

Using Corpus-Based Data To Linguistically Investigate Absolute And Loose Synonyms

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Abstract: The first section of the paper aims at examining and comparing pairs of absolute synonymous in terms of their stylistic, syntactical and lexical levels. The expressive resources of a language will not be as useful if it was not for synonyms. Linguistics, in these modern times, is faced with this issue called synonymy. Their most perplexing characteristic is the duality of synonyms. The stylistic features, connotations, and different meanings help to distinguish these words. Synonyms can be categorized into two main types; absolute synonyms and loose synonyms. As absolute synonyms pair belongs to different dialects, they may be persistent in the vocabulary. The synonyms pairs in American English and British English (truck/lorry, elevator/lift, and prison/jail) demonstrate a similar case. It has been established among linguistics of different linguistic origins that the altogether existence of absolute synonyms is questionable or that they rarely occur. The second section of this paper focuses on stylistic, syntactic, and lexical information of five synonyms in English language.

The primary focus of this section is on loose synonyms, i.e. appeal, request, plead, beg, and ask. The two key sources, i.e. concordance lines and dictionaries, were used to derive data to carry out this section. The investigation of absolute synonyms is done with the help of British National Corpus and Corpus of Contemporary American English. Lastly, the field of linguistics can greatly benefit from and depend on a corpus based data to supply it information, as confirmed by the hypothesis used in this section. The corpus-based data appears to be beneficial because it supplies additional information as opposed to dictionaries that lack comprehensive details of the words, for instance collocations or grammatical patterns. Additionally, corpora provide the option to search for more sample sentences of synonyms in case the learner is not clear on the meaning of a certain word.

1. INTRODUCTION

English language is referred to as lingua franca because it is widely spoken throughout the world and is regarded highly useful. According to Kirkpatrick (2007), English serves as medium of communication between people who have different native languages, and thus enables them to indulge in conversations by understanding each other's speech. English language constitutes million of words, which is not a surprise considering its long history and benefits. As compared to most other languages, English has a relatively larger number of words (Crystal, 2007). However, Finegan (2007) contends English has borrowed numerous words from different languages. It is widely known among English linguists and learners that synonyms are the words that are similar in their semantic features or meaning, e.g. large and big. Synonymy, as a concept, assumes a vital role in English. It is essential to

be aware of synonyms and understand them in their entirety in order to excel at learning and improving English.

However, the context of the word makes it hard to interchange synonyms. The appropriateness of the synonym to the situation should be considered because sometimes they should only be used in a certain context. Trudgill (1990) states; synonyms vary according to geographical regions as well as the connotations they express (Jackson & Amvela, 2000).

The dictionary meaning of a word may or may not be similar to the infinite denotations, connotations, and indications that it may also represent. The words have different senses and shades of meaning according to the situation or context it is used in. It is absolutely essential to be cautious when picking a word for a certain situation. The unwanted implications can be avoided if the word carries a preferred meaning for a required expression. It can be quite daunting for writers and speakers, especially those who are non-native, to choose the right word. The question that arises in such situations for these people is “how to pick the right word”.

The situation of a puzzled driver at the intersection with two paths in front of him perfectly illustrates the role of an individual when learning English as a foreign language. The right road goes to the dictionary path with word’s definitions while the road on the left leads to learning “real English”. It can be hard to decide which one should be picked. The meaning of a word in the dictionary does not even come close to representing what it means in real English and the examples given there to illustrate the meaning are not always appropriate. However, according to Gries (2006), the samples of naturally occurring language are used to build corpora. Therefore, this research aims at proving that the meaning of the words in the dictionary are interlaced with natural, authentic and real language, i.e. real English through corpus-based study.

The objectives of this section are as follows:

- I. Investigating the lexical information, i.e. connotative and referential meanings with collocations of the pairs of synonyms truck/lorry, elevator/lift, prison/jail.
- II. Examining the stylistic information, i.e. context and formality in which respective synonyms take place.
- III. Comparing the information provided in the dictionaries of learners with reference to corpora.
- IV. Comparing and contrasting the synonyms in COCA and BNC corpus.

E-dictionaries and corpus data are used to accomplish the objectives of this section based on the analysis of quantitative linguistic. The ambiguity and issues of synonymy as a phenomenon are discussed in this paper in addition to analyzing American and British English dialects by comparing them.

1. Synonymy as a Phenomenon

Synonymy gives rise to numerous dilemmas and difficulties when an individual wants to provide a concrete, exact and accurate definition. Thus, it is regarded as one of the most questionable and disputable linguistic issues. Given the complex nature of synonyms and core of their mutual relationship, this sense-relation between them is differently explained by different linguists.

“I am your great admirer and I like you a lot, but I only love you as a friend”

The above sentence uses similar verbs, i.e. admire, like and love to describe attraction, affection, and admiration but it can be quite confusing if these verb’s synonymous duality is

considered. They appear very similar on the first look, however they become dissimilar if they are observed separately. This stirs the issue of what should and should not be defined as a synonym.

If one synonym is substituted with the other and the sentence's semantic meaning is not changed then it is known as lexemes synonymous (Lyons, 1995). Synonyms are greatly generalized through the assertion made by Cruse (1986) as the lexical items or words that indicate a unique similarity. The author later asserted that it is not advisable to consider synonyms as identicalness of meaning because it is rather redundant and unnecessary to analyze identical meaning. It is worth noting that there have been evident extensions in the way synonyms are defined over time. Accordingly, synonyms are labeled as synonyms if they describe the same occurrence, naming it differently, and representing it from various outlooks (Divjak, 2006).

The definitions given above essentially state that synonyms are lexical varieties that should be in correspondence with each other but not necessarily be interchangeable. Whereas the meaning of correspondence suggests that the core meaning of the saying should be in agreement. The LLC time circle illustrates all the definitions mentioned above.

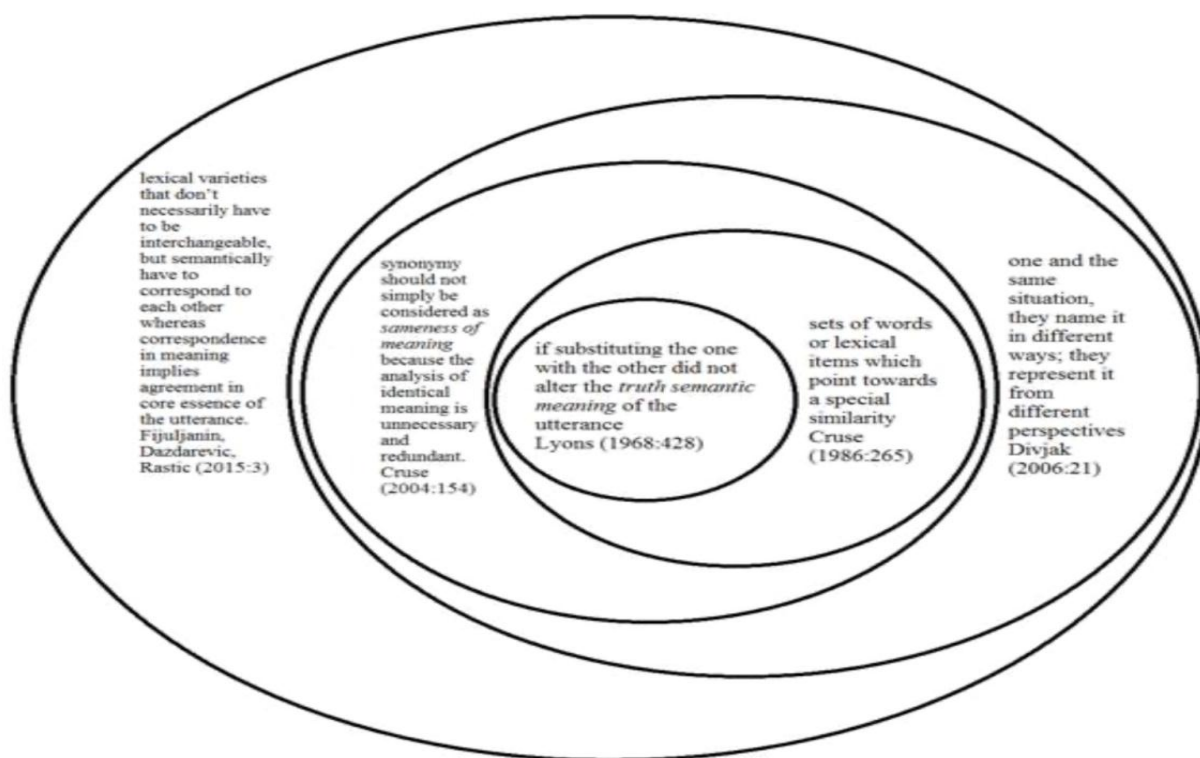


Diagram 1: Different definitions of synonyms over time. Source: Divjak (2006).

Stylistics and Stylistics Synonymy

Stylistics is a field of linguistics that uses different tools to interpret language or texts in reference to their linguistic and tonal style. Corpus linguistics is providing new prospects to study the language. The approaches of stylistics and corpus linguistics encompass interesting similarities. Stylistics relates to empirical analysis field in which literary texts are analyzed using the techniques and insights of linguistic theory. The evidence of language usage as corpora collects and analyzes provides bases for corpus linguistics. The approach has a few fundamental similarities, as pointed out by Burrows (2002); "Sometimes, at first glance, it is

not obvious enough as to how many commonalities computational and traditional forms of stylistics have. Relying on analyzing texts closely and benefitting from comparison opportunities are just two of the many similarities.” According to Stubbs (2020), there has been a significant increase in the number of studies published suggesting that it would be beneficial to bring these two fields together. This is particularly due to the fact that corpus resources and techniques offer numerous possibilities which is just being realized by the stylisticians and linguists. The barriers to uptake of corpora are being overcome which is making its use more mainstream and widespread. There are two distinguished approaches among the significant areas of current activity, i.e. corpus annotation and collocation analysis.

The concept of interchangeability does not apply to stylistic synonymy because of the varying underlying conditions, e.g. father – dad or infants – children. The connotational and pragmatic aspects of meaning of the stylistics synonyms are different while denotational aspect is similar. The communication situation is inadequately presented if stylistics synonyms are substituted for another. More often than not, archaisms or poetic words are used as stylistics substitutes of neutral words in the literary language. For instance, *quit* for *leave*, *steed* for *horse*, *bliss* for *happiness*, and *maid* for *girl*.

It is extravagant to use *vocation* and *calling* as compared to *business* or *occupation* from the synonymic group *business*, *vocation*, *calling*, *occupation*. There is usually a factor of elevation in the meaning of stylistic synonym, for example, *girl* – *maiden* or *face* – *visage*. There is also the reverse process of degradation along with elevation of meaning; *face* – *muzzle*, *to steal* – *to pinch*, *to eat* – *to devour*, *to begin* – *to fire away*.

Stylistic distinction is the main difference between synonyms. However, there can be different types of stylistic differences, it may lie in the extent of the quality denoted, or in the application area, or in the way a word is connoting emotional tension. Thus, it is recommended not to substitute one synonym for another.

Absolute Synonyms

The various shades of meaning, kind of “sameness”, dialect, scale of synonymy, and interchangeability criteria divide the synonyms. Synonyms can be classified into three types as Vinogradov, a famous Russian scholar, states:

- a) Stylistic Synonyms: The ones that differ in terms of their stylistic features, as discussed above.
- b) Absolute synonyms: The ones that coincide in all their stylistic features and shades of meaning.
- c) Ideographic synonyms: Varying in shades of meaning but having identical concept.

On the other hand, synonyms are divided into; absolute synonyms, near-synonyms, and cognitive synonyms by Cruse (1986).

This section focuses on strict or absolute synonyms. The key characteristic of absolute synonyms, if described using the interchangeability, is that it can possibly be interchanged in all the contexts of language. Additionally, this statement would have to be proved by checking all the potential contexts; which is not possible to do. This implies that it is uncommon and rare to find two words with exactly the same meaning; such words do not exist. It is said that “the semantic meaning of a word is continuously being reinvented” (Edmond & Hirst, 2002). Furthermore, some linguists argue that synonyms with same meaning do not exist and if they do, they are extremely rare as they lead to redundancy in a language (McCarthy, O’Keeffe & Walsh, 2010).

However, the perspective of Leech (1981), which involves employing the division on meaning, is particularly useful for this section:

- 1) Denotative/cognitive/conceptual meaning
- 2) Thematic meaning
- 3) Collocative meaning
- 4) Reflected meaning
- 5) Affective meaning
- 6) Social meaning
- 7) 'connotative' meaning

The cognitive synonyms are divided into five categories (Palmer, 1986).

- i. The ones used in various styles, for instance, *an 'orrible stink* or *a nasty smell*.
- ii. The ones that overlap in terms of their meaning or have almost same meaning, for instance potential synonyms for the word *mature* are *due, ripe, adult and perfect*.
- iii. The ones that are restricted in a collocational sense, for instance *cheese* cannot be rancid but *butter* and *bacon* can be.
- iv. The ones belonging to different language dialects, for instance *autumn* in Great Britain and *fall* in America.
- v. The ones differing in their evaluative or emotive meaning, for instance, *freedom* and *liberty*.

Palmer (1986) refers to a type or group of synonyms as “dialect” and Leech (1981) refers to the same group as “social”. The term social has been explained as a piece of language through which social conditions of its use are conveyed. The socio-stylistic variations have a number of dimensions, however this section focuses on the aspect of *dialect* in socio-stylistic variation.

The stylistics linguistic varieties constitute a dimension called dialects that are considered as subtypes of languages that can vary in grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary. English language has numerous dialects, however this section examines American English and British English.

2. TRUCK OR LORRY? PAIR SYNONYMY IN AMERICAN ENGLISH AND BRITISH ENGLISH

As mentioned earlier, dialects have numerous varieties in English language. American and British English definitely stands out but even they have sub-dialects as demonstrated in the following two figures. The dialects are marked in various shades of colors depending on their geographical area, as evident in *Figure 1* and *Figure 2*.

In the first figure, different regions of Great Britain are mentioned. All these regions have their own subdialects. It can be seen that every region has at least 3 sub-dialects with the maximum number being as high as 10. The second figure demonstrates different American dialects and subdialects.



Figure 1: British and Irish Dialects. Source: MapsInternational, UK (2015).

These figures give rise to an important query, i.e. are these different dialects understood among people from these regions?

More often than not, English-speaking people make use of different expressions and words to refer to the same thing. This implies that vocabulary usage in different dialects can cause misunderstandings.

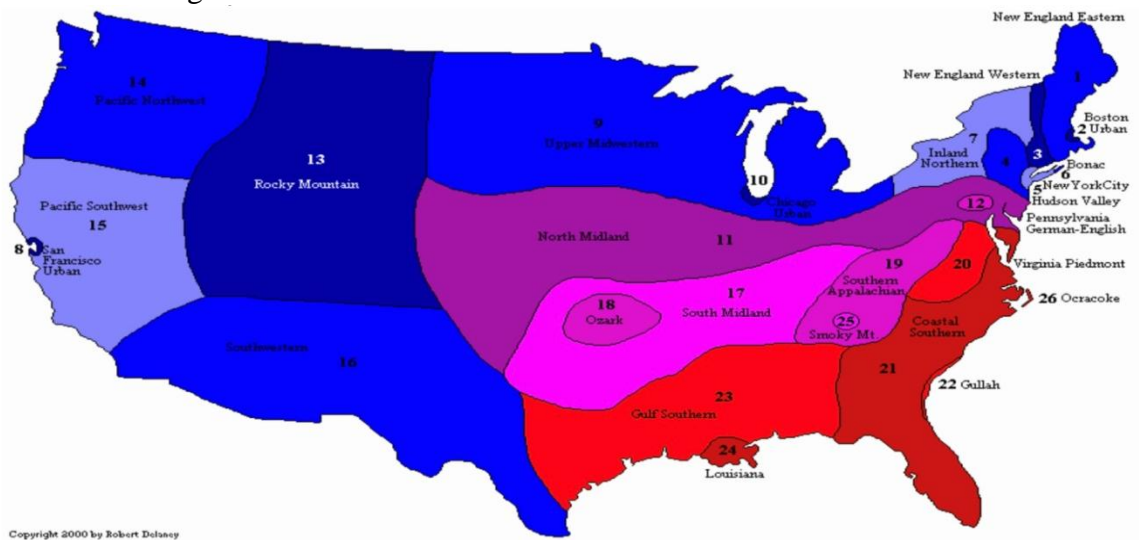


Figure 2: American Dialects. Source: Robert Delaney (2013).

Consider, for example, the words cotton-candy and candyfloss. They sound completely different and somebody who is unaware of their meaning could totally pass them as two different words with different meanings, however in reality, they refer to the same thing, i.e. a type of candy.

Thus, this section examines such synonym's pairs in vocabulary of American and British dialects to find the difference between them, if any. The 3 groups of synonym's pair in

American English and British English are used in this section. (lorry/truck, lift/elevator, jail/prison).

The following e-dictionaries were used for consultation purposes:

- Dictionary (2020)
- Merriam-Webster Dictionary (MWD 2020)
- Oxford Learner’s Dictionary (OLD 2020)
- Cambridge Dictionaries Online (CDO 2020)

3. DICTIONARY DEFINITIONS OF PAIR SYNONYMS

The above mentioned dictionaries were used to analyze the words truck (American English) and lorry (British English) which were identified by all of them, as Table 1 demonstrates. The word truck is defined “as a large vehicle” and a number of other terms are used to describe its physicality. However, it should be noted that the word “lorry” is not used or mentioned as its synonym. In this case, absolute synonymy is proposed on the basis of definitions provided in the dictionary. As opposed to this, the second word, i.e. “lorry” is defined as a motor truck or truck in 3/4 online dictionaries that were used in this paper.

Table 1: Dictionary Definitions of Truck and Lorry

	Dictionary	Merriam-Webster Dictionary	Oxford Learner’s Dictionary	Cambridge Dictionaries Online
Truck (American English)	-any of various forms of vehicle for carrying goods and materials, usually consisting of a single self-propelled unit but also often composed of a trailer hauled by a tractor unit.	1. barter 2. commodities appropriate for barter or for small trade 3. close association or connection 4. payment of wages in goods instead of cash 5. vegetables grown for market 6. heterogeneous small articles often of little value; also : RUBBISH	1. a large vehicle for carrying heavy loads by road 2. an open railway vehicle for carrying goods or animals	1. a large road vehicle that is used for transporting large amounts of goods: 2. a part of a train that is used for carrying goods or animals:
Lorry (British English)	-a motor truck, especially large one.	-motor truck	-a large vehicle for carrying heavy loads by road	-a truck

The lexemes searched shown in Table 2 are elevator (American English) and lift (British English) that, in their simple sense, refer to a machine that carries things and people to desired floor in a building. The point of observation here is that how many dictionaries provide a similar definition. In this regard, OLD defined “lift” as an act rather than a device or machine, thus not considering it as a noun. The definitions provided by all the dictionaries suggest the use of absolute synonymy here. To summarize all four definitions, it can be said that “it is a device used to carry people and goods to different levels in a building”.

Table 2: Dictionary Definitions of *Elevator* and *Lift*

	Dictionary	Merriam-Webster Dictionary	Oxford Learner's Dictionary	Cambridge Dictionaries Online
Elevator (American)	1.a person or thing that elevates or raises 2.a moving platform or cage for carrying passengers or freight from one level to another, as in building 3. any of various mechanical devices for raising objects or materials.	-a machine used for carrying people and things to different levels in a building	-a machine that carries people or goods up and down to different levels in a building or a mine	1.a device like a box that moves up and down, carrying people or goods from one floor of a building to another or taking people up and down underground in a mine 2. a conveyor (= moving strip) that can be used for removing goods from a ship, putting bags onto an aircraft, moving grain, etc.
Lift (British English)	1.the act of lifting, raising, or rising 2.the distance that anything rises or is raised 3.a lifting or raising force 4.the weight, load, or quantity lifted 5.an act or instance of helping to climb or mount 6.a ride in a vehicle, especially one given to a pedestrian 7.a feeling of exaltation or uplift	a device (as a handle or latch) for lifting	/	a device like a box that moves up and down, carrying people or goods from one floor of a building to another or taking people up and down underground in a mine

Two different words that explain and denote the same thing are represented in Table 3. Essentially, both jail and prison are described as “a building or place to keep criminals”. While other dictionaries have mentioned that prison is a place where criminals wait for trials, Merriam-Webster Dictionary and Cambridge Dictionaries are more inclined towards specifying it as a place where criminals are forcefully kept. However, both the expressions have the same core semantic meaning, thus qualifying as absolute synonyms.

Table 3: Dictionary Definition of *Prison* and *Jail*

	Dictionary	Merriam-Webster Dictionary	Oxford Learner's Dictionary	Cambridge Dictionaries Online
Prison (American)	1.a building for the confinement of persons held while awaiting trial, persons sentenced after conviction 2.state prison 3.any place of confinement or involuntary restraint 4.imprisonment	-a place of confinement especially for lawbreakers; specifically : an institution (as one under state jurisdiction) for confinement of persons convicted of serious crimes	-a building where people are kept as a punishment for a crime they have committed, or while they are waiting for trial	-a building where criminals are forced to live as a punishment
Jail (British English)	-a prison, especially one for detention of persons awaiting trial or convicted of minor offenses	-a place of confinement for persons held in lawful custody; specifically : such a place under the jurisdiction of a local government (as a county) for the confinement of persons awaiting trial or those convicted of minor crimes	-a prison	-a place where criminals are kept to punish them for their crimes, or where people accused of crimes are kept while waiting for their trials

4. CORPUS BASED DATA RESULTS

The comparative analysis and concordance lines were used to obtain data for this part of the study in order to complete the research on pair synonyms and determining whether or not absolute synonyms exist. A total of two corpora, i.e. The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) and British National Corpus (BNC) were used to draw realistic conclusions.

A collocation certainly serves as a great measure to find out if synonyms of a given word exist, and if they do, what is the scale of synonymy. The pairs of synonyms used in this section are presented through collocation in the following figures as English speakers consider it a significant vocabulary unit.

Corpora are used to extract the tables shown in the following figures. The collocation of the searched words is presented in the first column. The comparison of words is shown in W1 and W2 columns. The total number of times that collocations of the first and second word occurred is represented by numbers. The meaning of the compared words holds certain similarities and differences that should be highlighted by the comparison of the collocates.

The synonyms pair *truck* and *lorry* is defined as absolute in the e-dictionaries used in the last section, however, their collocations in both the corpora (COCA and BNC) do not match. According to noteworthy linguists, one of the key characteristics of absolute synonymy is that collocations of the synonyms match with each other. In the first 17 entries; 6 out of 10,420 were detected, and the possessive adjectives “his” and “my” seem to be the only collocations. As all nouns can have their determiners in the shape of personal pronouns, also known as possessive adjectives, these collocations cannot be considered as real collocations. The word *lorry*, considering its first 17 collocations, mostly collocates with determiners, articles, and prepositions, however, this situation outlines a contrariwise situation making a comparison of 1st word with the 2nd. In COCA, as figure 3 demonstrates, there are many more collocations of the word *lorry* as compared to the word *truck*. The dialect basis of corpus (COCA) and pair synonyms used for investigation can be accounted for this significant difference.

WORD 1 (W1): TRUCK (189.20)				WORD 2 (W2): LORRY (0.01)			
	WORD	W1	W2		WORD	W2	W1
1	PICKUP	1498	0	1	DRIVER	12	1058
2	OUT	1063	1	2	"	22	2133
3	STOP	484	0	3	ON	12	1569
4	CAR	471	0	4	THAT	11	1479
5	DRIVING	377	0	5	WITH	11	1578
6	ONE	373	0	6	,	63	9116
7	HAVE	357	0	7	'S	14	2185
8	DRIVE	355	0	8	WAS	10	1571
9	PARKED	351	0	9	A	54	9575
10	MY	694	1	10	.	55	10292
11	TOW	336	0	11	THE	78	16965
12	YOUR	336	0	12	OF	20	4439
13	HIS	2509	4	13	TO	16	3942
14	BED	310	0	14	AND	23	5729
15	ITS	303	0	15	IN	14	4092
16	FIRE	302	0				
17	HAS	301	0				

Figure 3. Collocation comparisons of pair synonyms *lorry* and *truck* in COCA

WORD 1 (W1): LORRY (1.17)				WORD 2 (W2): TRUCK (0.85)			
	WORD	W1	W2		WORD	W2	W1
1	LORRY	26	1	1	PICK-UP	35	0
2	FRENCH	12	0	2	FORK-LIFT	21	0
3	WIFE	12	0	3	TRUCK	20	1
4	CRASH	11	0	4	FORKLIFT	10	0
5	WOMAN	9	0	5	PICKUP	9	0
6	LONG-DISTANCE	7	0	6	CATERING	8	0
7	MILK	7	0	7	SALES	8	0
8	MOVEMENTS	7	0	8	HALF	7	0
9	SING	7	0	9	COMPANY	12	1
10	FELL	6	0	10	FORK	12	1
11	MAY	6	0	11	MASKLIN	6	0
12	MORNING	6	0	12	MINUTES	6	0
13	NA	6	0	13	REFUSE	6	0
14	SERIOUS	6	0	14	SYSTEM	6	0
15	BRING	5	0	15	PLANT	10	1
16	BLOCKADE	5	0	16	HULL	5	0
17	CRUSHED	5	0	17	&;	5	0

Figure 4. Collocation comparisons of pair synonyms *lorry* and *truck* in BNC

The words, truck and lorry, both have great amount of zeros placed in the W2 column. This corroborates that absolute synonymy does not exist. The search for absolute synonyms only proved that such a phenomenon does not exist in linguistics.

The non-native speakers can greatly benefit from corpus in terms of learning about and recognizing various linguistic changes, as represented through the comparison made in Figure 5. The non-existence of absolute synonymy is indicated by the low numbers in column W2 as compared to W1. However, collocations ratio (810:24 & 2921:5) in both the images in Figure 5 supports the view that absolute synonymy exists.

WORD 1 (W1): ELEVATOR (0.46)				WORD 2 (W2): LIFT (2.17)			
	WORD	W1	W2		WORD	W2	W1
1	APARTMENT	36	0	1	WEIGHTS	287	0
2	OTIS	36	0	2	EMBARGO	284	0
3	BUTTONS	33	0	3	SPIRITS	203	0
4	HALLWAY	38	1	4	BAN	197	0
5	DING	18	0	5	TICKET	190	0
6	PUNCHED	16	0	6	TICKETS	347	1
7	INT	237	8	7	SANCTIONS	167	0
8	GRAIN	87	3	8	SKI	141	0
9	SPEECH	14	0	9	LEG	217	1
10	ESCALATOR	13	0	10	HIPS	104	0
11	FREIGHT	77	3	11	ARMS	348	2
12	HEROINE	12	0	12	CHEST	73	0
13	SHAFTS	22	1	13	LEGS	126	1
14	LOBBY	102	5	14	ECONOMIC	62	0
15	BASEMENT	20	1	15	KNEE	61	0
16	THEOREM	10	0	16	RESTRICTIONS	58	0
17	CORRIDOR	39	2	17	CHIN	56	0

Figure 5. Collocation comparisons of pair synonyms *elevator* and *lift* in COCA

This section aimed at comprehensively examining synonymy in English linguistics. The results obtained from comparing BNC COCA were quite similar, therefore, only the BNC corpus has been included in the following table.

The synonyms pair, *jail* and *prison* are investigated in Figure 6. The numbers obtained in columns W1 and W2 were expected as the figure only features British English speakers. The word *jail* has 127 collocations and matches with *prison* collocations 68 times. This pair has shown the least difference in collocations. The *jail* collocations in the right part of the table are significantly less than that of *prison* collocates, i.e. 1192:11, which is opposite to the first ratio; thus implying absolute synonymy should be defined.

WORD 1 (W1): JAIL (0.20)				WORD 2 (W2): PRISON (4.98)			
	WORD	W1	W2		WORD	W2	W1
1	GETS	6	0	1	SYSTEM	116	0
2	BAGHDAD	10	1	2	MY	52	0
3	AMERICA	5	0	3	SERVICE	183	2
4	KEYS	5	0	4	OFFICERS	264	3
5	COUNTY	13	3	5	OFFICER	75	1
6	THREE-MONTH	6	2	6	CAMP	37	0
7	APPEAL	14	5	7	POPULATION	143	2
8	BLANDFORD	5	2	8	VISITORS	30	0
9	BUILD	7	4	9	BUILDING	29	0
10	FAZAKERLEY	5	3	10	OFFICE	29	0
11	KILLER	5	3	11	PENTONVILLE	29	0
12	TAX	5	3	12	ASSOCIATION	49	1
13	FACES	10	7	13	REFORM	49	1
14	JUDGE	14	10	14	CAMPS	24	0
15	LEEDS	5	4	15	GOVERNORS	22	0
16	REFUSED	5	4	16	WOMEN	41	1
17	CHARGES	7	6	17	DOES	20	0

Figure 6. Collocation comparisons of pair synonyms *prison* and *jail* in BNC

5. CONCLUSION

Synonymy is a complex field of linguistics where there are dilemmas and difficulties at every step. The figures, tables and the overall results of the e-dictionaries and corpora lend corroboration to the complexity of linguistics synonyms. Firstly, the phenomenon of

synonymy was examined. It was established that synonyms are labeled as synonyms if they describe the same occurrence, naming it differently, and representing it from various outlooks. Synonyms are divided into; stylistics synonyms, absolute synonyms, near-synonyms, and cognitive synonyms. The focus of this section was on strict or absolute synonyms. The key characteristic of absolute synonyms, if described using the interchangeability, is that it can possibly be interchanged in all the contexts of language. The five main categories of the absolute synonyms were identified. Secondly, it was established that stylistics linguistic varieties constitute a dimension called dialects that are considered as subtypes of languages that can vary in grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary. English language has numerous dialects, however this section examined American English and British English. The lexical information, i.e. connotative and referential meanings with collocations of the pairs of synonyms /lorry, elevator/lift, prison/jail were examined in terms of vocabulary of American and British dialects to find the difference between them, if any. Thirdly, four e-dictionaries were used to define the synonyms pairs and the information provided in the dictionaries was compared with reference to corpora.

The corpora COCA and BNC were used to compare and contrast synonyms. In essence, this section was a comparison between the dictionary path and the natural language path. The situation of a puzzled driver at the intersection with two paths in front of him perfectly illustrates the role of an individual when learning English as a foreign language. The right road goes to the dictionary path with word's definitions while the road on the left leads to learning "real English". It can be hard to decide which one should be picked.

On the basis of the criteria defined by well-known linguists mentioned in this section, the dictionary path supports the existence of absolute synonyms. The definitions of pair synonyms were according to the concept of absolute synonymy, i.e. they could be interchanged. However, it should be remembered that the dictionary meaning of a word may or may not be similar to the infinite denotations, connotations, and indications that it may also represent. The words have different senses and shades of meaning according to the situation or context it is used in. Thus, the second part of this section was conducted with help of corpora which showed opposing results. There is a huge difference between the definition of words provided by dictionaries and their application in real life. The corpora-based results negated the e-dictionaries results and claimed that absolute synonymy does not exist in English linguistics.

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