



**A CORPUS-BASED STUDY OF ENGLISH SYNONYMS:  
BRAVE, VALIANT, AND DARING**

**BY**

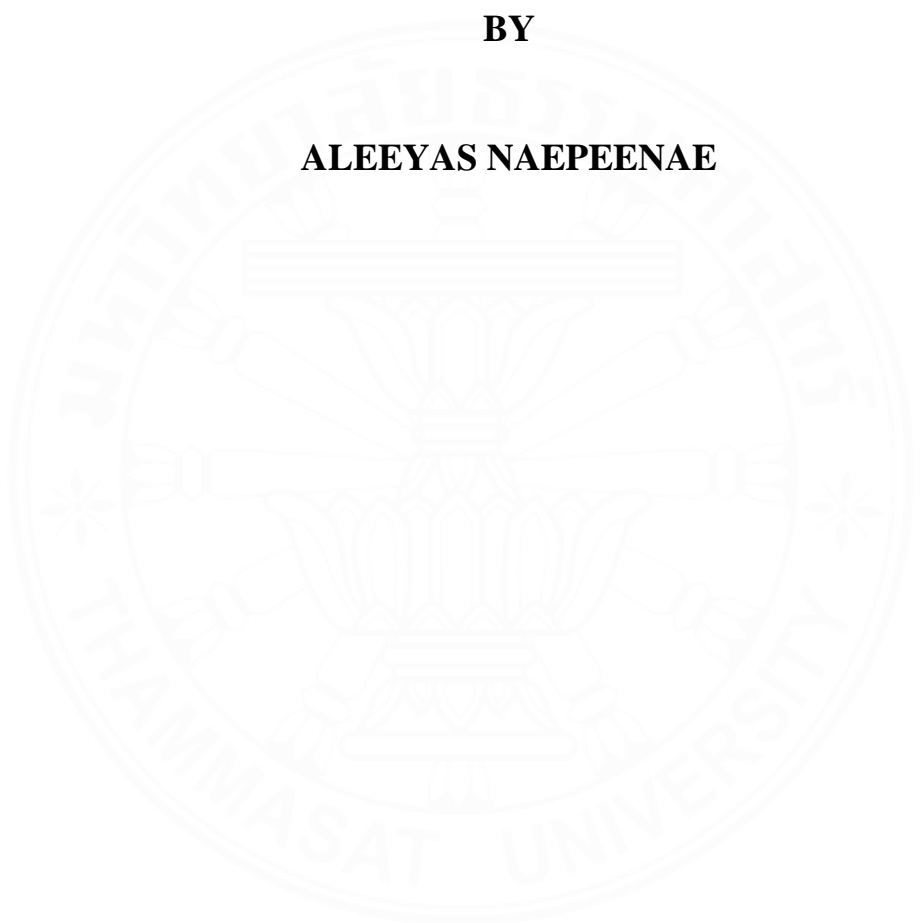
**ALEEYAS NAEPEENAE**

**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 2022**

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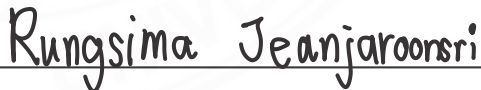
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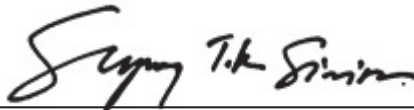
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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the similarities and differences among the synonymous adjectives *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring*, focusing on their meanings, collocations, semantic preferences, and distribution across various genres. The sources of data used in this study were 1) two dictionaries, namely Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English and Cambridge Dictionary (both are online versions), and 2) Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). The findings revealed that while these words share a common theme of bravery, they possess distinct nuances in meaning and usage. Brave is associated with fearlessness and confronting danger in everyday situations, valiant emphasizes bravery in defending noble causes and facing adversity, and daring conveys a willingness to take risks and pursue bold actions. For this reason, the three words cannot be used interchangeably in all contexts. Understanding the specific contexts in which words are used is crucial for accurate and effective language acquisition. By considering the nuances and appropriate usage of synonyms like brave, valiant, and daring, students can develop a deeper understanding of their meanings and use them appropriately in different situations. This highlights the necessity of contextual comprehension in vocabulary learning and reinforces the need for educators to emphasize context-driven approaches in language instruction.

**Keywords:** Synonyms, Corpus-based Study

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

This paper is presented in five chapters. The first chapter is the introduction to the study, which includes the background of the study, the research objectives, the research questions, the definitions of key terms, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, and the organization of the study.

### 1.1 Background of the Study

English is regarded as one of the most significant languages in the world. It has served as a universal language and is the most widely used language for international trade, diplomacy, mass entertainment, international telecommunications, scientific and newspaper publications, and other books (Rao, 2019). Moreover, Hasman (2004) stated that over 1.4 billion people throughout the world reside in countries where English is an official language. Over 70% of the world's scientists read English. About 85% of the world's mail is written in English, and 90% of all information in the world's electronic retrieval systems is stored in English. Likewise, the role of English in Thailand is important as it is in many other countries.

Regarding the domain of English education in Thailand, English is a required subject in schools according to the Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 (A.D. 2008). Thai students begin studying English as a school subject in their first year of study; they would have spent roughly twelve years learning the English language (primary 1- 6 and high school 1- 6). In order to comply with the main purpose of the basic education core curriculum in learning foreign languages, students must formulate and develop their communicative language skills. As a result, English instruction must emphasize the four skills and proper grammar usage. Vocabulary knowledge is considered to be an important variable that affects reading comprehension in both first and second-language learning (Alderson, 2000; Joshi, 2005). As asserted by David Wilkins (1972, p. 111), without grammar, very little can be conveyed; without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed.

Although Thai students spend approximately 11 to 12 years learning English in primary and secondary schools, the majority of them cannot speak the language correctly and they are poor in every skill. There are several factors that contribute to this failure. For example, students have limited vocabulary proficiency (McCarthy, 1990). Many researchers view vocabulary knowledge as a critical tool for second language learners because a limited vocabulary in a second language impedes successful communication. Schmitt (2000) emphasizes that “lexical knowledge is central to communicative competence and to the acquisition of a second language” (p. 55). In addition, Nation (2001) further describes the connection between vocabulary knowledge and language usage as mutually beneficial: vocabulary knowledge supports the use of language, while language usage contributes to the expansion of vocabulary knowledge.

To master the English language, students should place importance on many aspects of language, including grammatical structure, vocabulary, and synonyms. According to Nation (2001), there are numerous aspects of language learning that L2 students must master, including word meanings, spoken and written forms, collocations, synonyms, connotations, and frequencies. McCarthy (1990) emphasizes that no matter how well the learner learns grammar or how skillfully they master the sounds of L2, communication in an L2 simply cannot take place in any meaningful way without words to represent a larger range of meanings. In addition, insufficient knowledge of synonyms is also a problem, according to Phoocharoensil (2010), who claimed that students who can use a variety of synonyms will be able to effectively convey their ideas and will rarely misinterpret the meaning. Likewise, Boonyasaquan (2009) showed that collocations are virtually essential to enable learners to communicate efficiently or master the English language. Synonymy in the English language is consequently considered to play a crucial role in learning English to reduce the use of repetitive words in conversation. This concept aligns with the findings of Kruawong and Phoocharoensil (2022), as they suggest that students' awareness of synonyms can contribute to their learning progress and their proficiency in using language authentically.

Nevertheless, mastering English vocabulary usage is not easy because English vocabulary has a large number of synonyms or near-synonyms. For instance, the phrases ‘get up’ and ‘wake up’ appear to be the same but are actually different. According to

the definition given by the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English an online version, 'wake up' is to stop sleeping, or to make someone stop sleeping, on the other hand, 'get up' is to get (somebody) up to get out of your bed after sleeping, or to make someone get out of their bed. Other examples include 'dress up' and 'get dressed,' which, widely found are used incorrectly by my students. 'Dress up' means to wear special clothes for fun, or to put special clothes on someone, while 'get dressed' means to put your clothes on your normal day. As a result, learning and comprehending vocabulary and synonyms is a priority when learning any language.

In light of the aforementioned, corpus-based studies of English synonyms have been conducted to examine interchangeability in order to assist students in selecting terms that are appropriate for the context and form. Tsui (2005) revealed that the usage of a corpus method in English language teaching and learning has become more widespread among ELT practitioners because corpus data are able to provide authentic evidence for users to observe different patterns between synonymous words. Moreover, Hu (2015), and Kruawong and Phoocharoensil (2022) highlighted that even if two words could have comparable cognitive meanings, they might show different collocation patterns in various contexts. Therefore, synonymous words should be used carefully, as they usually differ in their semantic prosody and collocational behavior (Gu, 2017).

In this study, three adjective synonyms, namely *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring*, were selected since they are very close in terms of meaning; as a result, users probably get confused and apply them in contexts improperly. Moreover, the word 'brave' is a common word that is used with a high frequency (top 3,000 spoken words), while the two synonyms are used at a medium level, as indicated by the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English Online. Understanding synonyms is crucial for users as they need to employ them during exams to attain their desired scores, such as TOEIC, TOEFL, or even TU-GET (Thammasat University General English Test), aligning with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Previous research, as exemplified in the study conducted by Yuliawati and Indira (2019), has explored the synonyms of certain words. However, their investigation focused solely on the synonyms of brave and courageous, neglecting the exploration of synonyms for valiant and daring. Consequently, there exists a research gap concerning the synonyms of these three words. Hence, conducting further research in this area would be valuable.

Corpus-based studies can provide benefits to L2 and EFL learners in terms of language learning and familiarizing them with authentic language, and they also can help English teachers to enhance the meaningful input that is provided to learners. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the differences between the three synonymous adjectives *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring* in terms of meaning, frequency and distribution across genres, noun and adverb collocational patterns, and semantic preference. Hopefully, the results of this study will support the need for vocabulary learning, including the factors affecting the strategy choices among L2 or EFL learners, particularly their meaning and collocation associated with these adjectives. Additionally, this research may help English teachers develop new teaching strategies and produce new instructional media and materials for their students. In particular, the results of this study may help students employ words in the appropriate context, so that they can improve their English language ability, particularly their vocabulary knowledge and language use.

## 1.2 Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to investigate English adjectives synonyms of *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring* concerning meaning, frequency and distribution of the synonyms across genres, the most frequent noun and adverb collocations used with these synonymous adjectives, and also group them into semantic preference. To accomplish the objective, the study was carried out to address the following objectives:

- 1) To explore the differences between synonyms *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring* in terms of meaning
- 2) To investigate the frequency differences between *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring* and their patterns of distribution across the genres in COCA
- 3) To examine the noun and adverb collocates in relation to the semantic preference of three synonyms: *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring*

## 1.3 Research Questions

- 1) What are the differences between the synonyms *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring* in terms of meaning?
- 2) What are the frequency differences between *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring* and their patterns of distribution across the genres in COCA?

3) What are the noun and adverb collocates in relation to semantic preference of the synonyms *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring*?

#### 1.4. Definitions of Key Terms

The following are the definitions of the key terms:

1) **Corpus** refers to a computer-stored compilation of written or spoken texts. Initially, it was commonly used to describe a complete body of work from a single author. However, with the development of computer technology, extensive amounts of text can now be stored and examined using analytical software (O'keeffe, McCarthy, and Carter 2007).

2) **COCA** is the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA); it has in excess of a billion words, adding 20 million words annually from 1990 to 2019. COCA is an English corpus that is 1) substantial, 2) recent, and 3) composed of a variety of genres (spoken language, fiction, magazines, newspapers, academic, web pages, blogs, and TV/movies).

3) **Collocations** are word combinations that occur more frequently than they would by chance.

#### 1.5 Scope of the Study

This study used the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English and Cambridge Dictionary (online version) as a fundamental instrument to examine three synonymous adjectives *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring* in terms of meaning. The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) was used as the tool to gather data to investigate the frequency and distribution of the synonyms across genres, the most frequent noun and adverb collocations used with these synonymous adjectives, and their semantic preference.

#### 1.6 Significance of the Study

Vocabulary is a crucial component of language use, so it is important for language users to pick the right words and use them in the right context. Therefore, this corpus-based study of the three targeted adjectives - *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring* - has significance for both students and teachers for the following reasons:

The study will provide a deeper understanding of three synonyms in terms of their meanings, semantic preferences, and collocations. English language learners can benefit from this study by gaining the ability to differentiate between the synonyms and use them appropriately in various contexts. They will also develop a more nuanced understanding of the specific connotations and appropriate usage of each synonym.

The study showcases a modern research method for studying synonyms by utilizing corpora. Corpora are large collections of written or spoken language that can be analyzed to uncover patterns and usage preferences. By using corpora, the study investigates the semantic preferences and collocations associated with the three synonyms. This approach provides a systematic and data-driven way of understanding how words are used in context. Teachers can learn from this methodology and apply it in the classroom to teach synonyms effectively. They can use corpora to help students grasp the appropriate usage and collocational patterns of different synonyms, leading to more accurate and natural language production.

The study can serve as a guide and example for language learners who are interested in using corpus data to explore different sets of synonyms. Corpus-based research provides a reliable and authentic basis for studying language usage. Language learners can follow the study's methodology and apply it to their own investigations of synonyms. By leveraging corpus data, learners can gain valuable insights into the patterns and preferences associated with different synonyms. This enables them to use language more accurately and effectively, enhancing their overall language proficiency and ability to communicate in diverse contexts.

### **1.7 Organization of the Study**

The corpus-based analysis of the adjectives *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring* is divided into five chapters as follows:

The first chapter is the introduction to the study, which includes the background of the study, research objectives, research questions, definitions of key terms, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, and the organization of the study.

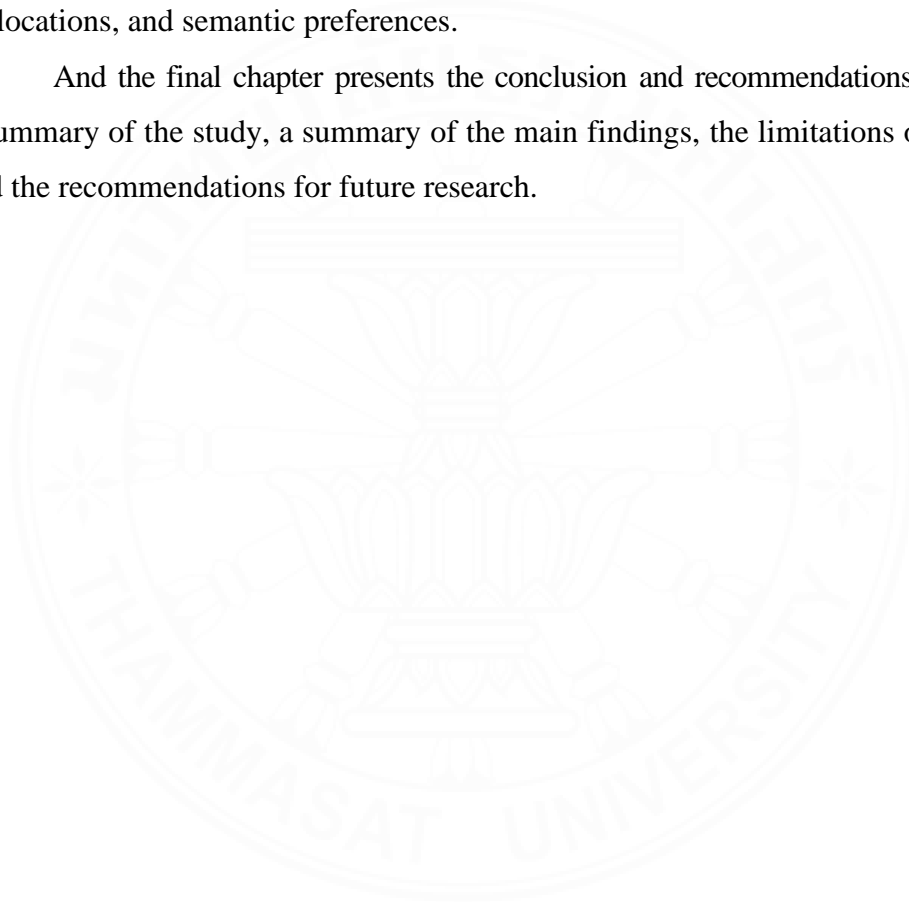
The second chapter presents a review of literature and research studies related to this topic. There are five sections in this chapter, which include corpus linguistics,

the definition of synonyms, collocation, semantic preference, COCA, and previous related studies.

The third chapter describes the design and procedures used to conduct this study. It also covers the instrument of the study, data collection, reason to use COCA, and data analysis process.

The fourth chapter describes the results and discussion of the study in the area of similarities and differences regarding meaning, the most frequent noun and adverb collocations, and semantic preferences.

And the final chapter presents the conclusion and recommendations. It includes a summary of the study, a summary of the main findings, the limitations of the study, and the recommendations for future research.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The background of study, statement of the problem, purpose, objectives, and research questions were all stated and described in chapter one. This chapter presents a review of literature and research studies related to this topic. There are five sections in this chapter, which include corpus linguistics, concordance lines, the definition of synonyms, collocation, semantic preference, and previous related studies:

#### **2.1 Corpus Linguistics**

According to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (online version), "corpus" is a noun that can be written as corpuses or corpora in the plural form. It refers to a collection of all the writing of a particular kind or by a particular person. Moreover, the meaning of corpus linguistics is widely accepted in the field of linguistics, and there are many researchers who have contributed to its development and definition. One of the key figures in the development of corpus linguistics is John Sinclair, who is widely recognized as the founder of the approach. Sinclair defined a corpus as a large, principled collection of naturally occurring texts, selected and ordered in a way that makes it suitable for certain types of language processing (Sinclair, 1991). Other researchers have provided similar definitions of corpus linguistics, emphasizing the importance of using authentic language data in linguistic research. For example, Biber, Conrad, and Reppen (1998) define corpus linguistics as the study of language based on large collections of natural texts, written or spoken. Similarly, McEnery and Wilson (2001) define it as the study of language as expressed in naturally occurring texts of all kinds and the application of tools and techniques from computational linguistics in the analysis and exploitation of those texts.

According to Leech et al. (2012), the other characteristics of corpus linguistics are methods of quantitative and qualitative analysis used in corpus linguistics. Quantitative results are provided before qualitative ones; however, both are frequently used. Faemthaisong and Khamkhien (2021) further describe that a corpus can be used to perform both qualitative and quantitative studies of linguistic properties. The frequency at which a word appears

in a context is statistically evaluated to ascertain whether it occurs in that context more frequently than others. A qualitative study, on the other hand, concentrates on the context in which a word or phrase is used throughout a corpus, and exploring concordance lines to discover qualitative patterns of use might help with this.

Corpus linguistics can help individuals learn English languages and be a valuable tool for language teachers and learners. Lee and VanPatten (2003) suggest that using authentic language samples from corpora can help learners to develop their language proficiency in a way that is more natural and communicative than traditional textbook-based methods. There is a considerable amount of research that has shown that using authentic language samples in language learning can be effective in improving learners' proficiency in the target language. For example, a study by Boulton and Cobb (2017) found that using corpus-based materials in language teaching can help students to develop a better understanding of grammar and vocabulary, as well as improve their reading and writing skills. Furthermore, a study by McEnery and Wilson (2001) found that corpus-based language learning can be particularly effective for developing learners' ability to use language in context, which is an important aspect of communicative competence. It can be seen that corpus-based language learning allows learners to explore various aspects of the language through authentic material and develop a better understanding of its structure and use in context.

In the field of linguistics, there exists a wide variety of corpora that can be utilized for analysis purposes. Here are a few illustrations of different types of corpora:

### ***2.1.1 Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)***

COCA stands for the Corpus of Contemporary American English; it added over 20 million words annually from 1990 through 2019. COCA provides authentic American English with fresh data consistently uploaded each year to keep the corpus relatively up to date. It can be considered that COCA is the English corpus that is 1) substantial, 2) recent, and 3) composed of a variety of genres (spoken, fiction, magazines, newspapers, academic, web pages, blogs, and TV/movies). At the present, there are numerous publications looking into the differences and similarities between word synonyms. Using a dictionary to determine the significance of synonyms may not be sufficient to distinguish between

their similarities and differences. Researchers can utilize COCA to collect data from concordance lines, which contain lexical-grammatical patterns, to examine how the terms are utilized in various contexts. This approach allows for the observation of not only the differences and similarities between word synonyms but also provides opportunities for exploring other aspects within the corpus. For example, Lertcharoenwanich and Phoocharoensil (2022) investigated the distinctions of the synonymous nouns namely purpose, goal, and objective based on their distribution across genres in terms of the degree of formality and their verb and adjective collocates in relation to semantic preference. The authors used a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis methods to analyze the data. They first examined the collocational patterns of the three words, looking at their typical noun and verb collocates. They then analyzed the distribution of the words across different genres. Finally, they conducted a semantic analysis of the words, looking at their connotations and semantic preference. Based on the analysis of distribution frequency across various genres, it is likely that the three target synonyms predominantly occur in formal contexts, such as academic texts. Additionally, these synonyms often appear in similar genres, indicating their close similarity in terms of objective and goal-related concepts. However, it is important to note that these synonyms also exhibit specific collocational patterns with certain verbs or adjectives. This distinction in collocation patterns suggests that the synonyms cannot be used interchangeably in all circumstances, emphasizing the importance of considering the specific context in which each synonym is employed.

## **2.2 Concordance Lines**

In linguistics and natural language processing, a corpus is a large and structured collection of texts, typically used to study language patterns, usage, and context. One of the fundamental tools in corpus linguistics is the concordancing, which is a list of words or phrases from the corpus, along with their surrounding context (O’Keeffe, McCarthy & Carter, 2007). Quah (2006) also claims that concordance enables the user to choose a specific word or phrase and displays all instances of that word or phrase in the corpus they have chosen in order to show where, how frequently, and in what linguistic contexts it appears. There are several researchers who have highlighted the benefits of using concordance lines in English language learning. Stubbs (1996) states

that concordance lines can be used to develop learners' discourse competence, which is the ability to use language effectively in social situations. By examining how words and phrases are used in context, learners can gain a better understanding of how language is employed to achieve different communicative goals. Similarly, Sinclair (1991) maintains that concordance lines provide a powerful tool for developing learners' language awareness, which is the ability to understand how language works in context.

Since concordance lines can provide language learners with authentic examples of how words and phrases are used in context, which can help students develop their vocabulary, grammar, and overall language proficiency, a number of research papers have been written with the aim of suggesting potential concordancing applications in different teaching contexts. For example, Johns (1991) showed how concordance lines could be used to teach vocabulary by providing students with real-world examples of how words are used in context. Meanwhile, Sripicharn (2003) aimed to evaluate the use of concordance-based materials in a Thai classroom. The results found that the use of concordance-based materials was generally effective in improving the students' understanding and use of English language structures. The students found the materials engaging and useful for learning vocabulary, grammar, and collocations in context.

### **2.3 Synonyms**

The online Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English gives the definition of synonyms as a word with the same meaning as another word in the same language. However, despite how similar and closely related synonyms are, they have subtle, distinct differences in meanings that prevent them from being replaced by other terms (Edmonds & Hirst, 2002). Additionally, Phoocharoensil (2010) notes that English synonyms are not interchangeable in every context of use. Their differences lie in many factors, including different denotative meanings, dialects, formality of the context, connotations, grammatical patterns, and collocations. For example, the synonyms 'beautiful' and 'handsome' appear to be the same, but they are used differently depending on which sex they refer to. Handsome is more frequently used with men; beautiful is more frequently connected with a woman (Bergdahl, 2009).

In order to be accurate and fluent in the English language, learners must grasp the notion of synonyms, which is crucial to the language (Shahzadi and Javed 2019).

One concept that frequently causes learners to struggle in their acquisition of L2 English vocabulary is synonymy, or the relationship between two words to have a similarity in meaning (Jackson & Amvela, 2007). Phoocharoensil (2021) further argues that in the context of English language learning and teaching, vocabulary knowledge is crucial to studying English as a second language (ESL) or as a foreign language (EFL). The classification of synonyms in English is described as follows:

### 2.3.1 Types of Synonyms

According to Murphy (2010), synonyms can be classified into two categories based on their characteristics: absolute synonyms and near-synonyms. Absolute synonyms can be used interchangeably in any context without altering the meaning or connotation. On the other hand, near-synonyms do not possess absolute identical meanings but exhibit looser similarities in terms of sense. An example can be seen from the following: ‘obtain’ and ‘acquire,’ both of them have a sense that roughly means ‘get,’ but there are subtleties to those senses that are not shared by both words as shown below.

- Ian obtained permission to land.
- Ian acquired a British accent.

Moreover, Matt (2022), a freelance content writer, states on a website that synonyms can be categorized into three types: ‘absolute synonyms,’ ‘partial synonyms,’ and ‘near synonyms.’

Absolute synonyms are words that have the exact same meaning; they don't differ in any way. Absolute synonyms are interchangeable; they can be used to replace one another without changing the meaning of the sentence.

**Examples:**    *Identical — indistinguishable*  
                   *Drink — beverage*  
                   *Insect — bug*

Partial synonyms are words that mean almost the same thing, and the meaning changes slightly if a word is replaced with a partial synonym; but the overall message is kept the same (it can be a degree or amount), such as the difference between good and excellent, or one word can be a specific type of a more general word—the way a puppy is still a dog.

**Examples:** *Car — vehicle*  
*Run — sprint*  
*Big — gigantic*

Near synonyms are words that have different meanings, but their meanings are still related. These words cannot be substituted for one another; if they are, the message becomes different.

**Examples:** *Smart — witty*  
*River — creek*  
*Hairy — furry*

## 2.4 Collocation

One of the many methods and strategies for teaching and learning vocabulary is studying collocations. Collocations are commonly accepted to be a crucial component of knowledge of second language acquisition and are necessary for non-native English speakers in order to speak or write effectively and fluently (Jaén, 2007).

The online version of the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English provides the definition of collocation as “the way in which some words are often used together or a particular combination of words used in this way.” In addition, collocation is the way words occur with other words around them. For instance, ‘pay’ regularly occurs with ‘attention,’ but ‘commit’ frequently occurs with ‘crime.’ (O’Dell and McCarthy, 2008). Moreover, the word meaning in collocation is arbitrary because it cannot be predicted by syntactic or semantic rules. For example, ‘strong’ and ‘powerful’ are both adjectives and are synonymous in meaning, but ‘strong’ is used to modify ‘tea’ and ‘powerful’ to modify ‘car’ (Smadja and McKeown, 1991). Also, Boonraksa and Naisena (2022) have highlighted that collocation refers to the occurrence of two or more words together, forming unique combinations with distinct meanings based on the situational context. For instance, the phrases "break down" and "break a leg" both contain the word "break," but each conveys a different meaning. "Break down" signifies damage or fracture, whereas "break a leg" is an expression of good luck. This suggests that collocations can involve various types of words, including verbs, nouns, adverbs, and adjectives.

## 2.5 Semantic Preference

Another concept that is closely connected to collocation is semantic preference, which is defined as the desire for lexical elements to be confined to recognizable semantic fields (Cheng, 2012). Further described by Begagić (2013), semantic preference is the relationship between a word form and a group of words that share similar meanings. In other words, according to Lertcharoenwanich (2023), semantic preference is seen as a semantic setting where vocabulary terms frequently appear. For instance, Edmonds and Hirst (2002) found that although ‘die’ and ‘pass away’ are near-synonyms that share a similar meaning, their usage patterns are not interchangeable and are influenced by semantic preferences. Specifically, ‘pass away’ was found to be used more frequently in formal contexts, while ‘die’ was found to be used more frequently in informal contexts. Additionally, ‘pass away’ was found to have more positive connotations and was used more often to refer to the deaths of older or more respected individuals, while ‘die’ was used more often to refer to sudden or violent deaths. Lertcharoenwanich and Phoocharoensil (2022) investigated the synonyms purpose, goal, and objective and found that there were subtle differences in their usage patterns. Specifically, ‘purpose’ was found to be used more frequently to express a broader and more abstract concept, while ‘goal’ and ‘objective’ were used more frequently to express specific and measurable targets.

Edmonds and Hirst (2002) also suggest that by understanding semantic preferences, natural language processing applications can improve their accuracy and effectiveness in understanding and producing language. For example, by taking into account the differences of word usage, these applications can improve their ability to distinguish between near-synonyms and select the most appropriate word in a given context. Thus, in this study, the linguistic features of the near-synonyms *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring* were examined, specifically the noun and adverb collocates in relation to semantic preference.

## 2.6 Previous Related Studies

A significant amount of research has looked into the differences in word usage using corpus-based data. For instance, the study by Petcharat and Phoocharoensil (2017) examined the similarities and differences between appropriate, proper, and suitable. The data were drawn from the three dictionaries and the Corpus of Contemporary American English. The study found that although appropriate, proper, and suitable share a similar

core meaning, they have subtle differences in their connotations and usage patterns. For instance, 'appropriate' was found to be more versatile and used in a broader range of contexts compared to 'proper,' which was found to be more narrowly defined and used in more formal contexts. 'Suitable,' on the other hand, was found to have a more neutral connotation and used in a wider range of contexts than 'proper.' In addition, the study also demonstrated the benefits of using corpora as a tool for language learning and teaching. By analyzing corpus data, students can gain a better understanding of the differences between synonyms and how to differentiate between them.

Another study conducted by Aroonmanakun (2015) focused on the two English synonyms 'quick' and 'fast' to explore their similarities and differences in terms of their frequency, collocates, and usage patterns in the English language. The study was based on an analysis of the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), which is a large and diverse corpus of English texts that includes spoken and written language from a variety of sources and genres. The findings of the study were that, while 'quick' and 'fast' are often used interchangeably in English, they have subtle differences in meaning and usage that depend on context, collocation, and connotation. For example, 'fast' is often used to describe physical speed, such as in the context of vehicles, sports, or movement. 'Quick,' on the other hand, is often used to describe actions that can be completed rapidly, such as in the context of cooking, cleaning, or decision-making. In addition, "fast" is used more frequently than "quick" overall in both spoken and written.

Song (2021) analyzed the differences between two near-synonymous verbs, 'damage' and 'destroy', using corpus linguistics. The analysis showed that the two verbs have differences in frequency, genre, colligation, collocation, subtle meanings, and uses. 'Damage' is more collocated with the human body or physical health, which partly explains its more frequent usage in social sciences. In contrast, 'destroy' is more widely used with military affairs and one's thought or belief. The British tend to collocate both verbs with the same word to create a build-up because 'destroy' is endowed with a stronger degree of destruction than 'damage'. The use of 'destroy' tends to refer to something that no longer exists, while 'damage' refers to something that can be recovered but does not work well as before. The study suggests that using corpora is a useful tool for language learners when they feel confused about near-synonyms in their second language. Traditional dictionaries and language teachers may not provide genre distribution

or frequently used collocations, which can lead to vocabulary issues for language learners. Hence, corpus-based language teaching and learning should be promoted to provide authentic contexts for learners to better understand the nuances of near-synonyms.

Chung (2011) compared the usage patterns of the verbs ‘create’ and ‘produce’ in contemporary English by conducting a corpus-based analysis. The study draws on data from the British National Corpus. Chung found that both ‘create’ and ‘produce’ are highly frequent and versatile verbs with similar semantic ranges. However, the two verbs differ in their collocational patterns, or the words that tend to occur alongside them. For example, ‘create’ is more likely to occur with abstract nouns like ‘opportunities’ or ‘solutions,’ while ‘produce’ is more likely to occur with concrete nouns like ‘goods’ or ‘documents.’ The study also found that ‘create’ is more commonly used in academic and creative writing, while “produce” is more commonly used in business and technical contexts.

Moreover, Malik et al. (2022) compared and contrasted the usage of three seemingly synonymous adjectives — *wondrous*, *prodigious*, and *stupendous* — based on their frequency, collocations, noun modification, and semantic similarities and differences. The researchers used a corpus-based methodology to gather data from the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English and The British National Corpus. The results of the study revealed that each adjective has unique patterns of usage and collocational preferences. For example, ‘wondrous’ is often used in descriptive and narrative contexts, and frequently collocates with words such as ‘beauty’, ‘sight’, and ‘soul’. ‘Prodigious’ is often used to describe extraordinary or impressive quantities, and frequently collocates with words such as ‘talent’, ‘ability’, and ‘strength’. ‘Stupendous’, on the other hand, is often used to describe awe-inspiring or overwhelming experiences, and frequently collocates with words such as ‘spectacle’, ‘achievement’, and ‘size’. Also, researchers suggested that L2 learners should use the corpus database to gain a better understanding of adjectives so that they can use them correctly.

Sumonsriworakun (2022) explored the usage and meaning of three English synonyms — *disadvantage*, *downside*, and *drawback* — in terms of their frequency, distribution patterns, and collocations, using data from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). The study found that ‘disadvantage’ is the most commonly used word among the three, followed by ‘downside’ and ‘drawback’ respectively.

Additionally, ‘disadvantage’ is most commonly used in academic texts, while ‘downside’ and ‘drawback’ are more commonly used in magazines. The author also analyzed the verb and adjective collocates of these synonyms and identified common themes. The verbs most commonly associated with these synonyms were ‘consider’ and ‘deal with,’ while the adjectives most commonly associated with them were ‘extent,’ ‘aspect,’ ‘counter-expectations,’ and ‘prominence.’

Jarunwaraphan and Mallikamas (2020) investigated the usage of the English synonyms ‘chance’ and ‘opportunity’ through a corpus-based approach. The authors aim to provide a comprehensive analysis of these words' meanings, collocational patterns, and contextual features to discern their similarities and differences. To conduct their study, the authors utilized a corpus, which is a large collection of written and spoken texts, along with the Cambridge Dictionary and Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, to examine and answer all the research questions. The analysis revealed that although ‘chance’ and ‘opportunity’ share some overlapping meanings, they also exhibit distinct patterns of usage. ‘Chance’ typically conveys the idea of uncertain or unplanned occurrences, emphasizing randomness or luck. It often implies a situation that is unforeseen or unanticipated. On the other hand, ‘opportunity’ suggests favorable circumstances that present a potential advantage or opening for action. It implies a chance to do something or achieve a desired outcome. Furthermore, the authors also investigated the distribution of ‘chance’ and ‘opportunity’ across different genres. They found that ‘chance’ is more commonly encountered in spoken language and informal contexts, such as conversations and casual interactions. In contrast, ‘opportunity’ is more prevalent in formal discourse, academic writing, and professional contexts.

Lastly, Phoocharoensil (2021) investigated the semantic prosody and collocational patterns of the near-synonyms ‘persist’ and ‘persevere.’ The aim of the study was to explore the subtle differences in meaning and usage between these two words through a corpus-based approach. The author employed a corpus linguistics methodology, utilizing a corpus (a large collection of written and spoken texts) and a dictionary to analyze the usage of ‘persist’ and ‘persevere’ in different contexts. The study focused on uncovering their semantic prosody, which refers to the evaluative associations or connotations that accompany a word, and their collocational patterns, which are the words that typically occur in close proximity to the target words. The findings of the study indicate that

while ‘persist’ and ‘persevere’ are often considered near-synonyms, they exhibit different semantic prosodies and collocational preferences. The word ‘persist’ tends to have a neutral or positive prosody, indicating endurance and determination. It commonly collocates with terms related to effort, behavior, and change. On the other hand, ‘persevere’ tends to have more positive prosody, suggesting a higher level of commitment and determination. It frequently collocates with terms related to challenges, goals, and obstacles. The study highlights that these subtle differences in semantic prosody and collocational patterns contribute to the nuanced usage of ‘persist’ and ‘persevere.’ Understanding these distinctions can help language learners and researchers utilize these words accurately and effectively in different contexts.

In conclusion, the results from the previous studies, as described above, showed that even though synonyms have the same meaning, they are not interchangeable because of their collocations and varying meanings in other contexts. Additionally, using corpus-based data in language teaching and learning can have significant benefits for both learners and teachers. It can help learners develop more authentic, nuanced, and sophisticated language skills while also providing teachers with valuable insights into language usage and learner needs. As such, it is likely that the use of corpus-based data will continue to grow in importance in language education in the years to come.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the design and procedures used to conduct this study. It contains the target words studied, research instruments, data collection, and data analysis process. This study used a dictionary to look up the meaning of the words *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring* as well as a corpus-based methodology to examine the interchangeability of the words to make it easier for teachers and students to choose appropriate terms and convey them naturally. The three research questions of this study were as follows:

1) What are the differences between the synonyms *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring* in terms of meaning?

2) What are the frequency differences between *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring* and their patterns of distribution across the genres in COCA?

3) What are the noun and adverb collocates in relation to semantic preference of the synonyms *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring*?

#### 3.1 Target Words

In the present study, three adjective synonyms, *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring*, 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 determine the similarities and differences in terms of noun and adverb collocations and semantic preferences. Then, the information from standard learner's dictionaries, namely Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English and Cambridge Dictionary, were consulted to determine the similarities and differences in terms of their meaning as described below in detail:

**Brave** (adjective) = dealing with danger, pain, or difficult situations with courage and confidence

- e.g.     - Her brave fight against cancer.  
           - It was brave of you to speak in front of all those people.

**Valiant** (adjective) = very brave, especially in a difficult situation

e.g. - No outcome seems too impossible or, at least, unworthy of valiant effort.

- Despite valiant efforts, firemen were unable to save the house.

**Daring** (adjective) = involving a lot of risk or danger, or brave enough to do risky things

e.g. - A daring rescue attempt.

- A daring pilot.

### 3.2 Research Instruments

In this part of the study, the researcher decided to use two online versions of dictionaries and a corpus — Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, Cambridge Dictionary, and Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) — to analyze three synonymous adjectives, i.e., *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring*, in terms of meaning, noun and adverb collocational patterns, and semantic preference. (1) Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English and Cambridge Dictionary (online version) were used for obtaining information about meaning. These dictionaries provide learners with word meanings to assist learners to avoid mistakes in using them inappropriately, and they also include thesaurus notes, which help learners find the most appropriate word or phrase in a set of synonyms. For these reasons, the researcher decided to use these online dictionaries to look for three synonyms for the adjectives used in this corpus-based analysis. (2) The decision to utilize COCA is based on two key reasons. Firstly, according to information retrieved from the website [www.english-corpora.org](http://www.english-corpora.org) in early 2020, COCA has undergone significant expansion in terms of its scope, size, and features. This enhancement makes it an even more valuable resource for researchers, teachers, and learners alike. With its extensive collection of authentic American English, COCA offers a high level of generalizability and reliability, ensuring that the data to be analyzed is of substantial quality. Lastly, COCA is regarded as a monitor corpus, with new data being routinely added each year to keep the corpus somewhat current. The website [www.english-corpora.org](http://www.english-corpora.org) (2020) reports that it has data in excess of a billion words, including 20 million new words annually from 1990 to 2019. As a result, COCA is the only English corpus that is 1) substantial, 2) recent, and 3) composed of a variety of

genres (spoken language, fiction, magazines, newspapers, academic texts, web pages, blogs, and TV/movies). In this study, COCA was employed to analyze the target synonyms *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring* in order to differentiate the target words; the study concentrated on meaning, noun and adverb collocations, and semantic preferences that can be obtained from COCA.

### 3.3 Data Collection

This section describes the data collection processes for the corpus-based study of the three adjective synonyms *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring*. The Longman Dictionary and Cambridge Dictionary (online version) along with the COCA were chosen as the instruments of the research in this study. The main reason for the selection was that COCA is the largest American corpus. Besides, it is useful for researchers, teachers, and learners, as it contains authentic American English. Additionally, Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English and Cambridge Dictionary was selected since they offer various information consisting of definitions, examples, grammatical patterns, and pronunciation.

The data collection started by searching for the core meanings of the three synonymous adjectives *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring* in Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English and Cambridge Dictionary to see the similarities and differences. After that, the researcher determined the frequency and distribution of the synonyms *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring* across eight genres, including academic texts, webpages, blogs, magazines, fiction, spoken, newspapers, and TV/movies. Then, the researcher analyzed the noun and adverb collocates drawn from COCA and grouped them into different categories according to their semantic preference to find out the similarities and differences in terms of semantic preference between *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring*.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

The data was first collected from the online dictionaries, Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English and Cambridge Dictionary, which were used to investigate the meanings of the target synonyms as well as to compare and contrast them for similarities and differences among the three synonyms. The online dictionaries provided data about word meanings, word families, and examples from the corpus and thesaurus box. In addition to the dictionaries, the researcher collected data on the frequency and frequency per

million words of use of each word in each genre from COCA, and they were arranged from the highest to the lowest frequency. Second, the data was drawn from searching collocates through COCA to extract noun and adverb collocates of the three synonyms in order to see how they differed in collocations and semantic preference. The collocates were determined by MI score values ( $\geq 3$ ), with the top-twenty most frequent noun and adverb collocates being sought. Finally, the target collocates were divided into various semantic categories based on their semantic preferences. This was done in order to discern the target near-synonyms clearly.

In conclusion, the methodology of the study, which included the target words studied, research instruments, data collection, and data analysis process, was the main focus of this chapter. The target adjective synonyms, namely *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring*, were examined for similarity and difference using the Longman Dictionary, Cambridge Dictionary, and COCA as instruments. In this study, both quantitative and qualitative data analysis were used.



## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section provides responses to the research questions and highlights the key findings from the results and analysis. It also discusses the overall frequency and distribution of the English synonyms brave, valiant, and daring, as well as their noun and adverb collocates, across different genres.

#### 4.1 Meanings

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English and Cambridge Dictionary were used as the main source of the study. It was found that these three synonyms share a common theme of bravery, but they differ slightly in their meanings.

**Table 4.1**

*Meaning of Brave, Valiant, and Daring from Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English and Cambridge Dictionary.*

Meaning		
Synonyms	Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English	Cambridge Dictionary
Brave	dealing with danger, pain, or difficult situations with courage and confidence	showing no fear of dangerous or difficult things
Valiant	very brave, especially in a difficult situation	very brave or bravely determined, especially when things are difficult or the situation gives no cause for hope
Daring	involving a lot of risk or danger, or brave enough to do risky things	brave and taking risks

In addition to the information in Table 4.1, the thesaurus box and example from the corpus as occur in Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English show how these three synonyms are different.

**Table 4.2**

*Examples of Brave, Valiant, and Daring from the Thesaurus Box and Examples from the Corpus as Occur in Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English.*

Synonyms	Meaning	Examples
Brave	showing that you are not afraid to do things that other people find dangerous or difficult	I think he was incredibly brave to do a parachute jump.
Valiant	very brave and determined	Despite valiant efforts, firemen were unable to save the house.
Daring	brave and willing to take a lot of risks	- Three inmates fled the prison in a daring tunnel escape. - He would often do very foolish things just to prove how daring he was.

Based on the information from Tables 4.1 and 4.2 provided by two dictionaries, these three synonyms are similar in meaning, as they all convey the idea of courage and bravery in the face of danger or difficulty. However, there are some slight differences in their connotations.

‘Brave’ is a more general term that describes someone who is not afraid to face danger, pain, or difficult situations. It can be used to describe a wide range of actions or situations. As can be seen in the example from Table 4.2 “I think he was incredibly brave to do a parachute jump.” It focuses on the courage and fearlessness of the person.

‘Valiant’ is a stronger synonym of ‘brave’ and implies a high level of determination and courage, especially in difficult situations where there may be little hope of success. As seen by the example from Table 4.2 "Despite valiant efforts, the firemen were unable

to save the house." This expresses that they have determination and a commitment to their task, even in the face of difficult circumstances.

Last but not least, the word 'daring' has a slightly different connotation in that it specifically refers to actions that involve a lot of risk or danger. It suggests a willingness to take risks and push oneself to the limit in order to achieve a goal. As shown in the example from Table 4.2 "Three inmates fled the prison in a daring tunnel escape." This suggests that the focus is on the risk-taking and adventurous nature of the inmates' escape plans.

In conclusion, while all three synonyms share the common theme of bravery, they each have different shades of meaning and connotations. Therefore, knowing the differences between synonyms is important for effective communication, as choosing the right word can help convey the intended meaning more precisely, and avoid confusion or misunderstandings. It's also helpful to have a broad vocabulary of synonyms, so that you can choose the most appropriate word for the tone, context, and audience of your communication.

#### **4.2 Frequency and Distribution of the Synonyms across Genres**

To address Research Question Two, the chart function was utilized to analyze the distribution of the target synonym within each genre. The data was sorted in descending order based on their 'per million' values, starting from the highest and descending to the lowest. The statistical findings are presented in Table 4.3, which displays the distribution of the synonyms brave, valiant, and daring across eight genres in the COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English).

**Table 4.3***Distribution of the Target Synonyms Across Genres.*

<i>Genre</i>	<b>Brave</b>		<b>Valiant</b>		<b>Daring</b>			
	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Per million</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Per million</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Per million</i>		
TV/Movie	3,805	29.71	Fiction	246	2.08	Magazine	742	5.88
Fiction	3,012	25.46	TV/Movies	238	1.86	Newspapers	512	4.21
Blogs	2,864	22.27	Magazines	231	1.83	Fiction	497	4.20
Webpage	2,296	18.48	Webpages	204	1.64	Webpages	403	3.24
Spoken	2,049	16.24	Newspapers	144	1.18	TV/Movies	322	2.51
Magazines	1,819	14.43	Blogs	151	1.17	Academic texts	301	2.51
Newspapers	1,332	10.94	Academic texts	116	0.97	Spoken	313	2.48
Academic texts	588	4.91	Spoken	73	0.58	Blogs	281	2.18
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,765</b>	<b>17.89</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,403</b>	<b>1.41</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>3,371</b>	<b>3.39</b>

As can be observed from Table 4.3, in terms of frequency and per million occurrences, brave (17,765 tokens or 17.89 w/m) occurs with the highest frequency among the three target synonyms, followed by daring (3,371 tokens or 3.39 w/m) and valiant (1,403 tokens or 1.41 w/m), respectively. Regarding the genres, ‘brave’ appears most frequently in the TV/Movie genre, with 3,805 occurrences, and its per million occurrences in this genre are 29.71, which could be due to the fact that this genre often features heroic characters and action-packed scenes that require bravery. Similarly, the frequent use of the word ‘daring’ in magazine articles (742 tokens or 5.88 w/m) may reflect a focus on bold and risky activities, as well as the use of attention-grabbing headlines. In contrast, the use of these target synonyms in academic texts is relatively low; these synonyms may be considered too colloquial or informal for academic writing, or they might use more technical or specialized vocabulary instead of these synonyms. The most noticeable point from Table 4.3 is that all of them occur in the written genres, namely in TV/Movie subtitles, fiction, and magazines. Therefore, readers of such materials need to possess a strong vocabulary and be able to understand the meaning of words in their specific contexts in order to fully comprehend the intended message of the writing. It can be concluded that even though these three synonyms occur with a relatively low frequency in academic texts,

students should be familiar with these three adjective synonyms because some textbooks use texts from fiction or magazine for the reading passage and reading assessment; also, these words might appear in a proficiency English test, especially in a reading comprehension passage or a listening exercise, where test takers are required to understand the meaning of the word in context. Alternatively, they might appear as part of a vocabulary section where test takers are asked to match the word with its definition, or to use the word in a sentence.

### **4.3 Common Collocations: Analysis of the Noun and Adverb Collocates**

To answer Research Question Three, this section analyzes the common noun and adverb collocates and their semantic preferences of the target synonyms *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring*.

#### **4.3.1 Noun Collocates of Brave, Valiant, and Daring**

In this section, the top-twenty collocates with the target synonyms *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring* were identified based on their mutual information (MI) scores ( $\geq 3$ ) to examine the differences in collocate nouns.

**Table 4.4***Noun Collocates of Brave, Valiant, and Daring*

Rank	Brave			Valiant			Daring		
	Noun collocates	Frequency	MI Value	Noun collocates	Frequency	MI Value	Noun collocates	Frequency	MI Value
1	man	1521	3.28	effort	202	6.62	escape	89	7.74
2	world	996	3.24	<b>attempt</b>	67	6.37	<b>rescue</b>	76	7.39
3	soul	286	4.92	prince	53	7.16	raid	64	7.74
4	soldier	267	4.57	fight	30	5.29	move	54	4.86
5	warrior	150	5.58	death	27	3.36	mission	38	4.10
6	<b>hero</b>	96	3.72	struggle	26	5.85	adventure	35	5.52
7	<b>knight</b>	82	6.29	battle	25	4.90	tenacity	31	9.62
8	courage	40	3.74	warrior	24	6.61	act	30	3.01
9	<b>fighter</b>	37	3.31	soldier	19	4.43	dragoon	29	11.59
10	correspondent	33	3.15	<b>hero</b>	17	4.90	courage	24	6.38
11	pioneer	26	4.08	<b>knight</b>	14	7.41	<b>attempt</b>	23	3.56
12	<b>deed</b>	26	4.11	cancer	9	3.10	experiment	23	4.26
13	maverick	21	5.21	<b>fighter</b>	8	4.77	feat	23	7.09
14	tribute	17	3.45	command	6	3.92	operation	22	3.08
15	explorer	17	3.63	crew	5	3.19	robbery	20	6.12
16	coward	15	4.21	opponent	5	3.60	imagination	16	4.46
17	astronaut	14	3.55	resistance	5	3.76	<b>deed</b>	15	5.72
18	memoir	13	3.13	<b>rescue</b>	5	4.73	exploit	15	7.53
19	firefighter	13	3.20	<b>assault</b>	3	3.12	<b>assault</b>	12	3.85
20	heroine	12	4.11	<b>deed</b>	3	4.66	maneuver	10	6.38

Table 4.4 shows the noun collocates (i.e., the nouns that frequently occur alongside) of the adjectives *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring*, along with their frequency and mutual information (MI) value. The MI value measures the strength of the association between the adjective and noun, with higher values indicating a stronger association. It is evident that the two synonyms *brave* and *valiant* share three noun collocations, which include *hero*, *fighter*, and *knight*. Additionally, *valiant* and *daring* also share three nouns collocates, such as *rescue*, *attempt*, and *assault*, whereas the noun ‘*deed*’ is the only collocate that all three adjectives share. When describing a courageous act, the word ‘*deed*’ is a particularly salient noun choice (as may be observed in the bold words of their collocations). Thus, the conclusion can be made here that while the adjectives *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring* may be

used interchangeably to some extent, they also have nuanced differences in meaning and connotation that are reflected in their noun collocates.

An intriguing observation from Table 4.4 is shown below:

**Brave** The top three collocates for brave are man, world, and soul, which suggests that bravery is often associated with facing dangerous situations or challenges that test one's inner strength.

**Valiant** The top three collocates for valiant are effort, prince, and fight, which suggests that valiant behavior involves exerting oneself in the face of difficulty and fighting for a noble cause.

**Daring** The top three collocates for daring are escape, rescue, and raid, which suggests that daring behavior involves taking risks to achieve a goal or overcome an obstacle.

**Table 4.5**

*Semantic Preference of the Noun Collocates of Brave*

<b>PEOPLE</b>	soldier, warrior, hero, knight, fighter, firefighter, astronaut, heroine, pioneer, explorer, correspondent
<b>PERSONAL QUALITIES AND CHARACTERISTICS</b>	courage, maverick, coward
<b>ACTION</b>	deed

Table 4.5 illustrates that brave mostly occurs with nouns which are often used in people and human personality, such as soldier, warrior, hero, knight, fighter, maverick, and coward. The noun collocates can be categorized into three distinct themes. The first theme that can be observed in the noun collocates of 'brave' indicates that they refer to individuals who are commonly associated with bravery. For example, soldiers, warriors, and firefighters are often recognized for their bravery in dangerous situations, while heroes, heroines, and pioneers are typically celebrated for their courageous acts and contributions to society. The second theme that emerges from the noun collocates of 'brave' is personal qualities and characteristics. This includes the words courage,

maverick, and coward. Another noun is categorized as action, i.e., deed. It can be stated that the word brave is commonly used to describe people who demonstrate courage and face danger with determination.

**Table 4.6**

*Semantic Preference of the Noun Collocates of Valiant*

<b>ACCOMPLISH</b>	effort, attempt, struggle, resistance, deed
<b>PEOPLE</b>	prince, knight, hero, warrior, soldier, crew
<b>CONFLICT</b>	fight, battle, assault, war
<b>MORTALITY</b>	death, cancer

According to Table 4.6, the noun collocates of valiant have a semantic preference that is identical to that of brave, namely PEOPLE. But three distinct themes-ACCOMPLISH, CONFLICT, and MORALITY-appear. In the theme of ACCOMPLISH, the noun collocates of 'valiant' include effort, attempt, struggle, resistance, and deed. These collocates suggest that the adjective 'valiant' is often used to describe someone who has put in a significant amount of effort or shown great perseverance in achieving something difficult or challenging. In the theme of CONFLICT, the noun collocates of 'valiant' include fight, battle, assault, and war. These collocates further reinforce the notion that 'valiant' is most often used to describe bravery and courage in the context of fighting or taking a risk. Finally, in the theme of MORTALITY, the noun collocates of 'valiant' include death and cancer. These collocates suggest that 'valiant' can also be used to describe someone who has shown great courage in the face of a life-threatening illness or other mortal danger. In conclusion, these themes suggest that "valiant" is most often used to describe bravery in situations that require courage, determination, and a willingness to take risks whether that is in the pursuit of goals, the context of conflict, or the face of mortality.

**Table 4.7***Semantic Preference of the Noun Collocates of Daring*

<b>ACTIONS OF PHYSICAL FORCE</b>	raid, robbery, assault, dragoon, maneuver
<b>ACTIONS OF ACHIEVEMENT</b>	mission, operation, feat, exploit, deed, attempt
<b>ACTIONS OF OVERCOMING OBSTACLES</b>	tenacity, courage, rescue, escape, move, adventure

Based on the semantic preferences of the noun collocates of ‘daring’ as presented in Table 4.7, it is clear that the word ‘daring’ is often associated with actions that involve physical force, achievement, and overcoming obstacles. The noun collocates with "daring" in the theme of actions of physical force, including raid, robbery, assault, dragoon, and maneuver. These words suggest that ‘daring’ is often used to describe actions that involve taking risks and using physical force to accomplish a goal. In the theme of actions of achievement, the noun collocates of ‘daring’ include mission, operation, feat, exploit, deed, and attempt. These words indicate that ‘daring’ is often used to describe actions that require courage and boldness to accomplish a significant goal or achieve a notable feat. Finally, in the theme of actions of overcoming obstacles, the noun collocates of ‘daring’ include tenacity, courage, rescue, escape, move, and adventure. These words suggest that ‘daring’ is often used to describe actions that require overcoming challenges or obstacles and taking bold steps to achieve a particular outcome. To summarize, the noun collocates of ‘daring’ suggest that it is a word that is often associated with taking risks, being courageous, and pushing beyond one's comfort zone to achieve a goal or overcome an obstacle. It is a term that is often used to describe actions that require both mental and physical strength, as well as a willingness to take risks and embrace adventure.

In summary, based on the noun collocates and semantic preferences presented in Table 4.4 – 4.7, it can be seen that ‘daring’ is often associated with actions that require taking risks and pushing beyond one's comfort zone, while ‘brave’ may be used to describe someone who shows courage in the face of danger or adversity. ‘Valiant,’ on the other hand, is often used to describe someone who shows bravery in the face of great danger

or difficulty, and who is willing to fight for a noble cause or defend others in need. Overall, while brave, daring, and valiant may share some degree of semantic overlap, the different noun collocates and semantic preferences suggest that each word has its own unique connotations and is used in slightly different contexts.

#### 4.3.2 Adverb Collocates of Brave, Valiant, and Daring

In section 4.3.2 of the study, the focus was on exploring the adverb collocates of the target synonyms brave, valiant, and daring. The adverb collocates for each synonym were examined based on their mutual information (MI) scores, specifically considering those with a score of 3 or higher.

**Table 4.8**

*Adverb Collocates of Brave, Valiant, and Daring*

Rank	Brave			Valiant			Daring		
	Adverb collocates	Frequency	MI Value	Adverb collocates	Frequency	MI Value	Adverb collocates	Frequency	MI Value
1	incredibly	112	5.07	wisely	1	4.34	boldly	4	5.72
2	exceptionally	7	3.51	onward	1	5.15	wildly	3	3.72
3	extraordinarily	6	3.11	<i>bravely</i>	1	5.73	<i>heroically</i>	2	7.02
4	fiercely	6	3.34	sharp	1	6.28	<i>bravely</i>	1	4.47
5	stubbornly	3	3.56	crucially	1	6.29	courageously	1	5.98
6	mighty	3	3.93	honorably	1	7.07			
7	insanely	2	3.17	crushingly	1	9.99			
8	recklessly	2	3.67						
9	blithely	2	3.83						
10	admirably	2	3.85						
11	<i>heroically</i>	2	4.61						
12	strong	2	4.73						

Table 4.8 shows the most frequent and informative adverb collocates the three adjectives: brave, valiant, and daring. The frequency column indicates how often each adverb appears in the context of the adjective, while the mutual information (MI) value column indicates how strongly associated each adverb is with the adjective compared to its overall frequency in the language. One interesting finding from the table is that some synonyms share adverb collocates. For example, both ‘brave’ and ‘daring’ are

collocated with the adverb ‘heroically.’ And also, one synonym shares the adverb collocates of valiant and daring i.e., bravely. This suggests that, in certain contexts, these words may be used interchangeably to convey similar meanings. Additionally, the table shows that the adverb collocates for each adjective are relatively small in number. This suggests that these adjectives may not be as commonly used in combination with adverbs as other adjectives might be.

**Table 4.9**

*Semantic Preference of the Adverb Collocates of Brave*

<b>Intensity</b>	Incredibly, exceptionally, extraordinarily, insanely
<b>Strength</b>	mighty, fiercely, heroically, strong
<b>Attitude</b>	Stubbornly, recklessly, blithely

Table 4.9 shows that there are three main themes of the adverb collocates of brave based on their semantic preferences. The majority of the adverb collocates of ‘brave’ fall into the theme of Intensity, which suggests that there is a strong tendency to use adverbs that emphasize the degree or level of bravery being described. The adverbs incredibly, exceptionally, extraordinarily, and insanely all convey a sense of heightened intensity or extremity, and when used with "brave," they indicate that the individual's bravery is exceptional, remarkable, or even extreme. The second theme, Strength, is related to the degree of bravery, but in a slightly different way. These adverbs suggest that the individual's bravery is not just intense, but also powerful or forceful in some way. For example, ‘heroically’ suggests that the individual is exhibiting a level of bravery that is not only exceptional but also inspiring or admirable. Finally, the third theme, Attitude, focuses on the manner in which bravery is being displayed. Adverbs like ‘stubbornly,’ ‘recklessly,’ and ‘blithely’ suggest that the individual's bravery is being expressed in a particular way — whether through determination, impulsiveness, or carefree disregard for danger. These adverbs are often used to describe the personality or behavior of the individual being brave, rather than just the level of bravery itself. Overall, these three themes provide some insight into the different ways in which ‘brave’ is often described in language. Depending on the specific adverb used, we can get a sense of not only how brave someone is but also the manner in which their bravery is being expressed.

**Table 4.10***Semantic Preference of the Adverb Collocates of Valiant*

<b>Intensity</b>	bravely, sharply
<b>Manner</b>	wisely, honorably, crushingly

The table above shows the semantic preferences of adverb collocates of the adjective 'valiant.' The adverb collocates are grouped into two main themes based on their semantic preference. First, the theme of Intensity: The adverbs 'bravely' and 'sharply' belong to this theme, suggesting a high level of bravery or sharpness in the individual's actions. For Manner, the adverbs 'wisely,' 'honorably,' and 'crushingly' belong to this theme, suggesting a particular way of acting or behaving. It can be concluded that with the semantic preference of valiant we can get a sense of not only how valiant someone is but also the manner in which their valor is being expressed.

**Table 4.11***Semantic Preference of the Adverb Collocates of Daring*

<b>Manner</b>	boldly, heroically, bravely, courageously
<b>Intensity</b>	wildly

Table 4.11 illustrates that the semantic preference of adverb collocates of daring is categorized into two themes. It can be noted that the semantic preference of the adverb collocates of daring shares the same themes as the adverb collocates of valiant. This suggests that these two concepts are closely related and have similar connotations. Valiant actions are also likely to be performed in a bold, heroic, or courageous manner, and may also involve a level of wild intensity. Nevertheless, while daring and valiant share similar semantic preferences for adverb collocates, they are not interchangeable in all contexts, as Table 4.11 shows a greater emphasis on the manner of performing an action with a sense of risk or audacity, while valiant suggests a sense of bravery in the face of danger.

Consequently, the analysis of the adverb collocates and semantic preference of the synonyms *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring* confirms their status as near-synonyms since they share the same adverb collocates, i.e., heroically and bravely, and also share similarities in terms of semantic preference.

From the analysis of the noun and adverb collocates, and semantic preference, distinctions in the meaning of the three target words can be made. The semantic preference of the noun collocates of *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring* indicates that these synonyms share some commonalities in meaning, such as being associated with people who exhibit bravery and performing courageous acts. However, they also have distinct nuances in their meaning and usage, such as *valiant* being associated with fighting for a noble cause and *daring* being associated with taking risks to achieve a goal. The analysis of noun and adverb collocates and semantic preferences provides us with a deeper understanding of the subtle differences between *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring*. This knowledge can help us choose the most appropriate word to use in different contexts, and more accurately convey the intended meaning of our message.



## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter is divided into five sections: (1) summary of the study, (2) summary of the findings, (3) the conclusion, (4) limitations of the study, and (5) recommendations for further research

#### 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, *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring*, differentiated by the selection criteria of synonyms i.e., meanings, collocations, semantic preference, 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 between the three synonymous adjectives, *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring*, in terms of meanings, collocation, semantic preference, and their distribution across eight different genres.

##### 5.1.2 Selected Synonyms

The synonyms being investigated were the adjectives *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring*. The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English and Cambridge Dictionary were used to collect data on their meanings. Additionally, the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) was employed to gather information on similarities and differences in terms of noun and adverb collocations, semantic preferences, and patterns of distribution across genres in COCA.

#### 5.2 Summary of the Findings

The analysis of noun and adverb collocates and semantic preferences of the three target words - *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring* - revealed that they share some commonalities in meaning related to exhibiting bravery and performing courageous acts. However, they also have distinct nuances in their meaning and usage. Brave is often associated

with overcoming fear and facing danger, and it is frequently used to describe ordinary people who exhibit bravery in everyday situations. Valiant, on the other hand, is often associated with fighting for a noble cause or defending a righteous position. It is also frequently used to describe individuals who display bravery in the face of adversity. Daring, meanwhile, is associated with taking risks and challenging oneself to achieve a goal. It often connotes a willingness to take bold and unconventional actions, even in the face of potential danger or uncertainty. The analysis of noun and adverb collocates and semantic preferences provides us with a deeper understanding of the subtle differences between these three words. This knowledge can help us choose the most appropriate word to use in different contexts, and more accurately convey the intended meaning of our message.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

Even though these words are synonyms, the findings of the current study suggest that they cannot be used interchangeably in all situations. It can also show that synonymous words can be distinguished by using the selection criteria, such as meanings, collocations, as well as semantic preference in which they are mostly integrated in such studies. In this study, the target adjective synonyms brave, valiant, and daring are classified as near-synonyms, as can be summarized based on the three keywords studied as follows:

#### **5.3.1 Definitions from Dictionaries**

The study examined the meanings of the synonyms *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring*, using the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English and Cambridge Dictionary as the main sources. It was discovered that these three words share a common theme of bravery, but they have slight differences in their meanings. According to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, brave is defined as dealing with danger, pain, or difficult situations with courage and confidence. It implies showing no fear of dangerous or difficult things. This meaning suggests that individuals described as brave are not afraid to undertake tasks or face circumstances that others may perceive as dangerous or challenging. On the other hand, valiant, as defined by the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, means being very brave, especially in a difficult situation. It indicates being very brave or bravely determined, particularly when things are difficult

or the situation seems hopeless. The term valiant can be used to describe individuals who demonstrate exceptional bravery and determination in the face of adversity. The context of the word daring, as defined by the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, refers to involvement in a lot of risk or danger, or being brave enough to do risky things. This meaning implies that individuals described as daring possess a willingness to engage in actions that involve significant risk or uncertainty. Similarly, the Cambridge Dictionary provides corresponding definitions for these synonyms. It describes brave as showing no fear of dangerous or difficult things. Valiant, according to the Cambridge Dictionary, means being very brave or bravely determined, especially when things are difficult or there is no cause for hope. Daring, as per the Cambridge Dictionary, is defined as being brave and willing to take a lot of risks. Therefore, it can be concluded that they cannot be used interchangeably in all situations.

### ***5.3.2 Frequency and Distribution of the Synonyms Across Genres***

The findings revealed that ‘brave’ had the highest frequency of occurrence, followed by ‘daring’ and ‘valiant.’ Specifically, ‘brave’ appeared most frequently in the TV/Movie genre, indicating its association with heroic characters and action-packed scenes typically found in this genre. On the other hand, ‘daring’ was frequently used in magazine articles, suggesting a focus on bold and risky activities and attention-grabbing headlines.

It is noteworthy that the use of these synonyms in academic texts was relatively low, suggesting their potential colloquial or informal nature. However, despite this, it is important for students to familiarize themselves with these synonyms as they may encounter them in the reading passages, listening exercises, and vocabulary sections of English proficiency tests. Textbooks often incorporate fiction or magazine texts, making it necessary for students to possess a strong vocabulary and the ability to understand the meaning of these words in specific contexts. Overall, the analysis of the frequency and distribution of these synonyms highlights their relevance and importance in various genres, underscoring the need for learners to grasp their usage and nuances to enhance their language proficiency.

### 5.3.3 Collocations

According to the analysis of the noun and adverb collocates shown in Tables 4.4 and 4.8, it can be concluded the synonyms brave, valiant, and daring and their nuances in meaning and usage are as below.

#### **Noun Collocates:**

- Brave and valiant: These two adjectives share three noun collocates, namely hero, fighter, and knight. This suggests that when describing acts of bravery or courage, both brave and valiant can be used interchangeably, emphasizing the heroic and courageous nature of the subject.

- Valiant and daring: These two adjectives also share three noun collocates, namely rescue, attempt, and assault. This indicates that valiant and daring can be used similarly when describing bold and audacious actions or endeavors that involve risk or danger.

- Shared noun collocates: The noun "deed" is the only collocate shared by all three adjectives. This indicates that all three adjectives can be used to describe courageous acts, emphasizing the significant and noteworthy nature of the action.

From the noun collocates, we can conclude that while brave, valiant, and daring can be used interchangeably to some extent, there are nuanced differences in meaning and connotation. Brave and valiant emphasize heroism and acts of courage, while daring highlights boldness and venturesome actions.

#### **Adverb Collocates:**

- Brave and Daring: Both brave and daring share the adverb collocate "heroically." This suggests that in certain contexts, brave and daring can be used interchangeably to convey a similar meaning of courageously or heroically.

- Valiant and daring: Valiant and daring share the adverb collocate "bravely." This indicates that both adjectives can be used interchangeably to describe actions or behaviors done with bravery.

In summary, while *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring* share some noun and adverb collocates, indicating potential interchangeability in certain contexts, there are subtle differences

in meaning and connotation between these synonyms. Brave and valiant emphasize heroism and acts of courage, while daring highlights boldness and venturesome actions.

#### **5.4 Limitations of the Study**

The study relied on the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English and Cambridge Dictionary as the main sources for determining the meanings of the synonyms. Depending solely on these dictionaries might limit the exploration of alternative or nuanced definitions that could exist in other linguistic resources or dictionaries. While the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) is a valuable resource for analyzing collocations and semantic preferences, relying solely on COCA may overlook other relevant corpora that offer different perspectives and linguistic variations. Different corpora may represent different collocations, genres, or geographical regions, providing a more comprehensive understanding of word usage and meaning.

#### **5.5 Recommendations for Further Research**

For further studies, other criteria in terms of investigating to see the similarities and differences might be used instead of their meaning and noun and adverb collocation, for instance, the degree of formality, grammatical patterns, and so on. Apart from using the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English and Cambridge Dictionary (online version), expanding the analysis by incorporating a wider range of dictionaries from different publishers such as MacMillan Dictionary or Merriam-Webster Dictionary, would allow for a more comprehensive examination of the nuances in meaning and usage of synonyms brave, valiant, and daring. By comparing and contrasting definitions from various dictionaries, researchers can gain a more complete understanding of the similarities and differences among synonyms. Furthermore, the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), was a key resource for this study, which covers American English. Additional corpora, such as the British National Corpus (BNC) should be investigated in order to observe the results in other English-speaking regions. The recommendation to explore other corpora, such as the British National Corpus (BNC), stems from the fact that language usage can vary across different English-speaking regions. The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) primarily represents American English, and while it provides valuable insights into synonym usage in that context,

it may not capture the full range of variations and nuances that exist in other varieties of English. Analyzing data from the BNC alongside the COCA can help researchers identify any variations or divergences in synonym usage between American English and British English. It can shed light on how these synonyms are understood, employed, and nuanced within the specific linguistic and cultural contexts of British English. This comparative analysis would enhance the generalizability of the findings and provide a more complete understanding of how the synonyms *brave*, *valiant*, and *daring* are used and interpreted in different variations of English. It would contribute to the broader understanding of how language varies across dialects and regions, and how synonym usage can be influenced by cultural and linguistic factors.

### **5.6 Implications of the Study**

As demonstrated in this study, learning vocabulary and synonyms involves more than just understanding their core meanings and usage. It also requires considering the specific contexts in which these synonyms are used. Hence, teachers can apply these research findings to educate their students regarding the three near-synonyms that can be distinguished by some criteria, for example, comparing and contrasting the meaning from two dictionaries (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English and Cambridge Dictionary) and noun and adverb collocations in COCA. Based on the study's findings, it can be inferred that the process of learning English synonyms yields numerous advantages for both students and teachers. These benefits can be summarized as follows:

#### **For Students:**

1) Improved vocabulary: By studying synonyms in a corpus, students can expand their vocabulary and learn how to use words appropriately in different contexts. This can improve their reading comprehension and writing skills.

2) Better understanding of language: Studying synonyms can help students understand the nuances of language and how words can convey different meanings depending on the context. This can enhance their ability to communicate effectively in both oral and written contexts.

3) Language proficiency: Studying synonyms can improve students' language proficiency and help them communicate more accurately and fluently in the target language.

4) Better Writing: Understanding synonyms can also help students improve their writing skills by providing them with a wider range of words to choose from and helping them express their ideas more precisely.

#### **For Teachers:**

1) Better teaching: Researching synonyms in a corpus can assist teachers in creating more effective lesson plans and teaching resources that are catered to the needs of their students. This may result in more efficient instruction and learning.

2) Assessment: Teachers can use the knowledge gained from a corpus-based study on synonyms to develop more accurate assessments that test students' understanding of language and their ability to use synonyms appropriately.

3) Professional development: Studying synonyms in a corpus can also benefit teachers' professional development, providing them with a deeper understanding of language usage and helping them improve their teaching skills.

4) Resource creation: Teachers can use the findings of a corpus-based study on synonyms to create better teaching resources, such as worksheets and exercises that are tailored to the needs of their students.

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