



**A CORPUS-BASED ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH
SYNONYMS: JOB, CAREER, OCCUPATION**

BY

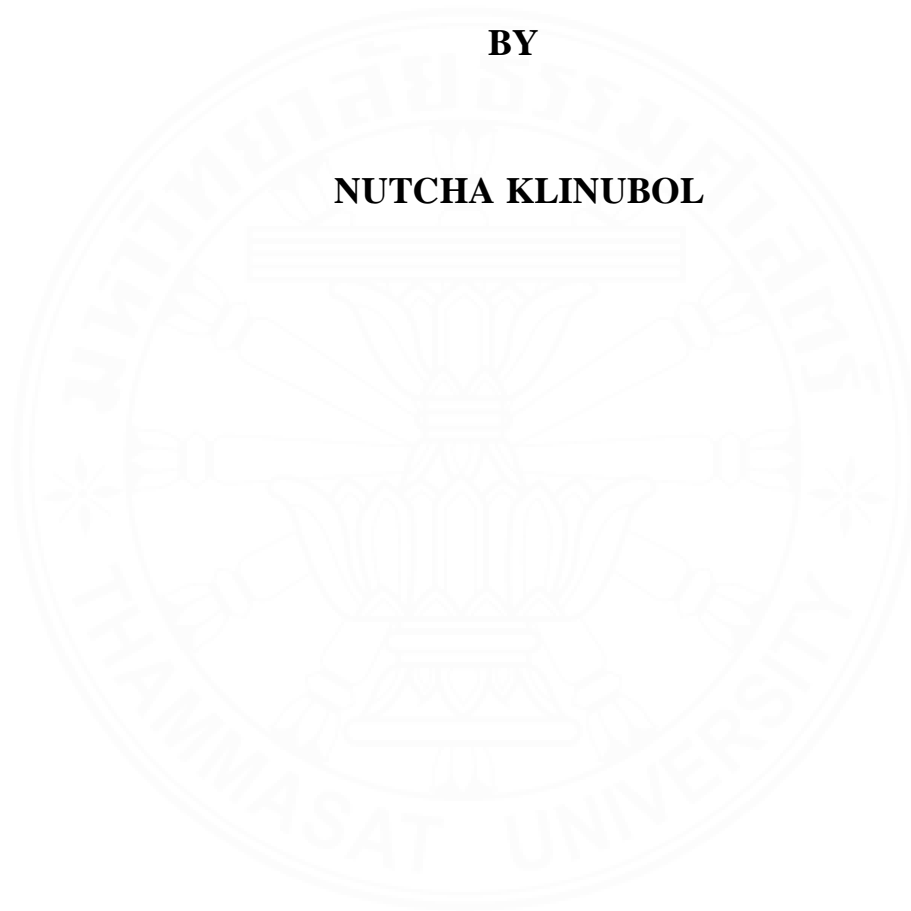
NUTCHA KLINUBOL

**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
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was approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts in English Language Teaching

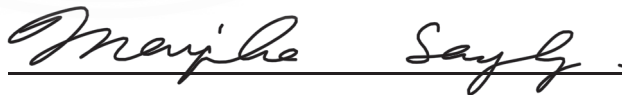
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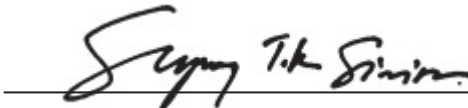
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ABSTRACT

One of the most common challenges faced by language learners when acquiring vocabulary is understanding the similarities and differences in meaning and usage among synonyms. Learners often replace words with their synonyms to add variety to their writing. However, it is important to recognize that not all synonyms can be used interchangeably in every context. Many English synonyms are near-synonyms, meaning they cannot substitute for each other due to variations in meaning. This study focuses on investigating three synonyms: *job*, *career*, and *occupation*, in terms of their meanings, genres, and verb and adjective collocations. The meanings were sourced from two online learner's dictionaries, namely the Online Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English and the online Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary. Additionally, the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) was used as a crucial data source, providing information on word frequency, genres, and collocations. The findings reveal that the three target words share a common core meaning of "the regular paid work that you do for an employer". However, *job*, *career*, and *occupation* cannot be used interchangeably in every context due to differences in formality and their tendency to collocate with different verbs and adjectives that have distinct semantic preferences. When teaching synonymous terms, it is important for educators to emphasize these distinctions, as second language (L2) learners often struggle with the use of synonyms. This approach can enhance L2 learners' understanding that not all synonyms can be used interchangeably. Furthermore, incorporating authentic examples

from corpus-based data can assist teachers in developing lesson plans and creating vocabulary learning activities for L2 learners.

Keywords: Corpus linguistics, Corpus-based study, Synonyms, Near-synonymy, Verb collocations, Adjective collocations, Senses of meaning, Genres



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Vocabulary learning is crucial for acquiring a second language. (L2). Synonyms are one of the lexical items that L2 learners find it difficult to master (Sridhanyarat, 2018). One of the most frequent difficulties in acquiring vocabulary for language learners is to comprehend the similarities and contrasts of the meaning and usage of synonyms. The most common difficulties for non-native speakers or second language (L2) learners is selecting the suitable words that convey the proper meanings in various contexts. Language learners may substitute a term with its equivalent to add variety to their writing. However, all synonyms cannot be used in every context interchangeably.

Liu (2010) noted that the language phenomena of synonymy is both common and difficult. Synonyms have been an interesting topic in linguistics during the past ten years. Several studies have found that even if synonyms having identical meanings, they cannot completely replace one another due to contextual or perspectives differences. (Harley, 2006). In order to comprehend and appropriately apply words, English language learners frequently use dictionaries. As an illustration, the Online Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2014) defines *quick* as “lasting for or taking only a short time” while *fast* means “moving or able to move quickly”. The meanings of these two terms show that their respective meanings are comparable. Furthermore, due to their limited ability with L2 English, learners are more likely to utilize the synonyms inaccurately. Additionally, even while learners may be familiar with numerous synonyms, they are unable to apply them in a way that is grammatically proper (Phoocharoensil, 2010). As a result, it is expected of learners to note the parallels and discrepancies between the meanings and usage of synonyms.

The different ways that synonyms are used in English language learning websites has drawn a lot of discussion. Internet commenters who produced and shared their responses primarily relied on their own perceptions and offered few empirical supports. These questions include those with the synonyms job, career, and occupation.

Although there have been several studies on synonyms in the past, none have been conducted on these three terms.

Investigating the synonyms *job*, *career*, and *occupation* in terms of the sense of meaning, genre, verb and adjective collocates is the purpose of this study. The data from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) will serve as the key source in this study.

1.2 Research Objectives

- 1) To study similarities and differences between *job*, *career*, and *occupation* in terms of meanings.
- 2) To explore how *job*, *career*, and *occupation* are distributed in different genres.
- 3) To examine the differences among *job*, *career*, and *occupation* in terms of verb and adjective collocations.

1.3 Research Questions

- 1) What are similarities and differences between *job*, *career*, and *occupation* in terms of meanings?
- 2) How are *job*, *career*, and *occupation* distributed in different genres?
- 3) What are the common verb and adjective collocates of the synonyms *job*, *career*, and *occupation*?

1.4 Definitions of Key Terms

- 1) Synonym refers to a term or phrase that nearly has the same meaning as another word or phrase in the same language
- 2) Corpus describes to a systematic electronic collection of authentic texts in both written and in spoken languages on computer software that may be utilized to learn a language in a variety of genres that human intuition would not pick up on.
- 3) Concordance lines refers to a collection of examples of English usage provided by native English speakers which is compiled in a corpus.

4. Collocations refers to words that are often appear more frequently than they would by chance in the same phrase as the headword; nonetheless, some collocations, such strong tea and powerful automobile, are indisputable.

5. COCA refers to the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), the biggest free online corpus, containing more than 450 million words of texts spanning spoken English, novels, magazines, newspaper articles, and academic work from 1990 to the present.

6. MI scores are a statistic utilized by COCA used to determine if two words are collocated together intentionally or if there is a significant connection between them.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The data was gathered from two online dictionaries: the online Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English and the online Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, and one corpus software: the Corpus of Contemporary American English. Concordance lines will be used to analyze the differences among *job*, *career*, and *occupation* to explore in terms of the degrees of formality, verb and adjective collocations.

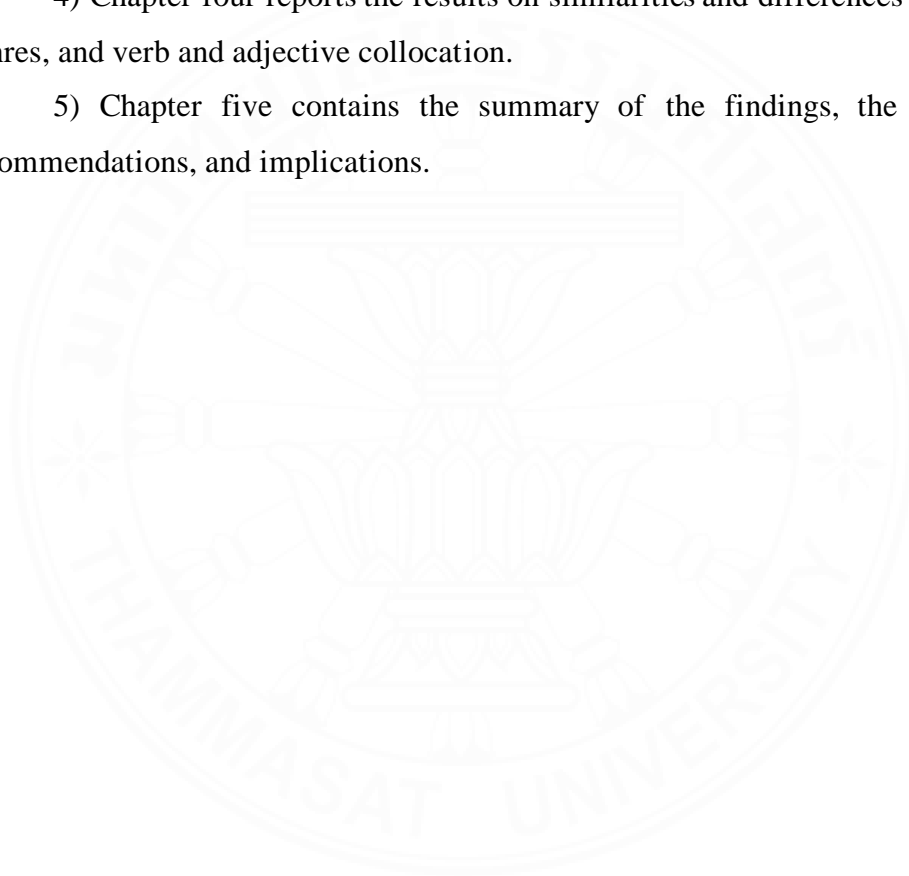
1.6 Significance of the Study

The three synonymous nouns—*job*, *career*, and *occupation*—were selected to examine since they are commonly employed in both spoken and written English. This investigation is significant in numerous aspects. Firstly, the findings of this study can assist L2 learners in better understanding the distinctions between the three synonyms. Secondly, the results can assist students in employing these synonyms accurately and naturally and help learners decrease misunderstanding. Lastly, this study will illustrate the usefulness of corpora, which can be utilized as a teaching tool to enhance EFL teaching and learning.

1.7 Organization of the Study

The study is divided into five chapters as follows:

- 1) Chapter one includes seven topics: the background of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, definitions of terms, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, and the organization of the study.
- 2) Chapter two presents the literature review and related studies.
- 3) Chapter three describes the target words, the materials, the data collection, and data analysis.
- 4) Chapter four reports the results on similarities and differences in meaning, genres, and verb and adjective collocation.
- 5) Chapter five contains the summary of the findings, the conclusion, recommendations, and implications.



CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the literature in three main areas: (1) corpus-based studies, (2) the concept of synonyms, (3) criteria for distinguishing synonyms, and (4) relevant research.

2.1 Corpus-based studies

2.1.1 Definitions of Corpus/Corpora

O'Keeffe et al. (2007) provided the most frequent definition for corpus as a principled collection of texts, both written and spoken, stored on a computer, while Biber et al. (1998) pointed out that the corpus is a collection of written texts that may be used for both qualitative and quantitative analysis. Additionally, concordance lines offer useful in-depth data on how a term is used throughout a corpus or in specific situations (quantitative analysis).

According to Lindquist (2009), through the approach of corpus linguistics, a specific language is investigated for its actual usage. Since this approach to language allows for empirical language research, it has enabled the creation of fields such as discourse analysis and language instruction as well as a thorough knowledge of linguistic elements like grammar and lexis (O'Keeffe et al., 2007).

Moon (2010) indicates that by using corpora to investigate linguistic variables, for example, genres, word frequency, phrases, and collocation, it is feasible to determine the similarities and differences between synonyms.

Many different corpora include a wide variety of texts; thus, some researchers have utilized them as a technique to gather data for their studies, such as the examination of the usage of the words 'fast' and 'quick'. Which word is used more frequently than the other may be determined by counting how many times it appears in the corpus. This approach leads to a quantifiable outcome since the data from the corpus is gathered from a variety of pertinent scenarios that help distinguish the use of synonyms.

Additionally, given that contemporary instructional resources are corpus-based, O'Keeffe and Farr (2003) recommend that teachers be familiar with corpus linguistics

and have the skills necessary to use corpus software. Numerous corpus tools, like Wordsmith Tools, Sketch Engine, the British National Corpus (BNC), and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), are available online.

2.1.2 Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)

Nesselhauf (2011) states that the largest free online resource, Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), has more than 450 million words of text and representative data from eight genres, namely spoken language, fiction, magazines, newspapers, academic texts, TV and movie subtitles, blogs, and web pages. In addition, the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) is a user-friendly software, is versatile, and has contemporary data.

Phoocharoensil (2010) contends that near-synonyms may be distinguished using the COCA corpus. The grammatical patterns, semantic preferences, semantic prosody collocations, and level of formality may all be studied utilizing COCA corpus techniques. The results from COCA corpus can provide more in-depth information from the context data in concordance lines than dictionaries. Therefore, COCA will be used as the major source of data analysis in this study.

2.1.3 Corpus-Based Studies and English Language Teaching

It may not be possible to distinguish between their similarities and differences by just looking up synonyms in a dictionary to determine their meaning or purpose. Corpora are appropriate for this use. O’Keeffe et al. (2007) suggests that several corpus functions, including concordances, wordlists, keyword analysis, and cluster analysis, are useful for language analysis. Concordancing, for instance, can provide real-world usage examples of terms so that learners can study usage trends. In addition, a list of words with a high frequency of occurrence can be displayed via word frequency counts. Listing basic vocabulary is a great use of this function. Using corpus linguistics can improve language teaching and acquisition in a variety of ways. Examples include creating dictionaries based on corpora, creating more genuine teaching materials for ELT classes, and presenting learner language (Mukherjee, 2006).

2.2 The Concept of Synonyms

The Online Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2014) defines a synonym as “a word with the same meaning as another word in the same language” and provides an example synonym as “*shut* is a synonym of *closed*”. The online Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (2015) provides the definition of a synonym as “a word or expression that has the same or nearly the same meaning as another word or phrase in the same language”. For example, *big* and *large* are synonyms.

2.2.1 Perfect Synonyms

According to Chung (2011), *perfect synonyms* or *absolute synonyms* are two interchangeable terms that can be substituted freely without violating the meaning, style or connotation of the texts; however, it is crucial to maintain the connotational meanings and style. For example, Kearns (2006) state that the words *everybody* and *everyone* can be used interchangeably in any context and retain their meanings.

2.2.2 Loose Synonyms

DiMarco et al. (1993) stated that loose synonyms or near-synonyms are synonyms that cannot be used interchangeably. Near-synonyms are “words that share the same central semantic traits but differ in minor or peripheral traits” (Cruse 1986, as cited in Chung 2011, p. 400). According to Jackson and Amvela (2000), near-synonyms have similar meanings to one another, but they cannot always be used in lieu of one another. For example, Nugroho (2018), investigated the words *rich* and *wealthy* and the outcome indicated that these terms cannot be used interchangeably. For instance, *wealthy* cannot substitute *rich* in all contexts, as demonstrated by the sentence “Meat is *rich* in protein”.

2.3 Criteria for distinguishing synonyms

The corpus-based analysis of the three synonymous nouns was completed once the data was gathered from the Oxford Learner’s Dictionary and Longman Dictionary in Online version, and the COCA, manually. There are many criteria to distinguish English synonyms as follows:

2.3.1 Meaning

This refers to words that are applicable in a wide range of situations, have various meanings, and have distinct connotations. Due to the fact that words may have various meanings, their connotations are correlated with the senses that are present in every circumstance (Murphy, 2003). Furthermore, O’Keeffe et al. (2007) indicated that consideration must be given to word meanings and the unique contexts in which they are used, which can lead to ambiguous contexts.

2.3.2 Genres

This refers to a group of verbal (oral and written) and physical actions that have developed into more or less routine within a discourse in order to regularly and uniformly carry out and identify particular socially placed identities and activities. Ruenroeng (2014) investigated the words *ruin*, *demolish*, and *destroy* with the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). The outcomes indicated that *ruin* and *destroy* are mostly used in spoken language. The low frequency in academic texts suggested that it is improper to use the word *ruin* in a formal text. COCA provided data in eight separate genres, i.e. spoken language, fiction, magazines, newspapers, academic texts, TV and movie subtitles, blogs, and webpages. For example, Cai (2012) studied the synonyms *great*, *excellent*, *amazing*, *terrific* and *wonderful*. The results showed that *excellent* is more frequently used than others. *Fabulous*, *fantastic*, *great*, *terrific* and *wonderful* occurred most frequently in the spoken genre, while *awesome* and *excellent* mostly occurred in the magazine genre.

2.3.3 Collocations

According to the Online Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2014), collocation is the frequent usage of certain words together, or a specific grouping of terms used in this manner, e.g. ‘commit a crime’ is a typical collocation in English. Sinclair (1991), defines a collocation as “the occurrence of two or more words within a short space of each other in a text”.

Several researchers have argued that there is no exact definition of collocation. According to Woolard (2000, p. 24) a collocation “is words which are statistically much more likely to appear together than random chance suggests”. Seratan (2011) asserts

that collocation has no exact definition. The researcher maintains that a “collocation is understood as typical combinations of words that differ from regular combinations in that their components co-occur in a short span of text more often than chance would predict”. For example, Palmer’ study (1997) showed that *pay* usually collocates with “attention” and *commit* usually collocates with “crime”.

The current study focuses on verb collocations and adjective collocations of the synonyms *job*, *career*, and *occupation*.

2.4 Relevant Research

Numerous studies have examined how to differentiate between synonyms using corpus-based data from various significant corpora, such as the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) or the British National Corpus (BNC). The most frequently utilized benchmarks by researchers to differentiate between synonyms were meanings and senses of meanings, collocations, grammatical patterns, and degree of formality. In several investigations, data from corpora and dictionaries were compared.

Phoocharoensil (2010) investigated five verb synonyms: *ask*, *beg*, *plead*, *request*, and *appeal*. By concentrating on lexical, syntactic, and stylistic information, the Oxford, Longman, and Cambridge dictionaries were employed as the tools. The data from Time Magazine(1995) was examined using Wordsmith Tools 3.0 software. The findings demonstrated that despite having similar meanings at their core, these synonyms are not always interchangeable in every context of use.

Chung (2011) examined the synonymous verb pair *create* and *produce*. After the data were collected from the Brown Corpus and the Frown Corpus, the results were compared with British National Corpus (BNC) to investigate the collocations. The results showed that the semantic features and contexts provide insightful information to easily decide between *create* and *produce*. The findings indicated that the verbs are comparable in that they both feature the -ed pattern and appear as infinitives. *Create* is always associated with the object that is typically used to describe

smaller, more abstract components. In contrast, *produce* primarily refers to physical objects, manufacturing products, and agricultural products.

Cai (2012) investigated six near-synonyms of *great*, i.e. *awesome*, *excellent*, *fabulous*, *fantastic*, *terrific*, and *wonderful*, in terms of meaning and usage. The data were obtained from COCA corpus to analyze the frequency and collocations. The results showed that all seven synonyms overlap in terms of noun collocations and are mostly used mainly in spoken language. However, each word occurred with different collocates. Therefore, these seven near-synonyms have similar meanings, but they are not fully interchangeable.

Jariyanupong (2018) studied three synonyms, *reveal*, *disclose*, and *divulge*, to investigate the differences and similarities based on context, collocations, grammar forms, and formality using the Cambridge Dictionary and BNC, with 100 concordances lines. The findings showed that the three verbs are near-synonyms and have comparable meanings. The BNC also provided more information than the Cambridge Dictionary in terms of collocations, grammatical patterns, and reference formalism. The three verbs were found to not be interchangeable in all situations.

Jarunwaraphan and Mallikamas (2020), conducted a corpus-based study using both quantitative and qualitative methods on the two synonyms, *chance* and *opportunity*. The data were gathered from COCA and online dictionaries. The results from COCA showed that *chance* and *opportunity* are more frequently used in academic texts and the spoken genre, respectively. Moreover, *chance* and *opportunity* are used least frequently in fiction and academic text, respectively. The list of collocations for each word shows that *opportunity* is used more often in formal contexts and has more semantic preferences than *chance*. In conclusion, the synonyms *chance* and *opportunity* are classified as near-synonyms.

Panruang (2021), studied three synonyms, *garbage*, *trash*, and *rubbish* in terms of meanings, collocations and grammatical patterns by collecting the data from COCA and online dictionaries. The results showed that *garbage*, *trash* and *rubbish* have subtle variances in terms of grammatical patterns, collocations, and detailed meanings, yet

have the same main meaning. The three synonyms cannot always be used interchangeably.

The six studies mentioned above provide evidence in favor of the notion that synonyms do not always have the same meaning in all situations. The distinctive qualities of synonymous terms vary.



CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes: (1) the target words, (2) the materials, (3) the data collection, and (4) data analysis.

3.1 The Target Words

In this present study, three synonymous nouns—*job*, *career*, and *occupation*—were chosen for the study since second language learners frequently utilize them improperly, particularly when it comes to word choice. They were looked up utilizing COCA, an internet corpus search engine.

3.2 The Materials

3.2.1 The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDOCE) and Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (OALD)

There are numerous reputable online dictionaries and thesauruses that offer clear definitions, grammatical patterns, and easily understandable explanations of written and spoken English in both British English and American English, along with pronunciation guidance. Additionally, these resources provide language glossaries for two languages, enabling smooth usage for individuals learning a second language.

3.2.2 Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)

COCA was selected as the primary research instrument due to its status as the largest freely accessible corpus, consistently updated with over one hundred million words of text. It currently houses the most extensive corpus database, evenly distributed across eight distinct genres: spoken language, fiction, magazines, newspapers, academic texts, TV and movie subtitles, blogs, and webpages.

3.3 Data Collection

The process for gathering data of the corpus-based study of three English synonyms, *job*, *career*, and *occupation*, is described in this section.

To answer the first research question, the researcher studied the meanings of the words from the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDOCE) and Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (OALD).

To answer the second research question, each target word was searched in COCA to investigate how they are distributed in eight different genres by comparing their percentages after examining the occurrences.

In order to address the third research question, the researcher looked for the top 20 verb and adjective collocates that frequently appear with the target synonyms. The mutual information (MI) value or score, which assesses whether two words co-occur by accident or have a significant link in terms of collocations, was the corpus statistic utilized to detect collocations for this study. A combination of frequency and the MI value was used in this study to assess the collocational strength. The verb and adjective collocates that are in the top 20 frequency list presented in COCA and whose MI score is ≥ 3 were chosen, which is the value of significance for collocational association (Cheng, 2012).

3.4 Data Analysis

The corpus-based analysis of the three synonyms nouns was done after the data was compiled from the Online Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, the online Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)

To conduct this study, *job*, *career*, and *occupation* were investigated for their meanings, genres, and collocations. The data about meanings were derived from the two online dictionaries: the Online Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English and the online Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary. The key information source was the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). The corpus data exposed details regarding word frequency, genres, and collocations.

3.4.1 Meaning

The dictionary definitions and example sentences were used to explore the meanings of these nouns with the purpose of discovering both similarities and differences.

3.4.2 Genres

By utilizing the "Chart" command and the corpora, it was simple to determine the genre in which each target word is used. Using the chart feature in the COCA interfaces, a researcher can seek the genres and subgenres where a phrase was used.

3.4.3 Collocations

The top twenty verb and adjective collocations that often accompany each word were carefully searched among the three synonymous nouns. In order to identify the words that often occurred alongside the headword and their word classes, the frequency of occurrences of the collocations was studied.

3.4.4 Mutual Information (MI) Score

Both frequency and the MI value were used to calculate to determine the degree of collocation in this study. The verb that collocates the target nouns is among the top 20 nouns in COCA's frequency list and has the MI score of less than 3. According to Phoocharoensil (2017), the MI score demonstrates whether two words collocate randomly or have a significant link. Nevertheless, relying solely on the MI score to determine collocational strength is ineffective since high MI values may occur infrequently across a corpus. In order to assess the strength of collocations, various prior research studies have employed both frequency and the MI score. In the present study, verb and adjective collocates that are in the top-20 frequency list shown in COCA and have the MI score of ≥ 3 were observed.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The information in this chapter addresses three research questions in Chapter 1. The information was divided into three primary categories: 1) the similarities and differences in meaning between *job*, *career*, and *occupation*, 2) corpus-based data on the three synonyms distributed in different genres, and 3) verb and adjective collocations of the three synonyms: *job*, *career*, and *occupation*.

4.1 The Similarities and Differences in Meaning between *job*, *career*, and *occupation*

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English and the online Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary are online resources that were used to acquire the meanings of the three synonymous terms in order to find the shared and the different meanings among these three target words. The meanings of each word are presented below in detail.

Table 4.1

Meanings of job, career, and occupation from Longman Online Dictionary of Contemporary English, and Oxford Advanced Learner's Online Dictionary

Source	<i>Job</i> (N.)	<i>Career</i> (N.)	<i>Occupation</i> (N.)
1. Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English	1. the regular paid work that you do for an employer e.g. It was the first paid job I ever had	1. a job or profession that you have been trained for, and which you do for a long period of your life e.g. He realized that his acting career was over.	1. a job or profession e.g. Please state your name, address and occupation .

	<p>2. something that you are responsible for doing</p> <p>e.g. Raising kids can be a difficult job.</p>	<p>2. the period of time in your life that you spend doing a particular activity</p> <p>e.g. My career as an English teacher didn't last long.</p>	<p>2. a way of spending your time</p> <p>e.g. One of my childhood occupations was collecting stamps.</p>
<p>2. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary</p>	<p>1. work for which you receive regular payment</p> <p>e.g. I don't have a job at the present.</p> <p>2. a particular task or piece of work that you have to do</p> <p>e.g. I've got various jobs around the house to do.</p>	<p>1. the series of jobs that a person has in a particular area of work, usually involving more responsibility as time pass</p> <p>e.g. He had a successful career in television journalism.</p> <p>2. the period of time that you spend in your life working or doing a particular thing</p> <p>e.g. She started her career as an English teacher.</p>	<p>1. a job or profession</p> <p>e.g. Please state your name, age and occupation below.</p> <p>2. the way in which you spend your time, especially when you are not working</p> <p>e.g. Her main occupation seems to be shopping.</p>

The data in Table 4.1 show two definitions from the online Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English and two definitions from the online Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary. The investigation into the three synonymous nouns revealed that they share the core meaning in the sense of "the regular paid work that you do for an employer". The data from the online Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English show that *career* and *occupation* share the same meaning, as they are defined as "a *job* or profession". In addition, the online Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary also define *occupation* as "a *job* or profession". Furthermore, both online dictionaries also present an alternative definition of *career* and *occupation* as "the period of time in one's life dedicated to a specific activity". Interestingly, upon consulting these dictionaries, an additional intriguing aspect emerged: both sources include a definition of *occupation* that pertains to an enjoyable activity pursued during one's leisure time. For instance, one of the provided example sentences reads, "One of my childhood *occupations* was collecting stamps," while another states, "Her main *occupation* seems to be shopping".

In conclusion, the results of this analysis show that *job*, *career*, and *occupation* share the same core meaning of "the regular paid work that you do for an employer". However, when analyzing the example sentences, it was found that *occupation* also conveys the sense of "an activity that you enjoy doing in your free time".

4.2 Genres

According to the findings, the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) offers certain details that cannot be discovered by simply looking through the two online dictionaries. The data show how *job*, *career*, and *occupation* are distributed across eight different genres.

Table 4.2

Distribution of the synonyms job, career, and occupation across eight genres according to frequency

<i>Job</i>			<i>Career</i>			<i>Occupation</i>		
Genre	Frequency	Per million	Genre	Frequency	Per million	Genre	Frequency	Per million
TV/Movie	54,324	424.16	Newspaper	26,066	214.11	Academic texts	3,530	29.47
Blogs	47,355	368.20	Magazine	16,965	134.55	Newspaper	2,314	19.01
Spoken	46,057	365.14	Blogs	14,673	114.09	Webpage	2,045	16.46
Newspaper	44,269	363.63	Web	14,005	112.71	Magazine	1,865	14.79
Webpage	42,835	344.74	Academic texts	12,938	108.01	Blogs	1,576	12.25
Magazine	32,215	255.49	Spoken	11,291	89.51	Spoken	1,571	12.45
Fiction	28,582	241.56	TV/Movie	6,738	52.61	Fiction	706	5.97
Academic texts	17,124	142.95	Fiction	5,003	42.28	TV/Movie	559	4.36
Total	312,761	314.96		107,679	108.44		14,166	14.27

Table 4.2 clearly shows that *job* occurs more frequently than the other two synonyms in every genre in COCA, with a total frequency of 312,761 tokens and almost three times higher than *career* (107,679 tokens), while the total frequency of *occupation* is 14,166.

In terms of genre, the synonyms *job* and *career* have different occurrences. *Job* has a high degree of informality, as its occurrences are highest in number in TV and

movie subtitles (54,324 tokens), followed by blogs (47,355 tokens), and spoken language (46,057 tokens), all of which are representative of informal English. On the contrary, *career* and *occupation* occur with a high frequency in genres with a high degree of formality. As an illustration, *career* occurs with the highest frequency in newspapers (26,066 tokens) and magazines (16,965 tokens), while *occupation* occurs with the highest frequency in academic texts (3,530 tokens) and newspapers (2,314 tokens).

4.3 Collocations

The results showed that *job*, *career*, and *occupation* have both similar and different verb and adjective collocates. These verb and adjective collocates, which have the MI scores of at least 3 or above, were collected from COCA and ranked by their frequency.

4.3.1 Verb collocations of job, career, and occupation

In this section, the verb collocates that are frequently used with the nouns *job*, *career*, and *occupation* are shown and discussed. The verbs that collocates with the target nouns are in the top-20 frequency list presented in COCA.

Table 4.3

The top-20 verb collocations of job, career, and occupation

Rank	<i>Job</i>			<i>Career</i>			<i>Occupation</i>		
	Verb collocate	Frequency	MI Value	Verb collocate	Frequency	MI Value	Verb collocate	Frequency	MI Value
1	lose	13,037	3.42	pursue	1,839	5.42	end	381	3.64
2	create	11,669	3.42	launch	842	4.03	list	95	3.93
3	quit	3,649	4.75	ruin	611	4.69	resist	85	4.40
4	land	1,606	3.53	span	542	6.12	oppose	68	3.57
5	outsource	512	5.27	advance	440	4.00	employ	62	3.43

6	embark	210	5.04	project	29	3.50
7	devote	196	3.50	protest	26	3.38
8	resume	162	3.51	stem	17	3.10
9	derail	135	5.28	sample	14	3.49
10	revive	113	3.70	aspire	13	4.08
11	jeopardize	99	4.51	legitimize	7	4.47
12	progress	93	3.04	entrench	7	4.58
13	aspire	83	3.98	liberate	6	3.09
14	juggle	73	4.42	predate	6	4.33
15	stall	57	3.14	levy	3	3.18
16	resurrect	55	4.14	eschew	3	3.22
17	wreck	48	3.30	exile	3	3.47
18	restart	34	3.36	braid	3	3.95
19	sabotage	32	3.31	plunder	2	3.38
20	blossom	31	3.89	acquiesce	2	3.42

From Table 4.3, there were only five frequent verb collocates of *job* based on frequency and MI scores (≥ 3). Surprisingly, the three synonyms did not share any common verb collocates. Only *career* and *occupation* share one verb collocate, which is “aspire”.

Semantic Preference

Table 4.4

Semantic preference of the verb collocates of job

1. Transition	lose, quit
2. Formation	create
3. Miscellaneous	land, outsource

The semantic preference of each verb collocate determined how they were all categorized. In Table 4.4, the verb collocates of *job* were categorized into three themes, namely Transition, Formation, and Miscellaneous. The theme “Transition” consists of *lose* and *quit*. “Formation” consists of *create* while *land* and *outsource* were classified under “Miscellaneous”.

Table 4.5

Semantic preference of the verb collocates of career

1. Destruction	derail, jeopardize, ruin, sabotage, stall, wreck
2. Restore	restart, resume, resurrect, revive
3. Desire	aspire, devote, pursue
4. Development	advance, further, progress
5. Start	embark, launch
6. Miscellaneous	juggle, span

Unlike the semantic preference of verb collocate of *job*, *career* can be categorized into six themes. The theme that consists of most verbs collocates is “Destruction”, i.e. *derail, jeopardize, ruin, sabotage, stall, and wreck*. While *restart, resume, resurrect, and revive* were classified under “Restore”. “Desire” consists of *aspire, devote, and pursue*. The verb collocates that represent “Development” are *advance, further and progress*. *Embark, and launch* were categorized under “Start”. Lastly, *juggle, and span* are under “Miscellaneous”.

Table 4.6

Semantic preference of the verb collocates of occupation

1. Prevention	end, oppose, protest, resist
2. Negative sense	eschew, exile, plunder

3. Law and order	legitimize, liberate
4. Protrude	project, stem
5. Positive sense	entrench
6. Miscellaneous	aspire, acquiesce, braid, employ, levy, list, predate, sample

According to Table 4.6, the semantic preference of the verb collocates of *occupation* can be categorized into six themes. The theme “Prevention” consists of *end*, *oppose*, *protest*, and *resist*. The verb collocates that represent “Negative sense” *eschew*, *exile*, *plunder* while *legitimize* and *liberate* are classified under “Law and order”. “Protrude” consists of *project* and *stem*. *Entrench* is classified under “Positive sense”. Lastly, *aspire*, *acquiesce*, *braid*, *employ*, *levy*, *list*, *predate*, and *sample* belong to “Miscellaneous”.

4.3.2 Adjective collocations of job, career, and occupation

Described and illustrated in this section are the adjective collocates that are often used with the nouns *job*, *career*, and *occupation*. The adjectives that collocate with the target nouns are in the top-20 frequency list presented in COCA.

Table 4.7

The top-20 adjective collocations of job, career, and occupation

Rank	<i>Job</i>			<i>Career</i>			<i>Occupation</i>		
	Adjective collocate	Frequency	MI Value	Adjective collocate	Frequency	MI Value	Adjective collocate	Frequency	MI Value
1	full-time	2,284	5.51	entire	1,594	3.73	military	446	4.24
2	past-time	1,644	5.73	successful	1,357	4.14	foreign	202	3.65
3	excellent	1,322	3.02	professional	1,347	4.08	democratic	133	3.28
4	paying	897	6.65	academic	847	3.90	illegal	110	4.04
5	odd	877	3.09	acting	497	6.64	professional	107	3.20
6	decent	879	3.47	distinguished	409	5.79	brutal	90	5.64
7	high-paying	434	7.75	technical	315	3.04	retired	77	5.14
8	inside	403	3.65	promising	276	4.23	continued	72	4.77

9	menial	333	6.72	brilliant	238	3.16	full-time	60	4.85
10	entry-level	277	5.69	lucrative	238	5.40	related	53	3.72
11	low-paying	275	7.76	athletic	200	3.37	colonial	52	4.58
12	stressful	264	3.58	illustrious	178	7.19	ongoing	48	3.61
13	low-wage	262	6.09	stellar	149	4.83	permanent	42	3.36
14	private-sector	248	5.59	rewarding	139	5.10	allied	41	5.40
15	lousy	246	3.45	storied	132	6.49	parental	38	4.40
16	well-paying	246	7.87	chosen	128	4.43	postwar	34	5.28
17	superb	214	3.44	full-time	124	3.13	belligerent	33	7.45
18	thankless	213	6.81	collegiate	105	4.89	armed	32	3.10
19	good-paying	200	8.13	satisfying	101	3.79	subsequent	32	3.41
20	lucrative	185	3.22	legendary	100	3.26	hazardous	24	4.55

Table 4.7 shows that there is one common adjective collocate between the three target synonyms, which is “full-time”. It is in number one in the adjective collocates of *job*, while in the 17th place in the adjective collocate of *career* and ranked in the 9th place in *occupation*. Moreover, “professional” is in 3rd place in *career* and the 5th place in *occupation*. Another shared adjective collocate of *job* and *career* is “lucrative”, which ranks as the 20th collocate with *job* but in 10th place for the adjective collocates of *career*.

Semantic Preference

Table 4.8

Semantic preference of the adjective collocates of job

1. Payment	good-paying, high-paying, low-paying, low-wage, paying, well-paying
2. Quality	decent, excellent, lousy, superb

3. Temporal dimension	full-time, past-time
4. Feeling	stressful, thankless
5. Fundamental	entry-level, menial
6. Miscellaneous	inside, lucrative, odd, private-sector

Most of the adjectives that co-occur across all six themes in Table 4.8 are related to the category “Payment” i.e. *good-paying, high-paying, low-paying, low-wage, paying, and well-paying*. There are also some adjectives representing “Quality” i.e. *decent, excellent, lousy, and superb*. *Full-time* and *past-time* were placed under “Temporal dimension”. *Stressful* and *thankless* are viewed as members under the theme “Feeling”, while *entry-level* and *menial* are under “Fundamental”, as they represent unskilled and the lowest level. Lastly, *inside, lucrative, odd, and private-sector* were assigned to “Miscellaneous”.

Table 4.9

Semantic preference of the adjective collocates of career

1. Positive sense	brilliant, distinguished, illustrious, lucrative, promising, rewarding, satisfying, stellar, successful
2. Specialized	athletic, legendary, professional, technical
3. Academic	academic, collegiate
4. Miscellaneous	acting, chosen, entire, full-time, storied

By examining the semantic preference more carefully of adjective collocates of *career*, four main motifs were found. Of all the four themes shown in Table 4.9, the category “Positive sense” consists of the most co-occurring adjectives i.e. *brilliant, distinguished, illustrious, lucrative, promising, rewarding, satisfying, stellar, and successful*. There are also some adjectives representing “Specialized” as in *athletic, legendary, professional, and technical*. Three adjective collocates under “Academic” are *academic, and collegiate*, while *acting, chosen, entire, full-time, and storied* which have no connection to any theme, are placed under “Miscellaneous”.

Table 4.10*Semantic preference of the adjective collocates of occupation*

1. War	armed, belligerent, colonial, military, postwar
2. Connection	allied, foreign, related
3. Quality/ Characteristic	brutal, permanent
4. Progressing	continued, ongoing
5. Miscellaneous	democratic, full-time, illegal, parental, professional, retired

According to Table 4.10, the semantic preference of the adjective collocates of *occupation* can be categorized into five themes. The theme “War” includes *armed, belligerent, colonial, military, and postwar*. There are also some adjectives representing “Connection” as in *allied, foreign, and related*. “Quality/Characteristic” consists of *brutal and permanent*. Two adjectives under “Progressing” are *continued, and ongoing*. Lastly, adjectives under the theme “Miscellaneous” are *democratic, full-time, illegal, parental, professional, and retired*.

The next chapter will provide an overview and the discussion of the findings.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter consists of four topics: 1) a summary of the findings, 2) the conclusion, 3) recommendations, and 4) implications.

5.1 Summary of the Findings

The results of the investigation of the synonym nouns *job*, *career*, and *occupation* suggest that, although having similar core meanings, the three target words are not interchangeable in all situations, as demonstrated by using two dictionaries and COCA corpus software. Additional information will be clarified in accordance with the subsequent research questions.

5.1.1 Meaning

The data from two online dictionaries, the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDOCE) and Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (OALD), reveals that all the target synonyms share the same core meaning of “the regular paid work that you do for an employer”. Moreover, another definition of *occupation* from both online dictionaries can refer to “an activity that you enjoy doing in your free time” as in example sentence provided “One of my childhood *occupations* was collecting stamps” and “Her main *occupation* seems to be shopping”.

5.1.2 Genres

The data from the COCA Corpus shows that *job* occurs more frequently than the other two synonyms in every genre and almost three times higher than *career* and almost twenty-three times higher than *occupation*.

Job frequently appears in TV and movie subtitles, blogs and spoken language, all of which are representative of informal English, as opposed to *career* and *occupation* that occur with a high frequency in genres with a high degree of formality. *Career* occurs with the highest frequency in newspapers and magazines, while *occupation*

occurs with the highest frequency in academic texts and newspapers, which are forms of written materials.

In summary, *job* has the highest degree of informality as its distribution in informal English and spoken texts is high, and it has the least association with formal genres. *Career* and *occupation* have a high distribution in formality and written texts since their frequency is high in newspapers, magazines and academic texts.

5.1.3 Collocations

Another intriguing finding from the investigation was that although they are near-synonyms sharing the core meaning of “the regular paid work that you do for and employer”, the three nouns share only one adjective collocation: “full-time”.

5.1.3.1 Verb collocations: The findings demonstrate that there are only five frequent verb collocates of *job* based on frequency and MI scores (≥ 3). Surprisingly, the three synonyms did not share any common verb collocates. Only *career* and *occupation* share one verb collocate, which is “aspire”.

Through a deeper examination of the semantic preference, *job* frequently occurs with three sets of semantic preferences, which are *transition*, *formation*, and *miscellaneous*. *Career* are associated with six themes, which are *destruction*, *restore*, *desire*, *development*, *start* and *miscellaneous*. The largest group with up to six verb collocations is *destruction*. In addition, *career* indicates a connection with both negative sense and positive sense of verb collocations as its first group of semantic preference is words that relate to harm or destruction and its second and fourth group of semantic preference is words referring to a positive sense. *Occupation* is connected with six groups of semantic preferences; *prevention*, *negative sense*, *law and order*, *protrude*, positive sense and miscellaneous.

5.1.3.2 Adjective collocations: The outcome of the study shows that there is only one common adjective collocate between the three target synonyms, which is “full-time”. Moreover, there are some common adjectives in two pair synonyms. “Professional” is found in *career* and *occupation*. Another shared adjective collocate of *job* and *career* is “lucrative”.

Examining the target words in detail for semantic preference, *job* is associated with six themes, which are *payment*, *quality*, *temporal dimension*, *feeling*, *fundamental*, and *miscellaneous*. The majority group with up to six adjective collocations is payment. *Career* frequently occurs with four sets of semantic preferences which are positive sense, specialized, academic, and miscellaneous. The majority group with up to nine adjective collocations is positive sense. *Occupation* is connected with five groups of semantic preferences: *war*, *quality/characteristics*, *connection*, *progressing*, and miscellaneous.

5.2 Conclusion

The objective of the investigation of the study is to observe the similarity and differences of the three synonyms—*job*, *career*, and *occupation*—concerning their meanings, genres, and verb and adjective collocations. The two online dictionaries and the COCA corpus are the main sources of data. The findings revealed that the three target synonyms hold the same core meaning of “the regular paid work that you do for an employer”. However, *job*, *career*, and *occupation* cannot be used in every context interchangeably for the reason that they vary in degree of formality and frequently accompany verbs and adjectives with different semantic preferences.

The investigation has shown that *job*, *career*, and *occupation* are near-synonyms.

5.3 Recommendations

Due to time limitations, this study specifically focuses on the similarities and differences among three synonymous terms: *job*, *career*, and *occupation*, focusing on their meanings, genres, and verb and adjective collocations. However, it is worth noting that there are various factors that distinguish near-synonyms, as discussed in the existing literature, which could be explored in future research. These factors include

pragmatic functions, connotations, and cross-sociolinguistic applications. Another important area of investigation is the examination of how EFL learners inaccurately employ synonyms in written texts. This aspect warrants further attention.

5.4 Implications

The results of this study align with previous research, indicating that near-synonyms are more prevalent than perfect or absolute synonyms in the English language. Near-synonyms demonstrate distinguishable characteristics and are not universally interchangeable in all contexts, despite sharing a fundamental meaning. These distinctions manifest in various aspects, including meanings, genres, and collocations.

When teaching synonymous terms, it is crucial for educators to highlight these subtle differences, as second language (L2) learners often encounter challenges when using synonyms. Emphasizing these distinctions can enhance L2 learners' comprehension and awareness that not all synonyms can be used interchangeably. Additionally, incorporating authentic examples derived from corpus-based data can be valuable for teachers in developing lesson plans or designing vocabulary learning activities for L2 learners.

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