

A CORPUS-BASED STUDY OF ENGLISH  
SYNONYMS: *CHANCE* AND *OPORTUNITY*



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การศึกษาคำพ้องภาษาอังกฤษ **Chance** และ **Opportunity** โดยใช้คลังข้อมูล



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By                                      Miss Boonrak Jarunwaraphan  
Field of Study                      English  
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บุญรักษ์ จรรย์วรรณ : การศึกษาคำพ้องภาษาอังกฤษ *Chance* และ *Opportunity* โดยใช้คลังข้อมูล. (A CORPUS-BASED STUDY OF ENGLISH SYNONYMS: *CHANCE* AND *OPORTUNITY*) อ.ที่ปรึกษาหลัก : รศ.ปรีมา มัลลิกะมาส

งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อวิเคราะห์ความต่างและความเหมือนของคำนามพ้องความหมาย ได้แก่ *chance* และ *opportunity* ข้อมูลที่ใช้มาจากคลังข้อมูลภาษาอังกฤษร่วมสมัยแบบอเมริกัน (*Corpus of Contemporary American English*) และพจนานุกรมออนไลน์ภาษาอังกฤษ วิจัยใช้วิธีการแบบผสมผสานทั้งในเชิงปริมาณและคุณภาพ ความถี่ (word frequency) ของคำนามทั้งสองถูกนำมาวิเคราะห์การกระจายตัวในตัวบททั้งหมดใน COCA ได้แก่ หมวดภาษาพูด หมวดนวนิยาย หมวดนิตยสารยอดนิยม หมวดหนังสือพิมพ์ และหมวดวิชาการ *opportunity* พบว่าใช้บ่อยที่สุดในหมวดตัวบทวิชาการ และพบน้อยที่สุดในหมวดนวนิยาย ในทางกลับกัน *chance* พบน้อยที่สุดในหมวดตัวบทวิชาการ และมากที่สุดในหมวดภาษาพูด คำกล่าวอ้างที่ว่า *opportunity* มักใช้ในจันลีลาแบบทางการ (formal style) มากกว่า *chance* มีข้อสนับสนุนจากจำนวนคำที่เป็นคำเชิงวิชาการ ในรายการคำปรากฏร่วมจำเพาะ (collocate) ของ *opportunity* แม้ว่ากรณีที่ *chance* มีความหมายที่มีมากกว่า *opportunity* จะสะท้อนสถานะคำหลายความหมาย (polysemous status) แต่ *chance* และคำปรากฏร่วมจำเพาะของคำนามนี้ ให้ความหมายเชิงอรรถสัมพันธ์ (semantic preference) ที่น้อยกว่า *opportunity*



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The study aims to investigate differences and similarities of two synonymous nouns, *chance* and *opportunity*. The sources of data were from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) and online dictionaries. The study applied mixed methodology in both quantitative and qualitative aspects. The overall frequency was investigated to find the distributions of the two nouns across the five text types in COCA, which are spoken, fiction, popular magazines, newspapers, and academic journals. *Opportunity* was used most frequently in academic texts and was least found in fiction. On the other hand, *chance* least occurred in the genre of academic text and was found most in the spoken genre. The claim that *opportunity* tends to be used more often in formal style than its near synonym was supported by a number of academic words in the lists of its collocates. Although a wider range of meanings of *chance* reflects its polysemous status, *chance* and its collocates have fewer semantic preferences than those of *opportunity*.



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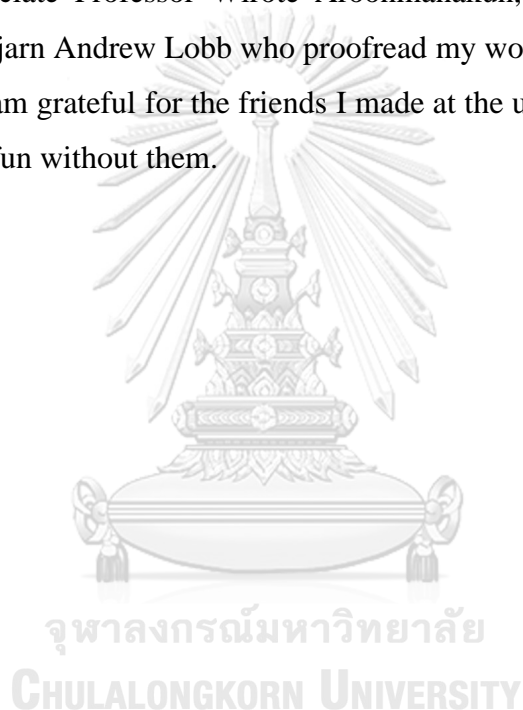
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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Not many research studies have been conducted on English nominal synonyms, but one corpus-based study on the differences between two near-synonymous nouns – *problem* and *trouble* by Jirananthiporn (2018) has drawn attention to the need for more investigation on differences of nominal synonyms. The researcher found a pair of problematic near-synonyms, *chance* and *opportunity*, worth examining. The present study is based on the assumption that many L2 learners might overuse *chance* in the meaning of *opportunity* in written texts. This could result from an assumption that *opportunity* has higher degree of formality than *chance*. Both *chance* and *opportunity* have multiple meanings, but they often are used with the same meaning of ‘opportunity.’

The study aims to find how frequency of the patterns of *chance* and *opportunity* in the five genres (i.e. spoken, fiction, popular magazines, newspapers, and academic journals) of the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) differs and to identify the two synonyms’ verb and adjective collocates. In addition, the study aims to emphasize the importance of teaching vocabulary within its context and/or giving specific examples to precisely present the use of vocabulary. The results of the study can be useful for any word-list compilers who wish to create vocabulary teaching materials. The implications of this study can also be applied by ESP students to learn how to use near-synonyms considering their similarities and differences, resulting in more effective word choice in their language performance. The insights of the study can also benefit anyone who wishes to explore corpora to learn more about words’ behaviors and their collocations in different contexts and genres.

To analyse *chance* and *opportunity*’s synonymous status, their collocations, similarities and differences are taken into account, leading to the research questions and the scope of the study as follows:

1. What are frequency differences of *chance* and *opportunity* and their patterns of distribution across the genres in COCA?
2. What are collocation patterns of *chance* and *opportunity*?

3. What are the similarities and differences of the two synonyms in terms of meanings and collocations?

According to Jirananthiporn (2018), a corpus linguistic perspective includes both quantitative and qualitative aspects. The first research question covers the quantitative aspect of word usage referring to the distribution patterns of the two nouns. The second and third questions involve the aspect of qualitative analysis, which can elaborate ways of distinguishing the two synonyms.

Section 2 provides details of English synonymy and synonymous classification, including the explanations of corpus linguistics and elements involved in the methodology of the analysis. In addition, a few previous corpus linguistic studies of synonyms are also included. Another perspective that can be drawn from analyzing synonyms is '*semantic prosody*,' which can be found in the same section with explanations accompanied by several previous studies on this concept. In Section 3, methodology – research tools and procedures are explained and the results with the answers to the research questions are discussed in Section 4. Conclusion and pedagogical implications are given in Section 5.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

#### 2.1 Synonymy

To begin with, the Greek roots *syn* ‘alike’ and *onym* ‘name’ are combined and together as one word which refers to words having the same meaning (Murphy, 2010). However, this is a rare case where words can be substituted without any change in meaning. The **substitutability test** can be used to investigate synonyms. According to Murphy (2010), *person* and *human* are synonyms whereas *man* and *person* are not. *Person* is *human* and both of them can refer to not only *man* but *girl*, *boy*, *woman* etc. *Person* can refer to many things such as boys, girls and women while *man* cannot.

In general, synonyms can be divided into two main types: absolute/strict synonyms and near/loose synonyms. However, ‘sense synonyms’ is also taken into consideration and discussed by well-known scholars such as Kearns (2006) and Murphy (2010).

**Absolute synonymy** requires the meanings of synonyms to be interchangeable in any context, including identical *connotation* (i.e. a feeling or idea a particular word conveys, Finegan, 2007 as cited in Phoocharoensil, 2010) and style/formality such as *everybody* and *everyone* (Kearns, 2006). An example of the substitution test is given by Murphy (2010: 110) as shown below in (1) and (2).

(1) My tummy feels a bit *funny* (= peculiar, ≠ comical) whenever I eat fish.

(2) Anna told a hilariously *funny* (≠ peculiar, = comical) joke.

*Funny* and *peculiar* are synonyms and *funny* is also a synonym of *comical*. *Funny* can substitute for *peculiar* in some contexts, but it may not be replaced by *comical* in some cases. They are interchangeably substitutable, but they share one sense of meaning which is ‘strange’. Therefore, they are **sense synonyms** not absolute ones.

Next, **loose/near-synonyms** are not absolute in meanings, but they do share looser similarities of sense. Murphy (2010: 111) presents an example of this type, which is *obtain* and *acquire*. Both of them have the same sense of ‘get,’ but they are irreplaceable in the same context, as illustrated in (3) and (4).

(3) Ian *obtained/acquired* three diplomas.

(4) a. Ian *obtained* permission to land. (? acquire)

b. Ian *acquired* a British accent. ( $\neq$  obtained)

Murphy further discusses ‘sense near-synonyms’ by giving an example of near-synonyms considered by dialect, *bathroom* in American English and *loo* in British English. Even though they both refer to a place people use to empty the body of urine and solid waste, they have different senses. The former refers to a room with a toilet with or without a bath while the latter means a room with just a toilet. Both of them then are considered sense near-synonyms “but dialectal variants” (Murphy, 2010, p. 112).

In the case of the selected synonymous nouns in this study, *chance* and *opportunity* are near-synonyms because they share similar senses, but they are not interchangeably substitutable in every register.

## 2.2 Corpus linguistics and English synonyms

Corpus linguistics can assist the study of synonyms. As a method, languages can be studied for their real usage (Lindquist, 2009 as cited in Petcharat & Phoocharoensil, 2017). Corpus, as a combination of naturally-occurring texts, can provide data for researchers to investigate the natural use of linguistic features (e.g. grammar and lexis) and linguistic variations (i.e. selection of alternative linguistic features according to constrained contexts in which they appear). A salient characteristic of corpus is its combination of quantitative and qualitative perspectives to describe authentic language use (Biber et al., 1998, as cited in Jirananthiporn, 2018).

In terms of quantitative analysis, corpus linguistics allows an investigation of frequency of distribution patterns of, for example, lexical items or phrases, in different genres of texts such as fiction, spoken and academic journals. In order to distinguish synonyms, criteria need to be established. For example, Sinclair (2004) provides four types of lexical co-occurrence to identify subtle differences of near-synonyms, which are *collocation*, *colligation*, *semantic preference* and *semantic prosody* (as cited in Jirananthiporn, 2018). Phoocharoensil (2010) suggests a set of criteria to differentiate

English synonyms, which are *dialects, degree of formality, connotations, grammatical patterns* and *collocations*. The following lists are the definitions of each criterion:

1. **Collocation** is the natural co-occurrence of words. Hoey (1991), as cited in Jirananthiporn (2018), notes that the relationship of co-occurring words is probable rather than random. In other words, lexical items are likely to constitute dependent selections of collocates (Sinclair & Carter, 2004). The noun ‘collocate’ refers to words or phrases commonly used with other words or phrases. For example, “*general trend, general perception, general drift, general opinion, general consent,*” the adjective ‘*general*’ does not add a clear meaning to these nouns but it underlines part of the meanings of these nouns. It can be said that these nouns in collocation with the adjective *general* are connected syntagmatically (Sinclair & Carter, 2004, p. 22).
2. **Colligation**, according to Firth (1957b), is “the co-occurrence of grammatical choices” (as cited in Sinclair & Carter, 2004, p. 32). Sinclair (2004) provides an example of this concept, which is the phrase ‘*naked eye*’ colligating with a grammatical class – prepositions, which are *with* and *by*. The concept seems similar to collocation but “it involves co-occurrence between a search word and a particular grammatical category” or a part of speech, as suggested in Jirananthiporn (2018, p. 5).
3. **Grammatical patterns** refer to two types of patterns that are co-selected: grammar (syntax or structure) and lexis (semantics). In a pattern of organization, “the items tend to be chosen individually and with little reference to the surrounding text” (Sinclair & Carter, 2004, p. 164). In other words, a grammatical pattern can be compared to a slot that produces items to fill in positions in the slot. For example, the pattern of the adjective *capable* requires a prepositional phrase headed by *of*.
4. **Semantic preference**, which is explicitly explained in Jirananthiporn (2018), is the co-occurrence of a particular word with lexical items at the semantic level, sharing the same semantic feature. For example, adjectives found with the phrase ‘*naked eye*’ such as *apparent, obvious* and

*undetectable* share the same semantic feature of ‘visibility’ (Sinclair & Carter, 2004).

5. **Semantic prosody** is attitudinal and refers to the co-occurrence of words at the pragmatic level (Louw, 1993). According to Sinclair and Carter (2004), semantic prosody needs to be considered by not only what a search word means but also its surroundings in the context. For example, when ‘*naked eye*’ collocates with the adjectives mentioned above, they all have ‘visibility’ as their shared semantic feature. However, when the phrase co-occurs with the verb *see* and is found with adjectives such as *small*, *faint* and *weak*, they convey the same semantic prosody of ‘difficulty.’
6. **Connotation** is “semantic associations that a word has, which are not strictly part of the denotative meaning of the word” (Murphy, 2010, p. 33). For example, the verbs *smile* and *sneer* are synonyms sharing a meaning of a facial expression of a person. However, the former has a positive connotation expressing friendliness and happiness. Unlike *smile*, *sneer* carries a negative connotation meaning an unkind and disrespectful expression by a person towards someone or something. This concept is different from semantic preference in terms of being considered by ‘feelings.’ For example, *lady* and *woman* can refer to females, but the former has a connotation of ‘refinement.’ Unlike *lady*, *woman* seems to have a neutral connotation since it is generally used to refer to an adult female.
7. **Dialect** is suggested to be part of differentiating synonyms by Phoocharoensil (2010). Words referring to the same thing can be different in dialects such as British English (BrE) and American English (AmE). Several pairs of British-American English synonyms are listed as follows: soccer (AmE) – football (BrE), football (AmE) – American football (BrE) and elevator (AmE) – lift (BrE).
8. **Degree of formality** refers to words sharing similar meanings but having different degrees of formality (Petcharat & Phoocharoensil, 2017). The concept can be justified by distribution patterns of a search word in different genres of texts such as spoken and academic journals. For example, Phoocharoensil (2010) suggests a pair of synonyms: *understand* and



*comprehend*. The former seems to be less formal than the latter according to the distribution patterns in the genres of spoken, fiction and academic journals in COCA. *Understand* occurs most in the genres of spoken and fiction, unlike *comprehend*.

Some of these concepts seem to be overlapping, however, they all can give insights into the analysis of synonyms. The different co-occurrences of lexical items can identify words' behavior and their usage. Moreover, these concepts can set a scope for a study and differentiate synonyms despite their similarity of meanings.

### **2.3 Related previous studies**

This part of Section 2 introduces several previous corpus-based studies on English synonyms and semantic prosody. These studies can provide guidelines and insights into methodology and analysis of the present study.

#### ***2.3.1 Previous corpus-based studies on English synonyms***

Many corpus-based studies have discussed both similarities and differences of synonyms. Some of the studies on the matters are briefly presented in this part, starting with Phoocharoensil (2010). He examined the lexical, stylistic and syntactic information of five English verb synonyms: *ask*, *beg*, *plead*, *request* and *appeal*. The data were drawn from three learner's dictionaries: Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (OALD, 2005), Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDOCE, 2009), and Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (CALD, 2009). Moreover, additional information (from concordance lines) about the five synonyms was taken from *Time* (1995) which represented journalistic language. Then all the collected data were analysed based on the five criteria to distinguish synonyms: dialects, formality, connotations, grammatical patterns and collocations.

The use of the five verbs was generally found in every dialect, but some idiomatic expressions were used differently in a specific region. In terms of degree of formality, it was found that *request* and *appeal* tend to be used in more formal contexts than the other three synonyms, with the evidence of their co-occurrence with the words expressing formality. For connotations, *appeal* has neutral meaning. However, when it

is used together with the preposition *against*, the meaning expressed is negative. Then, the grammatical patterns of the five verbs were compared and contrasted. Meanings of their collocations were also discussed, highlighting the benefits of further information from corpus data that might be unavailable in learner's dictionaries.

GU (2017) conducted a corpus-based study of two synonyms: *obtain* and *gain*. The study concentrated on genre, colligation, collocation and semantic prosody of the two verbs. The data came from three online corpora: *Sketch Engine*, *BNC* and *Just the word*. They were compared with information provided by the online Oxford Dictionary (2005) in order to emphasize what language learners can find besides learners' dictionaries. For genre difference, *obtain* is commonly found in written English relating to natural and pure science and applied science. On the other hand, *gain* is more ubiquitous in commerce, finance and social science. For the genre of world affairs, *gain* is more frequently used than *obtain*.

The next focus is colligation difference. Regarding the noun collocation of *obtain*, it often collocates with nouns in concrete concepts such as *information* and *property*, nouns that show acknowledgement such as *approval* and *permission*, and nouns in material forms showing acknowledgement such as *license* and *certificate*. For its counterpart, *gain* tends to collocate with nouns in abstract concepts, for instance, *confidence*, *insight*, *reputation*, *idea* and *view*. However, it also collocates with nouns having concrete meanings, e.g. *seat* and *ground*, and they often co-occur in political contexts. While *obtain* frequently collocates with adverbs of manner (e.g. *dishonestly*), adverbs of time (e.g. *previously*) and adverbs of place (*elsewhere*), *gain* is likely to collocate with adverbs of degree (e.g. *considerably*), and adverbs of frequency (e.g. *gradually*).

Lastly, the study examined the difference in semantic prosody. It depends on the nouns with which the verbs *obtain* and *gain* collocate. For example, *obtain* collocating with nouns such as *problem* and *low wage* can refer to negative meanings whereas collocating with nouns like *support* and *consent* which have positive denotation can give positive meanings. All in all, *obtain* has neutral and both positive and negative semantic prosody. *Gain*, however, often collocates with nouns that have positive denotation, for example, *popularity*, *confidence* and *value*, expressing positive

semantic prosody. In the end, it was found that the Oxford Dictionary seems to fail to provide the semantic prosody of the vocabulary, despite the attempt to offer collocations with definitions. The study also proposed data-driven learning, i.e. encouraging students to explore corpus data and discover the answers to their own questions. Finally, it emphasized the importance of semantic prosody in English-Chinese translation.

Petcharat and Phoocharoensil (2017) investigated three synonymous adjective, i.e. *appropriate*, *proper* and *suitable* focusing on their meanings, degree of formality, collocations, and grammatical patterns. They compared the synonyms' meanings from three dictionaries: Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English 6th edition (2014), Longman Advanced American Dictionary 3rd edition (2013), and Macmillan Collocations Dictionary (2010). From the data, they found that the three synonyms share the same core meaning, but they cannot be used interchangeably in all contexts.

Apart from the three dictionaries, three hundred concordance lines of each synonym were drawn from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). AntConc (a corpus-analysis software program) was used to facilitate the analysis process. The data from the corpus provided information about the selected synonyms' word frequency, degree of formality, collocations and grammatical patterns. The researchers reported that COCA can provide more information about degree of formality through the drawn concordance lines. Each synonym's lines differ in scores based on their appearance in formal contexts. However, the differences are less obvious among the three words unlike the comparisons between *appropriate* and *proper*, and *appropriate* and *suitable*.

As for their collocations, the data were taken from both sources (three selected dictionaries and COCA) to compare noun and adverb collocates of the three adjectives. It was found that the three synonyms share some common noun and adverb collocates, but not all collocates can be used with the three of them. Since they are synonyms sharing the core meaning and some collocates, they do have similar grammatical structures. The results of this study are similar to Phoocharoensil (2010). No matter how much the synonyms are alike, they cannot replace each other in all contexts.

Another recent corpus-based study on English synonyms was conducted by Sayyed and Al-Khanji (2019). The study aimed to examine eight synonymous

adjectives of fear: *afraid, scared, frightened, startled, fearful, horrified* and *petrified* in terms of dialects, frequency, distribution across different genres and core meanings. With such objectives, the authors chose to explore the differences of the eight adjectives in two corpora, the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) and the British National Corpus (BNC), and two online dictionaries, Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDOCE) and Merriam Webster's dictionary (MWD). The answers to the three research questions were discussed respectively. The first question is: *Which of the eight adjectives is the most frequently used based on BNC and COCA?* The adjectives having the highest frequencies in both corpora are *afraid, scared* and *frightened*. One reason is due to the history of words. *Afraid* first appeared in the 14th century while *scared* and *frightened* in the 16th century. This could suggest that the earlier occurrence of words might be related to more frequencies of use. The other reason is that the three adjectives have more than one sense. For example, according to MWD, *frightened* seems to have two senses: 'feeling fear' and 'made to feel afraid.' The idiom 'frightened of your own shadow' means 'easily frightened or very nervous,' according to LDOCE. As for *terrified*, it seems to have a higher degree of fear, which is 'very frightened.' When this adjective takes part in the idiom "terrified out of her wits," it means 'to be frightened very much.' As can be seen from these examples, their high frequencies can also result from their frequent use in idiomatic expressions.

The second question is: *In which genres are the eight adjectives used based on the two corpora?* The eight adjectives appear the most in fiction and spoken genres. Moreover, they seem to be less used in the academic genre. The reason behind their high rate of occurrence in the fiction genre is they are descriptive words that are often used to give readers a clear picture and to create emotional sequence in reading. The authors also discussed the low frequency of the eight adjectives in the academic genre. Both American and British speakers tend to use formal language in academic contexts. Since they are considered informal, the adjectives then have the lowest frequencies in this genre.

The last question is 'what are the core meanings of the eight adjectives based on the information from the two corpora and dictionaries.' Basically, the core meaning of the eight synonyms is 'the feeling of fright'. In comparison, LDOCE provides more idiomatic sense with more examples than MWD, for example, *afraid of your own*

*shadow*, *scared out of your wits* and *terrified out of your wits*, according to the data. The results from the two corpora, regarding idiomatic sense, show the other possibilities of the same idiomatic structures given by the dictionaries, and other idiomatic expressions giving different meanings. The pedagogical implications of the study seem to suggest that using more than one dictionary can be beneficial to study meanings of synonyms. In addition, other options of elements in the idioms given in dictionaries can be found in both corpora, BNC and COCA.

Compared to synonymous adjectives, corpus-based studies on synonymous nouns seem to be more limited in the field. One corpus-based study examining the differences between the two synonyms, *problem* and *trouble*, was conducted by Jirananthiporn (2018). The study concentrated on differences of the two words' frequencies, distribution of patterns across genres in a corpus, and verb and adjective collocations. In addition, it aimed to emphasize the problems in terms of grammatical patterns of the two words (e.g. *to have no problem* and *to be in trouble*) that often cause problems to Thai learners of English. Data used in the study were drawn from COCA for both quantitative and qualitative analysis.

According to the results focusing on the overall frequencies and distribution of the two words, their number of occurrences suggests that *problem* is more common than *trouble* and is often used in communication. As for *trouble*, the noun occurs the least in the academic genre. While *problem* occurs more frequently in the academic genre, *trouble* is mostly found in the genres of fiction and spoken. It can be said that *problem* is more formal than *trouble*.

For verb collocates of *problem*, they were categorized in terms of semantic preferences. The meanings of its verb collocates mainly involve difficulty that one encounters and generates. The grammatical pattern of *problem* is "verb + determiner + problem" (*problem* as a singular noun is considered in the study) because the verb collocates are all transitive. On the other hand, *trouble* seems to have various grammatical patterns, for example, *ask (for)* (phrasal verb), *lead (to) + trouble* (intransitive verb + preposition), *expect + trouble* (transitive verb) and other forms (e.g. *start + having/causing/making + trouble*).

Regarding adjective collocates, only seven were found with *trouble*, but plenty occurred with *problem*. Semantic properties were used to categorize 94 adjective collocations of *problem*: severity (e.g. fundamental, difficult and growing), subject (e.g. national, social, American), generality/specificity (e.g. single, unique and classic), temporal details (e.g. recurring, original and age-old) and miscellaneous (e.g. different, opposite and related). From the data, *problem* seems more common to collocate with adjectives, compared to *trouble*. Moreover, the two nouns were found to share two semantic preferences of “severity” and “subject.”

As suggested in the previous studies mentioned above, the present study emphasizes the benefits of using corpus in language teaching. More patterns and meanings in contexts can be found in a corpus besides what dictionaries provide for learners. Regarding pedagogical implications, it is worth noting that different lexicogrammatical aspects should be underlined in teaching synonyms.

### ***2.3.2 Previous studies on semantic prosody***

This part reviews two studies on semantic prosody, which suggest that the studies on semantic prosody of nouns are relatively limited.

Begagić (2013) paid attention to the collocation *make sense*, focusing on ‘semantic preference’ and ‘semantic prosody’. COCA was the source of the data and only two genres, i.e. newspaper and academic, were explored, based on two hypotheses. The author aimed to test whether there is a significant difference between semantic preference and semantic prosody in the two genres, and whether the two focuses can be inferred from the collocation MAKE SENSE. The criteria for identifying the focuses seem to be based on what Partington proposed (2004, as cited in the study). Semantic preference lies in the co-occurrence of words with other items as a feature of collocation while semantic prosody is more related to the environment of a particular word.

In each genre, every second occurrence was selected out of the first 100 occurrences of each form of MAKE SENSE, i.e. *make sense*, *makes sense*, *made sense*. However, an exception was made for *making sense*. A total of 56 concordance lines of this form in the genre of newspaper were all examined. Therefore, 50 occurrences of each word form in each genre and 56 of the form *making sense* gave a total of 406

examples. Ten span words from both left and right of the collocates were taken into account.

For the first form, the results show that *make sense* used in negative environments occurs more often in the genre of newspaper than in the academic genre. It expresses ‘difficulty’ in those genres. This form also has a strong colligation with the prepositions *of* and *out of*, for example, ‘...try to make sense of...,’ and ‘...attempts to make sense out of...’ Moreover, when the form *make sense* colligates with the modals such as *can*, *may* and *might*, it expresses ‘possibility.’

The second form is *makes sense*. It is often used in favorable environments. However, when it is expressed in the environment of ‘difficulty,’ this form tends to occur more in the genre of newspaper than in that of academic texts. In contrast to the second form, *made sense* occurs more frequently in unfavorable environments in the newspaper genre while it appears in the opposite environment in the academic genre. According to the results, the third form is likely to express facts or reasonable things because it occurs less often with modals and hypothetical clauses (if-clause).

The last word form, *making sense*, occurs in neutral environments in both genres, but it tends to express difficult situations in the genre of newspaper. Moreover, it is frequently found colligating with the preposition *of* when co-occurring with the words such as *trouble* and *difficulty*, for example, “...had trouble making sense of everything” and “the important work of making sense of the *difficulty* of living...”

The study claimed that MAKE SENSE has not only favorable, unfavorable and neutral semantic prosody, but it is also accompanied by the sense of difficulty and possibility. The data confirmed the first hypothesis because semantic preference and prosody are different in the two genres. MAKE SENSE is likely to occur in negative environments in the newspaper genre. The study also confirmed the second hypothesis that the two concepts can be inferred from the collocate MAKE SENSE.

Another study was conducted by Hu (2015), who aimed to compare the semantic preference and semantic prosody of three pairs of synonymous adjectives, taken from A New Academic Vocabulary List (AVL) by Gardner & Davies (2013) as cited in the study. The genre of academic texts in COCA was chosen to be the source of observation of semantic preference and semantic prosody of the three synonymous

adjective pairs. Under the criteria: (1) the pairs need to be near-synonymous, (2) meaning-checked by Collins Thesaurus and Webster-Merriam Online Dictionaries, (3) have only one core meaning, (4) have the same part of speech and (5) only 20 most frequent collocates (4 words to the left and right) of each word in the pairs can be selected. Three pairs of synonymous adjectives were selected: *initial/preliminary*, *following/subsequent* and *sufficient/adequate*.

To begin with, the first pair consists of *initial* and *preliminary*. *Initial*'s two types of collocations are: a specific point or period in progress/development (e.g. *stages* and *treatment*) and actions (e.g. *evaluation*, *screening* and *training*). Most of its collocations tend to have a neutral semantic prosody. For *preliminary*, it is often found co-occurring with items having neutral meaning such as *results*, *study* and *analysis*, and they seem to be used in neutral contexts as well.

The second pair contains *following* and *subsequent*. According to the results, the collocates of *following* seem to be neutral – not having neither positive or negative semantic prosody. Its preferences are concrete nouns involving specific sub-components or steps, for example, *questions* and *criteria*. Most of the (selected) collocates of *subsequent* are abstract nouns incorporating logical arrangement with causality such as *investigations*, *revisions* and *editions*. The majority of *subsequent*'s collocates has a neutral prosody, for example; *The chairs reviewed this first draft and all subsequent revisions* (p. 125).

The last pair comprises *sufficient* and *adequate*. In both neutral and negative contexts, the former often collocates with verbs while its noun collocates expressing quantity can be measured, for instance, *condition*, *numbers* and *cause*. *Adequate* tends to collocate more with nouns than verbs and they mostly occur in neutral contexts.

To conclude, the first two pairs frequently collocate with neutral terms while the last pair is likely to have both positive and negative collocates. The analyses of the study suggest that a word can take more than one group of semantic features, which can lead to different prosodies.

According to the related previous studies, there is still some room for a corpus-based study of nominal synonyms to investigate the concept of semantic prosody. The present study then establishes a set of criteria including *distribution pattern*,



*collocation, grammatical pattern, semantic preference and semantic prosody* to analyse *chance* and *opportunity*. The concept of distribution pattern can give the information about the two synonyms' behavior across the five genres in COCA (i.e. spoken, newspaper, magazine, fiction and academic journals) and identify their degree of formality. Collocation can contribute to their semantic preference which leads to semantic prosody in the pragmatic level. The concept of grammatical patterns is also worth investigating although the two nouns share similar meanings.



## Chapter 3

### Methodology

This section describes the research tools used in this study and the procedures of data collection and analysis.

#### 3.1 Research Tools

The primary source of data is *Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)*, and several online dictionaries are consulted regarding definitions, collocations and grammatical structures of the two target nouns.

COCA was built as a compensation for the limitations of two previous corpora, the British National Corpus (BNC) built in the early 1990s and the American National Corpus (ANC) created in the late 1990s (Davies, 2009). Creator Mark Davies launched COCA online in 2008. More than 380 million words were collected during 1990-2008 and balanced between five genres of spoken, fiction, popular magazines, newspaper and academic journals. Moreover, approximately 20 million words have been added to the corpus each year.

COCA was selected because of its balance, size and representativeness. In January 2020, the latest addition of texts from 2018-2019 was completed. The corpus is composed of approximately 600 million words from over 275,476 texts during 1990-2019. COCA is large in size and balanced, covering the five genres of spoken, fiction, popular magazines, newspapers, and academic journals. The texts in these genres come from a variety of sources, which can account for its representativeness. Moreover, the corpus is freely accessible online and has user-friendly search tools.

However, it should be noted that COCA was accessed by the researcher to conduct a pilot study and to gather data for this study before its latest update in March 2020. Three more genres of blogs, other web pages, and TV and movie subtitles were added into the corpus and it consequently increased the size of COCA to one billion words. However, these three genres are not included in the present study.

The other source is online dictionaries. *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDOCE)* and *Cambridge Dictionary (CD)* were mainly used for meanings and

grammatical pattern confirmation. Both of them can also be accessed online providing information complementing each other. Therefore, information from different dictionaries can be compared to gain various perspectives. They also incorporate parts of speech, other forms of word (if they have, e.g. plural and inflected past-tense forms).

The Cambridge Dictionary provides the definitions both in American English and British English, plus in other registers such as business. On the other hand, one special feature of LDOCE is its indication of in what kind of word list the vocabulary belongs. For example, both *chance* and *opportunity* are included in the top 1000 spoken and written words. Examples of the usage and collocations are illustrated with structures and explanations in both phrases, clauses and sentences which can be found in both dictionaries. Moreover, both dictionaries also offer synonyms, acronyms and degree of formality of the vocabulary. In terms of research procedures, some words were checked in other dictionaries as well, for example, *Merriam-Webster (MW)*, since some idioms and and/or expressions were not found in the two dictionaries.

It can be seen that the present study used mixed methods. The researcher sees benefits of each method and believes that they can offer complementary insights into studying the two target nouns. The previous corpus-based studies on English synonyms often used data drawn from corpora. Some use information from dictionaries to compare with data from corpora in order to highlight the information that may not be available in dictionaries such as natural occurring texts.

The major objective of dictionaries is to define words and provide different explanations focusing on common meanings. However, they still include polysemous properties of words. One dictionary may not offer all the meanings of words while the other does. Therefore, information gathered from more than one dictionary can complement each other in terms of meanings. CD provides an additional meaning of *chance* (i.e. risk) that was not found in LDOCE, but the latter word lists such as common spoken and written words, which is another method used in the present study.

However, dictionaries, sometimes, may not be able to provide precise information about meanings of words and their use, for example, a pair of synonymous nouns – ‘problem’ and ‘trouble’ in Jirananthiporn (2018). In this case, data from COCA can fulfil the study of English synonyms in terms of semantic preferences, collocations

and grammatical patterns. With regard to the present study's methodology, the two dictionaries are useful and can contribute to the study of synonyms in terms of meanings and polysemous properties of *chance* and *opportunity*. Moreover, information from the two dictionaries can support the data from COCA which provide both quantitative and qualitative perspectives to look at synonyms.

### 3.2 Procedures

After accessing the data of COCA, the functions of COMPARE and CHART were used to obtain the information about the pattern distributions across the five genres, and adjective and verb collocates of the two synonyms.

The CHART function was applied to obtain the statistics for words' distributions across the genres of *spoken*, *fiction*, *magazine*, *newspaper* and *academic*. The information included frequency, size and word per million of the two nouns across the five genres from 1990-2019.

Next, the COMPARE function of COCA allows users to see the collocates that the two target words may share. In this study, the pilot study was done in December 2019 before the update in January 2020. The comparison of both adjective and verb collocates of *chance* and *opportunity* from the results of the pilot study (conducted in December 2019) shows that the two synonyms share some adjective and verb collocates. According to Jiranthiporn (2018), the mutual collocates of the two nouns in her study reflect their synonymous status, which is in line with the results in this study, for example, the verbs PROVIDE, CREATE and SEIZE and the adjectives GOOD, POSSIBLE and SIGNIFICANT. According to the results of the pilot study, the data acquired from the COMPARE function show significant differences between *chance* and *opportunity*, which will later be discussed in the results and discussion section.

To apply the COMPARE function, the criteria of the search for collocations of *chance* and *opportunity* were established as follows:

- Two left-span of the node to find **verb collocates** of *chance* and *opportunity*
- One left-span of the node to search for **adjective collocates** of the two synonyms

The first criterion was set for the fact that the two target nouns can be both countable and uncountable nouns. Therefore, the span setting including the pattern of VERB + (DETERMINER) or MODIFIER + NOUN should cover other items that may come before the nouns such as determiners and prepositions as part of verb structures. Next, the second criterion was also suitable as a syntax query to find adjective collocations of the two synonyms.

The verb and adjective collocates of both nouns were selected from the first 100 words on each of the four lists. Some items in the four lists were excluded after consulting the dictionaries and examining the concordance lines. Explanations of the procedures are provided in the following section.



## Chapter 4

### Results and discussion

This section presents answers to the research questions and discusses salient points that can be drawn from the results and analysis. The contents contained in this section cover the overall frequency and distribution patterns of *chance* and *opportunity*, their verb and adjective collocates and both similarities and differences.

#### 4.1 Overall frequency and distribution patterns of ‘*chance*’ and ‘*opportunity*’

To begin with, the CHART function was employed to see the distribution of the target nouns in each genre. The statistical evidence is provided in Table 1 – distribution of *chance* and *opportunity* in the five genres in COCA. The quantitative results below can answer to the research question 1 which is about the overall frequency and the target nouns’ distribution patterns.

**Table 1:** Distribution of ‘*chance*’ and ‘*opportunity*’ in the five genres in COCA (data accessed in January, 2020)

Text genre	Chance		Text genre	Opportunity	
	Frequency	Per million		Frequency	Per million
<b>Spoken</b>	19,894	156.41	<b>Academic</b>	35,194	286.90
<b>Newspaper</b>	18,599	145.61	<b>Newspaper</b>	20,186	158.04
<b>Magazine</b>	15,981	156.07	<b>Magazine</b>	18,889	184.47
<b>Fiction</b>	15,678	132.00	<b>Spoken</b>	18,371	144.44
<b>Academic</b>	6,426	52.38	<b>Fiction</b>	5,364	45.16
<b>Total</b>	<b>76,578</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>98,004</b>	

The total number of tokens for *chance* is 76,578 and 98,004 for *opportunity* from the five genres combined. It can be seen from Table 1 that *opportunity* occurs more often than its synonymous counterpart, but the numerical difference is insignificant. They both seem to be used commonly in communication according to their frequencies in the spoken genre. The most noticeable point from the table above is the considerable difference between the frequencies of the two nouns in the academic

genre. *Opportunity* occurs most in the academic genre, so it can be assumed that many academic disciplines prefer it to *chance*. The high rate of occurrence of *opportunity* in the genre of academic and its lowest frequency in the fiction genre can support the assumption that it has higher degree of formality than the other target noun. In addition, *chance* has more meanings than those of *opportunity*. It then can be used in different text types and in both formal and informal contexts conveying meanings besides ‘opportunity,’ as can be seen from the frequency of 17,160 in the newspaper genre, which contains varieties of topics and registers. Both *chance* and *opportunity* were also found on the lists of the top 1000 spoken and written words of LDOCE. This accounts for the high frequencies of *chance* in the genres of spoken, newspaper and magazine, and those of *opportunity* in all the genres except fiction. Since the two nouns have more than one meaning, it is necessary to summarize the meanings provided by the two main dictionaries used in the study.

#### 4.2. Summary of definitions of ‘*chance*’ and ‘*opportunity*’ from Cambridge Dictionary (CD) and Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDOCE)

The meanings listed below are to support the pattern distributions of the two nouns which spread across the five genres in COCA. Table 2 and 3 below list the meanings of the two synonyms provided by the online dictionaries: *Cambridge Dictionary (CD)* and *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDOCE)*.

**Table 2:** Meanings of ‘*chance*’ from *Cambridge Dictionary (CD)* and *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDOCE)* (data accessed in December 2019)

Semantic domain	Dictionary	
	CD	LDOCE
<b>1. POSSIBILITY</b> [countable, uncountable]	The level of possibility that something will happen; likelihood	The possibility that something will happen
<b>2. OPPORTUNITY</b> [countable]	An occasion that allows something to be done	A time or situation which you can use to do something you want to
<b>3. RISK</b> [countable]	A possibility that something negative will happen	
<b>4. LUCK</b> [uncountable]	The happening of something without any known cause or reason for doing so	The way some things happen without being planned or caused by people

**Table 3:** Meanings of ‘opportunity’ from Cambridge Dictionary (CD) and Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDOCE) (data accessed in December 2019)

Semantic domain	Dictionary	
	CD	LDOCE
<b>1. OPPORTUNITY</b> [countable, uncountable]	An occasion or situation which makes it possible to do something that you want to do or have to do, or the possibility of doing something	A chance to do something or an occasion when it is easy for you to do something
<b>2. JOB OPPORTUNITY</b> [countable]	A chance to get a job	A chance to get a job or improve your situation at work

From Table 2 and 3, the definitions from both dictionaries are similar, but CD includes an additional definition of *chance*, which is RISK. This definition seems to focus on possibility of negative things to happen. As can be seen in Table 2 and 3 above, *something* in the definitions can refer to both pleasant and unpleasant things. It is noticeable that the types of nouns, countable and uncountable, can be related to their meanings. Exploring COCA may confirm or contradict the types of nouns used with particular meanings of *chance* and *opportunity* as provided by the dictionaries.

The information from Table 2 and 3 also supports the idea that using more than one dictionary can provide extra information about vocabulary. Plus, this can account for the pattern distributions of the two nouns as well since their meanings seem to be general and can appear in large varieties of contexts. Besides, the COMPARE results from COCA show that the use of *chance* and *opportunity* in various meanings depends on contexts and collocations, not just their substitution for the definition of ‘opportunity,’ which some students might be unaware of.

#### 4.3 Analysis of verb and adjective collocates

This part reveals the most frequent verb and adjective collocates, taking into account only the first 100 tokens of each list: verb collocates of *chance* and *opportunity*, and their adjective collocates. The explanations of excluded items are provided with examples as well as the items included in the study. Moreover, the results show more collocates of the two nouns than those provided by CD and LDOCE.



### 4.3.1 Verb Collocates

#### 4.3.1.1 Grammatical perspective on verb collocates of ‘*chance*’ and ‘*opportunity*’

According to the results, a number of verb collocates were found co-occurring with both nouns. However, the frequencies of the mutual collocations seem insignificant. All 100 verb collocates of *chance* and those of *opportunity* are lexical verbs including the auxiliaries *be* and *have* on the list of verb collocates of *chance* (see the full lists in Appendix 1). While the *'d*, *'s*, *has* and *was* occurred on the list of *chance*, they were not found on the list of *opportunity*. It is possible for those auxiliaries to occur since the search command in the COMPARE function was set two positions to the left before the node. Regarding syntax, auxiliaries are tagged as verbs. The span setting then allows both auxiliaries and lexical verbs to precede the target nouns.

After consulting LDOCE, the verb collocates of *chance* tend to be one of those of the top 1000-3000 spoken and/or written word lists as part of LDOCE while 6 verbs in the list of verb collocates of *chance* (e.g. MINIMIZE and ASSESS) are on the academic word list or AWL of LDOCE. On the other hand, its counterpart's verb collocates list contains 16 verbs found in the AWL of LDOCE such as EXPAND, SEEK, PROMOTE, RESTRICT, FACILITATE, GENERATE and IGNORE (data accessed in April 2020). The verb collocates of *chance* and *opportunity* are displayed in Table 4 and the academic words are in bold type in the table.

**Table 4:** Verb lemmas collocating with ‘chance’ and ‘opportunity’

Chance			Opportunity		
stand	damage	put	<b>identify</b>	lead	<b>deny</b>
hurt	cut	make	bring	use	include
decide	destroy	raise	open	recognize	buy
ruin	spoil	blow	<b>pursue</b>	grasp	find
kill	leave	deserve	provide	fill	embrace
lessen	reduce	want	<b>expand</b>	overlook	receive
lower	jeopardize	<b>maximize</b>	<b>seek</b>	develop	gain
double	increase	have	<b>exploit</b>	look	<b>generate</b>
win	get	<b>eliminate</b>	<b>create</b>	lack	repeat
improve	boost	<b>diminish</b>	afford	build	limit
decrease	take	risk	<b>promote</b>	extend	seize
<b>minimize</b>	<b>affect</b>	end	explore	capture	squander
<b>assess</b>			<b>restrict</b>	<b>facilitate</b>	<b>ensure</b>
			present	<b>guarantee</b>	equalize
			<b>access</b>	<b>evaluate</b>	experience
			foster	<b>ignore</b>	represent
			spot	become	
<b>Total</b>	37		<b>Total</b>	50	

On examining the verb collocates list of *chance*, the number of lemmas found is 52 in total, but only 37 lemmas are included in the study. The auxiliaries found on the list were excluded because most of their following items are the verb CHANCE not the noun *chance*. For the verb BE, the grammatical structures frequently found are *there's*, *there is*, *it's a + NOUN*, *here's* and *now's*. The meaning seems to focus on what modifies the noun following the verb BE, not the verb itself. Therefore, they should be eliminated from the list. Next, some verbs are followed by the expression ‘by chance’ such as EXPECT and OCCUR, not the noun *chance*, while the others are part of names (FIGHTING and TRUMP) and expressions (there GOES). They then were also excluded. The verbs THINK, SAY, KNOW and FIGURE tend to have the same

structure of VERB (that) + (DETERMINER) + CHANCE, which can occur with many verbs other than the two synonyms and the meaning seems to have a focus on what follows the verb or the relative pronoun *that*. Since the span setting was set to two positions from the left, this implies that the two nouns are supposed to be the verb's object, not a subject of clauses. As a result, these verbs were removed as well. LIKE was also found as part of the idiom 'like someone's chances' meaning 'to think someone has a good chance.' This piece of information was drawn from MW. Therefore, LIKE was also excluded.

As for the verb collocates list of *opportunity*, out of the 100 collocates, the total lemmas are 61, but only 50 lemmas are included. No auxiliaries and modals were found on the list, but there are two copulas: LOOK and BECOME. However, LOOK, after examining its concordance lines, turns out to be the phrasal verbs LOOK FOR and LOOK AT. The other phrasal verb found on the list is OPEN UP. Both main online dictionaries used provide the definitions of OPEN UP when used with *opportunity* as 'to create a new opportunity or a situation becomes an opportunity.' This phrasal verb often occurs in the genres of newspaper and magazine, which can contain both formal and informal language. However, it also frequently appears in the academic genre with *opportunity*. Next, most of the verb collocates excluded from the list function as a modifier of the noun *opportunity*. The verb collocate LIE is part of the idiom 'therein lies' and therefore was eliminated from the list. After reviewing the concordance lines, it was found that the verb collocates FILL and AFFORD often co-occur with *opportunity* in the passive form, especially the former.

The grammatical structure of FILL is 'be + filled + with something', as shown in the following examples. For AFFORD, the structure is 'be + afforded + (determiner) + *opportunity*' and its examples are listed in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1:** Examples of concordance lines illustrating grammatical patterns of the verb collocates *FILL* and *AFFORD* in collocation with ‘*opportunity*’

belong to a gym but, like most parents, my life is filled with **opportunities** to strengthen, stretch and tone. In fact, most of us complete a

've said to you before, you know that that day will be filled with **opportunities** for you to do something good for somebody, you know, to do something

of the best parts about this is the private lives that I'm afforded the **opportunity** to see and spend time with day after day. " # Baker repeatedly referenced

that aside from their day-to-day duties in the Army, they have been afforded ample **opportunities** for performance, teaching, and continuing education that supplement their overall musical experiences and

Most of the verb collocates of both synonyms are transitive verbs which have the pattern of VERB + OBJECT. Although their grammatical patterns are similar, the two nouns do not share the same verb collocates as shown in Table 4. However, after examining concordance lines, both target nouns were often found colligating with the preposition *of*, *for* and *to*. It can be assumed that each of these prepositions co-occurs with the two target nouns as an adjunct or a postmodifying prepositional phrase. The grammatical patterns of verb collocates of *chance* and *opportunity* can be VERB + OBJECT (*chance* and *opportunity*) (+PREPOSITION).

#### **4.3.1.2 Semantic perspective on verb collocates of ‘*chance*’ and ‘*opportunity*’**

Classifying the verb collocates of both *chance* and *opportunity* is quite problematic because of their various meanings. However, after consulting the dictionaries and analyzing concordance lines, the categorizations of the verb collocates of the two nouns are presented in Table 5 and 6 below.

Regarding the verb collocates of *chance* from Table 4, 34 of them can be categorized into five groups according to their semantic preference when co-occurring

with the noun. The categorization is shown in Table 5 and the numbers in the table refer to the list of semantic preference listed below.

1. To remove or take away a chance of something to happen, or to cause a positive or negative result to chance or possibility of something
2. To reduce a possibility of something or make something less likely to happen
3. To increase a possibility or opportunity of something
4. To obtain or have an opportunity or possibility of something or to do something
5. To judge or decide a possibility of something

**Table 5:** 34 Verb (lemmas) collocates of 'chance' categorized by semantic preference

<b>1</b>	blow	end	eliminate	damage
	cut	destroy	spoil	
	make	ruin	hurt	
	risk	affect	kill	
<b>2</b>	lower	decrease	reduce	minimize
	lessen	diminish	jeopardize	
<b>3</b>	raise	maximize	double	improve
	boost	increase		
<b>4</b>	stand	have	win	get
	take	decide		
<b>5</b>	put	assess		

Out of the 37 lemmas in Table 4, 3 verbs seem unlikely to fall into any group of the meanings: LEAVE, DESERVE and WANT. They then should be categorized into a miscellaneous group based on the further analyses.

LEAVE, including the passive form, seems to have several meanings of 'put something into a risk or possibility' and 'give something or someone an opportunity to do something' when co-occurring with *chance*. Some of the concordance lines of this lemma are illustrated in Figure 2 below.

**Figure 2:** Examples of concordance lines illustrating the meanings of the verb LEAVE in collocation with 'chance'

---

he said it in a joking tone. He didn't want to leave any **chance** for someone to think otherwise.. # " Well then, when can we expect

why we've developed attacks to knock out your condensate processors, but leave a **chance** for the human body, the backup system, to survive. " " And

and would be under a great deal more pressure and I wanted to leave no **chance** that anybody could ever misconstrue the conversation. If you hear the whole conversation,

---

WANT co-occurring with *chance* means 'to wish or need it,' which is different from the meanings of the five groups above. Lastly, DESERVE may have a similar meaning as those in Group 4, but it has a condition. DESERVE, according to CD, means 'to be given or to earn something because of particular actions or qualities.'

The verb collocates of *opportunity* from Table 4 can be grouped based on their semantic preference when co-occurring with the target noun. The list below contains the semantic preference of the members of each group illustrated in Table 6.

1. To create or increase or bring in an opportunity or possibility of something or occasion that will allow something to happen
2. To find or show that an opportunity or possibility exists
3. To take or have an opportunity or possibility
4. To use or experience an opportunity to do something or allow something to happen
5. Not to take or have or recognize an opportunity
6. To control or allow a particular amount of opportunities of something to happen
7. To make certain that an opportunity or possibility of something can happen

**Table 6:** 46 Verb (lemmas) collocates of ‘opportunity’ categorized by semantic preference

1	create	promote	generate	foster
	develop	build	extend	expand
	bring	provide	open	present
	fill	include		
2	spot	seek	recognize	find
	explore	look	identify	lead
	pursue	represent		
3	seize	grasp	capture	gain
	embrace	buy	access	afford
	receive			
4	exploit	use	repeat	experience
	squander			
5	overlook	ignore	deny	lack
6	limit	restrict		
7	ensure	guarantee		

Out of 50 verb collocates, 4 verbs seem unlikely to fit in any group. They include BECOME, FACILITATE, EVALUATE and EQUALIZE.

BECOME is a linking verb. When co-occurring with *opportunity*, BECOME connects the qualities of *opportunity* to a person or an object that acts as the subject of the verb in sentences as shown in Figure 3.

**Figure 3:** Examples of concordance lines illustrating the verb BECOME in collocation with ‘opportunity’

my blog as more than just a personal diary. *Each blog post became* an **opportunity** to inspire others, break stereotypes, or make people laugh. I made the

countries such as Pakistan or Egypt, *the risk of major change will become* an **opportunity** for creating new governments that will be more just and therefore more stable. Where

For the other three verbs, their meanings cannot be grouped together and are different from those of the seven groups. The meaning of FACILITATE may be similar to those in Group 1. However, when it co-occurs with *opportunity*, it means ‘to make that opportunity possible or easier to happen’ as illustrated in the concordance line in Figure 4.

**Figure 4:** An example of concordance lines illustrating the meaning of the verb FACILITATE in collocation with ‘opportunity’

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counseling, the establishment of rapport between a counselor and a student would [facilitate](#) the **opportunity** for students to discuss their feelings associated with classroom situations such as those experienced by

---

As for EVALUATE and EQUALIZE, their meanings are not similar to the meanings in the seven groups. The former means ‘to judge a quality of something’ while the latter means ‘to make things or people equal,’ according to CD. When they co-occur with *opportunity*, their semantic preference seems unlikely to fit into any group of meanings as shown in Figure 5.

**Figure 5:** Examples of concordance lines illustrating the meanings of the verbs EVALUATE and EQUALIZE in collocation with ‘opportunity’

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n't do deals just for the sake of doing deals. He will [evaluate](#) this **opportunity** six ways to Sunday, and if it doesn't work, he'll walk

---

middle school and high school, and allocating admissions by lottery did not [equalize](#) the **opportunity** for higher education in Korea. t only increased the demand and the competition for

---

1989, CIR has mounted numerous legal actions against policies and practices designed to [equalize opportunity](#) for not only minorities, but also women. (One recent CIR initiative defends

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Some of the meanings of the verb collocates of *chance* and *opportunity* are overlapping such as ‘to take/have and increase an opportunity or possibility of something/to do something’. Moreover, *something* in the meanings of verb collocates of *chance* can be pleasant and/or unpleasant as shown in the examples in Figure 6 from the concordance lines. On the other hand, *something* in the meanings of verb collocates of *opportunity* tend to be positive.

**Figure 6:** *Examples of concordance lines illustrating ‘something’ positive and negative in the meanings of verb collocates of ‘chance’ and ‘opportunity’*

, whether as the cook or a guest. If you want to [decrease](#) your [chances](#) of getting sick, it all comes down to proper hand washing. Be sure

Second, African American males are faced daily with situations that appear to [decrease](#) their [chances](#) for academic achievement. Therefore, this study offered an opportunity to gain a better

saturated from recent heavy storms and river levels are higher than normal -- [increasing](#) the [chances](#) of flooding. After a surprisingly wet August, storm systems will yield another heavy

his Jewishness as others elected to do, and during the purge, [lost](#) all [chances](#) of advancement. Even after his service to Communism, his imprisonment by the Iron

at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. # " It [creates](#) an [opportunity](#) not just to improve treatment right on the university's site, but to expand

idea. It's a modest tax. Living in New York City [creates](#) enormous [opportunities](#) for wealth, and these people that are making at this sort of level of

.14 # Age # # # /TABLE # Approach # A qualitative study [afforded](#) the [opportunity](#) to gather information in a question-answer process that yielded rich data about the topic,

Regarding semantic prosody, it can be implied that the semantic prosody of the two nouns can be both positive and negative. Even though the two nouns seem likely to be associated with something positive, the connotative meaning still depends on their surroundings in contexts not only their verb collocates. For example, if only *chance* in collocation with the verb DECREASE in the first concordance line in Figure 6 is considered in terms of connotation, they may contribute a negative meaning of reducing a possibility of something to happen. However, if their surroundings are taken into

consideration with this verb in collocation with *chance*, they actually have a positive semantic prosody which is ‘to reduce a possibility of negative results.’

Overall meanings of the two synonyms are similar but the various meanings of *chance* reflect its polysemous properties, which entail the meanings of *opportunity*, i.e. ‘possibility’ and ‘opportunity.’ Despite their overlapping meanings, they do not share verb collocates as shown in Table 4. Although *chance* has a wider range of meanings than *opportunity* does, the latter in collocation with its verbs in Table 6 contributes more semantic preferences. It seems that the semantic preferences of *chance* and its verb collocates tend to involve ‘possibility’ of something while *opportunity* and its collocates engage in creating and making an opportunity certain to happen. Moreover, the semantic preferences of *opportunity* and its verb collocates are likely to have positive connotations while those of *chance* and its collocates seem to involve negative situations as part of ‘possibility.’

#### 4.3.2 Adjective Collocates

The total numbers of adjective collocates in each list of *chance* and *opportunity* are 91 for the former and 100 for the latter (see Appendix 3 and 4). The difference is not statistically significant and therefore cannot reflect which target noun prefers adjectives. Nevertheless, the adjective collocates can be classified by their semantic properties and discussed in semantic perspective. Table 7 contains the included adjective collocates of *chance* and *opportunity*. The items excluded from the two lists of *chance*’s and *opportunity*’s adjective collocates in Table 7 below will also be discussed briefly.

It was found that the words in bold type in Table 7 are in the AWL by LDOCE (data accessed in April, 2020). Only 7 of *chance*’s adjective collocates were found in AWL while the rest tend to be found on the lists of the top 1000-3000 spoken/written words as part of LDOCE. On the other hand, 26 of adjective collocates of *opportunity* are on AWL.

It is worth noting that EXPANDING and EXPANDED on the list of adjective collocates of *opportunity* were not included in AWL, while the verb expand is. In

contrast, both CHALLENGING and the verb challenge, which are in collocation with *opportunity*, were found on AWL.

**Table 7:** Adjective lemmas collocating with ‘chance’ and ‘opportunity’

Chance			Opportunity		
slim	serious	possible	<b>economic</b>	athletic	illegitimate
slight	only	<b>significant</b>	educational	<b>positive</b>	postsecondary
higher	solid	early	recreational	present	<b>restricted</b>
even	unlikely	greatest	commercial	<b>unparalleled</b>	service-learning
pure	strong	fresh	rich	unusual	<b>varied</b>
remote	electoral	increased	expanding	ample	massive
lucky	good	rare	<b>financial</b>	global	<b>relevant</b>
tiny	better	once-in-a-lifetime	photographic	digital	<b>structured</b>
decent	slightest	biggest	<b>available</b>	<b>occupational</b>	vocational
blind	happy	increasing	exciting	regular	<b>sufficient</b>
remotest	legitimate	<b>major</b>	entrepreneurial	<b>adequate</b>	<b>individual</b>
sheer	high	great	endless	exceptional	musical
main	fair	limited	expanded	mating	incredible
unnecessary	reasonable	huge	<b>professional</b>	<b>ongoing</b>	additional
small	best	numerous	natural	extraordinary	<b>unique</b>
statistical	overall	equal	lucrative	<b>emerging</b>	favorable
sure	little	lost	amazing	<b>sexual</b>	extensive
better-than-even	large	<b>unprecedented</b>	valuable	<b>technological</b>	untapped
better-than-average	<b>final</b>	new	<b>strategic</b>	convenient	wonderful
<b>odd</b>	actual	perfect	instructional	<b>alternative</b>	marvelous
mere	real	political	critical	attractive	<b>obvious</b>
wild	single	missed	interesting	money-making	plentiful
poor	big	historic	limitless	profitable	wider
<b>random</b>	extra	golden	social	awesome	<b>appropriate</b>
outside	greater	multiple	tremendous	vast	important
low	bigger	wonderful	fantastic	right	special
presidential	excellent	<b>unique</b>	earliest	promising	international
lower	improved	ample	<b>enormous</b>	collaborative	various
realistic			abundant	invaluable	authentic
			local	<b>challenging</b>	acting
			promotional	seizing	compelling
			<b>cultural</b>	creative	formal
			fabulous	everyday	
<b>Total</b>	85		<b>Total</b>	98	

The total adjective collocates of *chance* are 91, but 6 of them: FAT, OFF, AVERAGE, JUST, SPORTING and OTHER, were excluded for the following reasons. FAT is part of the idiom ‘fat chance,’ which is used when something is unlikely to happen. OFF is structured in the prepositional phrase ‘on the off chance’ while SPORTING is part of the noun ‘sporting chance.’ Three of them can be found in both online dictionaries, CD and LDOCE, with examples. Next, AVERAGE is part of the other adjective collocate on the list – ‘BETTER-THAN-AVERAGE.’ JUST can be an adjective, but it tends to function as an adverb when co-occurring with *chance*. Similarly, OTHER can be an adjective, but it frequently precedes *chance* as a determiner. Therefore, they were excluded. Table 8 below shows the 85 adjective collocates of *chance* examined and grouped according to their semantic properties.

**Table 8:** 85 Adjective collocates of ‘*chance*’ categorized by semantic property

Subject	statistical	presidential	electoral	political	legitimate
Temporal details	random	final	rare	lost	missed
	outside	real	once-in-a-lifetime	unprecedented	actual
	early				
Extent	slim	remote	remotest	poor	slightest
	slight	tiny	small	low	high
	higher	decent	better-than-even	lower	fair
	little	big	better-than-average	greater	greatest
	large	extra	possible	bigger	increased
	biggest	great	huge	multiple	ample
	increasing	limited	numerous		
Quality/characteristic	pure	lucky	blind	sheer	unnecessary
	sure	odd	wild	realistic	serious
	solid	good	happy	reasonable	best
	unlikely	better	excellent	new	golden
	strong	fresh	improved	perfect	wonderful
Generality/specificity	even	main	mere	only	overall
	single	significant	major	equal	historic
	unique				

From Table 8, the group having the majority of adjective collocates is ‘**extent.**’ After a closer look at the concordance lines, the members in the ‘extent’ group can

reflect the preferred use of *chance* with the meaning of ‘possibility.’ Evidence from the concordance lines is provided in Figure 7 below.

**Figure 7:** Examples of concordance lines illustrating the preferred meaning ‘possibility’ of the members of the group of ‘extent’ in collocation with ‘chance’

4177141 Just how slim was Leicester City's [slim chance](#) of winning the English Premier League? # Leicester City players celebrate winning the Premier

this one special was that Jane Doe had handled it. There was a [slim chance](#) we might be able to lift her fingerprints from the beads. # Maybe her

great trade, all right. As for the Raiders, there's a [great chance](#) Jackson will regret his bodacious statement. # These future-is-now trades generally don't work

Outlook: The Jets, 6-2 on the road last season, have a [great chance](#) for their first road win of 2007. Giants' pass rush showed signs of

The group of ‘**subject**’ (e.g. STATISTICAL and LEGITIMATE) often precedes *chance* in the meaning of ‘opportunity.’ Next, the group of ‘**temporal details**’ (e.g. RARE and FINAL) contains the members followed by *chance* with the primary meaning of ‘opportunity’ as well. Evidence is shown in the concordance lines in Figure 8 and 9.

**Figure 8:** Examples of concordance lines illustrating the meaning ‘opportunity’ of the group of ‘subject’ in collocation with ‘chance’

, if any, action should be taken, much is made of the [statistical chances](#) of such a calamity occurring. During your lifetime, say panel members, the

Harris point out another problem with AYP as there is the possibility of the [statistical chance](#) where some schools will do well on a single assessment for an individual school

passing game than the Longhorns' running attack. I think Texas has a [legitimate chance](#) to win this game - the Longhorns are confident and loose, and Bryce Petty

in its financial support over the years, backing only candidates it thinks have [legitimate chances](#) of winning. It steered more than \$6 million toward Cruz in 2012 but dismissed

**Figure 9:** Examples of concordance lines illustrating the meaning ‘opportunity’ of the group of ‘temporal details’ in collocation with ‘chance’

may be. " # " Marvelocity's " original Spider-Man tale offers the [rare chance](#) to see Ross illustrating a full story from a panel to panel. Ross says

by the city has dropped by 40 percent, the city has had a [rare chance](#) to do what it has been promising to do since the late 1990's:

. It undermines it. GWEN-IFILL# For the president, it may be his [final chance](#) to keep a 2008 campaign promise: shutting down the military prison at Guantanamo. BARACK-OBAMA

242248 TED-KOPPEL: voice-over The President gives Iraq one [final chance](#). Pres. GEORGE BUSH: The coalition will give Saddam Hussein until noon Saturday to

Next, the group of ‘**quality/characteristic**’ seems to have the meaning distributions across all four meanings of *chance*, especially ‘possibility’ and ‘luck’ (see Table 2). Most members of the group of ‘**generality/specificity**’ also precede *chance* with the meaning of ‘possibility.’ The following concordance lines in Figure 10 and 11 show the preferred meanings of these last two groups respectively.

**Figure 10:** Examples of concordance lines illustrating the meanings ‘luck’ and ‘possibility’ of the group of ‘quality/characteristic’ in collocation with ‘chance’

that it was intact. (Photo-of-chain-lin) MORRISON: (Voiceover) And then -- this was [pure chance](#), really -- the deputy spotted the SUV just down the road and pulled it

and set a course to the Civil War. It was a matter of [pure chance](#) that Whitney found himself involved with cotton growing. After getting a degree from Yale

have 46 at the same place. The odds against a match occurring through [sheer chance](#) multiply as more loci are tested. The odds against matching at all five sites

that may take hundreds of years to complete and one should not ascribe to [sheer chance](#) what a nation has achieved through its laws and institutions. In England Edward III

going to be balanced. And I think in this case there is a [good chance](#) that Mueller is going to get what he wants because in this filing he's

. # While it still might be a little early, there's a [good chance](#) that the laptop industry has caught 5G fever, too, and we may already

*Figure 11: Examples of concordance lines illustrating the meaning ‘possibility’ of the group of ‘generality/specificity’ in collocation with ‘chance’*

ground. Soon the camera could even travel along with a politician on the [mere chance](#) that something might happen. In 1910, William Warnecke succeeded in capturing New York

delivery to the persons to whom they may be addressed, depends upon the [mere chance](#) of encountering them in the four oceans. Thus, most letters never reach their

scrapes. From what Johnson had told me, I figured there was a [significant chance](#) that the salmon-lizards would return in less than five years. That they'd bring

the Indian Supreme Court will make up the bench. There is certainly a [significant chance](#) that the Court would agree to set aside the settlement and reopen the proceedings.

As for semantic prosody, Louw (1993) states that this concept needs to be explored at the pragmatic level. Not only can the search word and its collocates contribute to their semantic prosody, but also other surroundings in the context (Sinclair & Carter, 2004). For example, when BETTER and GREATER in the group of ‘**quality/characteristic**’ collocate with *chance*, they convey the meaning of ‘something that is more likely to happen.’ When the phrases co-occur with the verb HAVE, they mean ‘to obtain or have an opportunity or possibility of something that is more likely to happen.’ The two collocates convey the same semantic prosody of ‘a better possibility’ as they share the same semantic property. This semantic prosody is illustrated in Figure 12.

*Figure 12: Examples of concordance lines illustrating the semantic prosody of the adjectives BETTER and GREATER in collocation with ‘chance’*

Then what the hell did this? " # " We'll have a [better chance](#) of finding that out when you find Alice and Zikri. " # Greenberg started to

our chances of success are? In my opinion, we'd have a [better chance](#) of selling sun glasses to coal miners. " # To give credit where it

least likely to marry, thus suggesting that couples with higher incomes may have [greater chances](#) of marital success, along with lesser vulnerability to domestic violence. 26 # In other

of the United States. # " If you have pets you have a [greater chance](#) of finding a cure or a home for them in Denver, " Snyder says

Even though this analysis cannot ensure whether *chance* is ‘mainly’ used with the meaning of ‘possibility,’ evidence from the concordance lines seems to show a tendency that *chance* is often used in contexts with the meanings of ‘possibility’ and ‘opportunity.’ The majority of adjective collocates of *chance*, according to LDOCE, are found in the top 1000-3000 spoken word list and a few such as ODD belongs to the AWL. This is in line with the overall frequencies of this noun according to the results from Table 1. It occurs the most in the spoken genre and the least in the academic genre.

With regards to *opportunity*, the 98 adjective collocates of the target noun from the results of the COMPARE function are taken into account except CONSERVATIVE and MISSING. The former is part of an organization name – ‘Conservative Opportunity Society’ while the latter is the verb ‘miss’ in the present participle verb form. The rest of the collocates (98 items) can be grouped based on the same semantic properties as those of *chance*, except ‘generality/specificity.’ The categorization of the adjective collocates of *opportunity* is shown in Table 9 below.

**Table 9:** 98 Adjective collocates of ‘*opportunity*’ categorized by semantic property

<b>Subject</b>	economic	financial	instructional	athletic	mating
	educational	photographic	social	global	sexual
	recreational	entrepreneurial	local	digital	technological
	commercial	professional	promotional	occupational	collaborative
	postsecondary	service-learning	cultural	vocational	individual
	musical	international	acting	illegitimate	
<b>Temporal details</b>	available	natural	earliest	present	regular
	ongoing	emerging	everyday	obvious	
<b>Extent</b>	rich	endless	limitless	tremendous	enormous
	abundant	adequate	vast	restricted	varied
	massive	sufficient	plentiful	various	expanding
	expanded	ample	additional	extensive	wider
<b>Quality/ characteristic</b>	exciting	critical	unparalleled	convenient	invaluable
	lucrative	interesting	unusual	alternative	challenging
	amazing	fantastic	exceptional	attractive	seizing
	valuable	fabulous	extraordinary	money-making	creative
	strategic	positive	right	profitable	incredible
	relevant	promising	awesome	appropriate	authentic
	structured	unique	untapped	important	compelling
	marvelous	favorable	wonderful	special	formal



After consulting LDOCE, many adjective collocates of *opportunity* belong to the AWL and the top 1000-2000 written words. This reflects the highest frequencies of *opportunity* in the academic genres and in the other written genre – newspaper, containing both formal and informal language. According Table 9, the first group consists of the adjective collocates with the semantic property of ‘**subject**’ and those subjects seem to be associated with the academic and newspaper genres. The biggest group is ‘**quality/characteristic**’ describing opportunities and occasions that allow positive things to happen. On examination of the concordance lines, it was found that *opportunity* tends to involve something positive rather than negative, as supported by the evidence of positive adjectives in the last group. The following concordance lines in Figure 13 illustrate *opportunity* which collocates with positive adjectives.

*Figure 13: Examples of concordance lines illustrating ‘opportunity’ in collocation with positive adjectives*

MACI cohort a group of students who journey together through the degree or certificate program offered **valuable opportunities** for students to get to know each other and to build a sense of community

the opportunity to express your point of view is meaningful. It is a **valuable opportunity**, and it will make a difference. " George Gallup, a grandfather of

The eruption and the ability to study it in real time " provided a **unique opportunity** to see firsthand how a massive input of external nutrients alters marine ecosystems, "

... # As a new Member of the U.S. Senate, you have a **unique opportunity** to dramatically increase diversity among top staff. Hiring just one African American top staffer

's correct. Again here, you know, you've got just an **extraordinary opportunity** to do something that will benefit the president, this president and future presidents in

tone controls opportunity in America to a very, very great extent. Without **extraordinary opportunity**, there is no way for people to move forward, especially young children.

Another noticeable difference between *chance* and *opportunity* is the number of their semantic properties of the adjective collocates. The adjective collocates of *chance* can be categorized into more semantic properties than those of *opportunity*. This can reflect *chance*'s polysemous status which means it has various meanings. In Table 8, the adjective collocates of *chance* in the group of 'extent,' which is the biggest group, seem to have mixed connotative meanings between positive and negative features. This may reflect the core meanings of *chance*, which are 'possibility' and 'opportunity.' The meaning of 'possibility' can refer to something positive or negative while the meaning of 'opportunity' is often associated with something positive. On the other hand, most of the adjective collocates of *opportunity* in the group of 'extent' in Table 9 seem to have positive connotations. This can reflect the semantic prosody of this nouns which tends to be involved in positive situations. Beside the semantic property of 'extent,' most of the adjective collocates of *opportunity* in the group of 'quality/characteristic' can also underline the positive association of this noun while those of *chance* seem to have mixed connotative meanings which can also reflect its polysemous properties regarding its wider range of meanings.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

The primary objective of the study is to investigate differences and similarities of a pair synonymous nouns, *chance* and *opportunity*. According to the analysis and evidence provided in this study, the two target nouns can be problematic synonyms because of their various meanings. Despite their overlapping meanings, the two synonyms cannot be used interchangeably in all contexts. Moreover, the occurrence of the two nouns in the five genres suggests that it is also important to underline the behavior of synonyms in different genres.

In response to the first research question, the data show overall frequency and different distribution patterns of the target nouns. Both nouns seem common in conversation. However, the analysis of both verb and adjective collocates indicates that *opportunity* is preferred academically and commonly used in more formal contexts.

Table 1 displays the overall frequency of both nouns across the five genres: spoken, newspaper, magazine, fiction and academic. Even though the overall frequency of *opportunity* (i.e. 98,004) is higher than that of *chance* (i.e. 76,578), the numbers are not significantly different. However, the occurrence of *opportunity* in the genre of academic (i.e. 35,194) exceeds that of *chance* (i.e. 6,426). Based on the results, it can be said that many academic disciplines prefer the former noun to the latter. Moreover, the high frequencies of *chance* in informal contexts such as the genre of fiction and spoken can imply the difference in the degree of formality between the two nouns. The findings of the first research question can highlight the benefits of using mixed approaches that their merits can complement each other.

As for the second research question, grammatical patterns of *chance* and *opportunity* are insignificantly different except for some items as discussed in Section 4. However, it was found that the two synonyms often colligate with the prepositions *of*, *to* and *for*, which can be either an adjunct or postmodifying prepositional phrase.

The last research question is concerned with the target nouns' similarities and differences in terms of meanings and collocations. In terms of meanings, both nouns were analysed using the same criteria of semantic preference for verb collocates and

semantic properties for adjective collocates. The overlapping meaning of both nouns is ‘opportunity’ which refers to a situation allowing something to happen or someone to do something. Based on the meanings provided by CD and LDOCE, *chance* has more meanings than *opportunity* does. The two dictionaries are used to complement each other’s information, which demonstrates the benefits of the use of mixed approaches of the present study.

*Chance* has more varieties of meanings which entail the meanings of *opportunity*. Therefore, *opportunity* cannot substitute its near-synonym in all contexts while *chance* can be used instead of *opportunity* to refer to the meaning of ‘opportunity’ in some contexts. Moreover, , the wider range of meanings of *chance* reflects its polysemous status which makes it distinct from its near-synonym.

The verb collocates of the target nouns were found to have different semantic preferences and the lists of verb collocates tend to involve the meanings of ‘opportunity’ and ‘possibility.’ Even though *chance* has more meanings than *opportunity* does, verb collocates of *chance* contribute more semantic preferences, according to the results. One noticeable difference in their semantic preferences is that those of *opportunity* involve the situations of finding and ensuring that an opportunity exist. With regards to semantic preferences of *chance*, they imply that this noun is likely to be used in the meaning of ‘possibility’ based on its semantic preferences of ‘to reduce, increase and judge.’ In addition, 16 out of 50 verb collocates of *opportunity* (or 8 per cent) were found in AWL of LDOCE, compared to 2 per cent of the verb collocates of *chance* found in the same list.

As for the adjective collocates of *chance* and *opportunity*, their semantic properties were used to categorize the items in the two lists of adjective collocates. It is noticeable that most of the adjective collocates of *opportunity* are more formal than those of *chance*. After consulting LDOCE, it was found that many of them are in the AWL and the top 1000-2000 written word lists. Moreover, many adjective collocates of *opportunity* tend to be associated with something positive rather than negative. On the other hand, the adjective collocates of *chance* convey mixed connotations than those co-occurring with *opportunity* because of *chance*’s polysemous properties. In addition, it can be implied from the adjective collocates of *chance* that the noun may be preferred in the meaning of ‘possibility’ that can involve both negative and positive situations.

Despite the contributions of this study, some of its limitations need to be pointed out for future research. The author attempted to fill in a gap in the research on semantic prosody of synonymous nouns. It was found that semantic prosody can be examined from the data drawn from concordance lines at the pragmatic level, as discussed in the subsection of adjective collocates. Although the present study found a few examples of semantic prosody, it is still insufficient to address the concept in detail. Therefore, there would be benefits to further research on the semantic prosody of this synonymous pair. It should also be noted that the data collection procedure of the study was completed before the latest update of COCA in March 2020. It should be fascinating to further explore the behaviors of *chance* and *opportunity* in the three further genres of blogs, other web pages, and TV and movie subtitles added to the latest version of COCA. New data should give more insights about the use of these two nouns since these genres represent general texts as well as both formal and informal spoken data.

In addition, the findings of the present study cannot identify whether the different collocates of *chance* are caused by specific meanings of ‘opportunity’ and ‘possibility.’ Therefore, this can be considered a limitation of the present study and is worth conducting further research on this issue. Verb and adjective collocates of *chance* can be categorized based on its meanings of ‘possibility’ and ‘opportunity.’ With its polysemous properties, it is possible that the two meanings of ‘chance’ can lead to the difference in lexical choice of collocates of this noun. For example, many adjective collocates of *chance* in the group of ‘extent’ tend to collocate with the noun in the meaning of ‘possibility’ rather than ‘opportunity.’ Further research then should focus on collocational analysis to investigate collocates of ‘chance’ that are associated with the two major meanings of this noun.

In terms of pedagogical implications, the present study emphasizes the importance of teaching vocabulary within its contexts and giving specific examples to precisely present the use of vocabulary. As suggested in Jirananthiporn (2018), different lexico-grammatical aspects should be underlined in teaching synonyms. According to the results of the present study, it was found that *chance* and *opportunity* cannot substitute for each other in all contexts although the two target nouns have overlapping meanings. *Chance* has more meanings than *opportunity* does and both nouns seem to

be preferred in different genres. Moreover, the results show other possible verb and adjective collocates of the two synonyms than what CD and LDOCE provide. Therefore, it is important for teachers to guide students to other possibilities of language use which can help them improve their English performance, especially their word choice. Introducing only meanings of synonyms in teaching might not be enough since words behave differently across genres. As can be seen from the lists of adjective and verb collocates of the two nouns, *opportunity* tends to collocate with written and academic words while *chance* and its collocates seem to be preferred in informal contexts. Furthermore, the two target nouns rarely share similar verb and adjective collocates, which means they yield different semantic preferences. *Chance* may be able to substitute *opportunity* in some contexts, but *opportunity* cannot because of *chance*'s wider range of meanings. Since *chance* has a polysemous properties, teachers can benefit from the study by underlining the fact that *chance* can mean something else other than 'opportunity.'

Knowledge from this study can also help language learners use English more naturally and effectively. As implied in Sayyed and Al-Khanji (2019), the present study also points out the benefit of using more than one dictionary in studying meanings of words. Different dictionaries can compensate some limitations that the others may have. Moreover, language learners can use the methodology of the present study to distinguish other synonyms and explore corpora to find the answers to their own questions. Analysing collocates can help them see the differences of near synonyms and the similarities they share. For example, the results of the present study show that both *chance* and *opportunity* are preferred in written as well as spoken, but the latter is more preferable in the academic genre as shown in Table 1. Furthermore, both the methodology and results of this study can be useful for word-list compilers who wish to create vocabulary teaching materials. COCA can be an abundant source to learn more about words' behaviors and collocation in different genres.

All in all, this corpus-based study emphasizes benefits of using corpus as a tool to study and to teach English. Corpus data can illustrate how a word behaves across different genres. Instead of focusing on whether a grammatical pattern is used *correctly* or *incorrectly*, corpus data give insightful information on how a grammatical pattern is *likely* to be used in different contexts.



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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Verb Collocates of CHANCE

WORD 1 (W1): CHANCE (0.98)

	WORD	W1	W2	W1/W2	SCORE
1	STAND	476	0	952.0	974.8
2	STOOD	133	1	133.0	136.2
3	STANDS	67	1	67.0	68.6
4	HURT	133	2	66.5	68.1
5	EXPECTED	56	1	56.0	57.3
6	RUINED	43	1	43.0	44.0
7	KILL	21	0	42.0	43.0
8	RUIN	40	1	40.0	41.0
9	KILLED	19	0	38.0	38.9
10	HURTING	18	0	36.0	36.9
11	LESSENS	18	0	36.0	36.9
12	OCCURRED	18	0	36.0	36.9
13	MET	30	1	30.0	30.7
14	DOUBLE	15	0	30.0	30.7
15	FIGHTING	15	0	30.0	30.7
16	LOWER	15	0	30.0	30.7
17	OCCUR	15	0	30.0	30.7
18	DECIDED	14	0	28.0	28.7
19	WON	14	0	28.0	28.7
20	DOUBLES	12	0	24.0	24.6
21	RUINING	23	1	23.0	23.6
22	LESSENING	11	0	22.0	22.5
23	HAPPENED	21	1	21.0	21.5
24	FIGURED	10	0	20.0	20.5
25	LOWERS	10	0	20.0	20.5
26	IMPROVES	37	2	18.5	18.9
27	LESSEN	53	3	17.7	18.1
28	DECREASE	74	5	14.8	15.2
29	GOES	13	1	13.0	13.3
30	DECREASING	13	1	13.0	13.3
31	LIKES	12	1	12.0	12.3
32	SPOIL	12	1	12.0	12.3
33	LEFT	114	10	11.4	11.7
34	IMPROVED	34	3	11.3	11.6
35	HAPPENS	11	1	11.0	11.3
36	REDUCES	114	11	10.4	10.6
37	DECREASES	20	2	10.0	10.2
38	REDUCE	300	33	9.1	9.3
39	CUT	26	3	8.7	8.9
40	JEOPARDIZE	23	3	7.7	7.9
41	HAPPEN	23	3	7.7	7.9
42	DAMAGE	15	2	7.5	7.7
43	BOOST	50	7	7.1	7.3
44	MINIMIZING	20	3	6.7	6.8
45	GOT	1620	246	6.6	6.7
46	INCREASES	236	37	6.4	6.5
47	'D	25	4	6.3	6.4
48	RAISES	12	2	6.0	6.1
49	ENDED	23	4	5.8	5.9
50	GETS	397	70	5.7	5.8
51	DESTROYED	17	3	5.7	5.8
52	DISCOVERED	11	2	5.5	5.6
53	KNOWS	11	2	5.5	5.6
54	TAKING	763	139	5.5	5.6
55	IMPROVE	278	51	5.5	5.6
56	MINIMIZE	90	17	5.3	5.4
57	GET	3149	613	5.1	5.3
58	END	10	2	5.0	5.1
59	CUTS	10	2	5.0	5.1
60	SAY	53	11	4.8	4.9
61	THOUGHT	37	8	4.6	4.7
62	ASSESS	22	5	4.4	4.5
63	PUT	21	5	4.2	4.3
64	KNEW	29	7	4.1	4.2
65	INCREASING	128	31	4.1	4.2
66	GOTTEN	86	22	3.9	4.0
67	INCREASE	485	130	3.7	3.8
68	ELIMINATED	11	3	3.7	3.8
69	MEET	11	3	3.7	3.8
70	TAKE	2363	652	3.6	3.7
71	THINK	168	48	3.5	3.6
72	MINIMIZES	16	5	3.2	3.3
73	BLOWN	27	9	3.0	3.1
74	DECREASED	12	4	3.0	3.1
75	MAKES	12	4	3.0	3.1
76	IMPROVING	34	12	2.8	2.9
77	DESTROY	22	8	2.8	2.8
78	INCREASED	71	26	2.7	2.8
79	BLEW	30	11	2.7	2.8
80	LIKED	19	7	2.7	2.8
81	SAID	52	20	2.6	2.7
82	LIKE	116	45	2.6	2.6
83	GETTING	264	112	2.4	2.4
84	REDUCING	65	29	2.2	2.3
85	TRUMP	11	5	2.2	2.3
86	WANTS	24	11	2.2	2.2
87	'S	1871	892	2.1	2.1
88	SCORING	35	17	2.1	2.1
89	DESERVES	72	35	2.1	2.1
90	REDUCED	37	18	2.1	2.1
91	HAS	1636	804	2.0	2.1
92	WAS	1464	721	2.0	2.1
93	MAXIMIZES	12	6	2.0	2.0
94	AFFECT	33	17	1.9	2.0
95	DIMINISH	21	11	1.9	2.0
96	WANTED	89	47	1.9	1.9
97	LEAVE	15	8	1.9	1.9
98	RISK	11	6	1.8	1.9
99	HAD	6360	3490	1.8	1.9
100	DESERVED	24	14	1.7	1.8

## Appendix 2: Verb Collocates of OPPORTUNITY

### WORD 2 (W2): OPPORTUNITY (1.02)

	WORD	W2	W1	W2/W1	SCORE
1	LEARNING	286	1	286.0	279.3
2	IDENTIFY	91	0	182.0	177.7
3	OPENS	45	0	90.0	87.9
4	PURSUE	81	1	81.0	79.1
5	PROVIDING	590	8	73.8	72.0
6	VOLUNTEER	33	0	66.0	64.5
7	EXPANDING	31	0	62.0	60.5
8	IDENTIFYING	31	0	62.0	60.5
9	EXPLOIT	59	1	59.0	57.6
10	SEEK	115	2	57.5	56.2
11	NETWORKING	57	1	57.0	55.7
12	HOUSING	27	0	54.0	52.7
13	OPENED	51	1	51.0	49.8
14	PURSUING	25	0	50.0	48.8
15	EXPAND	134	3	44.7	43.6
16	AFFORD	44	1	44.0	43.0
17	PROMOTE	40	1	40.0	39.1
18	EXPLORE	79	2	39.5	38.6
19	TEACHING	38	1	38.0	37.1
20	ACCESS	19	0	38.0	37.1
21	MARKET	19	0	38.0	37.1
22	CREATING	333	9	37.0	36.1
23	PRESENTED	72	2	36.0	35.2
24	EXPLOITING	18	0	36.0	35.2
25	LEAD	18	0	36.0	35.2
26	MENTORING	18	0	36.0	35.2
27	RESTRICT	18	0	36.0	35.2
28	USED	140	4	35.0	34.2
29	OPENING	35	1	35.0	34.2
30	PROVIDED	537	16	33.6	32.8
31	OPEN	66	2	33.0	32.2
32	RECOGNIZE	33	1	33.0	32.2
33	CREATES	227	7	32.4	31.7
34	PROVIDE	1667	54	30.9	30.1
35	GRASP	30	1	30.0	29.3
36	OVERLOOK	15	0	30.0	29.3
37	CREATE	606	21	28.9	28.2
38	LOOK	85	3	28.3	27.7
39	FILLED	14	0	28.0	27.3
40	PRESENTING	14	0	28.0	27.3
41	DEVELOP	27	1	27.0	26.4
42	USING	52	2	26.0	25.4
43	LACK	26	1	26.0	25.4
44	CAPTURE	13	0	26.0	25.4
45	EXPANDS	13	0	26.0	25.4
46	IDENTIFIES	13	0	26.0	25.4
47	LIES	13	0	26.0	25.4
48	PROMOTING	13	0	26.0	25.4
49	PRESENTS	173	7	24.7	24.1
50	EXTEND	24	1	24.0	23.4
51	FACILITATE	12	0	24.0	23.4
52	DENYING	12	0	24.0	23.4
53	BUILD	12	0	24.0	23.4
54	SEEKS	12	0	24.0	23.4
55	TRAVEL	12	0	24.0	23.4
56	BECAME	23	1	23.0	22.5
57	FINDS	11	0	22.0	21.5
58	EXPORT	11	0	22.0	21.5
59	IDENTIFIED	11	0	22.0	21.5
60	PURSUED	11	0	22.0	21.5
61	RESEARCH	11	0	22.0	21.5
62	USE	192	9	21.3	20.8
63	WORK	83	4	20.8	20.3
64	ENSURING	10	0	20.0	19.5
65	FOSTER	10	0	20.0	19.5
66	GUARANTEE	10	0	20.0	19.5
67	SPOTTING	10	0	20.0	19.5
68	RECEIVE	38	2	19.0	18.6
69	PROVIDES	864	48	18.0	17.6
70	BUYING	18	1	18.0	17.6
71	SEEKING	104	6	17.3	16.9
72	LOOKING	86	5	17.2	16.8
73	GAIN	17	1	17.0	16.6
74	FINDING	50	3	16.7	16.3
75	CREATED	233	14	16.6	16.3
76	EMBRACE	33	2	16.5	16.1
77	INCLUDE	81	5	16.2	15.8
78	BRING	48	3	16.0	15.6
79	BECOME	32	2	16.0	15.6
80	GENERATE	16	1	16.0	15.6
81	LIMITED	61	4	15.3	14.9
82	REPEATED	15	1	15.0	14.6
83	SOUGHT	29	2	14.5	14.2
84	AFFORDS	71	5	14.2	13.9
85	SQUANDER	28	2	14.0	13.7
86	EXPLORING	27	2	13.5	13.2
87	SEIZE	346	26	13.3	13.0
88	AFFORDED	116	9	12.9	12.6
89	PRESENT	88	7	12.6	12.3
90	ENSURE	25	2	12.5	12.2
91	EXPERIENCE	12	1	12.0	11.7
92	EQUALIZE	22	2	11.0	10.7
93	BECOMES	22	2	11.0	10.7
94	DENY	11	1	11.0	10.7
95	EVALUATE	11	1	11.0	10.7
96	EXPLOITED	11	1	11.0	10.7
97	EXTENDED	11	1	11.0	10.7
98	RECOGNIZING	11	1	11.0	10.7
99	IGNORE	10	1	10.0	9.8
100	REPRESENT	55	6	9.2	9.0

### Appendix 3: Adjective Collocates of CHANCE

#### WORD 1 (W1): CHANCE (0.98)

	WORD	W1	W2	W1/W2	SCORE
1	FAT	210	0	420.0	430.1
2	OFF	151	0	302.0	309.2
3	SLIM	151	0	302.0	309.2
4	SLIGHT	102	0	204.0	208.9
5	HIGHER	75	0	150.0	153.6
6	EVEN	46	0	92.0	94.2
7	PURE	79	1	79.0	80.9
8	REMOTE	53	1	53.0	54.3
9	LUCKY	18	0	36.0	36.9
10	TINY	16	0	32.0	32.8
11	DECENT	121	4	30.3	31.0
12	BLIND	15	0	30.0	30.7
13	REMOTEST	15	0	30.0	30.7
14	SHEER	28	1	28.0	28.7
15	MAIN	26	1	26.0	26.6
16	UNNECESSARY	12	0	24.0	24.6
17	SMALL	139	6	23.2	23.7
18	STATISTICAL	22	1	22.0	22.5
19	SURE	11	0	22.0	22.5
20	BETTER-THAN-EVEN	11	0	22.0	22.5
21	BETTER-THAN-AVERAGE	11	0	22.0	22.5
22	ODD	11	0	22.0	22.5
23	MERE	40	2	20.0	20.5
24	WILD	10	0	20.0	20.5
25	AVERAGE	10	0	20.0	20.5
26	POOR	17	1	17.0	17.4
27	RANDOM	64	5	12.8	13.1
28	OUTSIDE	84	7	12.0	12.3
29	LOW	33	3	11.0	11.3
30	PRESIDENTIAL	11	1	11.0	11.3
31	LOWER	30	3	10.0	10.2
32	REALISTIC	93	11	8.5	8.7
33	SERIOUS	37	5	7.4	7.6
34	ONLY	680	105	6.5	6.6
35	SOLID	19	3	6.3	6.5
36	UNLIKELY	12	2	6.0	6.1
37	STRONG	94	17	5.5	5.7
38	JUST	22	4	5.5	5.6
39	ELECTORAL	16	3	5.3	5.5
40	GOOD	2397	462	5.2	5.3
41	BETTER	1635	327	5.0	5.1
42	SLIGHTEST	55	11	5.0	5.1
43	HAPPY	10	2	5.0	5.1
44	LEGITIMATE	58	12	4.8	4.9
45	HIGH	53	12	4.4	4.5
46	FAIR	275	69	4.0	4.1
47	REASONABLE	143	39	3.7	3.8
48	BEST	1413	407	3.5	3.6
49	OVERALL	10	4	2.5	2.6
50	LITTLE	185	79	2.3	2.4
51	LARGE	10	6	1.7	1.7
52	FINAL	84	51	1.6	1.7
53	SPORTING	22	15	1.5	1.5
54	ACTUAL	12	9	1.3	1.4
55	REAL	404	337	1.2	1.2
56	SINGLE	16	14	1.1	1.2
57	BIG	179	158	1.1	1.2
58	EXTRA	10	9	1.1	1.1
59	GREATER	287	281	1.0	1.0
60	BIGGER	17	17	1.0	1.0
61	EXCELLENT	159	230	0.7	0.7
62	IMPROVED	10	15	0.7	0.7
63	POSSIBLE	49	86	0.6	0.6
64	SIGNIFICANT	42	78	0.5	0.6
65	EARLY	11	21	0.5	0.5
66	GREATEST	54	120	0.5	0.5
67	FRESH	14	38	0.4	0.4
68	INCREASED	49	151	0.3	0.3
69	RARE	110	372	0.3	0.3
70	ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME	25	100	0.3	0.3
71	BIGGEST	10	43	0.2	0.2
72	INCREASING	12	64	0.2	0.2
73	MAJOR	13	72	0.2	0.2
74	OTHER	56	334	0.2	0.2
75	GREAT	197	1198	0.2	0.2
76	LIMITED	16	163	0.1	0.1
77	HUGE	14	155	0.1	0.1
78	NUMEROUS	10	111	0.1	0.1
79	EQUAL	116	1339	0.1	0.1
80	LOST	16	203	0.1	0.1
81	UNPRECEDENTED	10	128	0.1	0.1
82	NEW	90	1153	0.1	0.1
83	PERFECT	20	296	0.1	0.1
84	POLITICAL	11	163	0.1	0.1
85	MISSED	33	499	0.1	0.1
86	HISTORIC	12	183	0.1	0.1
87	GOLDEN	21	333	0.1	0.1
88	MULTIPLE	10	163	0.1	0.1
89	WONDERFUL	11	258	0.0	0.0
90	UNIQUE	28	674	0.0	0.0
91	AMPLE	10	445	0.0	0.0

## Appendix 4: Adjective Collocates of OPPORTUNITY

### WORD 2 (W2): OPPORTUNITY (1.02)

	WORD	W2	W1	W2/W1	SCORE
1	ECONOMIC	1025	0	2,050.0	2,002.0
2	EDUCATIONAL	1021	3	340.3	332.4
3	RECREATIONAL	113	0	226.0	220.7
4	COMMERCIAL	79	0	158.0	154.3
5	RICH	57	0	114.0	111.3
6	EXPANDING	54	0	108.0	105.5
7	FINANCIAL	53	0	106.0	103.5
8	PHOTOGRAPHIC	53	0	106.0	103.5
9	AVAILABLE	50	0	100.0	97.7
10	EXCITING	88	1	88.0	85.9
11	ENTREPRENEURIAL	44	0	88.0	85.9
12	ENDLESS	44	0	88.0	85.9
13	EXPANDED	44	0	88.0	85.9
14	PROFESSIONAL	87	1	87.0	85.0
15	NATURAL	36	0	72.0	70.3
16	LUCRATIVE	35	0	70.0	68.4
17	AMAZING	67	1	67.0	65.4
18	VALUABLE	67	1	67.0	65.4
19	STRATEGIC	31	0	62.0	60.5
20	INSTRUCTIONAL	30	0	60.0	58.6
21	CRITICAL	30	0	60.0	58.6
22	INTERESTING	29	0	58.0	56.6
23	LIMITLESS	29	0	58.0	56.6
24	SOCIAL	111	2	55.5	54.2
25	TREMENDOUS	217	4	54.3	53.0
26	FANTASTIC	27	0	54.0	52.7
27	EARLIEST	53	1	53.0	51.8
28	ENORMOUS	104	2	52.0	50.8
29	ABUNDANT	26	0	52.0	50.8
30	LOCAL	26	0	52.0	50.8
31	PROMOTIONAL	26	0	52.0	50.8
32	CULTURAL	25	0	50.0	48.8
33	ATHLETIC	25	0	50.0	48.8
34	POSITIVE	25	0	50.0	48.8
35	PRESENT	25	0	50.0	48.8
36	UNPARALLELED	49	1	49.0	47.9
37	UNUSUAL	45	1	45.0	43.9
38	AMPLE	445	10	44.5	43.5
39	GLOBAL	22	0	44.0	43.0
40	DIGITAL	21	0	42.0	41.0
41	OCCUPATIONAL	21	0	42.0	41.0
42	REGULAR	21	0	42.0	41.0
43	ADEQUATE	41	1	41.0	40.0
44	EXCEPTIONAL	20	0	40.0	39.1
45	MATING	20	0	40.0	39.1
46	ONGOING	20	0	40.0	39.1
47	EXTRAORDINARY	119	3	39.7	38.7
48	EMERGING	19	0	38.0	37.1
	SEXUAL	19	0	38.0	37.1
50	TECHNOLOGICAL	19	0	38.0	37.1
51	CONVENIENT	18	0	36.0	35.2
52	ALTERNATIVE	18	0	36.0	35.2
53	ATTRACTIVE	18	0	36.0	35.2
54	MONEY-MAKING	18	0	36.0	35.2
55	PROFITABLE	18	0	36.0	35.2
56	AWESOME	17	0	34.0	33.2
57	VAST	17	0	34.0	33.2
58	RIGHT	65	2	32.5	31.7
59	PROMISING	32	1	32.0	31.3
60	COLLABORATIVE	16	0	32.0	31.3
61	INVALUABLE	16	0	32.0	31.3
62	CHALLENGING	15	0	30.0	29.3
63	CONSERVATIVE	15	0	30.0	29.3
64	SEIZING	15	0	30.0	29.3
65	CREATIVE	28	1	28.0	27.3
66	ILLEGITIMATE	14	0	28.0	27.3
67	POSTSECONDARY	14	0	28.0	27.3
68	RESTRICTED	14	0	28.0	27.3
69	SERVICE-LEARNING	14	0	28.0	27.3
70	VARIED	14	0	28.0	27.3
71	MASSIVE	13	0	26.0	25.4
72	RELEVANT	13	0	26.0	25.4
73	STRUCTURED	13	0	26.0	25.4
74	VOCATIONAL	13	0	26.0	25.4
75	SUFFICIENT	50	2	25.0	24.4
76	INDIVIDUAL	25	1	25.0	24.4
77	MUSICAL	25	1	25.0	24.4
78	INCREDIBLE	99	4	24.8	24.2
79	ADDITIONAL	122	5	24.4	23.8
80	UNIQUE	674	28	24.1	23.5
81	FAVORABLE	12	0	24.0	23.4
82	EXTENSIVE	12	0	24.0	23.4
83	UNTAPPED	12	0	24.0	23.4
84	WONDERFUL	258	11	23.5	22.9
85	MARVELOUS	23	1	23.0	22.5
86	OBVIOUS	23	1	23.0	22.5
87	MISSING	22	1	22.0	21.5
88	PLENTIFUL	11	0	22.0	21.5
89	WIDER	11	0	22.0	21.5
90	APPROPRIATE	21	1	21.0	20.5
91	IMPORTANT	142	7	20.3	19.8
92	SPECIAL	80	4	20.0	19.5
93	INTERNATIONAL	20	1	20.0	19.5
94	VARIOUS	20	1	20.0	19.5
95	AUTHENTIC	10	0	20.0	19.5
96	ACTING	10	0	20.0	19.5
97	COMPELLING	10	0	20.0	19.5
98	FORMAL	10	0	20.0	19.5
99	FABULOUS	10	0	20.0	19.5
100	EVERYDAY	10	0	20.0	19.5



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**CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY**

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