

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of Study

The term semantics is regularly characterized as the think about of meaning. It may be more precise to characterize it as the consider of the relationship between phonetic shape and meaning. The same rationale strengths us to recognize that dialect learners must obtain not as it were the implications of lexicon things, but too a set of rules for translating the expressions that are shaped when lexicon things are combined.¹ Semantics is the study of meaning communicated through language.² Semantic preference is the tendency for lexical objects to be restricted to certain semantic conditions, lthough collocation patterns are related to lexical boundaries, the appearance of words is determined by semantic context.³ To decide a semantic inclination, collocation has data that can be accumulated and utilized. Announced that semantic inclinations are closely related to collocations. It can be seen as a “feature of the collocates.”⁴

Synonymy is a semantic relationship that states that there is a similarity in meaning between one word and another. Despite having the same meaning, these

¹ Kroeger, Paul R. *Analyzing meaning: An introduction to semantics and pragmatics*. Language Science Press, 2023. 4

² John I. Saeed, *Semantics*, 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing,(2003), 3.

³ Cheng, Winnie. *Exploring corpus linguistics: Language in action*. Routledge, (2011).

⁴ Hardiman, Denitha Putri, and Tri Nuraniwati. "Semantic Preference and Semantic Prosody of the Collocations of Sustainable in NOW Corpus." 3L: Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies 29.1 (2023). 3

synonymous words often have different collocation patterns from other words in linguistic constructions. In the case of synonymous words, despite having similar meanings, each word tends to have a slightly different collocation pattern from other synonymous words. This difference reflects a more specific nuance of meaning or a slightly different context of use between the synonymous words. We often talk about synonyms as words that “have the same meaning.” To make the definition closer, we say that two words are synonyms (for the specific meaning of each word). If we change one word to another, the meaning of the sentence remains the same.⁵

Collocation is characterized as 'a combination of terms in a dialect that occurs exceptionally regularly and more regularly than would occur by chance', as expressed by the Oxford Learner's Lexicon Online. In other words, collocation alludes to the one of combining terms that are habitually used together.⁶ The term collocation is used in slightly different meanings in linguistic literature. These variations have a significant impact on the semantic status of collocation. According to the Fanian tradition, many scholars focus on a purely statistical definition of collocation.⁷

⁵ Kroeger, Paul R. *Analyzing meaning: An introduction to semantics and pragmatics*. Language Science Press, (2023). 106

⁶ Khoonthongnoom, Sutasinee. "Analysis of Collocations and Semantic Preferences of English Synonyms' Critical, Serious and Crucial': A Corpus Based Approach." *Shanlax International Journal of Education* 12 (2024). 34

⁷ Lehecka, Tomas. "Collocation and colligation." *Handbook of pragmatics online*. Benjamins, (2015). 4

Corpus based studies have become an effective technique for examining synonyms by looking at authentic data from real language use. Through corpora, researchers can discover collocational patterns and semantic preferences that are not always apparent in conventional dictionary definitions. In her study titled *"Analysis of Collocations and Semantic Preference of the Near-Synonyms: 'Blank,' 'Empty,' and 'Vacant,'"* Pallapa Lertcharoenwanich emphasizes the importance of analyzing collocations and semantic preferences to distinguish near-synonyms. Lertcharoenwanich states that synonyms can be differentiated based on their usage contexts and collocational patterns. To understand how words interact with one another and how semantic preferences influence synonym selection in various communicative contexts, this study employs a corpus-based approach.⁸

This study aims to examine the differences in collocations and semantic preferences among the synonyms good, fine, nice, and great. Prior to analyzing data from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), these target synonyms are first compared based on their definitions and usage in several online learner's dictionaries, such as the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, and Cambridge Dictionary, as illustrated in Table 1.1

⁸ Lertcharoenwanich, Pallapa. *"Analysis of Collocations and Semantic Preference of the Near-Synonyms: 'Blank,' 'Empty,' and 'Vacant'."* LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network 16.1 (2023): 365-383.

Table 1. 1 Comparison based on definitions and usage in several online student dictionaries

	Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary	Cambridge Dictionary
Good	Of high quality or an acceptable standard. <i>e.g., a good book.</i>	Very satisfactory, enjoyable, pleasant, or interesting. <i>e.g., it is good to It's so good to see you after all this time!</i>
Great	(informal) very good or pleasant. <i>e.g., You've done a great job.</i>	Large in amount, size, or degree. <i>e.g., The issue is of great importance to voters.</i>

Table 1.1 provides a comparison between the definitions and examples of usage for four synonyms in English, namely good, and great, taken from three major dictionaries for learning: Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, and Cambridge Dictionary. From the analysis contained in the table, it can be concluded that although the four terms have similar basic meanings that is, indicating something positive each has variations in meaning, nuance, and

different contexts of use. The word "good" is the most common and flexible synonym, as it can be used in a variety of situations, from describing quality, morals, and success to health and fitness. Conversely, "great" has a stronger and more impressive connotation than the word "good," as it is often used to convey extraordinary achievement, admiration, or high enthusiasm, especially in more informal contexts. Therefore, although both words can be translated as "good" in Indonesian, their use in English is highly determined by the context, communication style, and the nuances of meaning the speaker wishes to convey. This conclusion is an important point in this study because it shows that in language practice, the choice of synonyms depends not only on their basic meanings but is also influenced by the collocation and semantic preferences of each term.

B. Focus of Study

This study examines the differences in meaning and usage of the adjectives good and great, which are often considered synonymous in English. It specifically examines the collocation patterns in sentences and semantic preferences, based on data taken from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). The study is directed to :

1. Identify and classify noun collocations that frequently appear with the words good and great in the corpus. Each collocation is analyzed based on its mutual

information (MI) value to determine the strength of the lexical relationship between the main word and its accompanying word.

2. To determine the preferred meanings of these two words, namely their usage tendencies within specific conceptual domains where they frequently appear. By examining recurring word usage patterns, this study aims to determine whether the words good and great typically appear within specific domains of meaning, such as moral, social, evaluative, or achievement.
3. Comparing how the collocations and semantic preferences of the words good and great reflect differences in meaning and context of use. Although both words have similar positive connotations, this study aims to show that their use in everyday sentences depends heavily on the situation and context, not just on the dictionary definition.

C. Research of Study

1. What are some common collocations found in the use of the words good and great based on English corpus data?
2. What are the semantic preferences of the words good and great in the contexts of their use?
3. What are the differences in meaning and context between the two synonyms based on corpus data.

D. Objective of Study

1. To identify common collocations that appear with the words good and great in English corpus data.
2. To analyze the semantic preferences of the words good and great based on the context of use in the corpus.
3. To compare the differences in meaning and context of use between good and great based on corpus data.

E. Significance of The Study

This research has theoretical and practical aspects, provides a solid foundation for deeper insights into the use of synonyms in English and how this can be applied to various linguistic and communicative needs.

1. Understanding Context and Synonym Usage

This research provides significant contributions to semantic theory by highlighting the relationships between synonyms good and great and their contextual usage. This supports pragmatic analysis by revealing how word choices are influenced by factors such as communicative intent, emotions conveyed, and the social relationship between speakers.

2. Advancement of Collocation Studies

The research enriches collocation research by highlighting word pairings that frequently occur with certain synonyms in specific contexts. For

example, collocations like good job or great achievement showcase patterns of usage that are common in English

3. Enhancement of Synonym Studies in English

By presenting a detailed analysis of synonyms, this research expands lexicological studies by focusing on the differences between the denotative and connotative meanings of good, fine, nice, and great. The research also aids in developing guidelines for learners to understand that synonyms involve not just meaning but also social and cultural aspects tied to their usage. Learners can develop an understanding of subtle differences in word usage for example, they can design exercises requiring students to match synonyms with appropriate contexts, such as choosing between good or great to describe someone's performance in different situations.

By understanding the differences between good and great, English users can express themselves more confidently and effectively in line with their communicative goals.

F. Previous Study

To complete this research and make it more relevant, the author focuses on previous studies. Previous research on Collocation Analysis on Synonyms of Words.

Semantic Prosody and Collocation: A Corpus Study of the Near-Synonyms Persist and Persevere (2021).

Near-synonyms in English often pose significant challenges for EFL students. This study seeks to address this issue through a corpus-based analysis of the synonymous verbs *persist* and *persevere*, focusing on their distribution across genres, collocations, and semantic preference/prosody. Using data from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), the findings reveal that *persist* appears most frequently in academic texts, while *persevere* is more common in webpages. Although both verbs share similar cognitive meanings, they exhibit distinct collocational patterns. The analysis of semantic prosody indicates that *persist* is often associated with negative contexts, particularly those involving ongoing unpleasant situations, whereas *persevere* tends to co-occur with words that convey strong determination and significant effort in overcoming challenges. Additionally, while learner dictionaries describe *persevere* as strictly intransitive, corpus evidence suggests that it can also function transitively. The study recommends integrating corpus data into vocabulary instruction alongside learner dictionaries, as corpus-based evidence provides more authentic insights into collocational and grammatical patterns.⁹

⁹ Phoocharoensil, Supakorn. "Semantic prosody and collocation: A corpus study of the near-synonyms *persist* and *persevere*." *Eurasian journal of applied linguistics* 7.1 (2021)

Analysis of Collocations and Semantic Preference of the Near-synonyms: Blank, Empty, and Vacant (2023).

For English dialect learners, using the utilization of near-synonyms can be challenging. In spite of the semantic likenesses of English equivalent words, they are not conversely in all settings. The targets of this corpus-based consideration are to look at contrasts between the near-synonymous descriptive words clear, purge and empty based on the degree of custom from their dispersion over classes and to analyze the thing collocates in connection to semantic inclination drawn from the Corpus of Modern American English (COCA). The discoveries show that these equivalent words are unprecedented in formal English, i.e., scholarly writings and they tend to have very distinctive events and conveyances over classes (i.e., clear and purge most habitually happen in fiction while empty for the most part happens in daily paper) in spite of a comparative degree of convention. For the thing collocates and semantic inclination, these three descriptive words have a powerless near synonymous status as they share as it were one thing collocate and one comparative topic of semantic inclination. Hence, in spite of their similitude in implications, these equivalent words appear together with certain things placed in a certain order

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¹⁰ Lertcharoenwanich, Pallapa. "Analysis of Collocations and Semantic Preference of the Near-Synonyms: " Blank," " Empty," and " Vacant"." *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network* 16.1 (2023).

Analysis of Collocations and Semantic Preferences of English Synonyms 'Critical, Serious and Crucial': A Corpus Based Approach (2024).

This study aims to analyze three English synonyms: critical, serious, and important. The main focus of this research includes the level of importance, form, collocation, and semantic preference of each word. As reference sources, this study utilizes two dictionaries, namely the Oxford Advantage Learner's Dictionary and the Cambridge Advanced Online Dictionary, as well as the Corpus of Modern American English (COCA). The analysis results indicate that two synonyms, important and essential, share similar core meanings and semantic preferences. However, these two words differ significantly from the other synonyms in terms of form, collocation, preference level, and semantic meaning. Therefore, their usage in certain contexts should be carefully considered to avoid confusion.¹¹

Is it 'important,' 'significant,' or 'crucial' ? A Corpus Based Study of English Synonyms

Due to the large number of near-synonyms present in the English language, English learners frequently struggle to use near-synonyms in different contexts, as these words, despite similar meanings, are not always interchangeable. This study examines the distribution and collocation of three

¹¹ Khoonthongnoom, Sutasinee. "Analysis of Collocations and Semantic Preferences of English Synonyms' Critical, Serious and Crucial': A Corpus Based Approach." *Shanlax International Journal of Education* 12 (2024).

synonyms, ‘important,’ ‘significant,’ and ‘crucial,’ across genres. The objectives are to investigate differences in formality based on genre distribution and to analyze collocates in relation to semantic preference. The data from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) indicates that the synonyms are used primarily in academic contexts, with ‘important’ being the most common. Nonetheless, these synonyms differ in their collocates and themes. ‘Significant’ is frequently associated with quantity related matters, whereas ‘crucial’ is typically associated with the political domain. ‘Important’ often appears with intensity-related adverbs, and ‘significant’ with study-related ones. Therefore, the analysis of collocates between nouns and adverbs reveals that these synonymous adjectives have both shared and distinct preferences.¹²

Distinguishing the near-synonyms ‘increase’ and ‘rise’: Genre and collocation investigation

Mastering the use of near-synonyms is often considered a daunting challenge for English learners. Although some synonyms in English are very semantically close, they cannot always be used interchangeably in all contexts. This corpus-based study aims at analyzing the genres and collocations of two synonymous verbs increase and rise found in American English through the

¹² Chaokongjakra, Wimonnit. "Is it ‘important,’ ‘significant,’ or ‘crucial’? A Corpus Based Study of English Synonyms." *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network* 16.2 (2023): 512-532.

Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). The findings demonstrate that both synonyms are common in formal written genres, with increase and rise being most frequent in academic texts and popular magazines respectively. While the target synonyms share most of the adverb collocates, both seem to differ clearly in the nouns with which they collocate. The meaning ‘go upward’ of rise in combination with nouns describing a direction of a natural entity, as in the moon, the sun, or the sea, distinguishes its usage from increase.¹³

The five journals reviewed have several strengths that make significant contributions to corpus-based synonym research. All utilize corpus data, so the findings are based on real language use and reflect actual contexts of use. Furthermore, each journal highlights collocation patterns and meaning tendencies such as semantic preference or prosody, allowing readers to discern subtle differences between synonyms that are not always apparent in dictionary definitions. Each study also has analytical strengths, for example, the first journal that dissects persist and persevere through the distribution and prosody of their meanings, the second journal that identifies the differences between blank, empty, and vacant through collocation, the third journal that examines critical, serious, and crucial based on the level of urgency and their collocation,

¹³ Phoocharoensil, Supakorn, and Monthon Kanokpermpoon. "Distinguishing the near-synonyms ‘increase’ and ‘rise’: Genre and collocation investigation." *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences* 42.4 (2021): 968-975.

the fourth journal that reviews important, significant, and crucial from the perspective of genre and their lexical companions, and the fifth journal that maps the differences between increase and rise from the perspective of genre and verb collocation. However, these five studies still have limitations, especially because they focus only on certain synonym groups such as technical verbs or adjectives with formal nuances so they have not touched on evaluative adjectives that are very often used in everyday interactions. In addition, most of the studies do not incorporate more structured analysis such as MI Score and have not examined idiomatic forms that often appear in word usage. This gap indicates an unfilled research gap: there has been no study specifically analyzing the differences in collocation and meaning tendencies of two high frequency adjectives, good and great, which at first glance appear similar but have significant differences in context and evaluative value. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap through a more comprehensive corpus analysis to explain how the two words are used differently in contemporary English.