



**A CORPUS-BASED STUDY OF ENGLISH SYNONYMS:
FAMOUS, RENOWNED AND WELL-KNOWN**

BY

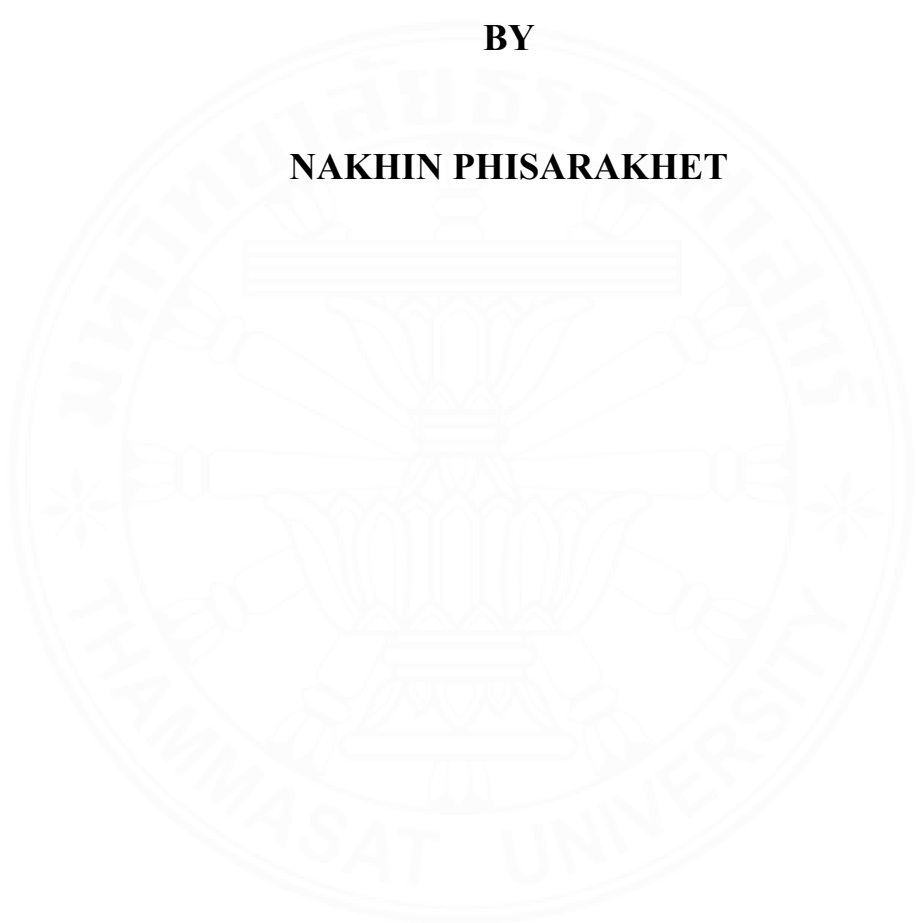
NAKHIN PHISARAKHET

**AN INDEPENDENT STUDY SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING
LANGUAGE INSTITUTE
THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY
ACADEMIC YEAR 2021
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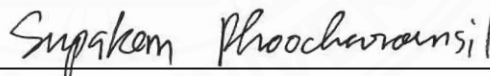
ENTITLED

A CORPUS-BASED STUDY OF ENGLISH SYNONYMS: FAMOUS,
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the degree of Master of Arts in English Language Teaching

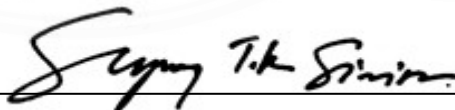
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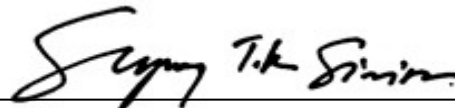
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Independent Study Title	A CORPUS-BASED STUDY OF ENGLISH SYNONYMS: FAMOUS, RENOWNED AND WELL-KNOWN
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ABSTRACT

This corpus-based study aims to investigate the similarities and differences of the three adjective synonyms: *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known* in terms of meanings, degree of formality, and collocations. The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), Oxford Advanced American Online Dictionary (2010), and Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2011) are used as primary sources of data collection. The findings of this study found that the adjective *renowned* is slightly different from the other two adjectives when comparing the cognitive and connotational meanings provided by both American English online dictionaries. In terms of degree of formality, *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known* are commonly used in a formal context because of their lower frequency in spoken language. Moreover, *well-known* has a higher degree of formality compared to *famous* and *renowned*. To be more specific, *famous* is slightly less formal than *renowned* due to its lower frequency in academic texts. It is also found that these words usually collocate with nouns regarding people who have artistic ability. However, there are several types of semantic categories where noun collocates of *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known* are differently shared. Additionally, there are certain contexts where these three adjectives cannot act as substitutes due to the differences of meanings, degree of formality, and collocations. Hence, this confirms

(2)

that these three adjective words are near synonyms since they are not interchangeable in all contexts.

Keywords: COCA, degree of formality, collocation, semantic prosody



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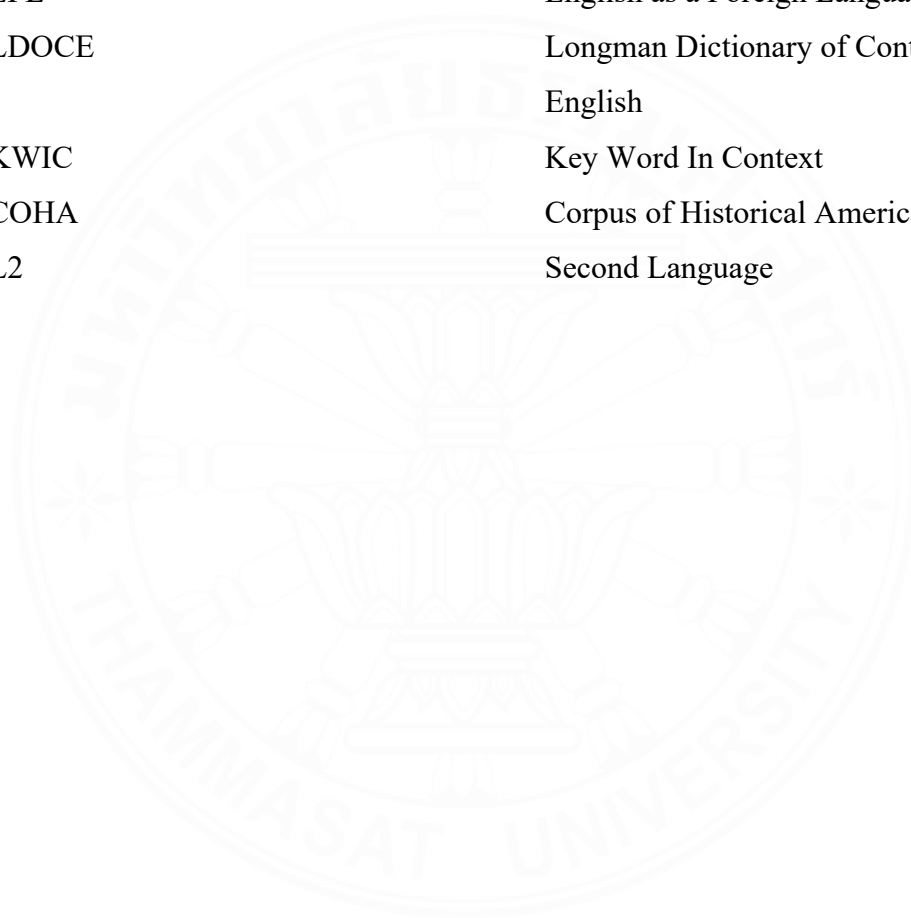
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Symbols/Abbreviations	Terms
COCA	Corpus of Contemporary American English
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
LDOCE	Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English
KWIC	Key Word In Context
COHA	Corpus of Historical American English
L2	Second Language



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is divided into seven sections. The background of the study explains the statement of the problem for this study, as well as the justification for conducting this research. This section also describes the research questions and research objectives of the study. The definitions of key terms that are related to this study will also be defined and provided. Lastly, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, and the organization of this research paper will also be described, respectively.

1.1 Background of the Study

When it comes to English language learning and teaching, vocabulary plays a significant role in English. English learners will not understand the language if they do not have a wide knowledge of English vocabulary. As Gass and Selinker (2008) claimed, the most necessary part of English is vocabulary. Hence, English learners are required to know plenty of vocabulary to help them to communicate to each other. L2 learners who can understand various English vocabulary would get a huge advantage in producing English language. Knowing a variety of English vocabulary not only helps English L2 learners in constructing daily conversation and producing their own language, but it can also assist them in building and improving their knowledge regarding lexical features and sentence construction. This allows L2 learners to have more choices of the appropriate vocabulary used in each context.

However, learning English vocabulary is quite challenging for those who are non-native English speakers who study English as a second language, as English vocabulary have their own complexity and various meanings. Moreover, learning English vocabulary is not just about knowing its core meaning or the sense of appropriateness, but it requires the use of context. Some of the words from other languages have been borrowed as English words (Finegan, 2007). According to many studies, the language that has a larger number of words is English compared to other languages, if not the largest. (Crystal, 2007). This emphasizes that learning English

language is quite challenging for English L2 learners to study English vocabulary due to its larger number of vocabularies to be understandable.

To improve English language skills, English learners need to know a variety of words and understand the use of the words in each context. However, there is a major difficulty of learning English vocabulary as English learners have a challenge on how to use words that are synonymous. In linguistics, synonym is classified as a necessary and interesting phenomenon. It is a very puzzling phenomenon in many aspects (Taylor, 2002). It requires the learners to choose words to be used in an appropriate context. Many English language learners are facing the problem of choosing synonymous words to be used in the sentence for each context, and they also often get confused in selecting which words are more appropriate for certain contexts. Along the way, they may apply the words incorrectly because they are not considering the differences between them (Cystal, 2007).

Even though synonyms share similarity in meanings, it does not mean that synonyms can be interchangeable to use in all contexts (Harley, 2006). Synonyms are words that have been considered as one of the difficult parts of English to be studied. Having the problem of their similarities and even differences, which may not be differentiated due to complexity in meanings and usage in each context, results in L2 learners experiencing ambiguity. We also cannot deny the fact that questions from the learners regarding synonymous words are very complicated to respond to since English language teachers have no evidence to prove their answers. However, L2 learners usually find the ways to distinguish synonymous words by using various sources of dictionaries. Generally, L2 learners used both offline and online dictionary to find the meanings of the words. The differences of synonymous words are sometimes not provided through dictionaries, however, a corpus assists to provide the information by showing the great number of frequency, collocation, and phraseology of synonyms (Hunston, 2002). In recent years, the English language teaching field has been influenced by the usage of corpora in English teaching. Many research have been investigated to examine the usage of English language corpora in the field of language teaching (Garcia, Flowerdew & Aston, 2010; Jones and Waller, 2015). This implies that language corpora can be used to help both English language learners and teachers to find the information that can clarify the complexity and ambiguity of using

synonymous words in the context, as well as to make acceptable and empirical evidence of distinguishing similarities and differences among those synonyms.

The above-mentioned justification leads the researcher to the reason why this corpus-based study of English synonyms should be investigated. Hence, the groups of synonyms being investigated in this study are three adjective synonyms, *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known*, because these three synonymous adjectives could result in ambiguity for both English teachers and EFL learners to distinguish as they are very close in meanings. It is restricted to examining the similarities and differences in terms of meanings, common genres, degrees of formality and collocation. First, the information from standard learner's dictionaries, i.e., Oxford Advanced American Dictionary Online (2010), and Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2011) was analyzed to see the similarities and differences in terms of meaning. Next, corpus data were utilized to find more additional information not provided in those dictionaries. Finally, after the information was summarized, all these words were ranked by the total frequency drawn by COCA to distinguish the similarities and differences in terms of degree of formality and collocations.

1.2 Research Objectives

Based on Oxford Advanced American Online Dictionary (2010), Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2011) and COCA, the present study is aimed to investigate three adjective synonyms: *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known* to examine the similarities and differences in terms of meanings, common genres, degrees of formality, and collocations.

1.3 Research Questions

- 1) How are synonyms *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known* used differently in terms of meanings, degrees of formality, and collocations?
- 2) How are synonyms *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known* distributed across different genres?

1.4 Definitions of Key Terms

The definitions of the terms in this study are defined as follows:

1.4.1 Synonym

Synonym refers to a word that has a similar meaning as another word in the same language. (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English: LDOCE, 2016) The target synonyms to be studied were three adjective synonyms: *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known*.

1.4.2 Corpus (plural corpora)

Corpus refers to a collection of authentic texts in which they were gathered from both written and spoken language stored in a computer database.

1.4.3 Concordance Line

Concordance line refers to the results gathered from a corpus software which displays the searched keyword in the middle of each line in contexts.

1.4.4 COCA

COCA stands for Corpus of Contemporary American English which is a 100-million-word text corpus of written and spoken English from many sources. It is one of the freely accessed corpus databases available at present. The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) is used as a primary source for this study. At the time of writing, this corpus contains 520 million words of American English language use in the text which can be classified into eight categories: spoken, fiction, magazines, newspapers, TV and movie subtitles, blog, webpages, and academic texts.

1.4.5 Collocation

Collocation refers to terms or words that have a chance to co-occur with the main word e.g., rancid is often used with the word butter, as in rancid butter.

1.4.6 Formality

Formality refers to a style of information expression which depends on the speaker's purposes and where it is used.

1.4.7 Strict Synonym

Strict synonym refers to two words that have the same meaning in the same language. They can be used interchangeably in all contexts without making any changes in meaning. They are rarely found.

1.4.8 Loose Synonym

Loos synonym refers to two words in the same language which have similar meaning, but they cannot be used to substitute for each other in all contexts because they are different in some issues.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study is targeted to only one group of three adjectives synonyms: *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known*. The data were collected from Oxford Advanced American Dictionary, Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2011), and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) with only 300 concordance lines. This study examines the similarities and differences of the three target synonyms with respect to the differences of meanings, common genres, degrees of formality and collocations.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This corpus-based study of three adjective synonyms: *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known* is significant in the following ways:

1) English learners can see the differences between *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known* in terms of collocation.

2) English learners can explore the degrees of formality of *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known*.

1.7 Organization of the Study

This corpus-based study of the three synonymous adjectives: *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known* is divided into five chapters. The first chapter introduces the general overall background of the study, starting with the research questions, research aims, statement of the problem regarding why the researcher wanted to explore these three adjective words, definitions of these three terms, the scope of this study and the

significance of the study. The second chapter shows literature reviews which consist of theoretical concepts and related studies that have been conducted on synonyms using data from corpora and dictionaries. Next, chapter three demonstrates research methodology which comprises target words, materials, procedures, and the data analysis in this study. After that, the chapter four presents the results in this study. Lastly, chapter five describes conclusions and further research recommendations.



CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This section explains the reviewing of literature which is divided into four main sections composed of a summary of: (1) synonyms, (2) criteria for distinguishing synonyms, (3) English language corpora, and (4) relevant research.

2.1 Synonyms

2.1.1 Definition of Synonyms

Cambridge Dictionaries Online (2016) provides a definition of synonyms as “a word or phrase that has the same or nearly the same meaning as another word or phrase in the same language, i.e., the words ‘small’ and ‘little’ are synonyms”. Also, Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (2015) defines a synonym as “a word or expression that has the same or nearly the same meaning as another in the same language”. The word synonymy originally comes from the Greek word “*synonymous*”, meaning it has the similarity in meanings (Jackson & Amvela, 2000, p. 92).

Nowadays, several English dictionaries, including both electronic and physical dictionaries, provide the usage of words. However, English learners should recognize that each individual vocabulary does not have the exact same meaning. Taylor (2002) suggested that some groups or pairs of synonyms can have a difference in terms of meanings. Several studies regarding linguistics reveal that exact synonyms do not exist. They can be different in many aspects such as a syntactic, semantic, or from the viewpoint of pragmatics. This creates the perception that “true synonyms” are hard to be found and may not exist at all (Chalker & Weiner, 1998). Thus, it can confirm that perfect synonyms do not exist (Fromkin, Rodman, & Hyams, 2011, p. 196).

2.1.2 Types of Synonyms

In general, two types of synonyms were classified: absolute or strict synonyms and near or loose synonyms. Both types of synonyms have been discussed in this section.

2.1.2.1 Strict Synonyms. in Phoochareonsil's (2010) study, can be defined as the similar words that have to be interchangeably used in all contexts or aspects. However, the style and connotational meanings also must not be changed. Many linguistic studies make a strong emphasis that those strict synonyms are rarely found in English. The meaning, moreover, will be changed of one of the words or it will vanish from the language, and they will finally be dead words if the strict synonyms appear together at the time. For example, Kearns (2006) gives the example of the words *everybody* and *everyone*. These words have the same meanings, and can be interchangeably used in any context without changing the meanings in any aspects.

2.1.2.2 Loose Synonyms. In the English language, loose synonyms are frequently used (Biber, Conrad & Reppen, 1998). When language researchers discuss about synonyms, they always refer to changing the degree of loose synonyms, "Where we identify not only a significant overlap in meaning between two words, but also some contexts at least where they cannot substitute for each other." (Jackson & Amvela, 2000, p. 94). For example, the study of Ruenroeng (2014), which investigated three synonyms: *ruin*, *demolish*, and *destroy* showed that these words cannot be used interchangeably in all contexts.

2.2 Criteria for Distinguishing Synonyms

Petcharat (2016) and Phoocharoensil (2020) divided the criterion to distinguish English synonyms into five categories: (1) dialects, (2) formality, (3) collocations, (4) semantic prosody, and (5) grammatical patterns. However, this study focuses on the types of collocation, formality of the context and semantic prosody.

2.2.1 Collocation

Collocations are groups of words or phrases that usually and typically co-occur. They are words or group of words that naturally co-occur in language. Cambridge Dictionary Online defines collocations as the word combination formed by two or more words that usually co-occur together in the sense that it sounds naturally and correctly. Moreover, many linguists have defined collocations in several aspects. One of the definitions of collocation comes from Hill (2000) as defined that collocation is

predictably combined by words, and some combinations can be highly predicted from a single component word, for instance, an action movie, a film stunt, etc. However, collocations were first defined by Firth (1975) as an association of word groups. Generally, words are not formed randomly, even though they are required to follow specific rules of grammar and syntax, but they usually have preferred patterns. For instance, the collocation *heavy rain* and *strong rain* are both correct in terms of syntactic, but *heavy* sound like a more suitable collocation to use with *rain* (Benson et al., 2010). Another definition of collocation was provided by McCarthy and O'Dell (2017) as groups of words that are usually observed together i.e., *do homework* frequently co-occurred, *tall* goes with human, and *high* belongs to mountains. There are many collocations that English native speakers used in their daily conversation and written texts. Collocations can be used as a language indicator to assess learners who are non-native English speakers since it can provide the natural usage of language and the sense of correctness. Based on the word class of word combinations, collocations are divided into two main types e.g., lexical and grammatical collocations.

2.2.1.1 Lexical Collocations refer to a combination of content words i.e., nouns, verbs, adverbs, and adjectives. Lexical collocations are normally separate from infinitives, clauses, and prepositions. For example, the clause “take *strong coffee*” as the word *strong* is an adjective but the word *coffee* is a noun. This combination of words shows the content that does not focus on the grammatical functions. Another example of lexical collocations is the clause “*tie a rope*” as the word *tie* is a verb that is required to be followed by the word *rope* as a noun, showing the information in that clause rather the grammatical information. Benson et al. (2010) classified lexical collocations into seven types which are verbs (normally as transitive verbs) + nouns, verbs+ nouns, adjective+ nouns, nouns+ verbs, qualifier + nouns, adverbs + adjectives, and verbs + adverbs. This type of lexical collocation has been accepted universally and has been applied in many studies.

2.2.1.2 Grammatical Collocations can be described as a combination between the content words (i.e., as noun, verb, adverb), and function words (i.e., preposition, complementizer) (Benson et al., 2010; Lewis, 2000). One of the great examples of

grammatical collocations is “*believe in*” since it is composed of both content word and function word. To be more specific, the word *believe* is a verb as a content word, while the word *in* is a preposition, showing that it is a function word. More examples to describe the grammatical collocations are *good at*, *focus on*, *to be afraid*, and *at night*. Grammatical collocations are idiomatic in some ways, for the meanings are different from the core meanings. For instance, the phrase *run out of* is the grammatical collocation that shows groups of combined words having a different meaning from their core context of meanings.

2.2.2 Formality of the Contexts

Words sometimes share similar meanings, but they are not the same in terms of degree of formality. This is important to mention as some words are more likely to be used in formal context, while the other words are mostly found in an informal context. Slang words are classified as words used in spoken language, whereas the others are commonly found in written language (Jackson & Amvela, 2000). Therefore, the degree of formality can be classified as the criteria to differentiate the differences among synonyms. It is important in the sense that it illustrates the politeness of the speakers while having English communication. Moreover, informal words can normally occur in daily life conversation and personal messages (Jackson and Amvela, 2000). Phoochareonsil (2010) suggested that one of the groups of the synonymous words can be compared and occur in a different level of formality i.e., the word ‘*material*’ is used in more formal contexts than the word ‘*stuff*’. Hence, synonyms can be different if they have a different degree of formality.

More examples of formal and informal words can be found in LDOCE. Based on LDOCE (<https://www.ldoceonline.com>), *choose*, *famished*, *free*, *get*, and *give* are informal words corresponding to *select*, *hungry*, *release*, *receive*, and *provide*, respectively.

2.2.3 Semantic Prosody

Apart from collocation, another concept that is closely connected is semantic prosody, which it can be defined as “a consistent aura of meaning with which a form is imbued by its collocates” (Louw, 1993, p. 157). Moreover, Cheng (2012) and Ang et

al. (2017) suggested that words can be commonly limited to identifiable semantic fields. In other words, the semantic relationship between words and their collocates can examine semantic preference. The range of association of the search words along with the semantic relations among its collocates can be identified by the information from a collocational list (Ly and Jung, 2015). Lexical items or synonymous words can be determined by the criteria of semantic prosody and preference. Moreover, semantic prosody talks about the evaluations of the attitudinal meanings that result from a word that co-occurs with specific collocations. In the present time, semantic prosody has been utilized in many corpus-based studies since it helps to observe the high level of accuracy by seeing co-occurring words or phrases (Flowerdew, 2012; Szudarski, 2018).

A classic corpus-based study that examined semantic prosody is one of the studies of Stubbs (1995), which was primarily focused on the verbs analysis “*cause*”. In his study, Stubbs found that both verbs have certain significant differences in terms of patterns of collocations. In more specific viewpoint, *cause* usually co-occurs with certain words that have a negative sense, e.g., *accident*, *alarm*, *concern*, *confusion*, *damage*, *death*, and *delay*.

2.3 English Language Corpora

In this following part, the search information regarding English language corpora will now be described. The definitions and terms of English language corpora were defined by several linguistics researchers. Moreover, the general information of the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) which is used as a primary source of data in this study will also be reviewed.

2.3.1 The Definition of English Language Corpora

It can be defined as a collection of language texts that are naturally occurred, chosen to characterize a state or variety of a language (John Sinclair, 1991). The Concept of Corpora by O’Keeffe, McCarthy, and Carter (2007, p.1) defines corpus as “*an electronic collection of naturally-occurring examples of language used in both written and spoken language*”. Also, the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2016) provides a definition of corpus as having two aspects of meanings. Corpus, in the past, meant “a collection of all the writing of a particular kind or by

contexts, which is a systematic or principled collection available for qualitative and quantitative analysis”. Moreover, the definition of corpus has been updated and it was defined as “*a large collection of written or spoken language, which is used for studying the language: a corpus of spoken English*”. It is noteworthy that corpus usage is beneficial for those English learners who would like to explore more in-depth information about the language used in real life. Thornbury (2002) stated that content-based selection is still largely used for material developers processed by their intuition, but they are not considerable of the important and frequent features of the language used in the real context, rather spoken or written language.

The term “*language corpus*” is usually defined as a text collection which is large, computer-readable, and designed for linguistic analysis. It aims to explain English language and theories. Corpora data is important in the sense that it helps describing the accurate usage of language, and have shown how lexis, grammar, and semantics interacts (Alan Devies and Catherines Elder, 2004). Corpus data can be used to analyze the text data drawn from computer software or any electronic devices to see the differences of English language usage. Corpus linguistics can assist with the analysis of synonyms. Through these methods, it is the study that allows the real language usage to be found. (Lindquist, 2009 as cited in Petcharat & Phoocharoensil, 2017). The combination of providing both aspects of qualitative and quantitative use that describe the real usage of language gives a unique characteristic of corpus linguistics (Biber et al., 1998). The researcher who uses corpus linguistic data can obtain deep information of the authentic usage of language apart from the grammatical features and grammatical information given through a core textbook.

2.3.2 Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)

COCA is freely available and accessible online. It contains a large computer-based corpus in which more than one hundred million words of both contemporary written and spoken English are among the several genres such as spoken, fiction, magazines, newspapers, non-academic, academic, and music (Nesselhauf, 2011, p. 13). L2 learners can explore the words that they are interested in to see the additional information of the authentic usage of English language apart from the information given by the core textbooks. Historically, Mark Davies, Professor of Corpus Linguistics at

Brigham Young University (BYU) from 1990- present, is the first one who created the COCA. It is now a more than 560-million-word corpus of American English.

Nowadays, the use of COCA has largely dominated the field of linguistics. Most linguistics researchers used COCA to explore the data from digital information to support the evidence in finding new aspects of language authenticity. We cannot deny the fact that distinguishing lexical patterns or linguistic features such as synonymous words would not be empirical if we use only human intuition. Rather, it requires a perfect combination of such data that contain the authentic usage of language such as COCA. COCA is composed with 5 main functions which are list, chart, collocates, compare, and KWIC. The first one is the “*List*” function which is used to find and observe the synonymous words as well as customized wordlists, i.e., *gorgeous*. The next one is the “*Chart*” function which is used to see the total frequency of found words across different genres i.e., the word “*advocate*” which is commonly used in academic texts. The third function is the “*Collocate*” function which is normally used to see the words that typically co-occur with the found words. It also provides a greater depth insight into the meanings and its usage. For example, the user can type the word “*get*” in this function in order to find the collocate words that co-occur with the word “*get*”. The “*Compare*” function is used to compare between the two collocational words to see the differences in terms of meaning and usage, e.g., *utter*, and *sheer*, *warm*, and *hot*, *small*, and *little*. The last function is ‘KWIC’ which stands for “Key Word in Context” and is used to explore the patterns of the words being surrounded and to see a word occurring in contexts by observing the words from left to right, i.e., *budge (verb)*, *matter (noun)*.

2.4 Relevant Research

According to the investigation on English synonyms, there are many previous relevant studies that have been conducted by many researchers.

Punyasuth (2014) conducted a corpus-based study of two verb synonyms, *adjourn* and *postpone*, in respect to these selection criteria i.e., collocation, degree of formality, and grammatical patterns. The results of the study revealed that in terms of grammatical patterns, they are different between these two synonyms. The word “*adjourns*” tended to be commonly found in the formal context more than the word

“*postpone*” since the words that collocated, such as *session*, *congress*, and *senate*, are strongly given a sense of formality. In conclusion, these two synonymous verbs were classified as loose synonyms.

Phoocharoensil (2021) investigated a corpus-based study of two verb synonyms: *persist* and *persevere*, which focused on the distribution across eight different genres, collocations, and semantic preference and prosody. He conducted the research by using the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) to see the frequency and collocation. The finding shows that *persist* and *persevere* can commonly be found in academic texts, showing the highest frequency, followed by webpages. The analysis of the study in terms of semantic prosody describes that the verb *persist* is likely to co-occur with words or phrases that have a negative meaning and are associated with continual unpleasant situations, the words that collocates around *persevere* provide a strong determination and great effort to complete difficult task.

Ruenroeng (2014) studied three verb synonyms: *ruin*, *demolish*, and *destroy* regarding grammatical patterns, degrees of formality, collocation, and the distribution across eight different genres. The researcher used the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) as a primary source for the data collection in which 100 concordance lines were drawn to analyze the grammatical patterns and collocations. The researcher used American English for the data analysis and used the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary Online (2011) as the major reference to see the differences of its connotational meanings, grammatical features, example of language usage, and grammatical information of each synonym. The findings shows that the meanings defined by different dictionaries are not the same. Moreover, it is not identical in terms of grammatical patterns as it just shares some patterns. Additionally, these target words are different due to the different level of formality. To be more specific, *ruin* and *destroy* are mostly used in the colloquial contexts but *demolish* is mostly found in the contexts of formality.

Jariyanupong (2018) investigated the similarities and differences of the three synonymous verbs, *reveal*, *disclose*, and *divulge*, using linguistic criteria to differentiate the synonyms i.e., grammatical patterns, formality of the contexts, and collocation. The researcher used an American English dictionary along with British National Corpus (BNC). Moreover, one hundred concordance lines were drawn to analyze the additional

data. The findings suggested that the three target synonyms being studied were differently used in terms of collocations, grammatical patterns, and degree of formality, although these target synonyms being studied share the same general and cognitive meanings as near synonyms. But it was also suggested that these three synonymous words cannot be interchangeable to replace each other in all contexts.

Petcharat (2017) studied a corpus-based study of three adjectives synonyms, *appropriate*, *proper*, and *suitable*, with respect to meanings, grammatical patterns, degree of formality, and collocations. Three sources of English dictionaries and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) were used as primary sources for the collection of data and research instruments. The findings found that the three adjective synonyms have the similarities in terms of core meanings. They, however, are different in some context such as degree of formality, grammatical patterns, and collocations. This suggested that these three synonymous adjectives are not interchangeable to use in all contexts. Moreover, it was also described that a corpus and the use of corpora provides some additional data which the three English dictionaries or core textbooks cannot provide.

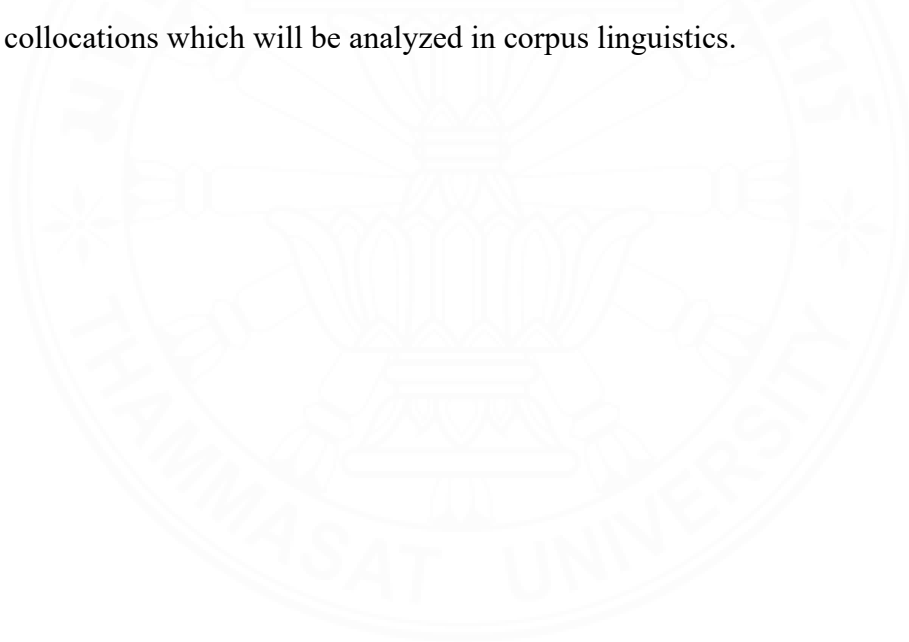
Aroonmanakun (2015) investigated the contributions of using corpora to the corpus-based analysis of two near adjective synonyms i.e., *quick*, and *fast* with the use of the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). The target adjective synonyms were investigated to see the similarities and differences in terms of meanings and collocations. The top one hundred of noun collocates with the MI value more than 3 for each target synonym were drawn and ranked by their frequencies. This study was limited to only noun collocates. In terms of results, it found that there were noun collocates that only share with either *quick* or *fast*, whereas some noun collocates share both. However, it was important to see the differences in terms of meaning in which *quick* tended to be used to describe the quality and property of an action, while *fast* associated with the sense of manner when used to intensify a noun.

Cai (2012) conducted a study about the differences in the meanings and uses of seven synonymous adjectives, *awesome*, *excellent*, *fabulous*, *fantastic*, *great*, *terrific*, and *wonderful*, by using the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). He found that there were positive meanings i.e., *fabulous*, *fantastic*, *terrific*, and *awesome*. When considering connotations, he found that *fabulous* and *fantastic* conveyed the

sense of something incredible. In terms of usage, all seven adjectives were mainly used in the spoken genre, which is an informal context, and they have similarities and differences of adverb collocations and noun collocations. Thus, his findings support the idea that synonyms cannot be replaced interchangeably in every context.

2.5 Summary

Some previous studies regarding corpus-based analysis of English synonyms and related literatures were reviewed in this section. The objective of this study is to examine the similarities and differences in terms of meanings, common genres, degrees of formality and collocation. The connotational and cognitive meanings revealed in this study and also the degree of formality of each word will be analyzed. Additionally, one hundred concordance lines of each target adjective synonyms will be observed to see the collocations which will be analyzed in corpus linguistics.



CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains: (1) The subject, which mainly focuses on the corpus, (2) Research instruments, (3) Research procedures used in the data collocation, and (4) Data analysis.

3.1 Corpus

In the present study, three adjective synonyms, *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known*, were selected due to their complexity and ambiguity of similarities and differences. The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) was used to investigate the three adjective synonyms to see the similarities and differences in terms of formality and collocation. Also, the information of the context from the 100 concordance lines of each of the adjective synonyms were drawn by COCA.

Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) was used as a primary source of data collection. This source of data is convenient to use in the sense that it allows users to access the information online in which users can easily gain just going to the COCA website. Moreover, over one hundred million of words were gathered from several sources of both written and spoken English in which it can be classified into many genres such as academic texts, books, online newspapers, and famous fiction. Moreover, it provides concordance lines to show keywords in contexts (KWIC). However, the concordance lines help the users to search easier and faster in accessing the data of lexical and structural information of the searched words being investigated.

3.2 Research Instruments

This section describes research instruments used in collecting the data in this research. There are two main research instruments in the present study which were:

3.2.1 *Oxford Advanced American Online Dictionary (2010) and Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2011)*

They were used as primary references for the data in terms of cognitive and connotational meanings since it can provide the definitions, sentence examples and grammatical features and information of the synonyms. It also gives clear details of bilingual translation which is very convenient for L2 learners to use.

3.2.2 *Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)*

It was used to search for words or phrases by exact word or phrase, and part of speech. It is also used to search for the data of the total number of frequencies, collocation, and the distribution across eight different genres.

3.3 Research Procedures

This section explains the procedures of data collection for the corpus-based analysis of three adjective synonyms: *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known*.

The data collection starts from searching the core meaning. The data of the three synonymous adjectives *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known* will be gathered from both American English online dictionaries, Oxford Advanced American Online Dictionary (2010) and Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2011). After that, the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) with 300 concordance lines is used to investigate each target synonym by using the selection criteria of collocation and formality of the context to distinguish each synonym. The researcher will investigate *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known* with 100 concordance lines for each synonym. Also, the researcher would analyze the noun collocates drawn from COCA and grouped them into different categories according to their semantic preference on the excel sheets to find out the similarities and differences in terms of semantic preference between *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known*.

In terms of investigating the formality of the context, The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) will be used to extract the data of formality of the context. The researcher will visit the COCA website at <https://www.englishcorpora.org/coca/>, click on the “Chart” on the menu bar then type on the each target word: *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known*. After that, click on the

menu bar of “See frequency by section” and the result would show the total number of frequencies ranked by the range of eight different genres, e.g., spoken contexts, fiction contexts, magazine contexts, newspaper contexts, webpages contexts, academic contexts, blog contexts, and movie subtitle contexts. To receive collocational data, on the menu bar, he will click on ‘List’, typed in the two words individually, and click on ‘Find the matching strings’ button. The results will display with 300 concordance lines.

To study the lexical data, Oxford Advanced American Dictionary Online (2010) and Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary will be used to search for the meanings, grammatical patterns, definitions, sentence examples and thesaurus of these synonymous adjectives in English. The researcher goes to the both American dictionaries online website <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com> and <https://www.merriam-webster.com>. After that, types the words *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known* and clicks on the button for searching, then data regarding general cognitive and denotational meanings, grammatical information, and sentence examples will be displayed.

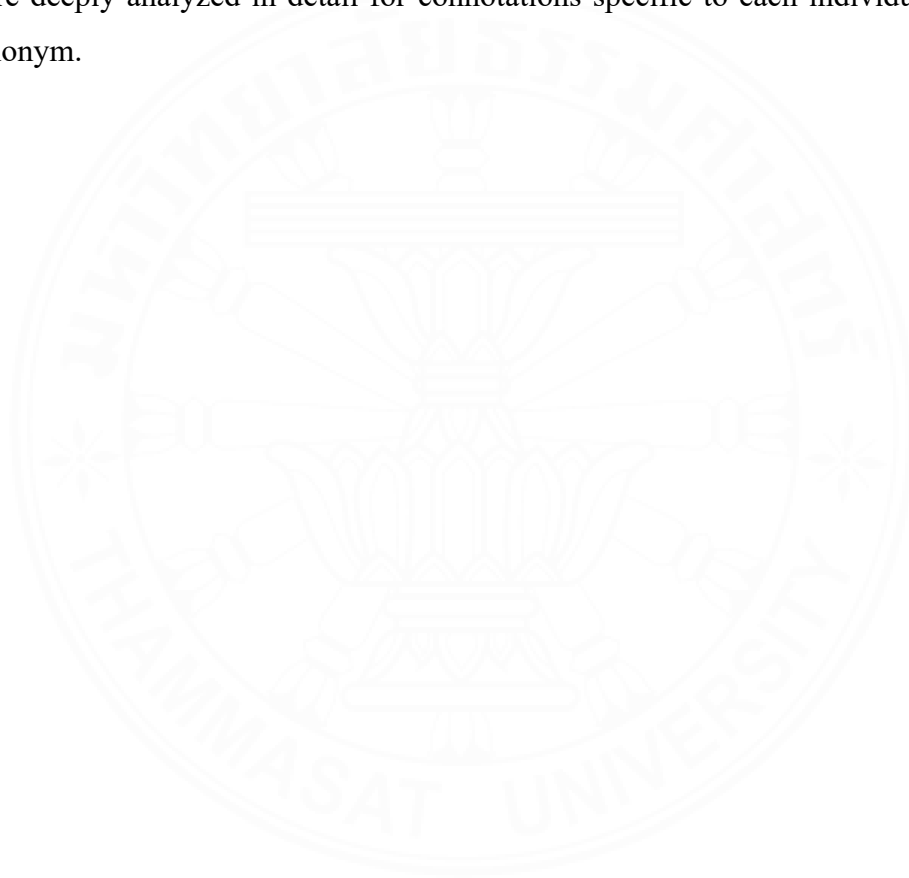
3.4 Data Analysis

The three adjective synonyms *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known* will be analyzed by these criteria as follows:

This study began with using the two online dictionaries which are Oxford Advanced American Online Dictionary (2010) and Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2011) to explore the definitions, sentence examples and grammatical information of the synonyms. To answer the first research question, COCA was utilized to see the frequency of the three synonyms distributed across eight different genres and collocations. The data drawn from the frequency was ranked to create the table by the number of frequencies from the highest to the lowest. After the that, it was analyzed to compare the degree of formality between three synonymous adjectives. To answer the second research question, the researcher searched for the nouns collocates that typically collocate with *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known*, listed based on the collocational strength determined by the Mutual Information (MI) value (or score). The noun collocations must be in the top-30 frequency lists presented in COCA and whose MI score is ≥ 3 (Cheng, 2012, as cited in Phoocharoensil, 2020). Hence, nouns collocates

for which the Mutual Information (MI) value is lower than 3 will not be put into the data to avoid having noun collocates that are not relevant to the target synonyms being studied as well as to filter noun collocates that are rarely found in language.

After nouns collocates were extracted, the nouns with which *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known* typically co-occur were categorized into several types of semantic categories based on the semantic preference, or similarities in meaning. In analyzing the semantic prosody, of *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known* randomized from COCA were deeply analyzed in detail for connotations specific to each individual adjective synonym.



CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The previous chapter explains the process of research methodology for analyzing the and collecting the data by using two sources of American English online dictionaries, i.e Oxford Advanced American Online Dictionary (2010), Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2011), and Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). This chapter reports the findings of similarities and differences in terms of meanings. Additionally, the distribution of three synonymous adjectives: *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known* across eight different genres will be presented to see the degree of formality. This chapter also presents nouns that typically collocate with *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known*. This chapter is divided into three parts based on keyword studies which are definitions from dictionaries, degree of formality, and collocations.

4.1 Definitions from Dictionaries

The definitions of the three adjective synonyms, *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known*, were found by using both American English online dictionaries, the Oxford Advanced American Online Dictionary (2010) and Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2011). As can be seen from Table 1, *famous* was defined as “*known about by many people*” by Oxford Advanced American Online Dictionary (2010), however, it was defined as “*widely known*” and “*honored for achievement*” by Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2011). The second key adjective is *renowned* which was defined as “*famous and respected*” by Oxford Advanced American Online Dictionary (2010), while it was defined as “*known and admired by many people for some special quality or achievement*” by Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2011).” On the other hand, *well-known* was defined as “*known about by a lot of people*” by the Oxford Advanced American Online Dictionary (2010) while on the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2011), it was defined as “*fully or widely known*”.

When comparing the definitions from two online American dictionaries, *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known* can be considered as near-synonyms since they

share the general cognitive meaning and denotation as “*known by many people*”. Aside from the core meaning, *renowned* itself has some differences from *famous* and *well-known* in the sense that *renowned* has its own respectability for being received from other people. Therefore, it can be established that there is no massive difference of how these synonyms are being defined as to the dictionaries. However, delving into the issue of how these words are being perceived by people, it can be shown in the data that there was a massive difference and a notable perception in terms of its usage and how people regard these words.

Table 1

Definitions and Sentence Examples of ‘famous’, ‘renowned’, and ‘well-known’ from both Online American-English Dictionaries

	Oxford Advanced American Online Dictionary	Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary
famous	<p>1. known about by many people</p> <p>-famous for something e.g., He became internationally famous for his novels.</p> <p>- famous as something e.g., She was more famous as an actress than as a singer.</p>	<p>1. widely known e.g., a restaurant famous for its French cuisine</p> <p>2. honored for achievement e.g., a famous explorer</p>
renowned	<p>1. famous and respected</p> <p>- renowned as something e.g., It is renowned as one of the region's best restaurants.</p> <p>- renowned for something e.g., She is renowned for her patience.</p>	<p>1. known and admired by many people for some special quality or achievement e.g., a restaurant renowned for its wine list.</p>
well-known	<p>1. known about by a lot of people e.g., His books are not well known.</p> <p>2. (of a fact) generally known and accepted e.g., It is a well-known fact that caffeine is a stimulant.</p>	<p>1. fully or widely known e.g., He is a well-known author.</p>

4.2 Degree of Formality

The findings regarding overall frequency and distribution of the three adjective synonyms: *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known* across eight different genres in COCA will now be presented and discussed, as shown in table 2. After that, nouns that typically collocate with *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known* will also be explored and analyzed to see their nouns and adverb collocations.

Table 2

Overall Frequency and Distribution of 'famous', 'renowned', and 'well-known' across Eight Different Genres

famous			renowned			well-known			Total Frequency
Genres	Frequency	Per Million	Genres	Frequency	Per Million	Genres	Frequency	Per Million	
Magazines	9,749	77.32	Magazines	1,366	10.83	Academic texts	2,481	20.71	
Spoken	8,088	64.12	Newspapers	1,073	8.81	Magazines	2,000	15.86	
Newspapers	7,241	59.48	Webpages	819	6.59	Newspapers	1,759	14.45	
Webpages	6,712	54.02	Academic texts	623	5.20	Webpages	1,595	12.84	
Fiction	6,003	50.73	Blogs	575	4.47	Spoken	1,422	11.27	
Blogs	5,624	43.73	Spoken	387	3.07	Blogs	1,422	11.06	
Academic texts	4,953	41.35	Fiction	337	2.85	Fiction	566	4.78	
TV and movie subtitle	5,227	40.81	TV and movie subtitle	190	1.48	TV and movie subtitle	291	2.27	
Total	53,597		Total	5,370		Total	11,536		70,503

In Table 2, it clearly shows throughout the three adjective synonyms that *famous* has the greatest frequency compared to the other two adjectives. In overall frequency and distribution, *famous* is over five times higher than *well-known*, showing with the highest frequency (53,597 tokens), followed by *well-known* (11,536 tokens) which is double than that of *renowned* (5,370 tokens) in each genre in COCA.

In terms of formality, *famous* occurs in magazines with the highest frequency (9,749 tokens) and *renowned* mostly occurs in magazines (1,366 tokens). Meanwhile, the highest frequency of *well-known* occurred in academic texts (2,481 tokens). However, it is noteworthy to see the top four genres in which three synonyms occur. The three adjective synonyms are mostly found in written language, wherein *renowned* is mostly found in magazines (1,366 tokens), followed by newspaper (1,073 tokens), webpages (819 tokens) and academic texts (623 tokens). Meanwhile, *well-known* is

mostly found in academic texts (2,481 tokens), followed by magazines (1,759 tokens), newspaper (1,759 tokens) and webpages (1,595 tokens). However, *famous* is slightly different from the other two adjectives in the sense that spoken genre only occurred in the top four genres, ranked in the second, showing the highest frequency from magazines (9,749 tokens), followed by spoken (8,088 tokens), newspapers (7,241 tokens), and webpages (6,712 tokens), respectively.

Moreover, the corpus data also indicates that the three synonymous adjectives, *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known*, are not commonly used in colloquial English because of the lower numbers of frequency and tokens in the genres of spoken language, fiction, and TV and movie subtitles as they were classified as informal contexts or styles. Hence, this implies that these words can be mainly found in written language rather than the spoken language. Lastly, their lower level of frequency in spoken genres emphasize that they have high degree of formality, with *well-known* having a higher degree of formality compared to *famous* and *renowned*. Moreover, *famous* is slightly less formal due to its lower frequency in academic texts at the seventh-ranking compared to *renowned*.

4.3 Collocations

In this section, the common nouns collocates and adverb collocates that typically collocate with the three synonymous adjectives: *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known* will be explored and discussed as follows:

4.3.1 Noun Collocations

In terms of collocations, the three synonymous adjectives: *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known* co-occur with different groups of nouns. There are 30 frequencies of noun collocates of *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known* selected based on frequency and MI scores (≥ 3). There tend to be more nouns collocates that *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known* commonly shared. However, the noun collocates whose MI score is lower than 3 or those that are not in the top 30 lists are not included due to the collocate selection criteria (Cheng, 2012, as cited in Phoocharoensil, 2020) as can be shown in table 3.

It is important to take note that words listed in COCA as noun collocates of the search words might not have a relationship with the target synonyms. Hence, the noun collocates that are specific names of people or places, e.g., *David* co-occurring with *renowned* with the highest MI score of 9.92 and *Washington* for *well-known* with the highest MI score of 9.44 were not included in the present-study and the analysis section. Also, the noun collocate “*quote*” is irrelevant to the synonyms *famous* even though it was revealed in the first-thirty lists of nouns collocates, but the information from the concordance lines was not showing the connection to the target word.

As can be perceived from the data, the majority of noun collocates for the three synonymous adjectives: *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known* are primarily humans with a specific field of artistic talent or abilities. Some noun collocates were revealed with different types of nouns apart from humans such as *works*, *example*, *essay*, *poem*, and *restaurant*. Moreover, there are noun collocates that co-occur with high level of frequency, e.g., *world*, *director*, and *politician*, are not given in Table 3 due to the fact that their MI value is lower than 3, wherein the level of significance is not helpful in the study.

Table 3

Noun Collocations of ‘famous’, ‘renowned’, and ‘well-known’ in COCA

Rank	<i>famous</i>			Rank	<i>renowned</i>			Rank	<i>well-known</i>		
	Noun Collocates	Frequency	MI Value		Noun Collocates	Frequency	MI Value		Noun Collocates	Frequency	MI Value
1	artist	419	3.25	1	artist	160	5.10	1	figure	225	3.95
2	writer	410	3.30	2	expert	117	4.87	2	artist	173	4.06
3	actor	332	3.71	3	author	107	4.08	3	example	164	3.72
4	painting	294	3.49	4	architect	94	6.97	4	author	154	3.47
5	singer	255	4.62	5	scholar	76	5.69	5	writer	146	3.92
6	poet	189	4.39	6	scientist	66	4.08	6	brand	114	4.84
7	actress	187	4.33	7	chef	63	5.60	7	actor	95	3.98
8	poem	164	3.70	8	designer	58	5.30	8	personality	63	4.05
9	celebrity	162	3.91	9	photographer	52	5.61	9	activist	57	4.32
10	athlete	161	3.22	10	professor	50	3.40	10	journalist	53	3.79
11	phrase	161	3.53	11	surgeon	45	5.78	11	scholar	50	3.96
12	musician	157	3.87	12	historian	44	5.35	12	phenomenon	50	4.16
13	essay	143	3.48	13	writer	43	3.30	13	actress	39	4.12
14	photographer	132	3.73	14	collection	43	3.60	14	singer	38	3.91
15	painter	127	4.39	15	researcher	41	3.59	15	poet	37	4.14
16	chef	126	3.51	16	poet	39	5.36	16	chef	36	3.63
17	portrait	121	3.65	17	restaurant	37	3.37	17	musician	26	3.83
18	landmark	118	4.70	18	painter	36	5.81	18	essay	34	3.53
19	architect	112	3.99	19	musician	31	4.76	19	advocate	32	3.56
20	saying	89	4.14	20	biologist	29	6.21	20	designer	31	3.19

21	philosopher	73	3.87	21	physicist	28	6.10	21	celebrity	31	3.58
22	statue	72	3.44	22	museum	27	3.02	22	photographer	31	3.69
23	composer	69	4.24	23	critic	27	3.58	23	painter	31	4.45
24	novelist	65	4.60	24	works	26	3.52	24	architect	29	4.13
25	dictum	62	7.10	25	specialist	26	4.58	25	phrase	27	3.06
26	attraction	54	3.04	26	composer	26	6.09	26	collector	26	4.36
27	astronomer	48	3.10	27	singer	25	4.48	27	poem	24	3.02
28	monument	48	3.20	28	institute	23	3.04	28	historian	24	3.34
29	performer	47	3.00	29	painting	23	3.04	29	dealer	22	3.08
30	comedian	47	4.07	30	beauty	22	3.32	30	blogger	21	4.29

In this step, noun collocates in which three target synonyms co-occur will be explored and listed. However, there tend to be more nouns collocates than those three adjective synonyms commonly share in the first-thirty lists, but only noun collocates that co-occur with all three target synonyms will be selected in the table, as can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4

Noun Collocates that are co-occurring with 'famous', 'renowned', and 'well-known' in COCA.

Rank	<i>famous</i>			Rank	<i>renowned</i>			Rank	<i>well-known</i>		
	Noun Collocates	Frequency	MI Value		Noun Collocates	Frequency	MI Value		Noun Collocates	Frequency	MI Value
1	artist	419	3.25	1	artist	160	5.10	2	artist	173	4.06
2	writer	410	3.30	13	writer	43	3.30	5	writer	146	3.92
5	singer	225	4.63	27	singer	25	4.48	15	singer	38	3.91
6	poet	189	4.39	16	poet	39	5.36	16	poet	37	4.14
12	musician	157	3.87	19	musician	31	4.76	18	musician	26	3.83
14	photographer	132	3.73	9	photographer	52	5.61	23	photographer	31	3.69
15	painter	127	3.49	18	painter	36	5.81	24	painter	31	4.45
16	chef	126	3.51	7	chef	63	5.60	17	chef	36	3.63
19	architect	112	3.99	4	architect	94	6.97	25	architect	29	4.13

In the following step, nouns collocates listed in the first-thirty lists based on the total number of frequency and MI value scores (≥ 3) were classified into different themes based on their semantic preference. Sinclair (2004) describes that semantic preference refers to lexical items that co-occur and share semantic features among items. Moreover, Cheng (2012) and Ang et al. (2017) suggested that lexical items can be commonly limited to identifiable semantic fields. In other words, the semantic relationship between words and their collocates can examine semantic preference. The range of association of the search words along with the semantic relations among its collocates can be identified by the information from a collocational list (Ly and Jung,

2015). Lexical items or synonymous words can be determined by the criteria of semantic prosody and preference. Hence, semantic preference helps determine the similarities and differences of synonyms as well as to distinguish the near synonyms. Noun collocates of *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known* that co-occur will be grouped into different themes as they share the similar semantic categories. The tables 5, 6, and 7 show the principal semantic sets in which *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known* were categorized.

Table 5

Semantic Preference of Noun Collocates of 'famous' in COCA

Semantic Categories	Noun Collocates of "famous"
1. people	artist, writer, singer, poet, musician, photographer, painter, chef, architect, composer
2. written works	phrase, essay, poem
3. saying	dictum, saying
4. artistic object	painting, statue, monument, portrait
5. place	landmark, attraction

As can be seen from Table 5, there are five principal semantic sets that noun collocates of *famous* was categorized into according to their semantic preference i.e., *people*, *written works*, *saying*, *artistic object*, and *place*. Most of the noun collocates of *famous* are represented by the principal semantic sets of *people* mostly associated with people working in a profession that requires artistic sense and/or specific abilities i.e., *artist*, *architect*, *scientist*, *chef*, *designer*, and *poet*, as shown in (1). The second theme is *written works*, including the noun collocates that refer to various kinds of writings such as *phrase*, *essay*, and *poem*, as exemplified in (2).

(1) I have mentioned before that many of the *famous artists* became famous for few of their art works even though they produced hundreds of works.

(2) In my mind, it had become conflated with a less *famous poem*, by an American who had once been my teacher at the university.

As for the next theme *saying*, the noun collocates that describe words that have been remarkably spoken by some people i.e., *dictum* and *saying*, are shown in (3). The next theme represented in *famous* is *artistic object*, referring to the objects that are strongly associated with the sense of arts made by some certain group of people such as *painting*, *statue*, *monument*, and *portrait*. However, it is important to note that people who made those objects are mostly people who have artistic abilities as in (4). The last theme is under the *place* theme, which is the place that has been known by many people.

(3) This was the album that created the *famous saying* of a record “shipped gold and returned platinum”.

(4) The idea that the setting of a *famous monument* might be made more comprehensible to the viewer through a later remanagement was key to Piacentini and Spaccarelli's urban design.

Next, the noun collocates of *renowned* will be analyzed and discussed. However, some of the semantic categories of *renowned* share similar themes of *famous*, as will be discussed in Table 6 below.

Table 6

Semantic Preference of Noun Collocates of ‘renowned’ in COCA

Semantic Categories	Noun Collocates of “renowned”
1. people	artist, architect, scientist, chef, designer, photographer, historian, writer, painter, musician, physicist, singer
2. place	restaurant, museum, institute
3. artistic sense	beauty
4. artistic object	works, collection, painting

Table 6 shows four principal semantic sets that dominate the noun collocates of *renowned*. The four themes are *people*, *place*, *artistic sense*, and *object*. The majority of noun collocates co-occurring with *renowned* are primarily represented by humans with artistic abilities or specific subjects such as *artist*, *architect*, *scientist*, *chef*, *designer*, *photographer*, *historian*, *writer*, *painter*, *musician*, *physicist*, and *singer*. The second theme was categorized as *place*, referring to the place that is in a particular position, as exemplified in (5). The next theme is like one of the themes of *famous* which is *artistic sense*, showing the noun collocate *beauty* that was classified into this theme, as in (6). Lastly, the *artistic object* theme is classified for *renowned*, showing the several things that were built meaningfully with the sense of arts to express their artistic meanings and historical aspects, as example shown in (7).

(5) By the time a customer takes his seat, the ***renowned restaurant*** is out of pocket several hundred francs.

(6) Most of the clothes had belonged to Kate's grandmother Marilee, a ***renowned beauty*** who, like all the rest, had fallen in love with a poor man instead.

(7) They certainly expected to see more of the treasured works of art from the ***renowned collection*** of George Heye.

Table 7

Semantic Preference of Noun Collocates of 'well-known' in COCA

Semantic Categories	Noun Collocates of "well-known"
1. people	figure, artist, author, writer, actor, personality, scholar, phenomenon, actress, singer, chef, musician, designer, photographer, painter, architect,
2. written works	phrase, essay, poem
3. miscellaneous	brand, example

Also, *well-known* was grouped into three principal semantic sets: *people*, *written works*, and *miscellaneous* as can be seen from Table 7. Most of the noun

collocates represented for *well-known* are classified as *people* working in professions that require artistic abilities i.e., *artist, author, writer, actor, and designer*. However, there are noun collocates in the *people* theme that are general humans apart from those who require artistic abilities, such as *scholar*, and *phenomenon*. These noun collocates are simplified as a group of people who have special abilities, as exemplified in (8). The second theme is categorized as *written works* which refers to the noun collocates associated with writings, *phrase, essay, and poem*. The last semantic categories for *well-known* is classified under *miscellaneous* showing noun collocates that do not belong to any themes such as *brand* and *example*, as in (9).

(8) It is possible for well above average natural abilities to remain simply as gifts, and not to be translated into talents, as witnessed by the ***well-known phenomenon*** of academic underachievement among intellectually gifted children.

(9) One of the most ***well-known examples*** is the use of merchant juries, in both England and the colonies, to try cases involving commercial disputes.

In a nutshell, the corpus-based information from Tables 5, 6, and 7 emphasize that the three target synonyms are near synonyms because *famous, renowned, and well-known* share certain common collocates. To be more specific, it clearly showed that the noun collocations among the three target words: *famous, renowned, and well-known* mostly share the same major theme which is “*people*”. However, some different semantic categories occur when comparing the three target synonyms, namely *miscellaneous*, which is only presented under *well-known*. The theme *artistic sense* occurred for *renowned* due to its reputation being received. Also, the *saying* theme can only be found in *famous* probably due to its high level of frequency in spoken genre compared to the three target synonyms. Some principal semantic sets occur with only two of the adjective synonyms such as *place* and *artistic object* which are presented in both *famous* and *renowned*. Moreover, the *written works* theme can be found in both *famous* and *well-known*.

In addition, the “*people*” theme of noun collocates which share similarities of principal semantic sets in all of *famous, renowned* and *well-known*, are mostly

perceived as occupations or professions with a specific field of study and which have artistic sense or abilities in its profession i.e., *artist, architect, chef, designer, painter, and photographer*.

4.3.2 Adverb Collocations

The three adjective synonyms: *famous, renowned, well-known* can be modified by adverbs. The adverb collocates will also be explored and discussed to obtain more information apart from noun collocates. Cheng (2012) and Schmitt (2010) suggested that the selected adverbs should have the MI value (≥ 3) due to an appropriate level of statistical significance. There, however, tend to be more adverbs collocates that three target adjectives synonyms co-occur, but only the top 10 adverb collocates of each of the target synonyms will be drawn from COCA. However, 9 lists of adverb collocates of *famous*, and 8 lists of adverb collocates of *well-known* were only observed due to its low amount of frequency, as shown in Table 8.

Table 8

Adverb Collocations of 'famous', 'renowned', and 'well-known' in COCA

Rank	<i>famous</i>			<i>renowned</i>			<i>well-known</i>		
	Adverb Collocates	Frequency	MI Value	Adverb Collocates	Frequency	MI Value	Adverb Collocates	Frequency	MI Value
1	most	7,404	4.93	most	286	3.56	most	195	3.47
2	internationally	85	5.03	internationally	234	9.81	fairly	50	3.86
3	justly	80	7.10	nationally	72	7.39	nationally	16	4.10
4	locally	55	3.83	justly	11	7.55	reasonably	10	3.21
5	justifiably	11	4.67	globally	10	5.49	internationally	5	3.14
6	regionally	9	4.58	locally	9	4.54	commercially	3	3.08
7	fabulously	8	4.94	justifiably	5	6.86	regionally	2	4.61
8	deservedly	7	5.04	universally	2	3.41	indescribably	1	6.21
9	undeservedly	3	6.96	regionally	1	4.73			
10				improbably	1	5.36			

In terms of adverb collocates, Table 8 reveals the first top 10 adverb collocates that co-occur with *famous, renowned, and well-known* drawn from COCA. It can be said that the majority of adverb collocates to describe the three target synonyms is adverbs of degree, such as *most, internationally, nationally, globally, regionally, locally, and universally* which are used to intensify the level of reputation being received by people. Moreover, there were adverb collocates that show positive and

negative denotations. Even though these target synonyms have their own positive sense, it can also be negative if there were attached with adverbs of negative denotation.

Apart from adverbs of degree, there are other types of adverbs that modify the three target adjectives. The common adverbs that describe *famous* are adverbs of positive denotation i.e., *justly*, *justifiably*, *fabulously*, *deservedly*, and adverbs of negative denotation such as *undeservedly* which describes a strong negativity in the context, as exemplified in (10). Similarly, the adverb of positive denotation also occurred in *renowned*, such as *justly*. Adverbs of negative denotation also appeared namely, *improbably*. However, adverbs of positive denotation only occurred for *well-known* apart from adverbs of degree i.e., *fairly*, *reasonably*, *rightfully*, and *indescribably*, which intensify the quality of that reputation being received, as exemplified in (11).

(10) You're an ***undeservedly famous*** guy, so you'd probably have a problem being put in a jail too (if you raped someone).

(11) Almost not at all, Artly is actually a ***fairly well-known*** figure in the Austin creative arts scene.

In example 10, it can be interpreted that even though the adjective “*famous*” has its own positive sense based on its cognitive meaning, but it can also express the negative denotation in the sense that adverb “*undeservedly*” that co-occurs with *famous* changed the sense of the core meaning of adjective “*famous*” from positive into a negative sense. Moreover, sentence example 11 also shows that the adverb “*fairly*” that collocates with the adjective “*well-known*” shows a strong sense of negativity which can make the original connotational meaning of “*well-known*” from positive into negative as the collocate impact.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents (1) a summary of the study, (2) a summary of the findings, (3) conclusions and discussion of the similarities and differences of the three synonymous adjectives: *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known* (4) recommendations for further studies, and (5) pedagogical implications of the study.

5.1 Summary of the Study

This section explains the summary of the findings of the present study in terms of similarities and differences of the three target synonyms, *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known*, differentiated by the selection criteria of synonyms i.e., meanings, degree of formality, collocations, and their distribution across eight different genres.

5.1.1 Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to investigate the similarities and differences of the three synonymous adjectives, *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known*, in terms of meanings, common genres, degrees of formality and collocation.

5.1.2 Selected Synonyms

The selected group of synonyms being investigated here are primarily focused on the three adjective synonyms *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known*. Both American online English dictionaries, Oxford Advanced American Online Dictionary (2010) and Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2011), were used to collect the data in terms of definitions from dictionaries and exemplified grammatical information. Moreover, the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) was employed for data collection regarding degree of formality across eight different genres and collocations. The information from one hundred concordance lines for each target synonyms was also drawn from COCA to analyze the information that can help clarify the similarities and differences of the target synonyms.

5.2 Summary of the Findings

The findings of the present study can be summarized that the synonymous words can be distinguished by using the selection criteria of meanings, collocations, degree of formality, as well as the semantic preference and prosody in which they are frequently integrated. In this study, *famous*, *renowned* and *well-known* are near synonyms. The definitions of the the three synonymous adjectives are not exactly the same. Even though they are similar in terms of core meaning, but they share some different meanings. Even though these words usually collocate with people, they are not the same in terms of degree of formality. As synonyms, they can be treated as near synonyms if they have a different level of formality. To be more specific, *famous*, *renowned* and *well-known* are often used in the formal context because they are normally found in written English rather than spoken English. Comparing the three target adjective synonyms in terms of formality, *well-known* is more formal than *renowned* and *famous*. Moreover, *famous* is slightly less formal than that *renowned* due to its lower number of frequency in academic texts at the seventh-ranking.

5.3 Conclusion

The results of the present study indicates that this group of synonym words cannot be interchangeably used in every contexts even though these words are synonyms. It can also show that synonymous words can be distinguished by using the selection criteria such as meanings, degree of formality, and collocations, as well as the semantic preference in which they are mostly integrated in such studies. In this study, the target adjective synonyms: *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known* are classified as near synonyms as can be summarized based on the three keywords studied as follows:

5.3.1 Definitions from Dictionaries

In terms of definitions from dictionaries, the data from two American online English dictionaries, which are Oxford Advanced American Online Dictionary (2010) and Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2011), can be interpreted to show that the definitions of the three adjective synonyms are not exactly the same even if they all share the same general cognitive and denotational meaning as “*known by many people*” but each word conveys some different meanings. Apart from the core meaning, the

word *renowned* gives some differences compared to *famous* and *well-known* in the sense that *renowned* shows the sense of respect being received from other people. Therefore, it can be established that there is not a massive difference of how these synonyms are being defined from such dictionaries.

5.3.2 Degree of Formality

In respect to degree of formality, all three adjective synonyms being investigated show that they are commonly found in the formal contexts. To be more specific, *famous*, *renowned* and *well-known* are often used in the formal context because they are normally found in written rather than colloquial English. Comparing the three adjective synonyms in terms of formality, *well-known* is the most formal word among these target synonyms since the data shows that it can be mostly found in academic texts, showing with the highest frequency across eight different genres. Moreover, *famous* is slightly less formal than *renowned* when comparing the top four genres because spoken genres occur in the top four of *famous*, ranked in the third list. On other hand, *renowned*, in the top four genres, does not include any spoken genres. This confirms that low frequency of spoken genre means having a high degree of formality. Further additional evidence from the previous studies show that some groups of synonymous words are different in terms of formality (e.g., Phoocharoensil, 2010; Jirananthiporn, 2018).

5.3.3 Collocations

In the part on collocations, both noun and adjective collocates were deeply analyzed and discussed. The majority of noun collocates for the three synonymous adjectives: *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known* are primarily humans with a specific field of artistic or other abilities. Overall, some noun collocates were revealed with different types of nouns apart from humans such as *works*, *example*, *essay*, *poem*, and *restaurant*.

When comparing the analysis of the principal semantic sets from *famous*, *renowned*, and *well-known*, it can be interpreted that all the target words usually collocate under the theme *people* as most nouns collocates are associated with people being perceived as having occupations or professions with a specific field of study, and

have artistic sense or abilities in their professions i.e., *artist, architect, designer, painter, and photographer*. Moreover, *famous* has the wider principal semantic sets compared to *renowned* and *well-known*.

The analysis of the adjective collocates implies that most of the adjective collocates are associated with the degree in which they can be used to describe the levels of reputation being received by people such as *most, internationally, nationally, globally, regionally, locally, and universally*. Additionally, both positive and negative denotations occur in *famous* and *renowned*. However, adverbs of positive denotation only occurred for *well-known* apart from adverbs of degree i.e., *fairly, reasonably, rightfully, and indescribably*.

5.4 Limitation of the Study

The present study, however, has such limitations. The number of noun collocates and adverb collocates are limited. Only top-30 lists for noun collocates and top-10 lists for adverb collocates were selected based on the frequency and MI value. It will be more inclusive if the further study is going to investigate those low number of frequencies to see a wider and clearer picture of the information for the target synonyms. Moreover, the statistical test for MI value needs to be considered of. Cheng (2012) suggested that there should be alternatively implemented an application that combined both MI scores and T- scores, with respect to the number of joint frequencies to analyze collocations. Another aspect of limitation suggests that the further study should investigate grammatical patterns to obtain additional information apart from this study since the present study is only focused on meanings, degree of formality, and collocations.

5.5 Recommendations

Based on the present study, it can be suggested that this study has some recommendations in which American English is the only source of English language corpora used in the study. Moreover, Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) is the only source to collect and analyze the data. Hence, the findings from this study cannot be generalizable to other various sources of English such as British English, Australian English, or other Englishes due to the limitations of informational

sources. Thus, it would be recommended that the future study should investigate the similarities and differences of synonyms in other Englishes or conduct a study of comparative synonyms across Englishes. Also, it will be more inclusive if the researchers investigate in the future study in other aspects such as grammatical patterns. Moreover, there should be a comparative study of the target synonyms to see such differences regarding unparalleled insight into English variation by using another source of English language corpus, The Corpus of Historical American English (COHA). COHA is another language corpora, which contains words of more than 475 million texts from the 1820s-2010s. It is largely comparable in the history of English language corpora and the corpus is balanced by genre decade by decade. So, it can provide insight and wider information apart from the data drawn by COCA.

5.6 Pedagogical Implications

As explored in the present study, learning vocabulary or any types of synonyms is not just about working on the core meaning, the sense of appropriateness, and its usage, but it is also about the contexts in which the synonyms are being surrounded. The result from this study provides a strong emphasis that we should not rely on the sense of words, or the grammatical patterns given through the books since some words cannot be interchangeably used in each context such as synonyms. Hence, the use of language corpora can support the evidence to make an appropriate usage of each near synonym because it can provide the information of frequencies, degree of formality, collocations, as well as keyword in contexts in the concordance lines in which learners can explore the similarities and differences of each synonym apart from the core textbooks. Having a huge English corpora data like COCA, BNC, or another allows learners and teachers to easily access and explore to gain more knowledge of English vocabulary since it is freely available online. In the pedagogical aspect, it can be suggested that using English corpora can give more active participation as learners can have the opportunity to do it by themselves and try to observe and find the information regarding different meanings, usages, and patterns while surrounded by the teachers as facilitators.

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