *pricey* would include the following:

- *Expensive*: *fuel's so expensive in this country.*
- *Costly*: *Having professionally-made curtains can be costly, so why not make your own?*
- *Dear* (mainly British, informal, disapproval): *clothes here are much dearer than in the States.*

Synonyms for *barely* would include

- *Hardly: their faces were hardly more than eighteen inches apart.*
- *Scarcely (emphasis): he was scarcely more than a boy*
- *Only just: the film's has only just started, so you haven't missed much.*

6. Study the following sentence: [...] are having a competition as to who [...] (par. 4). Why is that sentence grammatically correct, but not *I'm having a car?

Topic 31

The answer to this question lies in the semantic difference between stative and dynamic verbs, depending on whether they admit progressive modification or not. Traditional descriptions tend to treat this feature as a fixed property that has to be learnt as an inherent grammatical feature of each verb. However, verbs are not intrinsically stative or dynamic. Rather, we might more tellingly speak of stative and dynamic uses of verbs, which explains why *have* allows progressive modification in some contexts, but not in others.

Verbs that allow both uses, e.g. *have*, normally imply a change in the basic meaning:

- *[...] are having a competition as to who* (dynamic): “are holding, organizing a competition”
- **I'm having a car* is ungrammatical because the meaning of “possession” requires a stative use of the verb. Therefore, the correct alternative would be *I have a car*.

This happens with multiple verbs, as the following examples show:

- *I'm weighing myself* (dynamic) – *I weigh 80 kilos* (stative)
- *I'm feeling the pullover* (dynamic) – *It feels like a normal fabric* (stative)
- *He is being very foolish* (dynamic; temporary meaning) – *He is very foolish* (stative; permanent meaning)
- *I'm thinking of going there* (dynamic, “I'm planning”) – *I think he is wrong* (stative, “believe”).