

Critical Review of “A Whole New World... Wait. is it a *Whole*, *Entire*, or *Total* World?” The Extraction of Collocations for the Three English Synonym Discrimination

Introduction

In English language teaching, vocabulary is a very crucial part, especially when it comes to academic writing. When talking about vocabulary, synonyms are inevitable. Whenever the L2 learners encounter the learning of synonyms, they will complain endlessly. The content of synonyms provided by bilingual dictionaries is very limited. Many students have a vague understanding of the concept of synonyms and mistakenly believe that synonyms are just words that share the same meaning in their first language. Therefore, in the process of academic writing and translation, it is difficult to accurately identify and interpret English synonyms. This research article was done by quoting data from the Corpus of Contemporary American English. And the critical review mainly focuses on the critical evaluation of the article from the perspectives of its main argument, research scope, methodologies and limitations and strengths, contributions and so on.

Summary of the Article

Based on the data drawn from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), this article analysed the advantages and disadvantages of learning synonyms in the process of English language acquisition. On one hand, the authors proposed that learning synonyms can effectively expand learners' vocabulary. On the other hand, the authors think learning synonyms would be an obstacle on the way of learning English as it will cause confusion and complication. Therefore, the authors gained the conclusion that corpus-based language teaching is very useful. In order to test the aim of this article, the authors took three synonyms “whole”, “entire” and “total” as examples to do the research. In this article, the authors first define synonyms in a detailed way and then explain the elements of distinguishing synonyms which would affect EFL/ESL learners to improve their English writing ability. In the methodology part, the authors displayed quite a lot of numeric information to do the comparison among the three synonyms.

The mastery of words is inseparable from the understanding of the meaning of words, and the meaning of words does not exist in isolation. A phenomenon in which the same meaning or concept can be represented by two or more words is called a synonymous phenomenon, such as: commence, begin, and start, which can all refer to "start". The rich synonyms in English enhance the expressive power of English, but at the same time bring learning difficulties to learners. Although synonyms express the same or

similar meanings and help us explain the meanings, there are a large number of English synonyms and they are widely used, and learners have many confusions about how to understand and remember and correctly distinguish the semantic differences between them. It is an important issue that must be addressed in the teaching process.

Evaluation of the article from a methodological perspective

This article used both quantitative and qualitative methods to explain the aim. In the Literature Review section, the authors used the qualitative method to analyse the meaning of synonyms. They well explained what is near-synonym and what is an absolute synonym, during which, the authors quoted several definitions given out by other researchers such as Jackson & Amvela, 2000; Cruse, 2000; Elgin 1992 (Taylor 2002). Then, they further listed the two criteria for distinguishing synonyms: the degree of formality and collocation. This part of the analysis helped readers to further understand how to differentiate synonyms from the perspective of form. And then, the authors mentioned five previous related studies to prove their analysis result of synonyms. Here, they summarised the previous related studies and let readers better understand the criteria adopted to discriminate synonyms.

However, there are also other criteria which can be used to discriminate synonyms:

- Semantic Degree

In some synonym groups, each word in each group of synonyms has different meanings. For example, the meaning of "surprise" has the following group of synonyms. The different degree of surprise is surprising, astonishing, and astounding. Another example is "anger". The intensity is variable, and sometimes it may not be revealed. For example, someone tried to conceal his anger. Then, the word "rage" refers to being very angry, focusing on violent attacks, uncontrollable. For example, his first hot anger against the beast has changed into a cold rage. The last one is "fury". It refers to rage, stronger than rage, close to madness.

- Emotional Degree

The difference between synonyms can be also reflected in emotion and connotation. The choice of these words can reflect the emotions and attitudes of the speaker. Some are neutral, some express affirmation, approval, or affection, and some express denial, denial, or disgust. For instance, the synonyms statesman and politician share the same meaning but the latter are often tended to contain a pejorative meaning.

Despite the aforementioned qualitative research, the authors drew data from the COCA, one of the most widely used corpora of English in the field of English language teaching, to introduce the 8 genres that can be used to analyse the frequency of word usage. They cited 8 tables and 1 figure picture to display the data for further supporting their point

of view. By using the quantitative research method, they perfectly proved in what way people can clearly know when the different synonyms should be used. For example, when it comes to academic writing, the word “total” should be taken; when describing a geography-related thing, the word “entire” or “whole” could be used. In this quantitative way, the readers can easily get find the highest frequently used words. It is more convincing. But in their quantitative research process, some repeated data came up several times such as formality and the frequency of three adjectives across the genres. And the authors included loads of numbers in their written parts after displaying them in the tables, which may not that necessary as it is very clear already.

It should be noted that, as the authors said, there are limitations in this research. This article mainly focused on the three synonyms but there are loads of synonyms with different forms such as synonyms with different scopes and synonyms with different emotional functions. Although this article provided sufficient theoretical support for the thesis, the analysis is still not comprehensive enough. However, it could be a perfect supplementary material as a part of English vocabulary teaching.

Evaluation of the article from the perspective of its contribution

This research attempts to conduct an empirical study of English synonym discrimination based on the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). This study identified and analysed three synonyms, which are based on the data collected from COCA and talked about elements of discriminating synonyms such as genres, formality and collocations, aiming to reveal the language characteristics of synonyms. In the meanwhile, it also demonstrated that corpus-based research methods are effective in synonym identification. This article offered inspiration and innovation in terms of vocabulary teaching methods, that is: to provide teachers and learners with a new method of synonym identification, while introducing corpora and index lines into classroom teaching will promote students to conduct data-driven learning, so as to effectively stimulate students' learning motivation, thereby improving students' ability to analyze and solve problems. It provides quantitative and qualitative analysis, resulting in more reliable and convincing research results. Such synonym analysis naturally also has important teaching implications. Of course, corpus-based vocabulary teaching will also encounter some problems. First, the problem faced by teachers is what kind of corpus to choose for teaching activities; secondly, whether the corpus extracted can meet the teaching purpose; third, sometimes the corpus provided by the teacher may not be understood by the students and cannot draw effective conclusions; the last but not the least, the corpus-based inductive teaching method may only be suitable for some students, and it may not be the most effective method for some students. Teachers should give full consideration to these issues and make flexible handling according to the actual situation of students and teaching.

Conclusion

Vocabulary is the basis for further improving English level, without vocabulary, it is difficult to express. English synonyms are numerous and complex, which is the key and difficult point in English teaching and the weak link between students. For synonyms, we not only need to know their similarities but also their differences. We must consider the semantics, colour and style in detail, and choose appropriate vocabulary and inappropriate occasions to correctly express our thoughts and feelings. Teachers should take targeted teaching measures in their usual teaching practice to help students fully and deeply understand the semantic characteristics of synonyms, and then use time and practice to help students improve the accuracy and discourse quality of English, and improve English communication. ability.

Most importantly, corpus-based research is a new research method in modern linguistics. With the rapid development of computer technology and the emergence of large-scale machine-readable corpora and retrieval software, this method has been widely used in language research at various levels and angles.

This article is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is the introduction of the full text, introducing the content of the authors' investigation towards synonymous adjectives, whole, entire, and total, and expounding the purpose and importance of corpus-based synonym analysis research. The second chapter is a literature review, which provides a review of some theories and studies related to this research, including the concept of near-synonyms and absolute synonyms, the criteria for distinguishing synonyms, and previous related studies. The third chapter is about the research methodology. It first explains the characteristics of the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) used in this study. The fourth chapter is the main body of the full text. The authors first used qualitative research methods to analyse non-numerical data to understand concepts of eight genres including spoken, TV and Movie subtitles, blogs, webpages, fiction, popular magazines, newspapers, and academic texts. And defined each genre. Then the study presented the quantitative findings of corpus retrieval, including accurate data and randomly selected partial index lines, and qualitatively analyzing and summarizing them. The fifth chapter concludes that the corpus-based research method is beneficial to English language teaching and is an effective method of synonym discrimination, although there are limitations there.

This research is an exploration and attempt at the application of corpus in professional English vocabulary teaching. The author believes that corpus-based vocabulary teaching is an effective method, it can make up for the shortcomings of traditional teaching methods; it is beneficial to play the role of students' subjectivity, stimulate students' interest in learning, and mobilize students' enthusiasm for learning; Students carry out exploratory and discovery-based learning activities. Through the analysis of a large number of real language examples to summarize and summarize the

characteristics and laws of language use, it helps to cultivate students' creative thinking ability and problem-solving abilities; vocabulary Teaching is a foundation of English teaching. Using the corpus-based method for vocabulary teaching can improve the effectiveness of English vocabulary teaching. The use of corpus-based methods for vocabulary teaching can enrich the content of English vocabulary teaching, promote the reform of English vocabulary teaching in terms of teaching methods, and promote and develop professional English language teaching theories. This research only involves the synonym part of English vocabulary teaching. Other aspects of English vocabulary teaching need to be explored; the application of corpus in English teaching has a very broad prospect. It is worth further exploration and research.

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