

# Synonymy

## The Synonymy of Un-adjective and “not + adjective”

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### Introduction

In morphology, the meaning of negative adjectival derivational prefixes, such as un-, il- or in- is described as “the state of not being X” or simply as “not.” One could therefore deduce that any un/il/in-adjective is synonymous to its not + adjective counterpart expression. However, according to Goldberg’s (1995) principle of no synonymy, there is no true, only partial, synonymy. This research focusses on only un-adjectives as some adjectives are able to take multiple negative prefixes, e. g. inhuman and unhuman. Hence, the degree of synonymy of these prefixes is also unclear.

### Data and methodology

All data is gathered from the BNC.

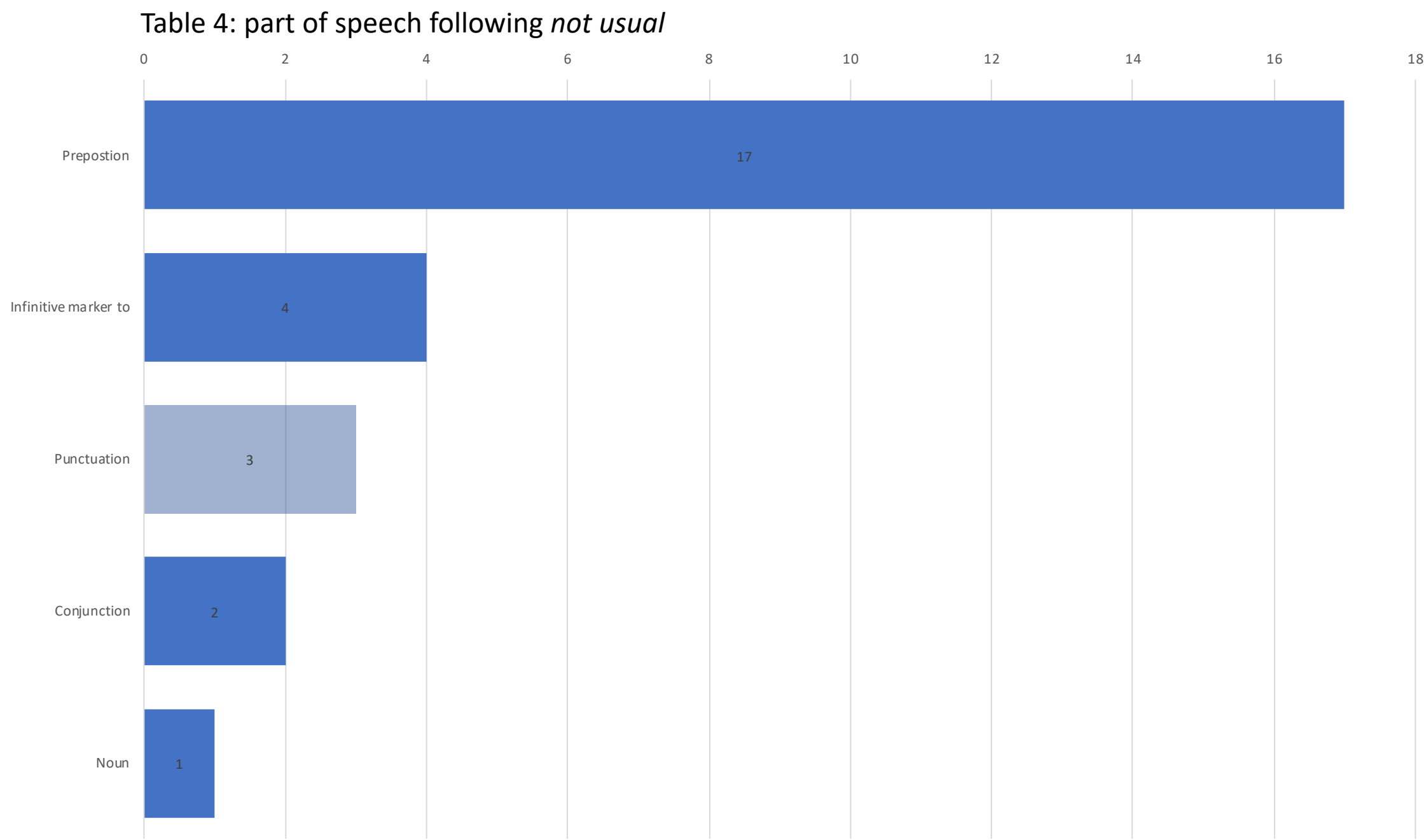
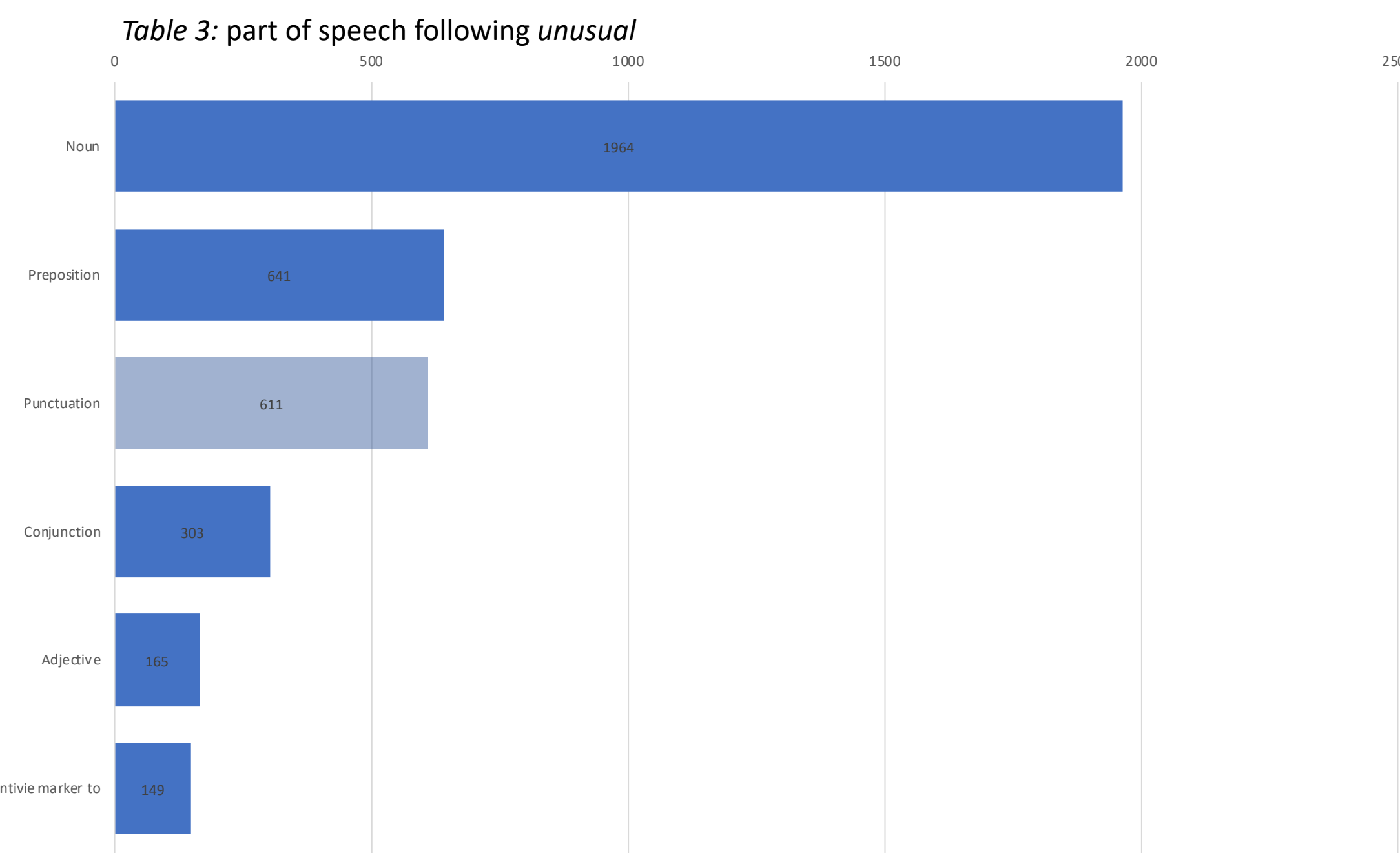
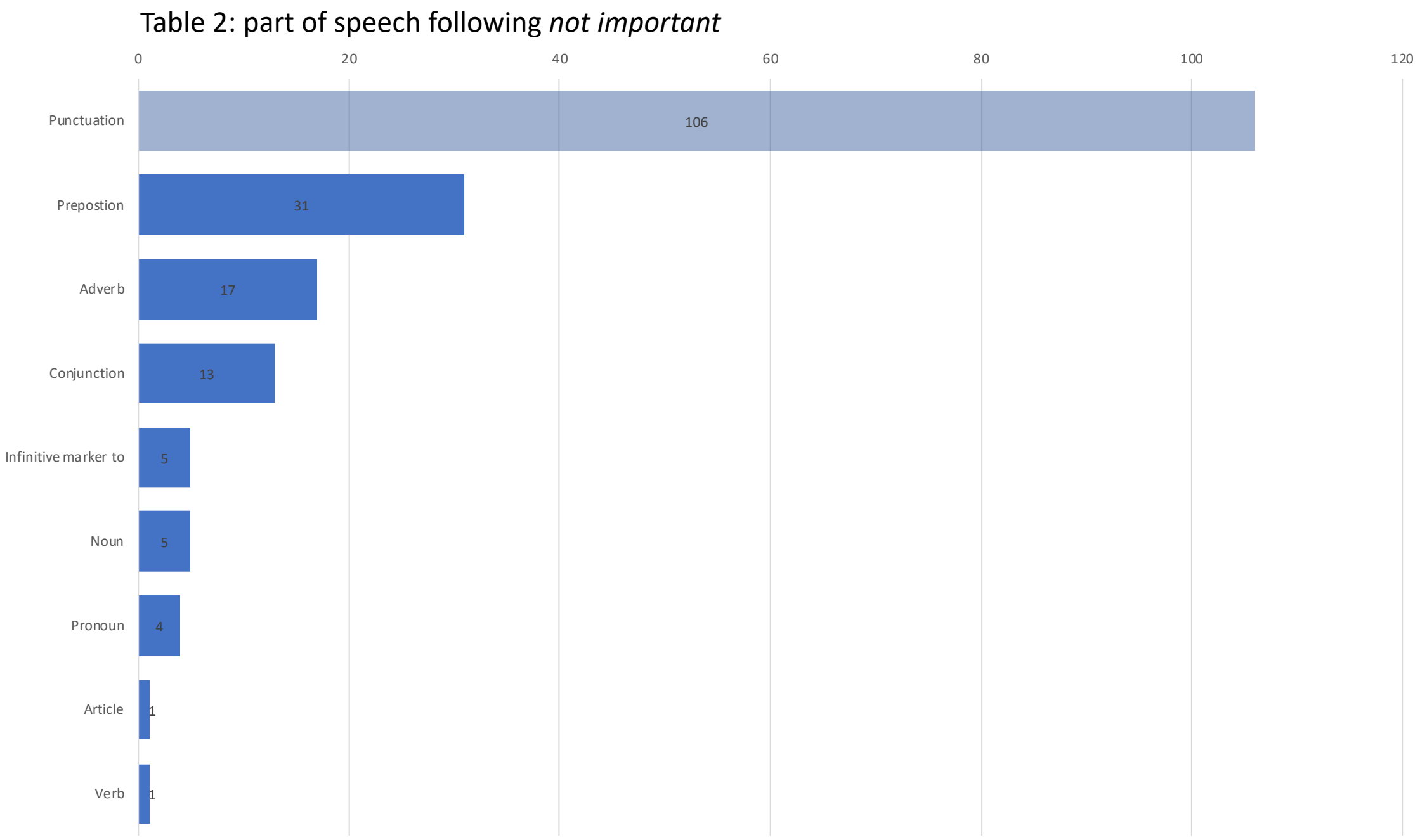
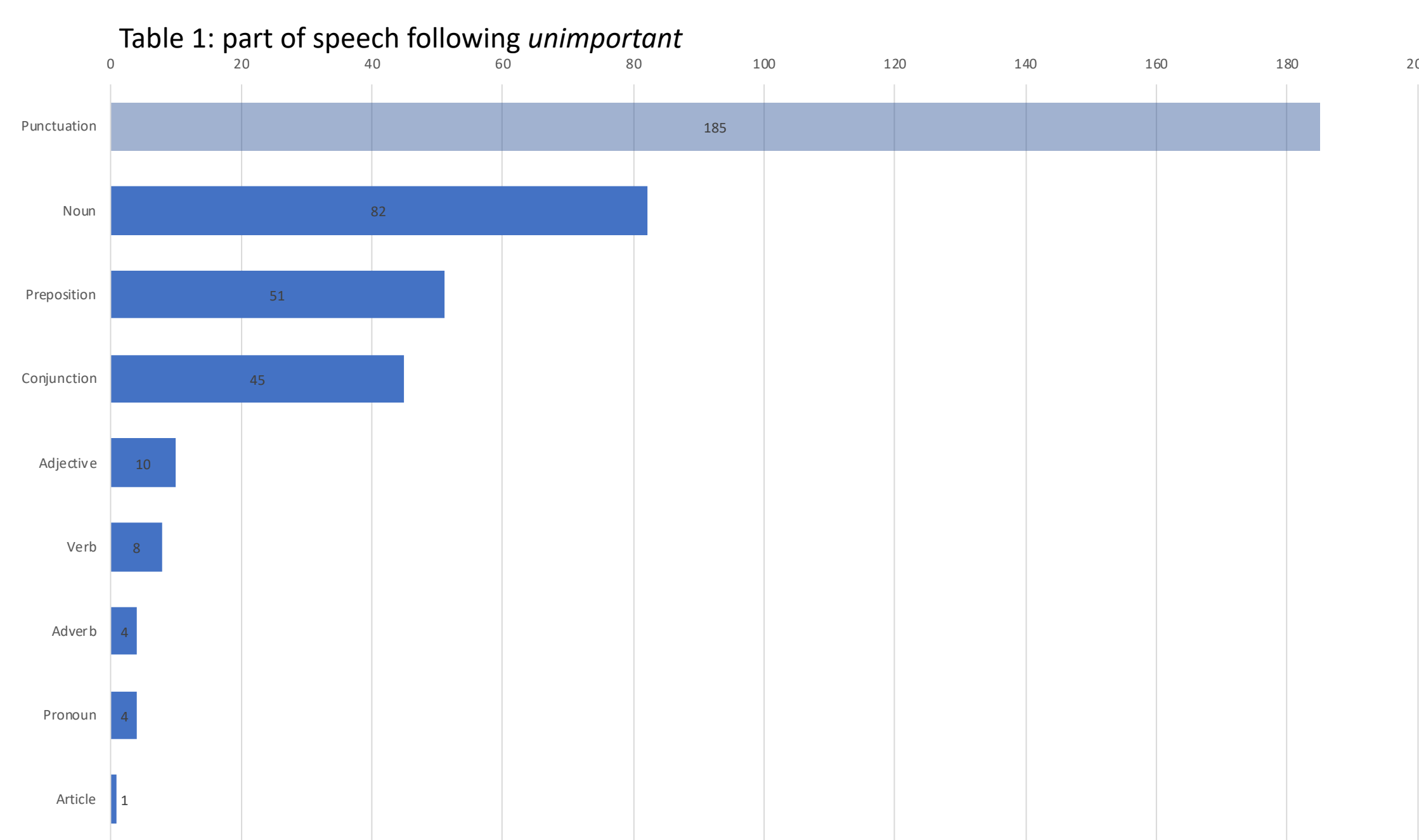


Table 3 & 4: It is worth to mention that the most frequent word following *unusual* and *not usual* is the preposition “for” in both cases.

### Results

Both examples show a differing syntactical structure between un-adjectives and the form “not + adjective.” Un-adjectives tend to be followed by a noun, whereas the form „not + adjective“ is more likely to be followed by a preposition. Nonetheless, parallels can still be found, e. g. the preposition *for* following *not usual* and *unusual*. Comparing table 1 and table 3, un-adjectives also seem to follow a similar structure with similar frequencies. Looking at table 2 and 4, the frequencies seem to be more unpredictable.

#### References

Goldberg, Adele E. 1995. *Constructions: A construction grammar approach to argument structure*. 1st edition. University Of Chicago Press.