國立政治大學英國語文學系碩士班(英語教學組)

碩士學位論文

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Pretty 與 *Charming* 之辨析：以語料庫與心理語言學為本的研究

Distinguishing *Pretty* and *Charming*: A Corpus-based and Psycholinguistic Study

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中華民國一○八年六月

June 2019

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

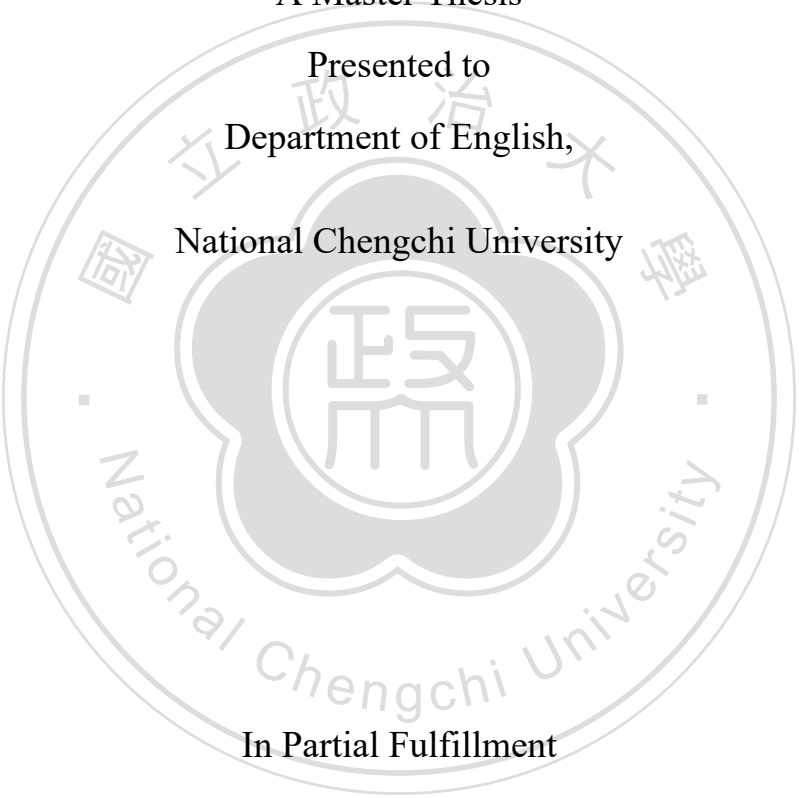
Distinguishing *Pretty* and *Charming*: A Corpus-based and Psycholinguistic Study

A Master Thesis

Presented to

Department of English,

National Chengchi University



In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

by

Ya-Lan Yu

June 2019

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

With the completion of the thesis, I would like to express my greatest gratitude to the following people. Without their assistance and support, it would be hard to accomplish the thesis.

First of all, I would like to show my heartfelt gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Siaw-Fong Chung, for her patient guidance, instruction, and encouragement throughout the process of working on my thesis. Her supportive attitude and professional guidance helped me find the direction of the research, enrich its content, and sharpen my writing skills. Her constant encouragement assisted me to go through the difficulties during the process of writing. I will never forget the words that she gave me on Christmas: *Never stop learning, because life never stops teaching.* Although my life as a student is coming to an end, I will bear these words in heart to open a new chapter in my life.

Next, I would like to give my appreciation to my committee members of the thesis defense, Dr. Michael Tanangkingsing and Dr. Shih-hui Lin, and my committee member of the proposal defense, Dr. Wen-Hui Sah. Their detailed suggestions and comments, made the research more complete. I would also thank all my teachers at the TESOL MA Program of English Department, National Chengchi University, for their abundant teaching throughout the past three years in which I develop my professional knowledge of language teaching.

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

I also give my gratitude to Dr. Jin-Lan Zhang, Dr. Siaw-Fong Chung, and Dr. Yung-Ho Hung, for providing me the opportunities to conduct the psycholinguistic judgement task in their classes. With their assistance, I could further explore English language learners' use of the target words and this makes the study more valuable.

Moreover, I would like to express my sincere thanks to all the members in the corpus research lab, who generously gave me variable comments and advice on my work. With their company and friendship, the process of conducting the study was not lonely.

Lastly, I would like to delicate my greatest thanks to my family whom I can share the worries and joys with. I am grateful for their love, understanding, and unconditional support when I need to focus on my work. They gave me the strength to face all the difficulties. Without their support, I would not be able to concentrate on the study and make this possible.

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國立政治大學英國語文學系碩士班(英語教學組)

碩士論文提要

論文名稱：*Pretty* 與 *Charming* 之辨析：以語料庫與心理語言學為本的研究

指導教授：鍾曉芳 博士

研究生：游雅嵐

論文提要內容：

在英語學習環境中，近義詞的誤用為常見之語言現象之一。學習者通常倚賴字典提供的語意，而忽略了其語言使用環境的不同。然而，近義詞之間的差異是微小、難以察覺的。本研究旨在透過語料庫為本的方法，分析近義詞 *pretty* 和 *charming* 的描述對象。此外，為得知學習者的學習困難，本研究也進行了以語料庫為基礎的心理語言學實驗測試搭配詞的接受度。

語料庫分析結果從不同角度展現了 *pretty* 和 *charming* 之相同與相異之處。其一，就語意分析得知，兩者皆能用來描述人和物體的吸引力。研究也發現，男性及女性都能被描述為 *pretty* 或是 *charming*。另外，在不同的語言環境中，這兩個形容詞皆具備表述褒義與貶義功能。其二，從句法結構與語域（register）表現得知，這兩個形容詞都偏好出現於名詞之前來修飾名詞，且他們較常被使用於非正式語域（例如: 口語和小說）。其三，從搭配詞分析可得知兩形容詞之主要差異如下：*Pretty* 傾向於形容人的外表與物體外觀（例如：面容以及洋裝）；而 *charming* 傾向於描述內在美，這種吸引力需要花較久時間思考與感受體驗（例如：個性、書）。其四，從分析心理語言實驗結果得知，搭配詞型態（*pretty*-only, *charming*-only, and common） 影響了受試者對於句子的接受度。而在三種搭配詞型態中，受試者對於 *pretty*-only 句子接受度最低，且較不熟悉。而在描述物體時，受試者

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

似乎不確定這兩形容詞使用差異。由此可得知，受試者對於 *pretty* 和 *charming* 的描述對象並不熟悉。

基於所得結果，我們提出藉由分辨被修飾名詞的種類，可以探討 *pretty* 和 *charming* 兩者間使用差異。並嘗試解釋造成近義詞學習困難的原因。本研究透過語料庫結合心理實驗研究，提供近義詞學習困難之解釋方法。此發現可應用於英語教材設計與教學方法，並被視為相關近義詞分析研究基石。

關鍵字：*pretty*、*charming*、形容詞近義詞、語料庫、心理語言實驗

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

Abstract

One of the commonest lexical use problems in English learning context is related to near-synonyms. Many language learners rely on dictionaries to provide the denotational meaning of a lexical item but are less aware of the subtle differences embedded in contexts. The differences between near-synonyms are hard to identify and acquire for learners. The present thesis aims to analyze a pair of near synonymous adjectives, that is, *pretty* and *charming*, through the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). In addition, in order to understand the learning difficulty of learners, a psycholinguistic judgment task (an acceptability judgment task) based on the corpus data was also conducted.

The corpus analysis demonstrated the similarities and differences between the two adjectives from several perspectives. First, from the semantic analysis, *pretty* and *charming* shared a sense of 'describing someone or something as pleasant or attractive'. Both males and females can be modified by the two adjectives. Moreover, in different language contexts, the two target words can be used to express negative and positive discourse functions. Second, for syntactic position and register, *pretty* and *charming* were more commonly shown in the attributive position, tended to pre-modify the head of a noun phrase, and in informal registers (e.g., spoken and fiction). Third, as for collocational information, the main differences between the two adjectives were as follows: *pretty* was found to mainly co-occur with the outer beauty of people and objects (e.g., *face*, *dress*); *charming* tended to describe one's inner beauty which takes more time to experience or think (e.g., *personality*, *book*). Fourth, from the analysis of psycholinguistic judgment task, one could find that the patterns of collocates (i.e.,

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pretty-only, *charming*-only, and common) may affect the participant's judgment of the sentences. Among the three patterns, *pretty*-only gained the lowest degree of acceptability, which showed that the participants might be less familiar with the collocational use of the *pretty*-only pattern. Furthermore, when describing an object, the participants seemed to be uncertain about the use of the two adjectives.

Based on the results, we proposed that identifying the source of beauty of their modified nouns could distinguish the uses among *pretty* and *charming*. The difference could also provide a possible reason for the difficulty of near-synonym acquisition. This thesis attempts to unveil the difficulties of learning a pair of near synonymous adjectives from the integrated corpus-based and empirical findings. The findings can be applied to the design of English teaching techniques and materials and may be regarded as the basis of analyzing synonymous adjectives in future studies.

Keywords: *pretty*, *charming*, near synonymous adjectives, corpus, psycholinguistic judgement task.

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background Information and Motivation of the Study

In the process of developing one's vocabulary, language learners may encounter the difficulties in choosing an appropriate word to use from pairs of near-synonymous words. Near-synonyms are lexical pairs or sets that have similar word senses but not completely identical (Murphy, 2003, p. 155). Many language learners tend to rely on the definitions provided by dictionaries to make a lexical decision. However, it is inadequate to only know the definitions of words to make the decision, sometimes dictionaries may overlook the importance of providing information about the appropriate context to use the particular sets of near-synonyms. The subtle differences between near-synonyms are hard to identify and to acquire for language learners, even for native speakers of a language as well. Misuse of lexical items, particularly between near-synonyms, has become one of the commonest language learning problems in the second language context (Lee & Liu, 2009, p. 205). In addition, choosing a word inappropriately may cause an unwanted implication. Edmonds and Hirst' (2002, pp. 109-110) summarized four types of variations of near-synonyms, demonstrated in Table 1-1.

Table 1- 1 Four Types of Variations of Near-synonyms

Types of variations	**Definitions**	**Examples**
1. Denotational variation	(a) To convey concepts with emphasis (b) To convey concepts indirectly by merely suggestion or implication	(a) *enemy*/ *foe* (b) *slip*/*mistake*
2. Stylistic variation	To compare the sets of near-synonyms involving relatively small set of dimensions	*inebriated* / *drunk*

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3.	Expressive variations	To express the speaker's attitude to their denotations	*skinny*/ *slim*/ *slender*
4.	Structural restrictions	The near-synonyms may be different from their (a) collocational choices, (b) restrictions of selection, and (c) syntactic restrictions	(a) *task* / *job* (b) *die*/ *pass away* (c) *ajar*/ open

Note. From Edmonds and Hirst (2002, pp. 109-110)

As can be seen in Table 1-1, there are four types of variations of near-synonyms. Near-synonyms can differ in the manners in which they convey a concept by their denotation of emphasis and suggestion. In some circumstances, the speakers can choose a more proper word to express their attitudes or emotions. On the other hand, the stylistic variation, including dialect and register, affects the appropriateness of the language user's lexical choice. As for the last category of variations among near-synonyms, the structural restriction may be either collocational, syntactic, or selectional. These types of variations among near-synonyms will be elaborated in detail in Chapter Two.

In line with Edmonds and Hirst's study (2002), Sinclair (2004) suggested that the distinctions among near-synonyms may lie in their collocational behavior and semantic prosody. For example, Partington's study (1998, pp. 34-39) examined how the target word, *sheer*, collocated with a number of items from specific semantic categories, such as 'magnitude', 'volume', 'size' and 'weight'. The results indicated that *sheer* had a preference of co-occurring with words sharing the semantic feature of 'magnitude'. In terms of the variance in semantic prosody, Sinclair (2004, p. 34) proposed that "[semantic prosody] has a leading role to play in the integration of an item with its surroundings. It expresses something close to the 'function' of the item". For example, a phrase, *the naked eyes* could be interpreted as expressions of some kinds of difficulties. The semantic prosody of 'difficulty' may be shown by the combinations of word such

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as *faint*, *weak*, *difficult* with *see* (e.g., …too *faint to be seen with the naked eye* …), and *barely*, *rarely*, and *just with visible* (e.g., *…it is not really visible to the naked eye…*) or by a negating 'visibility' or *invisible* itself, or it may just be hinted at by a modal verb such as *can* or *could*: (e.g., *…these could be seen with the naked eye from a helicopter…*) (Sinclair, 2004, pp. 33-34).

Other studies also proposed that the comparison between different corpora and on genre variations may be needed to figure out the behavior of near-synonyms in different genres. Chung and Chen (2015) aimed to examine the unique and share patterns of *critical* and *important* in academic and general use. In an academic writing, these two adjectives were commonly found. To analyze the near-synonym pair, both the BNC (serving as a reference corpus) and BAWE (serving as a specialized corpus) were adopted to examine the collocational behavior of the two target words. The results showed that *critical* and *important* behaved differently in the two registers. The shared collocates of the two adjectives were different in the BNC and BAWE under the same grammatical relation. For example, the modifiers such as *clearly*/*especially*/*often* were shared by the two adjectives in the BNC (i.e., general register), but only *highly important*/*critical* was equally shared by the two adjectives in the BAWE (i.e., academic register) (p. 15). The results indicated that the two corpora contained different contexts for *critical* and *important* (p. 20). This may affect the ways of teaching these particular adjectives. In another study, Hoffman (2014) explored the differences between a group of near-synonyms—*nice*, *kind*, *lovely*, *friendly*, *gorgeous*, and *pleasant*, by a corpus analysis. The nominal collocates of the adjectives were measured by raw frequency and MI score through the Corpus of Contemporary American English. Moreover, the stylistic variations among the six adjectives were examined across the five different genres provided by the same corpus (spoken, fiction, magazine, newspaper, and academic writing). As for collocational analysis, Hoffman showed that

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the language users clarify the semantic differences between the near-synonyms. For example, the results showed that *lovely* usually collocated with nouns denoting female human beings (p. 22); while, *pleasant* frequently co-occurred with terms related to smell, such as *aroma* and *fragrance*. In terms of the stylistic variations of the six adjectives, the results indicated that all of the adjectives were rarely used in more formal registers (i.e., academic writing and newspaper).

In addition, researchers also focused on the syntactic variation among the near-synonyms. Liu (2010) investigated five near-synonymous adjectives—*chief*, *main*, *major*, *primary*, and *principal* via COCA. The study focused on both the internal semantic and syntactic structure as well as co-occurrence information of the set of near-synonyms. For the syntactic variations among the adjectives, Liu (2010, p. 73) emphasized through (a) the predicative use of the adjectives and, (b) adverbs that modify these adjectives. As previous studies had shown that the five near-synonyms can be used in an attributive position only and they were rarely modified by adverbs, a few instances were found in the COCA (i.e., 95 token for *major* and 66 tokens for *primary*) showing that among the five near-synonyms, *major* and *primary* can be used in both attributive and predicative positions. Regarding their co-occurrence with adverbs, some instances showed that the typical degree adverbs—*very* and *really* were used to modify both *major* (282 tokens) and *primary* (18 tokens) (pp. 73-74). Overall, corpus analysis can help language users examine and understand the similarities and differences between sets of near-synonyms. Furthermore, collocational information and concordances shown in the corpus can provide a more complete context of language use which can serve as a tool to help the language users acquire knowledge of contextual use of a particular language.

From the previous studies, to solve the problems of distinguishing near-synonyms and to provide the explanation resolving the difficulty of making a proper lexical

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

decision may be two of essential significances of language learning. Investigating the language use could also be a valuable indicator of social change and people's attitudes. Some research has shown that using psycholinguistic experiments can demonstrate how language was constructed by social interactions, for example, through e-mail writing tasks (e.g., Thomson, Murachver, & Green, 2001). Moreover, Onem (2017) utilized photo describing tasks to reveal whether there were gender-related differences presented in native speakers of Turkish in terms of using intensive adverbs. Thus, this thesis intends to adopt an integrated approach combining corpus analysis and psycholinguistic experiments to help demonstrate both native English speakers' and EFL learner' s use of a pair of near-synonyms.

1.2 Significance of the Thesis

From the previous studies, to help language learners to solve the difficulties of choosing a proper word from a set of near-synonyms may be a vital significance in the language acquisition. The present study intends to adopt both corpus analysis and psycholinguistic experiment so as to distinguish the differences between the two near-synonymous adjectives—*pretty* and *charming*. Firstly, corpus analysis is used to explore the semantic distribution, collocational information, syntactic variation, and stylistic variation (i.e., the different behaviors of the adjectives in different registers) of the two target words. Corpus analysis is expected to demonstrate the language use of native speakers of English and to identify similarities and differences between *pretty* and *charming*. Secondly, a psycholinguistic experiment serves as a tool for indicating factors that might influence EFL learners' use of the adjectives. The psycholinguistic experiment in this study contains one acceptability judgement task mainly based on the corpus data. Three main controlled variables will be considered in the task: (a) 'gender', (b) 'patterns' of modified nouns (i.e., *pretty*-only, *charming*-only, and common), and (c)

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'source of beauty' (i.e., inner beauty and outer beauty). We assume that these variables may affect EFL learners' judgement about uses of *pretty* and *charming* in sentences. Furthermore, prior studies (e.g., Weitzman, Eifler, Hokada, & Ross, 1972; Tannen, 1990; Sunderland, 2006; Crabb & Marciano, 2011) have pointed out that gender representations may be obscured in the language. We also intend to investigate whether there is a relation between gender and language which can be demonstrated in the pair of near synonym—*pretty* and *charming*. Thus, the combinations of the genders of the participants and the gender of the person in the sentence will be labelled as a monitor variable in the study (more detailed introduction about the variables will be demonstrated in Chapter Four). Through the integrated approach, it is expected that this study can shed some lights on the language teaching about the issue of lexical acquisition. Teachers could help the learners to acquire a set of near-synonyms by providing them with different kinds of information, such as collocation, context, syntax, etc. Furthermore, it may be also essential to help students to develop the ability to understand the implied meaning of language uses, such as how language may reflect one's attitude toward different genders or one's social expectation.

Based on the research scope of the thesis, two research questions are formulated in (a-b) below:

(a) How can corpus data help in differentiating the similarities and differences between *pretty* and *charming*?

(b) How do EFL learners distinguish *pretty* and *charming*?

The thesis will be arranged in the following chapters: Chapter Two will begin with a review of some studies on near-synonyms, followed by studies adopting collocational analysis to explore the differences between sets of near-synonyms. Then, some important issues of near synonymous adjectives in previous studies, such as sub-classification of adjectives (i.e., syntactic and semantic differences), and semantic

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

categories will be discussed. The relation between language and gender will be demonstrated as well. The last section will present the studies adopting psycholinguistic experiments to explore the participants' language use.

Chapter Three will concentrate on the corpus study. We will first introduce methods of the corpus analysis including the corpus used in the study and display the way to establish a coding scheme for data classification. Then, we will demonstrate the results of corpus analysis including the overall semantic distribution of *pretty* and *charming*, the distribution of gender roles of the modified people, collocational information, the different behaviors of the two adjectives in different syntactic positions (i.e., predicative and attributive), and in different registers presented in the corpus. However, since the issue of how EFL learners distinguish the two adjectives cannot be understood from corpus analysis, a psycholinguistic judgement task is used.

Chapter Four will present the psycholinguistic experiment which aims to find out what factors may influence learners' language use of the two adjectives. In addition, the relation between gender and language were also considered in the study. Both methodology and results of the study will be presented in Chapter Four. We will firstly introduce the design of questionnaire and the grading criteria. Secondly, in the following section, introduction of participants, analytic procedure, and results will be shown.

Chapter Five will discuss the results of both corpus study and psycholinguistic experiment. Chapter Six will present conclusion of the study as well as some limitations of the thesis.

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CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The thesis aims to conduct a research on the pair of near-synonyms—*pretty* and *charming*, and compare them in terms of their semantic distribution, collocation, syntactic positions (attributive and predicative), and stylistic variations. This chapter will review the previous studies from six main related aspects: near-synonyms, sub-classifications of adjectives, semantic categories, gendered language, corpus linguistic studies on gender, and psycholinguistic experiments.

2.1 Near-Synonyms

In this section, near-synonyms will be reviewed from the definitions and studies adopting collocational analysis to demonstrate the distinctions between sets of near-synonyms.

2.1.1 Definitions of Near-Synonyms

Based on the *Collins Dictionary*, a 'synonym' refers to 'a word that has the same or nearly the same meaning as another word'. However, it is true that there are few synonyms which are completely equivalent and interchangeable in all contexts. Lyons (1968, p. 447) said that "synonymy is a matter of degree; that any set of lexical items can be arranged on a scale of similarity and difference of sense". In other words, these 'perfect' synonyms rarely exist (Lyons, 1968, p. 448). Pairs of words that we frequently encounter are called 'near-synonyms' (Taylor, 2002). The senses of near-synonyms overlap to a great degree but not completely (Murphy 2003, p. 155). Although they don't have the exact same senses, in each member of a near-synonym pair, we can find a sense which has similar sense of its counterpart (Murphy 2003, p. 147). Cruse (1986, p. 266) also suggested that "synonyms must not only manifest a high degree of semantic overlap, they must also have a low degree of implicit contrastiveness". Namely, the

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

characteristic that we used to distinguish members from near-synonyms is called 'implicit contrastiveness'. According to the definitions, *pretty* and *charming* are both adjectives that share a certain meaning. It is essential to find a way to identify the differences between the two adjectives. In the following part, we would like to present some studies adopting collocational analyses to show the distinctions between sets of near-synonyms.

2.1.2 The Variations of Near-Synonyms

Edmonds and Hirst (2002) suggested that many kinds of variations involved denotations. The most commonly seen difference between sets of near-synonyms lay in concepts (i.e., roles and aspects of a situation) or ideas. For example, *enemy* and *foe*, they differed in the emphasis they put on. *Enemy* focused on stressing "antagonism that arises from a cherished hatred or a desire to harm or destroy but it may suggest nothing much more than active or evident dislike or a habit of preying upon" (Gove, 1984, p. 289) as showed in example (2-1). *Foe* emphasized on "implying active warfare" (p. 289) as demonstrated in example (2-2).

(2-1) *The woodpecker is a natural enemy of insects that infest the bark of trees.*

(2-2) *He is the foe of all reform measures.*

In addition, another kind of denotational variation was related to the ways to convey meanings indirectly through implying or suggesting. For instance, *slip* and *mistake*, *slip* "carries a stronger implication of inadvertence or accident than *mistake* and often, in addition, connotes triviality" (Merriam-Webster, 1984, p. 298), shown in the sentence: *the wrong date on the check was a slip of the pen*. However, Edmonds and Hirst (2002, p. 110) proposed that the differences between near-synonyms in denotation can be fuzzy rather than clear-cut. The differences between groups of near-synonyms

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

involved many aspects of meanings, for example, "*woods* and *forest* was a complex combination of size, primitiveness, proximity to civilization, and wildness" (p. 110).

Secondly, a stylistic variation was related to a comparison between near-synonyms involving relatively small set of dimensions. For example, both *inebriated* and *drunk* are used to describe 'someone has drunk so much alcohol that they cannot speak clearly or behave sensibly' (Collin Dictionary). The differences between them was formality—*inebriated* was more formal than *drunk*.

Thirdly, some near-synonyms differed from the ways to express the speaker's attitude to their denotations: good thing or bad thing. For instance, the same person may be described as *skinny*, if the speaker wants to be deprecating; while when he/ she is described as *slim* or *slender*, the expression is more complimentary. Furthermore, some words can express the emotions of the speaker indirectly, such as *daddy*, *dad* and *father*, the use of *daddy* expressing a stronger feeling of intimacy than *dad* and *father*.

In terms of the last type of variations among near-synonyms involves structural restrictions; that is, the synonyms may be different from their collocational choices, restriction of selection, and syntactic restriction. For collocational choices, in a pair of near-synonyms, one word can co-occur with certain word but the other one may not. This word combination could be idiomatically uses. For example, *task* and *job*, they differed from the collocational pattern: one can *face a daunting task* but not * *face a daunting job*. Restriction of selection referred to the appropriateness of the word combinations were defined semantically. For instance, unlike *die*, *pass away* can only be used to say someone died, not for plants and animals. As for the variation in syntactic restrictions, it was derived from a syntactic subcategorization. For example, some adjectives can be only used in a predicative position (e.g., *the door is ajar*, * *the ajar door*), but some adjectives can show in both the predicative position and attributive one (e.g., *the door is open*, *the open door*).

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

2.1.3 Collocational Analysis

Liu (2010) examined five near-synonymous adjectives (i.e., *chief*, *main*, *major*, *primary*, and *principal*) by focusing on the types of nouns that they each modify in order to understand the semantic and usages patterns of these adjectives. To identify the typical types of nouns that the adjectives modify, Liu conducted two types of queries: (a) frequency and (b) Mutual Information (MI) score. MI score is used to "compare the probability of observing x [word] and y [word] together (the joint probability) with the probabilities of observing x and y independently (chance) (Church & Hanks, 1990, p. 23)". An MI score of 3 or higher can be seen as a strong evidence that two words often co-occur. The two types of queries can complement each other in identifying typical nouns modified by the adjectives. The frequency measurement will undervalue the words that have a low general frequency but commonly co-occur with the adjectives, while MI score overvalue the words that have a low general frequency but have a high tendency to collocate with target words. Based on the results of the frequency and the MI queries, a list of top ten modified nouns in each measure was compiled. These nouns were further classified into six semantic categories including (a) 'abstract' (e.g. *concern*, *reason*), (b) 'concrete' (e.g. *road*, *dish*), (c) 'dual' (e.g. *source*, *component*), (d) 'institution' (e.g. *school*, *corporation*), (e) 'position-title' (e.g. *executive*, *counsel*), and (f) 'non-position-title' (e.g. *sponsor*, *author*) (Liu, 2010, p. 66). Then, the author conducted a multifactorial test to determine whether the distributions of the five adjectives among these types of nouns differ significantly. The results showed that all five adjectives showed tendencies to pre-modify 'abstract' and 'dual' nouns. Additionally, 'concrete' nouns were commonly modified by *main;* 'position-title' nouns mostly by *chief;* 'non-position-title' nouns mostly by *principal;* and 'institution' nouns almost exclusive by *major* and *primary* (p. 68).

In a recent study of near-synonyms of a set of adjectives (i.e., *artificial*, *fake*, *false*,

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

and *synthetic*), Kamiński (2017) explored the potential usefulness of two techniques—correspondence analysis plot and collocational network—that visualize collocation preference for distinguishing the near-synonyms. Correspondence analysis (CA) converts the raw frequencies of collocations into distances and shows them in a two-dimension graph. The result of CA indicates the associations with each adjective. If the adjectives are closer to each other, it means that they may share certain collocates. For example, *accent*, *pearls*, *fur*, and *flowers* are collocates shared by *artificial* and *fake* (p. 246). These two adjectives may be more similar to each other. Collocational network is a diagram showing the links between lexical units in terms of their strength of collocation. With this technique, we can find out semantic differences between the adjectives by identifying the collocations not shared by others (e.g. *bombs*, *permits*, and *accent* are typical for *fake*). The results can also show the collocational overlap; for instance, *pitch* for both *synthetic* and *artificial*, suggesting the two adjectives had a similar sense. Overall, both Liu and Kamiński's studies demonstrated how collocation analysis can serve as essential tool to distinguish pairs of near-synonyms. However, other research also proposed that the differences between near-synonyms can be found in their behaviors in different syntax or in different registers. Thus, in the following section, the sub-classification of adjectives will be discussed.

2.2 Sub-Classification of Adjectives

In the section 2.2, in order to better understand the similarities and differences between near-synonymous adjectives, the sub-classification of adjectives will be discussed in two parts; namely, syntactic positions of adjectives (i.e., attributive and predicative) and semantic distinctions for adjectives (i.e., (a) stative/dynamic, (b) gradable/ non-gradable, and (c) inherent/non-inherent).

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2.2.1 Syntactic Sub-Classification of Adjectives

Adjectives were generally classified into two types—attributive adjectives and predicative adjectives. Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik (1985) proposed that adjectives can be categorized either as attributive-only, predicative-only, or attributive-and-predicative. "An adjective functions attributively when it pre-modifies the head of a noun phrase" (Quirk et al., 1985, p. 417), shown in example (2-3).

(2-3) a *small garden*

In terms of predicative adjectives, they can function as a subject complement or an object complement. They are used following copular verbs (i.e., *be*, *become*, *get*, *look*, *feel*, *seem*, and *appear*). The predicative adjectives are subject complement not only to noun phrases (example 2-4-a), but also to clauses (example 2-4-b).

(2-4)

(a) *The children are happy.*

(b) *Playing chess is enjoyable.* (Taken from Quirk et al., 1985, p. 417)

For predicative adjectives functioning as object complement, they often indicate the result of the process arisen from the verb (p. 417). The results can be demonstrated for each sentence by using the verb *be* (as shown in the example b for each example):

(2-5)

(a) *He pulled his belt tight.*

(b) *His belt is tight.*

(2-6)

(a) *He pushed the window open.*

(b) *The window is open.* (Taken from Quirk et al., 1985, p. 417)

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Notice that some adjectives can appear in both attributive position and predicative position, such as *beautiful* shown in the following examples.

(2-7)

(a) *The beautiful girl* (attributive position)

(b) *The girl is beautiful* (predicative position)

(c) *He found her beautiful* (predicative position)

(Taken from Peters & Peters, 2000, p. 2)

The adjective, *beautiful*, functions attributively when it occurs before the noun it modifies (i.e., *girl*) as in example (2-7-a). On the other hand, *beautiful* can also function predicatively, when it serves as a subject complement and it follows a copula (i.e., *is*) in the example (2-7-b). For the last example (2-7-c), *beautiful* functions predicatively as well, and it serves as an object complement when post-modifying *her* in the object position (Peters & Peters, 2000, p. 2).

Taking a deeper look into the characteristics of adjectives, Quirk et al. (1985 p. 432) further pointed out that "adjectives which were restricted to the attributive use did not characterize the referent of the noun directly". For example, *an old friend of mine*, *old* was restricted to an attributive position and it was used to describe the person's friendship was *old* rather than to describe the person was being identified as *old*. Similarly, *the wrong candidate* referred to the mistake in identifying the person as a candidate rather than the wrongness of the person. The adjective did not characterize the referent of the noun directly, and it was termed as 'non-inherent' (e.g., t*he wrong candidate* and *an old friend of mine*). While, when adjectives characterized the referent of the noun directly, they were termed as 'inherent' (e.g., *that old man* and *my friend is old*) (pp. 428-429).

In terms of predicative-only adjectives, they were frequently used to "describe a

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temporary condition, such as the health or the lack of health of the living" (example 2-8). In addition, "many predicative-only adjectives can take complementation", such as *able* (to+ infinitive), *fond* (of), *afraid* (that, of, about).

(2-8) He felt ill. (Quirk et al., 1985, p. 432)

For the target words of this thesis, both *pretty* and *charming* can take attributive position and predicative position. The two adjectives can be used to characterize the referent of the noun directly and indirectly. It depends on what the language users intend to emphasize: a permanent characteristic or a temperate states or particular events. The analysis of the syntactic role of *pretty* and *charming* will be presented in Chapter Three.

Overall, the syntactic sub-classification is one of essential language features of adjectives. It may serve as a tool to differentiate the near-synonymous adjectives. However, the use of adjective may not only be a matter of the syntactic position only but may also be related to the meaning they convey. In the following part, the semantic classification of adjectives will be illustrated.

2.2.2 Semantic Sub-Classification of Adjectives

Rittman, Wacholder, and Kantor (2004, p. 351) proposed that adjectives had been seen as essential indicators of subjectivity. The adjectives are frequently used to express the author's opinions or judgements. The statement, *she wrote a poem*, is a factual statement. However, when an adjective, *beautiful*, was employed to describe the noun in the sentence: *she wrote a beautiful poem*, the statement includes a fact with a person's judgement.

In the study of Quirk et al. (1985, p. 434), the researchers identified three basic semantic distinctions of adjectives—(a) stative/dynamic, (b) gradable/non-gradable, and (c) inherent/non-inherent of which the last type has been exemplified in the last

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section. Bruce and Wiebe's study (1999) further sharpened the previous findings, and they suggested that the presence of adjectives in a sentence was one of vital indicators of subjectivity through distinguishing the three semantic variables.

Among the three distinctions, Bruce and Wiebe (1999, p. 203) identified that the (a) stative and dynamic seemed to be the most related to subjectivity. An example of stative adjective is *tall*; dynamic adjective is *clever*. To be more precise, dynamic adjectives tended to be more indicative of subjectivity than stative adjectives. A general feature of dynamic adjectives was that they tended to evaluate an attribute that is not always present, but it is restricted by the possessor (e.g., *foolish*, *careful*, *friendly*); whereas, stative adjectives tended to describe a state that is almost permanent, and it is not under the control of the possessor (e.g., *big*, *small*, *tall*). Syntactically, there were several ways to differentiate between stative and dynamic adjectives. A stative adjective, such as *tall*, cannot be used with progressive aspect or with the imperative, as in the following examples:

(2-9)

(a) **He's being tall.*

(b) **Be tall.* (taken from Quirk, et al., 1985, p. 434)

On the other hand, a dynamic adjective, such as *careful*, can be used in these two syntactic patterns:

(2-10)

(a) *He's being careful.*

(b) *Be careful.*

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For the second distinction—gradability (i.e., gradable/non-gradable), "it is manifested through comparison" (Quirk, et al., p. 435), for example, *tall*, *taller*, *tallest*, *beautiful*, *more beautiful*, *the most beautiful* are gradable. Additionally, gradable adjectives can also be modified by intensifiers (e.g., *very*, *so*, *extremely*) which can be used to express the degree of intensity of the adjectives, such as *very tall*, *so beautiful*, etc. In terms of non-gradable adjectives, according to Quirk et al. (1985, p. 435), most adjectives are gradable, only some technical adjectives (e.g., *atomic* and *hydrochloric*), and adjectives denoting provenance (e.g., *British*) are non-gradable.

As for the last category of the semantic distinctions: inherent/ non-inherent adjectives, it has been briefly discussed in the previous section 2-2-1. In general, inherent adjectives were said to "characterize the referent of the noun directly; whereas, non-inherent ones did not" (Quirk, et al., p. 435). To illustrate the definitions, one could see that a non-inherent adjective can be used as an extension of the basic sense of modified noun shown in the example (2-11). For (2-11-a), *a firm friend* is "a friend whose friendship is firm" rather than a firm man or woman, and in the example (2-11-b), *old* also characterizes the 'friendship' not for the referent of the noun—*friend*. Thus, both *firm* and *old* in these sentences are seen as non-inherent adjectives.

(2-11)

(a) *A firm friend*

(b) *My old friend* (taken from Quirk, et al., 1985, p. 435)

From the above discussion, we know that adjectives can appear predicative-only, attributive-only, or with both predicate and attributive syntactic roles. In addition, adjectives with different syntactic roles may have different characteristics. Specifically, predicative-only adjectives were commonly used to describe a temporary condition, such as the health condition (e.g., *He felt ill*). On the other hand, attributive-only

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adjectives tended to characterize the referent of nouns indirectly (e.g., *an old friend of mine*). From first inspection, one could know that both the target words in the study, *pretty* and *charming*, function predicatively and attributively. Still, this information is inadequate to distinguish the pair of near-synonyms. Other research indicated that analysis of semantic categories can also help to differentiate the differences between sets of near-synonyms. Thus, in the following section, Haily and Jung's study (2015) will be elaborated. Their semantic categories in this study will be further adapted in the thesis.

2.3 Semantic Categories of Haily and Jung (2015)

Haily and Jung (2015) aimed to investigate the similarities and differences in the use of *cute*, *pretty*, and *beautiful* by using the *Bank of English* (BoE). The investigation focused on five language features of the target words: frequency, collocation, semantic preference, semantic prosody and phraseology of the adjectives. In this study, 'semantic preference' is "a type of semantic patterning where the node item collocates with words that are semantically related" (p. 127). For example, *beautiful* tends to collocate with words related to 'structure' (e.g. *house, building*). As for 'semantic prosody', it is a feature of a string of words concerned with communicative function (p. 127).[1]

To explore similarities and differences in the use of the three adjectives, firstly, the researchers tried to identify the distribution of the adjectives in each sub corpus in the BoE. The results suggested that all three adjectives were more frequently found in the written corpora. These adjectives may be more frequently used in formal language than informal language. Secondly, a search of the strongest collocates in different word classes was conducted. Nouns were the strongest collocates of the three adjectives,

[1]Although there is a dispute about the definitions of 'semantic preference' and 'semantic prosody', in this study, the authors adopted Sinclair (2004)'s descriptions of the two terms. In addition, in the present proposal, the author will adopt definition of semantic preference provided Sinclair (2004).

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followed by verb collocates. Thirdly, in order to find the semantic preferences of the three adjectives, the researchers classified the strongest R1 and R2 noun collocates into 10 categories, showed in the following table:

Table 2- 1 Haily and Jung's (2015) Semantic Categories

Categories	**Examples**
People	*kid, kids, baby, babies, boy*
Body Part	*faces, face, bottoms, bum, butt*
Animal	*animal, animals, puppy, bear, horses*
Art	*comedy, picture, color, music, book*
Generality	*one, stuff, thing, things*
Location	*town, village, place, south, country, city,*
Structure	*cottage, bedroom room house, home*
Clothing	*clothes, dress, dresses, patterns*
Nature	*garden, flower, countryside, valley, scenery*
Other	*accent, doll, penny, game, voice*

Note. From Haily and Jung (2015, p. 140)

It was found that there were some overlapped in the semantic preferences of the adjectives (see Table 2-2): they may have a similar preference for nouns related 'people', 'body parts' and 'generality'. Moreover, *cute* seems to have the fewest semantic preferences since *cute* only frequently collocates with five semantic categories while *pretty* and *beautiful* have seven (p. 132).

Table 2- 2 Semantic Preferences of Cute, 'Pretty' and Beautiful

Categories	People	Body part	Animal	Art	Generality	Location	Structure	Clothing	Nature	Other
cute	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓			
pretty	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
beautiful	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	

Note. From Haily and Jung (2015, p. 132)

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In terms of semantic prosody, concerned with the communication function of a string of words (Sinclair, 2004, p. 34), a further investigation in concordance lines was conducted. It is suggested that although the three adjectives had a consistent discourse function of compliment the appearance of people and things, they also can serve different functions such as causing insult to males (e.g., *pretty* boy) or criticizing an act that is dishonest or dirty (e.g. *cute* trick) (p. 133). Regarding phraseology, the study examined the concordance lines in an attempt to find the patterns or phrases of the adjectives. It is reported that *pretty* and *beautiful* appeared to share similar patterns, for example, [ADJ to-inf] with 'observation' verbs such as *behold*, *look at*, and *see*. This pattern for both adjectives has a sense of 'giving pleasure' (p. 134). For instance, *their hands are beautiful to* ***watch*** (BoE). We can know that the viewer feels pleasure by watching (i.e., observation verb) in the sentence.

Overall, it is suggested that *cute*, *pretty*, and *beautiful* were not completely synonyms based on the analyses of five language features presented above, they may have different uses in different language contexts. The researchers also pointed out that the value of corpus linguistic research: is to help us clarify any uncertainties that language learners, language teacher or speakers may encounter about language use (p, 136).

In summary, from the review of some corpus-based studies, one could know that corpus can help us identify the language use of adjectives from several aspects: collocation, syntax, and semantic, etc. However, within the field of gender and language, several studies have pointed out that language use could be correlated to a person's social attitude and reflect social expectations toward different genders (Moon, 2014; Baker, 2014; Crabb and Marciano, 2011). Therefore, in the next section, the relation between gender and language will be firstly introduced, and then a review of approaches to explore the relation between gender and language will be presented.

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2.4 The Relation between Gender and Language

Within the field of gender and language, Moon (2014) identified conventional ways that women and men were frequently described in the society through investigating collocational data. The results were correlated in turn with contemporary social attitudes and were consistent with other corpus studies. Moon (2014, p. 10) proposed that the recurrent finding is that 'females are described in terms of appearance and vulnerability more than males are, for example, *beautiful, blonde, naked;* whereas, males are described in terms of strength, competence and activity more than females such as, *handsome, honest, powerful*. In another study, Bakar (2014) explored how language was used in Malaysian personal advertisements in order to understand the construction of feminine and masculine identities. Both corpus linguistic techniques and discourse analysis of the texts were adopted in the study. The corpus data were collected from an on-line personal advertisement website (my. match. com). The study focused on several linguistic features to attain the goal. Firstly, functionalization occurred when "people were defined in terms of an activity" (p. 749), for example their occupations or roles. Secondly, the 'identification' of people referred to their age, gender, kinship or work relations with others (e.g., *friend*, *parents*, *sisters*, *brothers*, etc.), and physical appearances (e.g., *long hair*, *tall*, *fit*, etc.). Thirdly, three types of attitudinal expressions were also analyzed in the study—(a) a person's expressions of emotion, (b) evaluation of behaviors, and (c) evaluation of things. From analyzing these linguistic features, the results showed that both typical and atypical representation of females and males were found in the study. For the typical image of males, the image of "the fit and athletic man" (Bakar, 2014, p. 751) was found in the data. Men tended to describe themselves as part of a sporting community and their sports interests. While females were commonly marked by the collaborative features of talks and social relationship. Such features of females were correlated with the "traditional social

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expectation that women were supposed to be compassionate, caring, and be sensitive to other's feelings" (Bakar, 2014, p. 754). On the other hand, some atypical images of both genders were presented in Bakar's study as well. "The sensitive new age man" was constructed via the discourses of emotion and domestic activities. The man's personality was emphasized in terms of caring and compassionate traits. Moreover, "the new age man" were characterized by their participations of domestic works, such as cooking, gardening, and doing house works (p. 754). While atypical representation of females was characterized as "assertive and independent". These traits were presented by their capacity of doing occupational activities (e.g., *I am a dance instructor*) and educational accomplishments (e.g., *I'm managing the company's branding and marketing communications efforts dealing with target audiences globally*) (Bakar, 2014, p. 755). Overall, previous studies might suggest that the language use can reflect people's social expectations of genders. However, the image of both genders keeps on changing, and the roles of different genders are changeable. For instance, Bakar (2014) identified that females can also be assertive and independent; males can be sensitive and caring. In the following section, the approaches to investigate the relation between gender and language were further discussed.

This section will look at the different approaches used in investigating gender and language. To summarize the development of research within this field, we will introduce the approaches in the following three parts. Firstly, Lakoff's (1973) dominance approach is presented. In this study, Lakoff focused on the social significance of gender and tried to differentiate between the speech patterns of the two genders through investigating their preferences for words, hedges, polite language, etc. Then, we will introduce a gender difference approach which focused on the differences among male and female by categorizing each gender into groups (Baker, 2014). However, some researchers had different opinions about the issue of gender and

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language. They disagreed with the dichotomy between features of male and female speech patterns. The researchers adopted gendered discourse approach which aimed to find out how language use may reflect social convention and expectation. This approach will be introduced in the last part of the section.

Lakoff's (1973) dominance approach. When talking about the relation between gender and language, Lakoff's (1973) study *Language and Woman's Plac*e has been seen as a prominent and pioneering study. Lakoff emphasized on the social significance of gender. The language used by men and women can represent their social positions and the power of discourse. In the study, two aspects of English language were investigated; that is, lexical (e.g., color-words, swear-words, etc.) and syntax (e.g., tag-question, and intonation). The results indicated that language use can demonstrate the social expectation of both males and females. Men's verbal behaviors were seen as more powerful and prestigious; whereas, women's language was likely to be powerless and subordinate (p. 80). For example, females were taught to talk like ladies, in that their expressions of strong statement were prevented (p. 57). This phenomenon can be seen in the use of a compound request (e.g., *Won't you please open the door?*). In this kind of request, the speaker left the decision up to the addressee and assumed the addressee's answer was a negative response. Thus, the addressee might feel freer to refuse the request. As Lakoff (1973) emphasized that language use reflects one's power and inequality of society. Thus, women's language put themselves on a disadvantage position. Following Lakoff's study, further studies were conducted on the gender and language issue during 1980s and 1990s. In another study, Schulz (1975) investigated the semantic change of words with respect to the role of gender in language. The study revealed that the words for women tended to develop in a derogative direction, compared to the words for men. Specifically, male terms were often associated with

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positive and affirmative meaning. However, female terms easily carried negative connotations. For example, both *bachelor* and *spinster* refer to a singer adult. Whereas, *bachelor* refers to an unmarried man, a *spinster* refers to an unmarried woman beyond the marriageable age. *Bachelor* connoted that men were never too old to marry, but women can be. Similarly, in another pair of words the semantic degradation can also be found. Originally, *lady* and *lord* were used only for women and men of the nobility. However, in Early Modern Britain (1500-1700), there were lesser nobility in the society. *Lady* no longer reserved the meaning of a woman of high rank in the society. It was generalized to refer to people in all level in the society. Whereas, *lord*, remained its original meaning—a man who has lots of power or a man who has a high rank in the nobility. Overall, from the perspective of gender dominance, the differences of male and female language use were related to inequality of society, where women seemed to be subordinate to men.

Gender difference. As one of Lakoff's students, Tannen (1990) called for a shift from the 'dominance approach' to a 'difference approach'. She argued that "[t]he effect of dominance is not always the result of an intention to dominate" (Tannen, 1990, p. 8). In Tannen's (1990) book, *You just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*, she adopted many anecdotes and conversations to explain the frustrations of trying to communicate with the other sex. These communicative problems seemed to be a universal issue for everyone. We all have some similar experiences in our lives. To explain the causes of the communicative problems, Tannen utilized a cultural perspective. It is said that women and men grew up in different cultures which led to the development of different communicative styles. People talked to them differently, expected and accepted different ways of talking style from them. Thus, children learned the ways to speak and to communicate with others from the society and through the

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interactions with others. Girls tended to maintain a close and equal relationships when they play with others; whereas, boys were likely to play in a larger and hierarchically structured groups. They focused on physical or competing activities. In this context, boys learned the ways to communicate in a dominant way. Tannen (1990, p. 9) explained that "in this world, conversations were the way to negotiate for closeness in which people try to seek and give confirmation and support, and to reach consensus." People tried to preserve intimacy and avoid isolation in their lives. However, both the genders put the emphasis on different aspects. Females tended to pay attention on intimacy; while, males tended to focus on independence. A communicative style which centers on intimacy emphasized on the connection with others, trying to minimize the differences. Whereas, a communication style which centers on independence emphasized on status, power, and difference (p. 31). From the different conversational styles of the both genders, Tannen further suggested that the communicative issue between males and females were related to the inherent attempts to communicate cross-culturally.

One of modern research arguing for gender differences in language is Jackson's (2006) study. He explored pupils' and teachers' perspective about 'ladette' cultures in secondary schools in the United Kingdom from interview data. The term 'ladette' is mainly associated with females who are 'in trouble' or are a 'trouble' in the UK media. Based on the analysis of interview data, the results indicated that both teachers and pupils had similar perceptions about 'ladettes'. They all thought that the common characteristics of 'ladettes' are disruptive, rude to teachers, and aggressive to other pupils. Nevertheless, in school, "discourses around ladette are complex" (p. 355). Some aspects of 'ladettes' behaviors were celebrated, for example, assertiveness and increased confidence. There was a line between being assertive and being arrogant. The researcher further pointed out that this line was commonly drawn in different standards

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

for boys and girls. Teachers were more tolerant of males' interruptions in class. Whereas, the similar behavior by females were often regarded as big different. This double standard phenomenon may also be related to the expectation of females that they need to be 'successful' in class compared to males who are more commonly portrayed as 'underachievers' in an academic achievement (p. 355).

The dominance approach advocated by Lakoff (1973) put the emphasis on the inequality of society—females seemed to be subordinate to males. Tannen (1990) proposed that the linguistic differences between both the genders were not the result of subordination of females, but as a consequence of cultural differences. Boys and girls learned the ways to communicative from the interaction with others. However, based on the above, Cameron (2005, p. 486) suggested that although the dominance and difference approaches offered contrasting accounts, "both the approaches regarded the linguistic differences as a matter of gender rather than sex, and both often described them as the product of early socialization". Accordingly, Cameron (2005, p. 484) categorized these two big stories—Lakoff's dominance approach and Tannen's difference approach as 'Modern feminist approach'. However, some researchers took an opposite position to the modern feminist approach. They claimed that gender was not something that everyone possesses; it was something that people perform (Butler, 1990, p. 140). From this point of view, the advocate believed that the development of male or female characteristics depended on their social environments. "Gender was determined by a complex array of social factors, rather than by biological sex alone" (Barczewska and Andreasen, 2018, p. 197). Thus, the idea of gender was constructed by social environments and it was found in both CA and discursive psychology research (Cameron, 2005). We will be presented in the next section.

Gendered discourses. Sunderland (2004, pp. 20-22) proposed that the 'gendered discourses' concerned with the substance of gender. The language use and gender

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

representation in children's books, magazines, newspapers, etc., were incorporated in the research. Any human experience can be 'gendered', which refers to 'something to do with gender is going on' (p. 21). For example, school is gendered when girls or boys tended to perform better in one subject than another. Gender here was in the sense of difference. On the other hand, when the gender is in the sense of an idea or construct, a cooking magazine suggests that women or men tend to cook in distinct ways. Overall, Sunderland suggested that gendered discourses can be identified by analyzing of traces in language use:

> Discourses are not themselves visible. However, as a 'way of seeing the world' a given discourse may be recognizable to analysts and other language users through its manifestation in characteristic linguistic 'traces' in talk or written text, i.e. speakers' and writers' own words (Sunderland, 2004, p. 7).

One of such examples was Romera's (2014) study. The researcher investigated the extent to which gender stereotypes were still transmitted in higher education institutions (i.e., secondary schools and universities) in Spanish society. To attain the goal, the researcher analyzed posters hanging on the walls of educational buildings. The posters were coded and analyzed in terms of both the language and the image represented which were related to the construction of gender identity. With regard to the text, only the slogan was coded. Romera (2014, p. 210) suggested that the slogan was the main channel of the message, it caught the audience's attention with a short and informative sentence. The results indicated that the gender representation in public remained uneven view of the sexes. Although the linguistic discourses conveyed by the posters avoided mentioning of the gender of message receivers (p. 211), the visual representations still served as a tool to promote traditional stereotypical characteristics. Men were associated with the image of power while women were linked to powerless roles.

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Furthermore, the results also found that women were still under-portrayed in these posters. This may be related to the inferior position of females in the society as well (p. 224).

However, in a recently study, Sullivan, Kapur, Madden, and Shipe (2015) aimed to explore whether gendered discourse was shown in an online science discussion by analyzing the contents of chats through a content analysis. Two discourse styles were identified as the features of gendered discourse—(a) an oppositional /direct style was typical used by males since the male's social discourse was stereotypically seen as direct, confrontational, seeking independence, and dominance, and (b) an aligned / indirect style was regarded as female's typical discourse since female's way of speech tended to be indirect, non-confrontational, and polite. Females tended to seek harmonious agreement with others (p. 485). The analysis indicated that the females had an equal position with their male peers to participate in the science discussion (p. 497). Females can also take the authority to offer and uptake ideas. Although both genders tended to adopt their own stereotypical types of discourse in the discussion, sometimes the male became more indirect and polite and the female acted as a more dominant role. Contrary to the prior research, the findings in this study suggested that ideas were taken up regardless of the gendered discourse style employed. The implication derived from the study was the importance of constructing an equitable learning environment. The development of nominal and physical anonymity in online discussion settings may encourage females to participate in any of discussions (p. 500).

In summary, gendered discourse analysis can help us understand how the process of socialization is related to someone's way of talking. Furthermore, the studies may bring some implications for teachers and curriculum designers in terms of establishing learning environment and developing learning activities.

Although discourse analysis has become as one of popular approaches to

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

investigate gender and language, these studies tended to "use smaller excerpts of texts" (Baker, 2014, p. 6). Baker (2014) suggested that corpus approaches can have an impact on the field of gender and language. Corpus consists of collections of texts, involving "authentic cases of language use" which can reflect the language use in the "real world" (p. 7). Thus, in the thesis, we expect that the corpus data can help us identify and differentiate the similarities and differences between the two target words—*pretty* and *charming* in the study. In addition, from the data, the representation of gender in language may also be identified. Thus, in next section 2.5, we will firstly introduce some corpus linguistic studies on gender. Then, in section 2.6, a review of studies adopted psycholinguistic experiments to explore language use will be presented.

2.5 Corpus Linguistic Studies on Gender

2.5.1 Collocational Information

Pearce (2008) investigated the collocational behavior of MAN and WOMAN in the British National Corpus (BNC)[2]. It seems that the collocates of the two lemma have displayed gender stereotypes in language. MAN was often described as possessing more power than WOMAN did in physical size, strength, and economic power. MAN was often described as *big, burly* and *tall*; and frequently collocating with verbs of physical demanding activity, such as *dig*, *hammer*, and *racemic* (p. 7). The results also confirmed the representation of men as socially dominant: MAN was more likely to be *distinguished*, *leading*, and *rich*. Whereas, WOMAN was often presented as being emotional intemperance such as *distraught*, *neurotic*, *hysterical* and was often depicted as victims of violence, being the victim of *rape*. In addition, WOMAN commonly collocated with a set of verbs which suggested woman has sort of weakness: *advise*,

[2] The author used capital letters to distinguish the noun lemmas MAN and WOMAN (i.e., the nouns *man/men* and *woman*/*women*) from the word form *man* and *woman*.

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

encourage and *help*. These results demonstrated stereotypical representation exists in language.

Caldas-Coulthard and Moon (2010) examined the adjective collocates of *man, woman, girl,* and *boy* in a corpus of Britain articles in two types of newspapers—a group of broadsheet newspapers and a single tabloid, *The Sun*. The study aimed to explore how social factors were classified in public media discourse through lexical labelling. To attain the goal, the researchers adapted the categorization schema of Van Leeuwen (1996).This schema included three major categories: (a) 'functionalization', defining people's identity in terms of an activity or something they do (e.g., occupation); (b) 'Identification', categorizing people in terms of 'classification' (e.g., the age, gender, etc.), 'relational identification' (e.g. kinship, friendship, etc.) as well as 'physical identification' (e.g. size, coloring, appearance, etc.); and (c) 'appraisement', related to people's personality and behavior. The results showed that the press labeled men and women in different ways. Males were constantly evaluated in terms of their function and status in society (e.g., *main*, *powerful,* and *leading*). While Females were constantly judged by appearance and sexuality (e.g., *pretty, cute,* and *beautiful*), especially for a young woman (p. 124). Furthermore, these findings were in substantial agreement with Pearce's (2008) study: males were more often seen as power holders.

In another study, Macalister (2011) conducted a diachronic research by exploring the description of gender roles in the New Zealand *School Journal*. Through the investigation of the two lemmas, BOY and GIRL, the researcher uncovered that there had been great changes in frequency account of *boy/s* and *girl/s* (i.e., visibility) and the different ways (i.e., together or separately) of BOY and GIRL were presented in the school journal. The study indicated that there had been a considerable change in the relative visibility of boy/s and girl/s. In other words, both boys and girls had equal opportunities to present in the text. The researcher suggested that the result was related

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to the rising awareness of gender bias in writing for children in the society after 1970 (p. 37). Furthermore, the increasing trend of individuality in the treatments of *girl/s* can be seen from the uses of adjectives. For example, both *girl/s* and *boy/s* were commonly described as *brave*, *kind*, *tiny*, *naughty*, *young* and *pretty* in the study. Overall, all these studies focused on analyses of collocational information and demonstrated how collocational information can serve as a tool to reveal social attitudes toward gender.

It seems that gender played an essential role in conditioning sociolinguistic variation. To investigate the gendered differences represented in language use, keyword analysis was seen as one of the dominant methods in the field (Blaxter, 2014). Through the analysis, researchers can find out certain "lexical item occurs significantly more frequently in one (sub)corpus than other which is called as a KEYWORD" (Baker, 2004, pp. 346–347). The results of keyword analysis can be used to explore differences between genre and style, or discourse analysis, and differences between speech produced by males and females (Blaxter, 2014, p. 170). In the next section, we will demonstrate how keyword analysis can be employed in the research on gender and language and some issues of such a research technique.

2.5.2 Keyword Analysis

Baker, Gabrielatos and McEnery (2013) aimed to examine the change of topics about Muslim and Islam in British Newspaper articles from 1998 to 2009. The newspaper corpora were divided into eleven periods (i.e., each period includes a year from 1998 to 2009) and word lists were established based on the frequencies of words. Then, the researchers compared the word lists for each individual year against the overall word list (from 1998 to 2009) from the corpus. The results indicated that keywords related to sexuality and gender were frequently shown at the beginning of the corpus (i.e., 1998 to 2000) and then there was an absence period of such keywords from

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

2001 to 2005. Until 2006, the newspaper had regained the focus on the issue about sexuality and gender (p. 110). The researchers pointed out that one of possible reasons was that the disaster like 911 happened in 2001 caught the journalists most attentions on the relation between Islam and terrorism, while other issues may be less important. As the study demonstrated, keyword analysis can help the researchers notice the salient phenomena in their data (p. 182).

In a similar vein, Blaxter's (2014) study aimed to examine the differences between the speech produced by the male and female speakers in narrative prose texts by keyword analysis. Blaxter (2014, p. 171) suggested that although keywords can show the different facts about the language use from the corpus, there were some interpreted issues with keyword analysis. Firstly, when a difference was found with sociolinguistic variants between two groups of speakers, it can represent their differences of language use. For example, in a corpus of British and American English, *dived* and *dove* would be likely to be key (p. 171). These two words reflected the linguistic differences between the two groups of speakers. The examining lists of keywords of the two corpora can demonstrate the different language use between British English and American English. Keywords can represent linguistic differences between groups were termed as "direct keyword" in the study. However, keywords can also be selected indirectly through the differences in genres or contexts of language use within the corpora (p. 171). Such a keyword could not represent the different language use between groups, but the particular speech context occupied by a certain group of people. For example, a spoken corpus was gathered in different contexts for younger and older speakers—a school context for younger speakers and a workplace context for older speakers. And these keywords were termed as "indirect keyword". Another worried issue was a phenomenon known as "poor dispersion" (p. 171). It referred to a term or with a large proportion of instances was particularly used in a small subset of texts or

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used by a certain tiny group of people.

To solve these problems, Blaxter (2014, p. 173) suggested that identifying possible semantic groups of keywords can help the researchers find out indirect keywords. Through the demonstration of indirect keywords, some contextual differences between the two groups of speakers could be found. For instance, in order to examine the differences between the speech produced by the male and female speakers in narrative prose texts, Blaxter (2014) compared the sub-corpora of the male's and female's speech. Collocates "with a co-occurrence frequency greater than 20 and which were among the top ten according to female and/or male MI score were considered" (p. 187). Among the top 10 collocates of the male keyword *taka* 'take', seven of them were related to legal terms and two of them were related to religious. None of these semantic grouping were collocated with female's keywords (p. 187). In addition, the researcher proposed that "where keywords were in complementary distribution with their synonyms, this can be taken as an evidence that they are direct keywords, resulting from differences in lexical choice between represented female and male speech" (p. 173). For example, comparing instances of two groups of near-synonyms: (a): *pykja* ('seem'), *hugur* ('mind') and (b):*vilja* ('want, will'), *skulu* ('shall, should'), the lexical choice in group (a) belonged to female's keywords and the other group was male's keywords. The contexts indicated that males and females adopted different communicative strategies in a similar context. Males tended to use more direct expressions; whereas, female speakers tended to choose more indirect and polite ways of expression. In terms of the solution of poor dispersion, the researcher suggested that recalculating the significance of each keyword could be effective (p. 173). Overall, it seemed to be risky drawing a conclusion about the speaker's role or the speech pattern only from the keyword analysis. As Blaxter (2014, p. 195) recommended that researchers should use every tool at their disposal to demonstrate more details before making interpretations of the data.

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Thus, another approach to explore the language preference of users will be demonstrated in the next section.

2.6 Psycholinguistic Experiments

In order to examine what factors may affect the language use, some scholars (Cronin & Jreisat, 1995; Thomson, Murachver, & Green, 2001) proposed that psycholinguistic experiments can be applied to identify the language preference of users.

Cronin and Jreisat (1995) explored whether teacher's modeling, grade, gender, and attitude toward women would affect thigh school students' use of nonsexist language or sexist language. In the study, sexist language was defined as the use of gender specific pronoun (e.g., *he*) to refer both sexes. Three types of questionnaires were conducted as follow: (a) The Sexist Language Detector (SLD) used to explore the participants' use of sexist language by asking them to write down the solutions to ethical dilemma, (b) Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ), used to predict the participant's personality characteristics (e.g., self-assertive, independent, interpersonal-oriented, and expressive qualities), and (c) Attitudes toward Women Scale (ATW) used to understand the relation between personal characters and their uses of sexist language. The results indicated that teachers' 'modeling' of nonsexist examples had a positive effect on the participants' performances on using the nonsexist language. Furthermore, the grade of students and the gender were also related to the nonsexist language use. Freshman students used more nonsexist language than senior ones. The nonsexist language was more frequently used by the female participants, compared to the male participants. Cronin and Jreisat (1995, p. 828) suggested that one of the possible reasons was that the male participants used less nonsexist language may due to their resistance to change. Teachers may need different strategies to teach males and females to use the nonsexist language.

In another study, Thomson, Murachver, & Green (2001) aimed to examine how

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women and men reacted and accommodated to 'gender-preferential language' in an e-mail context. The language styles of the genders were based on the features found in a previous study (Thomson & Murachver, 2001). For example, females tended to use "words of questions, self-derogatory comments, compliments, apologies and subjective conjunctions. Males were more likely to convey opinions, make insults and to write more" (Thomson & Murachver, 2001, p. 200). There were two experiments in Thomson's (2001) study. In the first experiment, the participants were asked to write e-mail letters to two assigned net pals who were actually one of the experimenters. The gender-preferential language used by the two net pals matched with their genders. The results showed that the participants' language use were affected by their net pals' language styles, rather than the genders of themselves. In order to examine to what extent that the participants' language use was predicted by their net pals' language style, the 'language style of net pals' and 'gender labels' were independently manipulated in the second experiment. The same group of participants were asked to write messages to one net pal only. The net pal used either female-preferential language style or male-preferential language style and either a male label (e.g., *John)* or a female label (e.g., *Kate*). There were four conditions in the study (i.e., language styles x gender labels=2 x 2=4). According to the second experiment, the researchers suggested that the language styles of the net pals had the greatest impact on the participants' language use. Overall, from the study, one could know that each person had the ability to use a range of language styles depending on whom he or she was talking to. "The gendered language was related to the communicative context. But it didn't mean that "the gendered language is an invisible, inherent feature of a person" (Thomson, Murachver, & Green, 2001, p. 174).

Overall, from the overview of the prior related studies in this chapter, the distinction between *pretty* and *charming* should be investigated from the corpus

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analysis. It can help us understand the different use of the two adjectives from the perspective of English native speakers, such as different behaviors shown in collocation, syntax, and register. On the other hand, the relation between the native language speaker's use of the two adjectives and the EFL learner's difficulties of learning English could be elaborated profoundly through an integrated approach with a corpus analysis and psycholinguistic experiment. Therefore, in the following chapters, the thesis will focus on the two issues: the native speaker's use of *pretty* and *charming* (Chapter Three) and identification of the learning difficulties of the pair of near-synonyms (Chapter Four).

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DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

CHAPTER 3

CORPUS ANALYSIS

Based on the overview of the previous studies on discourse of gender, few studies could be found integrating corpus analysis and psycholinguistic experiments. We realized that adopting both research methods could be helpful for us to have a better understanding of how language is used to represent male and female. Therefore, in this chapter, the first part will focus on the corpus analysis, the methodology for the following three aspects will be introduced (a) to establish a coding scheme for data classification, (b) to analyze the semantic distribution of *pretty* and *charming*; and (c) to investigate the collocates of the two adjectives. In the following part of this chapter, the results of corpus analysis will be illustrated.

3.1 Methodology of the Corpus Study

3.1.1 The Corpus—the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)

To investigate the similarities and differences of *pretty* and *charming*, the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (*COCA*) was adopted as a source data in the study. The corpus contains more than 520 million words of texts from 1990 to 2015, including spoken, fiction, magazines, newspapers and academic texts. The distribution of texts is equally divided (COCA). The overall frequency patterns of *pretty* and *charming* in the adjective forms in the COCA were 17136 and 6171 instances respectively. For the present study, a total of 500 instances of the concordance results were randomly retrieved for each adjective. To identify adjective uses of each target word, a search of part-of-speech tagging was conducted. The results contained some mistagged instances since *pretty* can also function as adverb, for example, *Water is **pretty** cold up there* (COCA), *pretty* here functioning as adverb rather than adjective. It was required to exclude these mistagged instances by manual annotation. Moreover, if an instance has

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more than one target word, each one will be counted. For instance, in (3-1), the target word, *pretty*, appears in the instance two times.

(3-1) *He wasn't about to give a job to something fresh off the street with --so far as he could tell – nothing on the ball but looks.* ***Pretty****? The club had* ***pretty*** *faces to burn. Gorgeous? That was another story.*

3.1.2 The Establishment of a Coding Scheme

In order to detect the differences between *pretty* and *charming,* a coding scheme was established based on (a) word senses from three online dictionaries, (b) the results of most frequently appearing nouns modified by the two adjectives, and (c) an adaption of category scheme. For example (3-1), the first *pretty* was used to describe the job applicant's appearance which was labeled as [Person], [Outer beauty] and [Beauty]; the second *pretty* describes the club's appearance or nature, labeling as [Object] [Concrete], and [Place]. The definitions of types of classification and examples are based on Haily and Jung's study (2015).

Word senses of pretty and charming from dictionaries. Three online dictionaries were used to examine the word senses of the two target words. The three dictionaries are *Oxford English Online Dictionary*, *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, and *Collins' COBUILD Advanced Learners' English Dictionary*. These dictionaries are freely accessible and frequently updated, providing users with information of the latest words or phrases from both British and American usages of English. The overall definitions of the two adjectives are shown in Table 3-1 and Table 3-2. It appears that *pretty* and *charming* have one shared sense— both of them can be used to describe someone or something as 'pleasant' or 'attractive'. The nuance between them may be that *charming* is a stronger expression to modify a person or thing because its definitions from three dictionaries include intensifiers (the underlined words in Table 3-2), such as 'very' and

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'extremely', before 'pleasant'.

Table 3- 1 Definitions of 'Pretty' from Three Dictionaries

pretty **(adjective)**	**Oxford English Dictionary**	**Merriam-Webster Dictionary**	**Collins' COBUILD Advanced Learner English Dictionary**
Sense 1	(of a person, especially a woman or child) attractive in a delicate way without being truly beautiful. (of a thing) pleasing to the eye or the ear.	(a) artful, clever (b) pat, apt	If you describe someone, especially a girl, as pretty, you mean that they look nice and are attractive in a delicate way.
Sense 2	informal [attributive] Used ironically to express annoyance or displeasure.	(a) pleasing by delicacy or grace (b) having conventionally accepted elements of beauty (c) appearing or sounding pleasant or nice but lacking strength, force, manliness, purpose, or intensity	A place or a thing that is pretty is attractive and pleasant, in a charming but not particularly unusual way.
Sense 3		(a) miserable, terrible (b) chiefly Scotland :stout	
Sense 4		moderately large: considerable	
Sense 5		easy to enjoy: pleasant — usually used in negative constructions	

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Table 3- 2 Definitions of 'Charming' from Three Dictionaries

charming **(adjective)**	**Oxford English Dictionary**	**Merriam-Webster Dictionary**	**Collins' COBUILD Advanced English Dictionary**
Sense 1	Very pleasant or attractive. 1.1(of a person or their manner) very polite, friendly, and likeable.	extremely pleasing or delightful: · a charming restaurant · has such charming manners	If you say that something is charming, you mean that it is very pleasant or attractive.
Sense 2			If you describe someone as charming, you mean they behave in a friendly, pleasant way that makes people like them.
Sense 3			You can say 'Charming!' to indicate your disapproval when someone has just been rude to you or told you about someone's bad behavior.

However, there are some differences between *pretty* and *charming*, when they are used to describe people. The former one tends to describe someone's appearance (*you have no idea how **pretty** you look a woman of your age*) and the latter one tends to describe someone's manner or behavior (*he was a **charming**, affectionate colleague*).

In addition, when describing someone as *pretty*, all definitions provided by the three dictionaries used 'delicacy' or its adjective form (i.e., 'delicate') to define the meaning. To further understand the meaning of 'delicacy', a search in WordNet 3.1 was conducted. The result shows that *delicacy* refers to (a) 'smallness of stature', (b) 'lack

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of physical strength', and (c) 'lightness in movement or manner'. The examples below are derived from the COCA. As for (3-5), *pretty* is used to depict someone's appearance which corresponds to sense 2 in the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* (i.e., 'having conventionally accepted elements of beauty'). Here, Table 3-3, all the three dimensions are exemplified as (3-2) – (3-4).

Table 3- 3 The Senses of 'Pretty' in the Dictionary

Types	**Definitions**	**Examples**
(a) Slightness	Someone is thin or small in stature.	(3-2) *Sometimes Korean girls get part of their leg muscles removed, to be **pretty**.*
(b) Fragility	Someone lacks strength	(3-3) *…someone who was very, very angry with this particular **pretty** girl plunged an ordinary dinner knife into her pretty chest.*
(c) Airiness	someone is light and graceful in movement	(3-4) *Her inability to sit still, and her grace that made you catch your breath. Libbie was said to be **pretty**…*
(d) Beauty	Someone's appearance, the way that someone looks	(3-5) *You have no idea how **pretty** you look, a woman of your age.*

Apart from the word senses shown in the Table 3-1 and Table 3-1, both *pretty* and *charming* also have a discourse function of expressing disapproving, a negative use. For *pretty*, three negative meanings are found in the dictionaries in this study : (a) 'miserable, terrible', (b) something is not 'easy to enjoy', and (c) to be 'used ironically to express annoyance or displeasure'.

(3-6) Negative uses of *pretty* (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*)

(a) 'miserable, terrible'

e.g., *You try not to go into the real ugly cry on TV, because this is the thing. If*

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you're watching somebody cry and you're kind of with them as long as they're kind of crying ***pretty*** (COCA).

(b) something is not 'easy to enjoy' (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*)

e.g., *I already know how my welcome is going to be. It's not going to be too* ***pretty****, 'he said'* (COCA).

(c) 'used ironically to express annoyance or displeasure' (*Oxford Dictionary*)

e.g., *he led me a* ***pretty*** *dance* (*Oxford Dictionary*)

As for *charming*, negative uses were not found in these three dictionaries. However, we will show some examples that are found in the corpus data.

In summary, based on the definition of words from three dictionaries mentioned above, the main meaning shared by *pretty* and *charming* is 'pleasant or attractive', and both of them can be used to describe people, things or places. Furthermore, the senses shown in the dictionaries also imply that the two adjectives have both positive and negative meanings.

Collocates of pretty and charming in the COCA. To establish a coding scheme for data classification, R1 collocates were searched to identify types of nouns which the two adjectives modified. Two types of queries were used for searching the R1 modified nouns; that is, frequency and MI score. As Liu's study (2010, p. 63) pointed out that adopting both the two queries may complement each other in better identifying the typical nouns modified by the adjectives. In order to establish the representativeness of the most frequent nouns measured by MI scores, the nouns that have fewer than 35 tokens of co-occurrence with *pretty* were excluded. Given that the lower overall frequency of *charming,* the criteria of selection were lowered down to 10. Thus, the nouns which have fewer than 10 tokens of co-occurrence with c*harming* were excluded. The top 20 nouns modified by the two adjectives were recorded. A preliminary

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classification of the types of modified nouns was conducted and the results were shown in the following Table.

Table 3- 4 Types of Nouns Modified by 'Pretty' and 'Charming'

	Concrete	**Abstract**	**Dual**
pretty	*girl(s),woman (women), lady, boy(s), baby, face(s), eyes, clothes, dress(es), flowers, horses, penny, smile*	*name*	*picture(s), sight, thing(s)*
charming	*man (men), guy, person, people, smile woman, fellow, child, wife, girl, hostess, lady, grin, town, place, village, cottage, hotel, book*	*story, personality, scene, accent*	*way*

There are three major categories for the modified nouns: (1) concrete nouns, i.e., a noun that refers to a material object (*Collins Dictionary*), (2) abstract nouns, i.e., a noun that refers to a thing that does not exist as a material object (*Collins Dictionary*), and (3) dual nouns, i.e., a noun can be both concrete and abstract in different contexts.

As shown in Table 3-4, the adjectives are frequently collocated with concrete nouns and words related to people (e.g., *girl*, *woman*, etc.). Moreover, when describing someone's appearance, it seems that facial features or expressions (e.g., *face* and *smile* in examples below) are essential elements to show their attractions.

(3-7) *Mainly because she had the advantage of knowing that it took more than big breasts, a slim waist, onion booty and a* ***pretty*** *face to grab and hold his attention.*

(3-8) *It's my favorite city. He gives him his most* ***charming*** *smile.….*

In sum, based on the classification of the top 20 noun collocates of the two adjectives, it seems that this result provides a different perspective on the understanding of the two adjectives compared to the observation of the word senses in dictionaries. From the results of the analysis of collocate, *pretty* and *charming* are more commonly

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used to describe someone's attractiveness and to depict both females and males. Whereas, for word senses, *pretty* is frequently used to describe someone's appearance and it is especially used for describing females. On the other hand, *charming* is used to describe someone's character or attitude. Based on this finding, the issue of sources of beauty (i.e., inner or outer beauty) and the gender representation in uses of the two adjectives are still pending. Since the word senses and collocational information can only provide some semantic information of the target words, a further investigation is needed by using annotating the corpus data. In the following part, we will introduce the development of a coding scheme for concordance lines analysis.

A coding scheme. Based on the word senses and the results of most frequently appearing nouns modified by *pretty* and *charming*, a coding scheme was established (Table 3-5 and Table 3-6) for further analyzing semantic distribution. In the coding scheme, there are two categories modified by *pretty* and *charming*: person and object.

Table 3- 5 Coding Scheme of Person

	Modified nouns	**Types**
Person	1. Outer beauty	(a) Slightness (b) Fragility (c) Airiness (d) Beauty
	2. Inner beauty	(a) Character

As shown in Table 3-5, someone's attractiveness can be seen from one's 'outer beauty' as well as 'inner beauty'. Moreover, the attractiveness of 'outer beauty' was further divided into four main types based on the senses of *pretty*— 'slightness', 'fragility', 'airiness' and 'beauty' provided by the dictionary definitions. The 'inner beauty' referred to the 'character' of a person.

In terms of the attractiveness of objects, all the modified nouns were firstly divided into two types: 'concrete' and 'abstract'. In this study, concrete words were defined as

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the words which can be touched or sensed in any other ways (Khokhlova, 2014).

Table 3- 6 Coding Scheme of Object

	Types	Modified nouns	Examples
Object	1. Concrete 2. Abstract	(a) Artifact	*picture, story, dress*
		(b) Place	*barn, garden, house*
		(c) Sound	*crooning, music*
		(d) Nature	*beach, tree, roses*
		(e) General nouns	*things, stuff, one*
		(f) Others	*sitting pretty*

Then, in each type of modified nouns, they were further arranged in six categories. These six categories were established by the results of classification of R1 noun collocates (see Chapter 3, Table 3-12) and the adaption of category scheme from Haily and Jung's study (2015, p. 140).

The first category is 'artifact', referring to something created by people (e.g. *dress*, *painting*, *ideas,* and *joke*). The second and third are a 'place' and 'sound' which refer to 'any point, building, area, town, or country' and 'something that you can hear' respectively. 'Nature' refers to 'all the animals, plants, and other things in the world that are not made by people' (*Collins Dictionary*). For the last two types of modified nouns— 'general nouns' and 'others', the former one refers to nouns with referential functions, such as *one*, *thing*, and *stuff* (e.g. *…countries have contributed to the situation along the border, which is indeed not a pretty* <u>*one*</u>). The latter one contains those nouns that could not be assigned to any of the five types and the idiomatic usages (e.g. sitting *pretty*, not a *pretty* sight).

3.2 Results of the Corpus Study

This section presents the results of corpus analysis of the two adjectives—*pretty* and *charming.* For the present study, a total of 500 instances of the concordance results were randomly retrieved for each adjective from the COCA. After the extraction

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process introduced previously, 907 out of 1000 instances were kept for further analyses (i.e., 464 instances for *pretty* and 443 for *charming)*. The results will be presented in the following parts: the overall semantic distribution, the distribution of sex roles of modified people, collocational information, and a comparison of the two adjectives in different genres.

3.2.1 Semantic Distribution

The sense analysis of *pretty* and *charming* can be displayed in two categories based on the modified nouns— 'person' and 'object'. As Table 3-7 shows that *pretty* and *charming* were commonly used to describe people or things as attractive. Moreover, the two adjectives showed a slight preference toward describe 'person' with about 52% for *pretty* and 53% for *charming*.

Table 3- 7 The Distributions of Modified Nouns for 'Pretty' and 'Charming'

	pretty		***charming***	
Modified Nouns	**Freq.**	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**
Person	239	51.51%	234	52.82%
Object	218	46.98%	205	46.28%
Animal	7	1.51%	4	0.90%
Total	464	100.00%	443	100.00%

Modified nouns—person. Regarding modified nouns related to person, Table 3-8 present the percentages of inner and outer beauty described by *pretty* and *charming*. The results indicate that *pretty* seems to be more commonly used to modify someone's physical appearance tagged as 'beauty' (90.79%), whereas *charming* is more commonly used to describe someone's character (82.48%). Moreover, as previously mentioned, all the dictionaries adopted in the study used the word 'delicacy' or its adjective form (i.e., delicate) to define the meaning of *pretty*. Three types of 'delicacy' were established for analyzing, that is, 'slightness', 'fragility', and 'airiness'. The results show that only a

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

few instances displayed the meaning of 'delicacy' with 6.7% of the total instances. In these examples, we found that *pretty* was likely to collocate with other adjectives having similar senses of delicate, such as *little*, *thin* and *tiny*. For instances, in example (3-9), *little* and *petite* corresponds to the sense of 'slightness'. The adjectives were used to describe someone as thin or small in stature. Furthermore, some of the instances displayed that there was a cause and effect relationship between the behavior of the person described in the sentence and the beauty he or she admired. In example (3-10), Korean girls wanted to be *pretty*. To attain the goal, they tried to get part of their muscles removed. It seems that what the girls pursued was to be thin, and to have a good body shape (tagged as 'slightness').

(3-9) *She was a **pretty** little thing, petite and curvy, with a quick wit and generous nature…*

(3-10) *"Sometimes Korean girls get part of their leg muscles removed, to be **pretty**. You can get your hand half around their calves, "said one.*

Table 3- 8 The Semantic Distribution of Person for 'Pretty' and 'Charming'

			pretty		***charming***	
Modified Nouns	**Categories**	**Types**	**Freq.**	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**
Person	Outer Beauty	Slightness	12	5.02%	0	0%
		Fragility	2	0.84%	0	0%
		Airiness	2	0.84%	0	0%
		Beauty	217	90.79%	41	17.52%
	Inner Beauty	Character	5	2.09%	193	82.48%
	Others		1	0.42%	0	0%
	Total		239	100%	234	100%

Among all the instances related to people, one example was tagged as 'others' as demonstrated in example (3-11). Here, *pretty* means brave and it is a Scottish English

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

(Collin Dictionary). By looking through the extended context, one could know that Lucy was not brave enough to go down the stairs in this weird house in the past, but now she is capable of doing this.

(3-11) *Lucy was used to not **pretty**. She went down the stairs. The smell hit her first, before she was halfway down the rotting staircase. Human waste.*

Modified nouns—object. As for modified nouns related to object, Table 3-9 presents the distribution of concrete and abstract nouns modified by the two adjectives.

Table 3- 9 Distribution of Concrete and Abstract Nouns Modified by 'Pretty' and 'Charming'

	pretty		***charming***	
Categories	**Freq.**	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**
Concrete	162	74.31%	151	73.66%
Abstract	56	25.69%	54	26.34%
Total	218	100%	205	100.00%

The results suggest that when depicting nouns related objects, the two adjectives had something in common. Both the adjectives tended to describe 'concrete nouns' (74.31% for *pretty* and 73.66% for *charming*). In addition, the ratio of distribution of 'concrete nouns' and 'abstract nouns' modified by *pretty* and *charming* were similar, with a ratio of 3 to 1 for each adjective.

To further examine differences between the two adjectives, an analysis of distribution of types of objects were shown in Table 3-10. Among the six types of modified nouns, 'artifact' was the most frequently type depicted by the two adjectives, accounting about 51.83% for *pretty* and 45.37% for *charming*. The results indicate that both the adjectives showed the higher semantic preferences for describing something created by people (tagged as 'artifact'). In terms of 'place', it was more commonly modified by *charming* (34.15%) compared to *pretty* (12.84%). One of interesting things

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

we found was the total percentages of the top two types of modified nouns; that is, 'artifact' and 'place', for *charming* accounted for nearly 80% of the total instances. By contrast, for *pretty*, it displayed a high tendency to depict 'artifact', account for about 50% of all the instances, followed by the types of 'nature' (13.76%) and 'place' (12.84%).

Moreover, instances tagged as 'others' were conventional or idiomatic expressions, accounting for 11.01% for *pretty* and 1.46% for *charming*. The results suggested that *pretty* had more idiomatical usages.

Table 3- 10 The Semantic Distribution of the Two Adjectives Used to Describe the Attractiveness of an Object

	pretty		***charming***	
Types	**Freq.**	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**
Artifact	113	51.83%	93	45.37%
Place	28	12.84%	70	34.15%
Sound	2	0.92%	10	4.88%
Nature	30	13.76%	12	5.85%
General nouns	21	9.63%	17	8.29%
Others	24	11.01%	3	1.46%
Total	218	100.00%	205	100.00%

In general, from the results of sense analysis, it suggests that *pretty* and *charming* had similar tendencies to describe the attractiveness of a person and a thing. The main differences between them are types of attractiveness they described. In terms of a person, *pretty* seemed to describe someone's physical appearance; whereas, *charming* in most cases indicated someone had an attractive character. For an object, *pretty* was likely to depict 'artifact'. Whereas, *charming* tended to describe both 'artifact' and 'place'.

3.2.2 The Distribution of Gender Roles of the Modified People

Table 3-11 provides information about how the two adjectives were used in relation to gender. *Pretty* was used more often to describe females' outer beauty

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

(72.99%). By contrast, *charming* was more frequently used to describe males' inner beauty (65.66%). The results seem to correspond to social expectation that females are more likely to be *pretty*; that is, they tend to be attractive in a delicate way (tagged as 'slightness', 'fragility', or 'airiness') or have a good looking (tagged as 'beauty'). However, some instances (6.93%) indicated that males can also be described as *pretty*. Further discussion and examples will be presented later in the collocational information in terms of noun and adjective collocates.

Table 3- 11 The Distributions of Sex Roles of Modified Nouns for 'Pretty' and 'Charming'

	pretty			***charming***			
	Male	**Female**	**Neutral**	**Male**	**Female**	**Neutral**	**Total**
	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)
Outer beauty	19 6.93%	200 72.99%	14 5.11%	31 11.31%	8 2.92%	2 0.73%	274 100.0%
Inner beauty	1 0.51%	4 2.02%	0 0.00%	130 65.66%	40 20.20%	23 11.62%	198 100.0%

Notes. Neutral refers to "gender neutral"

3.2.3 Collocational Information

Noun collocates—person. As previous discussed in semantic distributions in sex roles (see Table 3-11), only a few instances (6.93%) indicated that males are *pretty*. The results may suggest that 'delicacy' and 'beauty' are not the traits that men are admired. However, through observing the top 20 R1 noun collocates of the two adjectives based on the results from the COCA as showed in Table 3-12. It shows that *boy* and *boys* were strong collocates with *pretty*.

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Table 3- 12 Top 20 R1 Noun Collocates of 'Pretty' and 'Charming'

pretty				***charming***			
Freq.		**MI score**		**Freq.**		**MI score**	
girl	573	*penny*	9.76	*smile*	83	*hostess*	9.89
woman	500	*girl*	8.57	*man*	75	*cottage*	8.44
face	478	*dresses*	8.46	*guy*	37	*smile*	8.37
girls	273	*sight*	8.44	*people*	24	*grin*	7.84
boy	196	*girls*	7.96	*story*	21	*accent*	7.8
picture	193	*pictures*	7.58	*woman*	21	*personality*	7.32
sight	156	*picture*	7.55	*person*	20	*fellow*	6.27
women	118	*lady*	7.32	*town*	19	*village*	6.17
pictures	115	*woman*	7.3	*men*	19	*guy*	5.94
things	112	*horses*	7.24	*way*	19	*lady*	5.5
penny	98	*face*	7.24	*personality*	17	*hotel*	5.25
lady	98	***boy***	7.1	*book*	17	*man*	5.13
name	88	*dress*	6.88	*place*	17	*scene*	5.09
thing	88	*flowers*	6.59	*village*	15	*town*	5.04
baby	69	*faces*	6.23	*fellow*	14	*person*	4.58
dress	64	*smile*	6.14	*child*	13	*story*	4.36
eyes	63	*clothes*	6.02	*cottage*	12	*girl*	4.34
smile	49	*baby*	5.83	*wife*	12	*book*	4.31
boys	40	***boys***	5.38	*scene*	11	*wife*	4.27
horses	39	*name*	5.17	*girl*	11	*woman*	4.2

Some examples can be seen below.

(3-12)

(a) *A young man, mid-twenties. Good-looking, too hand-some for Sawyer's taste -- a **pretty** boy, was the FBI agent's first thought.*

(b) ***Pretty** Boy Floyd, a well-known bank robber from Oklahoma, and his drunken sidekick, Adam Righetti, were identified as being two of the gunmen and were caught a year later in Ohio.*

(3-13)

(a) *# RILEY # # We got ta blow the fences! # **PRETTY** BOY (O.S.*

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LOUDSPEAKER) # Johnson's are loaded! # # RILEY # # Yeah, but they're capped!

(b) *My little boy, Wexford Junior, was at that time four and a half. Bright as a polished pebble… And* ***pretty, pretty*** *as an angel.*

Examples (3-12) and (3-13) indicate that not only sex roles but also the ages of modified people may be related to the discourse functions of *pretty. Pretty* can be used to express both compliment and insult. In (3-12-a), it shows that the FBI agent thought that the *pretty boy* wasn't suitable for the job. Being *pretty* seems to be a negative trait of men. On the other hand, in (3-12-b), *pretty boy* was used without judgments. It was used as someone's nickname, referring to a man who is attractive and good looking.

Unlike the previous examples, *pretty boy* sometimes can also be used to describe females. In (3-13-a), *Pretty boy* was used as a name of a female soldier in a movie—*Land of the Dead*. In this instance, *Riley* is talking to *Pretty Boy* and there is a war happening. It may not be possible to definitively conclude which meaning, positive or negative, was applied. It may only imply that she has an ability to fight but lacking of physical strength. Although in example (3-13-b), *boy* was not the R1 collocate of *pretty*. It may show that a *pretty boy* can be used to describe a little boy as *pretty* as an angel. It is undoubted that a *pretty boy* here is a compliment.

These examples show that *pretty* has both positive and negative meanings which can be seen in the phrasal usages *pretty boy*. The results may exhibit a slight disagreement with the findings of Haily and Jung's study (2015, p. 132). They found that *pretty boy* seems to have the purpose of causing insult to males by degrading males' masculine (e.g. *…pretty boy, cursed with beauty*) or criticizing their toughness (e.g. *a pretty boy wuss*). Whereas, we found that *pretty boy* can be used to imply men who lack masculinity (3-12-a) and to describe a little boy's attractive appearance (3-13-b).

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In additional to the examples discussed above, other collocational information can also show the representation of gender in language. From Table 3-12, *woman* is one of overlapped noun collocates between the two adjectives within the top 20 (showed in shaded). Compared to *pretty*, *charming* was relatively less used to describe females. By further examining in all the concordances of *charming woman* found in the COCA, the results may suggest that *charming woman* has at least three meanings. The first meaning is that a woman is beautiful and has sexual attractiveness. Men are likely to be enchanted by her (example 3-14-a). Secondly, the charm of a woman is not only restricted in her outer beauty, but the charm reflects on her inner beauty. In example (3-14-b), a woman with physically challenged (i.e., *a club foot* and *a squint*) shows her attractiveness by intelligence. In (3-14-c) the characters of the woman, being *spirited*, seem to be an essential factor of her charm. In (3-14-d), we can also find that no matter what a woman looks like, people want to have a good relationship with her since her *charming* personality. For the last meaning is that a woman makes effort to think like a man. She alters the traditional stereotypes of females (example 3-14-e). In summary, a *charming woman* can refer to a female who is attractive in outer beauty or inner beauty and sometimes it may be used to describe a woman who tries to break the gender stereotype.

(3-14)

(a) *That night he had realized that the twelve-year-old hellion Zarabeth who used to take him fishing and endlessly taunt him had become a woman—a beautiful,* ***charming*** *woman he wanted with every breath.*

(b) *A clever and* ***charming*** *woman will always attract wise lovers, even if she has a club foot and a squint.*

(c) *Her Majesty is a* ***charming*** *woman, Jeffrey. Not beautiful, exactly, but she is*

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so spirited, it scarcely matters.

(d) *She could be the most **charming** woman you ever saw. People loved to be around her.*

(e) *…Stephens presents Siefert as a **charming** woman poet who lacked the genius of her male counterparts. # The inspiration of Siefert's poetic writing in Les Stoiques, for example, alternates between feminine sentiment and abstract thought, which was considered an attribute of the male mind.*

Noun collocates—object. In terms of noun collocates for object, Table 3-12 displays the collocational data, and some similarities and differences are showed. For the 'artifact' type, we found that *pretty* often collocated with the things that people wear such as *dress*, and *clothes*. In contrast, *charming* tended to collocate with descriptions of events such as *story* and *book*. As for 'place', *charming* showed the tendency to collocate with a community of people such as, *town* and *village*; a building where people live in, for instance, *cottage*. In terms of 'nature', *pretty* was commonly used to describe *flower*. Whereas, the results of the top 20 R1 noun collocates did not provide much information about *pretty*'s tendency to collocate with words associated with 'place' or *charming*'s tendency to 'nature'.

Therefore, Table 3-12 shows that the two adjectives had different preferences in noun collocates in terms of 'art' 'place' and 'nature'. These results may be in agreement with those of sense analysis—*pretty* was apt to describe outer beauty; whereas, *charming* tended to describe inner beauty. Example (3-15) below shows some coordinating nouns with *pretty* and *charming* respectively.

(3-15)

(a) *A **pretty** dress helps an at-home holiday dinner feel more festive.*

(b) *John and Josie found so many **pretty** flower designs in the wallpaper-baskets*

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

of flowers, birds, and roses to frame.

(c) *A **charming** book that helps children see why manners are useful in our society, even if not required of dogs and other animals.*

(d) *Manteo is a cozy, **charming** town, small enough to be accessible on foot.*

In example (3-15-a) and (3-15-b), people were pleased or attracted by the visual impression; that is, *pretty dress* and *pretty flower*. By contrast, in example (3-15-c) and (3-15-d), the impressions came from moral lessons from the *book*, atmosphere or culture of the *town*. These things are more like the inner beauty of a person, those need people to think and to experience their attractiveness.

Adjectives collocates. Table 3-13 provides the data of the adjective collocates of *pretty* and *charming*. There was one overlapped coordinating adjective—*smart* (shaded). The results may be related to the meaning developments of the two adjectives. The original sense of *pretty* is 'cunning and tricky' from Old English (*Online Etymology Dictionary* [OED]).In terms of *charming*, it is present-participle adjective from *charm* (verb.) which means 'to recite or cast a magic spell' from Old French *charmer* (13 century) (OED).

Table 3- 13 Top 20 Adjective Collocates of 'Pretty' and 'Charming' (within a span of eight words)

pretty				***charming***			
Freq.		**MI score**		**Freq.**		**MI score**	
little	**527**	*petite*	7.35	*young*	106	*personable*	9.71
pretty	382	*dark-haired*	7.22	*funny*	98	*witty*	9.36
young	294	*blonde*	6.19	*handsome*	97	*quaint*	8.03
real	126	*plump*	5.79	*witty*	59	*handsome*	7.63
nice	109	*blond*	5.62	*beautiful*	58	*charismatic*	7.57
pink	103	*pink*	5.23	*charming*	47	*good-looking*	7.34
smart	70	*sexy*	5.23	*intelligent*	41	*delightful*	7.33

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sweet	67	*feminine*	5.11	*smart*	34	*charming*	7.23
beautiful	62	*slender*	5.09	*lovely*	32	*gracious*	7.2
bright	54	*slim*	5.07	*warm*	30	*intelligent*	6.49
blond	53	*pretty*	4.97	*sweet*	29	*funny*	6.16
blue	52	*ugly*	4.65	*attractive*	26	*polite*	5.93
dark	52	*handsome*	4.58	*nice*	26	*entertaining*	5.91
blonde	47	*shiny*	4.37	*charismatic*	25	*lovely*	5.71
tall	46	*neat*	4.37	*friendly*	25	*attractive*	5.24
thin	46	*smart*	4.26	*quaint*	23	*friendly*	5.08
sexy	40	*skinny*	4.16	*personable*	21	*romantic*	5.04
ugly	38	*cute*	4.12	*historic*	21	*brilliant*	4.82
petite	36	*delicate*	4.05	*romantic*	20	*smart*	4.67
popular	36	*sweet*	3.92	*delightful*	19	*historic*	4.52

In example (3-16), it appears that both *pretty* and *charming* can be used to describe a person who has an ability to achieve things in clever ways.

(3-16)

(a) *It finds on a single college campus every imaginable youthful type: a track star on an athletic scholarship (Omar Epps), who is convinced he is being exploited; his very smart, very **pretty** girlfriend (Tyra Banks), who is coolly intent on using the system to her advantage.*

(b) *Continuing our story now about Michael Backman, the con man, the conniver, **charming**, smart and slick. So slick, he came up with an outrageous plan -- a plan to actually erase the criminal part of his life.*

As for adjectives used to describe people, from Table 3-13, we can see that *pretty* shows the tendency to collocate with adjectives for modifying physical appearance, such as *blond, blonde* and *petite*. As for adjectives for describing character, such as *funny*, *witty*, *friendly*, were more frequently collocated with *charming*. Only one

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

adjective related to appearance (*handsome*) co-occurs with *charming* shown on the top 20 list.

For adjectives used to describe objects, it is apparently to see that *charming* tends to collocate with adjectives time-related, like *historic*, and *quaint.* The examples in (3-17) show that *charming* was frequently used to describe old places.

(3-17)

(a) *Historic Villa Rica Ghost Tour, "a 1.5-mile guided walking tour through the* ***charming*** *and historic downtown district that puts a paranormal twist on the town's rich history, from the time Native American tribes called the area home up to the mid-1900s.*

(b) *At Wimbledon, class is a continuum. The surrounding village is quaint,* ***charming*** *and accommodating.*

In summary, the findings of word senses and collocation analyses discussed here provided us with an understanding of the differences between *pretty* and *charming*. Both adjectives can be used to describe attractiveness of a thing and a person. Moreover, they had positive and negative meanings. On the contrary, the main differences between them were types of modified nouns. *Pretty* had preference in depicting physical appearances of people and objects (e.g., *face, dress*). Whereas, *charming* tended to describe inner beauty (e.g., *personality*) and experiences of beauty which need thinking or feeling (e.g., *book*).

In the next section, a comparison of *pretty* and *charming* in varied genres in the COCA was conducted. As previous mentioned in Chapter 2, Edmonds and Hirst (2002) proposed that stylistic variation is one of aspects that indicates differences of near-synonyms. Moreover, it is expected that the genre distribution of the two adjectives could help English learners have a better understanding of choosing appropriate words

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in different genres.

3.2.4 Comparison of 'Pretty' and 'Charming' in Different Genres in the COCA

In this section, the overall distribution of *pretty* and *charming* in different genres showed in the COCA will be presented firstly. Then, we would like to understand the performance of the noun collocates of *pretty* and *charming* in both fiction and spoken genres.

Distributions of the two adjectives in different genres. In order to understand the two adjectives better, we then compared collocates of *pretty* and *charming* in different genres from the COCA. The corpus contains texts from five genres (i.e., fiction, magazine, newspaper, academic, and spoken). A scale of formality was established for these genres provided by the COCA. It begins from the most formal to the least formal genre: academic writing, newspaper, magazine, fiction, and spoken (Hoffmann, 2014). The frequencies of the adjective form of *pretty* and *charming* in the COCA were 18,301 and 6,583 respectively. By paying attention to the distribution of the two adjectives in various genres, the frequencies of them were shown in Figure 3-1. Some similarities and differences will be demonstrated in this section.

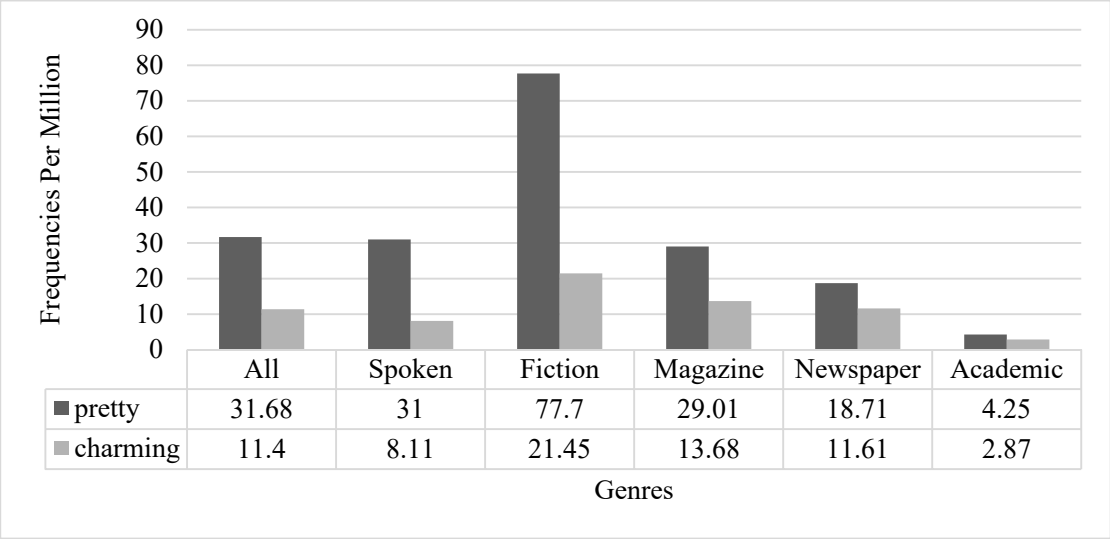

Figure 3- 1 Frequencies (Per Million) of 'Pretty' and 'Charming' in Each Genre

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

Figure 3-1 shows that *pretty* was more frequently used by language users than *charming* in general. In other words, the overall frequency of *pretty* was about 2.78 times than *charming* in the COCA. From the comparisons, Figure 3-1 also indicates that both the adjectives had a more dominant role in the fictional discourse than the other four genres. However, *pretty* was far more frequently used in the fiction genre, accounting about 3.6 times higher than *charming*. In addition to the fiction genre, *pretty* was frequently used in the spoken and magazine, ranked as the second and the third place, respectively, in the overall frequency distribution. Whereas, for *charming*, it was less frequently used in the spoken genre (8.11 per million) and academic genre (2.87 per million).

Overall, both adjectives commonly appeared in the fictional genre; while the academic genre was the least frequent section in which the two adjectives are shown. Specifically, from the overall frequency distribution of the two adjectives in the genres, both of them were more commonly used in informal register rather than formal register.

Then, to explore how noun collocates of *pretty* and *charming* performed in the most frequently used genre, we searched the collocates in fictional section in the COCA. In this query, only the R1 noun collocates were chosen; that is, those nominal words which appears immediately to the right of the target words were selected.

Performance of noun collocates in fiction discourse. Table 3-14 indicates that the overall frequencies of the R1 collocates of *pretty* and *charming* in fiction genre. These collocates were arranged by descending score. The score is "a function of the ratio of the two words" (COCA). For example, in the case of *penny*, the ratio of [*pretty*/*charming*] (90 times as frequent) is 9.1 times the overall ratio of [*pretty* vs *charming*] (9.88) in the corpus. "When the competing word has a frequency of 0, it is set to .5, to avoid division by 0" (COCA). In addition, collocates with a 'score' less than 3 were excluded from the discussion in the study.

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

Table 3-14 The Comparison of R1 Noun Collocates of the Two Adjectives in the Fictional Genre

Word 1 (W1): *pretty* (9.88)						**Word 2 (W2): *charming* (0.10)**				
	Word	**W1**	**W2**	**W1/W2**	**Score**		**Word**	**W2**	**W1**	**W2/W1**	**Score**
1	*penny*	45	0	90	9.1	1	*smile*	74	32	2.3	22.8
2	*thing*	65	1	65	6.6	2	***man***	18	9	2	19.8
3	*sight*	64	1	64	6.5						
4	***women***	60	1	60	6.1						
5	*dresses*	26	0	52	5.3						
6	*mouth*	25	0	50	5.1						
7	***girls***	147	3	49	5						
8	*head*	23	0	46	4.7						
9	***girl***	386	10	38.6	3.9						
10	*hair*	19	0	38	3.8						
11	*clothes*	19	0	38	3.8						
12	*eyes*	37	1	37	3.7						
13	*face*	293	8	36.6	3.7						
14	*pictures*	17	0	34	3.4						
15	*brunette*	17	0	34	3.4						
16	*flowers*	17	0	34	3.4						
17	*legs*	16	0	32	3.2						
18	*day*	16	0	32	3.2						
19	*dress*	31	1	31	3.1						
20	*faces*	15	0	30	3						

From the result, one could see that both the adjectives were used to modify features of people regularly, such as *mouth, eyes, face, legs, smile* etc., (the underlined words in Table 3-14) what different was that language users were more likely to use *pretty* to describe females, such as *woman*, *girl*, and *girls* (the bolded words); while they tended to use *charming* to describe males such as *man* (the bolded words). In addition, a noun collocate belonging to one of physical appearances deserved special mention; that is, *head*. When *head* was collocated with *pretty*, its meaning seemed to be expanded and it can be shown in the examples below.

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(3-18)

(a) *"You're thinking the price isn't fair, Fr[a]ulein? I can tell you that even Schwinns motorcycle is that price, and it isn't half as sturdy as the Emblem. Or are you just using that* ***pretty*** *head of yours to calculate? He grinned, then added, "Maybe you like my company on this Saturday afternoon."*

(b) A: *"You concerned about me? That's a switch, since I'm officially the one who gets to worry about everybody else. It's in my job description."*

B: *"You can worry your* ***pretty*** *head off about whomever you want, my dear Clare, but I'm in charge of you."*

In example (3-18-a), the *Fraulein*, referring to "*an unmarried German woman*" Collins Dictionary), thought that the price wasn't fair. The shopkeeper tried to convince her by comparing the capacity and price of another motorcycle. However, from the description of the shopkeeper's facial expression (*He grinned*) and his speech, it seemed that the shopkeeper looked down on the woman. Here, *head* means 'intelligence'. As for the example (b), it seemed to be related to the phrase *don't worry your pretty little head* and the phrase is used to "tell someone not to worry" (Cambridge Dictionary). In this example, the interlocutor B said to A that he will take care of her although she spends all her effort to worry about others. Overall, from the observation of the retrieved examples in the study, it was found that when *head* appeared immediately to the right of *pretty*, it did not refer to the forward most body part but referred to someone's intelligence or the process of protecting someone.

Another interesting finding was that all the top three noun collocates of *pretty*; that is, *penny*, *thing*, and *sight*, were nouns related to objects rather than people. One of the reasons why these collocates had higher frequencies may be correlated with some uses of idiomatic expressions, such as *pretty penny* and *not a pretty sight.* Examples below

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show the use of the idioms.

(3-19)

(a) *She had a Patagonia vest, L. L. Bean clogs, and a Nikon that was old enough and sturdy enough to fetch a* ***pretty*** *penny.*

(b) *By the time I got to the suite McNaught and McNulty shared, I found them stripped to the waist and drinking bottles of cold beer. It was not a* ***pretty*** *sight.*

Tracing back to Old English, *pretty* has original senses of "cunning and tricky". In the Middle English, the meaning had shifted to "manly, gallant," and later moved to "attractive, skillfully made," to "beautiful in a slight way". Until the late 15th century, *pretty* has a sense of "considerable" (American Heritage Dictionary; Dictionary. com) and it can be seen in the idiom of ***pretty*** *penny*. The phrase is used to describe "a considerable sum of money" (Collins's Dictionary) demonstrated in example (3-19-a). For the phrase *not a pretty sight*, it shows the sense of "attractive". The phase can be used to say someone or something is not pleasant to look at, indicating visually unappealing or an unfortunate situation (Collins's Dictionary) as shown in example (3-19-b).

In terms of the noun collocate—*thing* ranked as the second place in the comparison. A total of 63 tokens of *pretty thing* were found in the fictional genre in the COCA. It was found that *pretty thing* was more frequently used to refer a human being (62.5% of all the instances) rather than a solid object. Furthermore, among these sentences, 85% of them (i.e., 34 instances) focused on depicting females. From the observation of the concordance lines, it appears that when *pretty thing* was employed to describe females (example 3-20), the phrase tended to co-occur with the description of physical appearance, such as *hair*, *eyes*, *mouth*, etc.

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(3-20)

(a) *She was a **pretty** thing, with fine golden hair and hazel eyes.*

(b) *She was a **pretty** thing, with her long eyelashes and candy-shaped mouth.*

In summary, from the collocates of the *pretty* and *charming* found in the fiction genre, one thing in common was that both the adjectives were regularly used to describe features of human beings. Moreover, from the top three noun collocates of *pretty* (i.e., *penny*, *thing*, and *sight*), we found that some high frequency collocates may be related to idiomatic expressions and the idioms can show the development of the word sense. As for *pretty thing*, it was more likely to describe the female's physical appearances. In the next part, we want to investigate the differences between the two adjectives when they were used in fiction and spoken genre.

Comparison of noun collocates performed in spoken discourse. From Figure 3-1, it has been observed that both *pretty* and *charming* had a more prominent role in fictional discourse. However, when we looked at the spoken genre, *pretty* was more frequent than *charming* (i.e., 31 per million for *pretty* and 8.11 per million for *charming*). To find out how the two adjectives differ when they appear in spoken genre, a comparison in terms of their noun collocates were conducted and the result was shown in Table 3-15. The Table shows that the noun collocates of both *pretty* and *charming* were quite similar in spoken genre, they frequently co-occurred with nouns related to person, such as *girl*, *guy*, *man*, and *person*.

Table 3- 15 The Comparison of R1 Noun Collocates of the Two Adjectives in the Spoken Genre

Word 1 (W1): *pretty* (39.79)						**Word 2 (W2): *charming* (0.03)**					
	Word	**W1**	**W2**	**W1/W2**	**Score**		**Word**	**W2**	**W1**	**W2/W1**	**Score**
1	*girl*	75	0	150	3.8	1	*guy*	29	0	58	2,308.10
2	*picture*	62	0	124	3.1	2	*man*	21	1	21	835.7
						3	*person*	15	2	7.5	298.5

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However, when looking deeper through the score of collocates, one can see that the scores of modified nouns of *charming* were much higher than *pretty*. This may suggest that *charming* had a higher tendency to modify nouns related to person compared to *pretty* in the spoken discourse.

3.2.5 Syntactic Roles of 'Pretty' and 'Charming'

In this section, the syntactic roles of *pretty* and *charming* will be presented. Table 3-16 shows the distribution of the adjectives' tendency toward syntactic positions based on the analysis of the retrieved data in the study.

In this analysis, we only considered the adjectives which occupied either attributive or predicative position. In other circumstances, the instances were excluded from this stage of analysis and they were labeled as 'others', for example, the idiomatic expressions (e.g., *sitting pretty*, *pretty penny*, etc.), the adjective form of nouns (i.e., *the pretty* and *the charming*), and the convention use of *charming* (used to describe one's disapproval when someone has been rude). In addition, 'mistagged' instances with errors in part-of-speech annotation were deleted from the analysis as well (e.g., *It's pretty cool.*).

Table 3- 16 Distribution of Syntactic Positions

	pretty		***charming***	
Roles	**Freq.**	**Percentage**	**Freq.**	**Percentage**
Attributive	242	46.01%	245	47.85%
Predicative	204	38.78%	196	38.28%
Mistagged	62	11.79%	69	13.48%
Others	18	3.42%	2	0.39%
Total	526	100.00%	512	100.00%

Table 3-16 indicates that both *pretty* and *charming* can appear in both attributive and predicative positions. Furthermore, both the target words tended to pre-modify the head noun (i.e., in attributive position), accounting for over 45% for both the adjectives.

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However, what makes them different was that the syntactic position which they applied when describing different categories of modified nouns (i.e., person, object, or animals) as showed in Table 3-17.

Table 3- 17 The Syntactic Roles Applied in Different Categories of Modified Nouns

	pretty				
	attributive	**predicative**	**others**	**mistagged**	**Total**
	Freq. (%)	**Freq. (%)**	**Freq. (%)**	**Freq. (%)**	**Freq. (%)**
person	118 (49.37%)	119 (49.79%)	2 (0.84%)	0 (0.00%)	239 (100%)
object	121 (55.50%)	82 (37.61%)	15 (6.88%)	0 (0.00%)	218 (100%)
animal	3 (42.86%)	3 (42.86%)	1 (14.29%)	0 (0.00%)	7 (100%)
mistagged	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	62 (100%)	62 (100%)

	charming				
	attributive	**predicative**	**others**	**mistagged**	**Total**
	Freq. (%)	**Freq. (%)**	**Freq. (%)**	**Freq. (%)**	**Freq. (%)**
person	101 (43.16%)	133 (56.84%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	234 (100%)
object	142 (69.27%)	61 (29.76%)	2 (0.98%)	0 (0.00%)	205 (100%)
animal	2 (50.00%)	2 (50.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	4 (100%)
mistagged	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	69 (100%)	69 (100%)

From Table 3-17, one could see that *charming* tended to take the predicative position when it was used to describe nouns related to person (accounting about 57%); whereas, *pretty* didn't show its tendency apparently. Both attributive and predicative positions were commonly occupied by *pretty* in terms of descriptions of person. Comparatively, both *pretty* and *charming* were more likely to pre-modify nouns related

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to objects (accounting about 56% for *pretty*, and 69% for *charming*). One of possible reasons may be related to the difference in meaning between attributive and predicative adjectives. As Bolinger (1967) suggested that attributive adjectives were more often used to describe something's or someone's permanent characteristic (as shown in example 3-21-a); while, predicative adjectives can reflect temperate states or particular events (demonstrated in example 3-21-b).

(3-21)

(a) *The wasps seem to be more discerning than human taxonomists. There's more to attractive scent than a* ***pretty*** *flower though.* [attributive]

(b) *This plant's small yellow-centered white flowers are unpretentious but* ***pretty****, borne in abundance throughout the year, and extremely fragrant.* [predicative]

In example (a), the wasps were attracted by the scents from other species. There was something more attractive than *a pretty flower*. Here, the *pretty flower* referred to any kinds of flowers. The attributive adjective, *pretty*, was used to express the author's opinion. To the author, flowers were all *pretty* in principle. Whereas, in example (b), *flowers* referred to a particular kind of flower grown on the plant and it was yellow. In this case, *pretty* took the predicative position aimed to indicate a temporary state. The scenery of flowers may disappear due to weather or other event.

Overall, from the syntactic roles of the two adjectives, it seemed that the language users preferred to use both *pretty* and *charming* to describe permanent characteristics or states of something by taking the attributive position (e.g., *a pretty flower*, *a charming book*). Whereas, in terms of description of person, the two adjectives were commonly used in both attributive and predicative position.

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

CHAPTER 4

PSYCHOLINGUISTIC JUDGEMENT TASK

In the second study of the thesis, we intended to investigate what factors might influence EFL learners' use of *pretty* and *charming*. Two versions of a questionnaire featuring an acceptability judgement task were designed for the EFL learners. In each version of the questionnaire, sixteen questions within two types of modified nouns (person and object) were included. Through the acceptability judgement task, it was expected that some interpretations of the participants' judgements could be obtained. In the following section, we will firstly introduce the design of questionnaire in 4.1.1. Then, in 4.1.2, the grading criteria will be presented. As for the participants, procedure and data analysis will be displayed in section 4.1.3 to 4.1.5.

4.1 Methods of Psycholinguistic Judgement Task

In this thesis, both corpus analysis and psycholinguistic judgement task mainly focused on two types of modified nouns—person-related modified nouns and object-related modified nouns. For the psycholinguistic judgement task, the questionnaire was mainly designed to investigate what factors might affect EFL learners' uses of the two adjectives and the methods of psycholinguistic judgement task will be presented in this section.

4.1.1 The Design of Questionnaire

Three main variables. For the questions which focused on person-related modified nouns (e.g., *pretty girl*, *charming boy*), they were designed mainly based on three variables: (a) gender, (b) patterns of modified nouns (i.e., *pretty*-only, *charming*-only, and both (called 'common')), and (c) source of beauty (i.e., inner and outer beauty). Each of them will be introduced respectively below.

The first variable of the questionnaire is gender. The gender of the person who has the qualities being described was controlled in the example sentences. In example (4-

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1), a female person and a male person, respectively, were described (All examples were retrieved from the COCA).

(4-1)

(a) *She has a **charming** manner and she always likes to make jokes about herself.*

(b) *He has a **charming** manner and he always likes to make jokes about himself.*

Secondly, in order to select the stimuli of the questions, the patterns of collocates were considered. In total, there were three patterns of the stimuli: *pretty*-only, *charming*-only, and common. The 'only pattern' refers to the strongest collocates of the target word. For example, according to the corpus result, *clothes* can only collocate with *pretty* as in example (4-2-a), while *manner* can only collocate with *charming*, as demonstrated in (4-2-b). As for 'common pattern', collocates are shared between the two target words. In example (4-2-c) and (4-2-d), the word v*oice* frequently collocates with both *pretty* and *charming*.

(4-2)

(a) *Judy sat there imagining all the **pretty** clothes she would have when she went to the party.* *pretty*-only

(b) *He has a **charming** manner and he always likes to make jokes about himself.* *charming*-only

(c) *It's her good fortune that she can use her **pretty** voice to earn a living.* common

(d) *He always uses that **charming** voice to say 'Good morning' to everyone.* common

Thirdly, source of beauty can be further divided into two types: inner beauty and outer beauty. It is hypothesized that this variable may affect participants' uses of *pretty* and *charming*. The attractiveness of the female in example (4-3-a) is her *charming smile*,

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and we categorized it as an 'outer beauty'. As for (4-3-b), the man has a *charming manner* which may make people like him, and it belongs to an inner beauty.

(4-3)

(a) *She lowered her window and gave the man her most **charming** smile.*

outer beauty

(b) *He has a **charming** manner and he always likes to make jokes about himself*

inner beauty

From the definitions of *pretty* and *charming* shown in the dictionaries (see Chapter 3, section 3.1.2), one could know that both these two adjectives can be used to describe someone or something being 'pleasant' or' attractive'.

In order to understand the participant's use of the two adjectives in describing someone's attractiveness, sixteen sentences in total (i.e., 'gender' x 'pattern' x 'source of beauty' =2×3×2=16) were constructed. In addition to the three controlled variables in the questionnaire, the gender of the participant was seen as a monitor variable in the study. A monitor variable may affect the outcome, but it cannot be kept constant in its value. It needs to be monitored. From the result of corpus analysis indicated in the previous chapter, we hypothesized that there was a relation between the gender of the participant ('P') and the gender of the person in the sentence ('S') whose qualities are described in the sentences. To test the assumption, in total, there were four combinations of gender in the study— the first gender is the participant; the second is the person-stimuli, [FemaleP x FemaleS], [FemaleP x MaleS], [MaleP x MaleS] and [MaleP x FemaleS]. For instance, [FemaleP x FemaleS] refers to a female participant who made a judgement on the sentence containing a female person. The former gender represents the gender of the participant, and the latter one stands for the gender of the person in the sentences.

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For the distribution of person-stimuli in the questionnaires, the same stimuli with different genders of the person described in the sentences were evenly divided into different versions of questionnaires. For example, *manner*, in the *charming*-only pattern has both person's genders in two versions of the questionnaires, as shown in Table 4-1.

Table 4- 1 Stimuli Used in Person-Related Modified Nouns Part of Questionnaire

Patterns	Adjective	Source of beauty	R1 collocates	Person's gender	Version
charming-only	*charming*	Inner beauty	*manner*	Female	A
				Male	B
	charming	Outer beauty	*smile*	Female	B
				Male	A
common	*pretty*	Inner beauty	*traits*	Female	A
				Male	B
	charming			Female	B
				Male	A
	pretty	Outer beauty	*voice*	Female	A
				Male	B
	charming			Female	B
				Male	A
pretty-only	*pretty*	Inner beauty	*head*	Female	A
				Male	B
	pretty	Outer beauty	*clothes*	Female	B
				Male	A

For example, (4-4-a) depicts a female person, and it was distributed into questionnaire A, while example (4-4-b) describes a male person distributed into questionnaire B.

(4-4)

(a) *She has a **charming** manner and she always likes to make jokes about herself.*

(b) *He has a **charming** manner and he always likes to make jokes about himself.*

As for 'common pattern', stimuli were shared between both *pretty* and *charming.* For example, *traits* frequently collocates with the two target words and there were four

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sentences describing *traits* in total (i.e., gender x two patterns=2 x 2=4). Then, these sentences were distributed evenly into the two versions of questionnaires. Each version of questionnaire included two sentences describing the same person-stimuli in common pattern (one male and one female). Overall, there were eight questions in total focusing on person-related modified nouns in each version of questionnaires.

In terms of the questions which focused on object-related modified nouns, the stimuli were selected based on similar criteria—categorization of 'patterns' and 'source of beauty' were used. For object-stimuli, there were two different types of source of beauty—'nature' and 'artifact' as demonstrated in example (4-5).

(4-5)

(a) *I like the idea of you shooting the **pretty** scenery of beach. …* nature

(b) *This **charming** story is drawn from the true adventures of the author.* artifact

For example, (4-5-a) *scenery* was categorized as a 'nature' beauty. Example (4-5-b) belonged to 'artifacts', which were made by human beings.

Similar to the person-stimuli, eight object-related sentences were designed to test the understanding of the learners' use of the two adjectives. However, all the stimuli of the object-related nouns in the task were gender-neutral, there was no need to distribute the sentences into different versions of questionnaires. All of these sentences appeared in both versions of questionnaires. That means that the object-stimuli received double the number of responses from the two versions.

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Table 4- 2 Stimuli Used in the Object-Related Modified Nouns Part of Questionnaire

Patterns	Adjective	Source of beauty	R1 collocate
charming-only	*charming*	Nature	*nature*
	charming	Artifact	*inn*
common	*pretty*	Nature	*scenery*
	charming		
	pretty	Artifact	*story*
	charming		
pretty-only	*pretty*	Nature	*flower*
	pretty	Artifact	*harbor*

Overall, each version of the questionnaires contained sixteen questions (i.e., eight for person-related modified nouns and eight for object-related modified nouns), but the questions for person-stimuli were divided into two genders; the questions for the object-stimuli were the same for both versions. After showing the design of questionnaires, we then demonstrate the grading criteria in the following section.

4.1.2 Grading Criteria

All the sentences in the questionnaires were adopted or modified from the corpus data. In the acceptability judgement task of the study, five-point Likert scale was used to measure participant's acceptability. Point-one means a sentence was 'totally unacceptable'; whereas, point-five means that a sentence was 'perfectly acceptable'. Thus, it was expected that the results of the judgement task could reflect the participants' degree of acceptability toward the different uses of *pretty* and *charming*. They tested the suitability of collocation rather than grammatical acceptability. If a question was left blank, the answer would be labeled as missing. The missing data would be deleted in the stage of data analysis.

4.1.3 Samples of the Questionnaires A and B

In the first part of the questionnaire, the questions were designed to gather the participants' background information—gender, nationality, native language, and

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language proficiency. Then, in the following part of questionnaire was the psycholinguistic judgement task including sixteen questions in total. Instructions of the questionnaire were shown in (4-6) below. The participants were required to rate their degree of acceptability from 'totally unacceptable' to 'perfectly acceptable' (i.e., from point-one to point-five).

(4-6)

第二部分:

作答說明: 此問卷共 16 題。請仔細閱讀每一題句子，圈選您對每一個句子的接受度。1 為非常不接受----5 為非常接受。

Translations:

Part II:

Instruction: There are sixteen questions in total. Please read each sentence carefully, and circle the acceptability rating of each sentence. 1 means a sentence is 'totally unacceptable' to you--- 5 means it is 'perfectly acceptable' to you.

In terms of the presentation of the sentences in the questionnaire, they exemplified in example (4-7). The whole questionnaires are attached in this thesis as Appendix A and B.

(4-7)

(a) *He dares say she is much too young to bother her pretty head* (=智慧, which means intelligent in English) *about such dilemmas.*

(b) *Let yourself be seduced by the charming nature and extraordinary landscapes.*

In example (4-7-a), the subject of the sentence is *he* and the modified noun, *head,* is a strongest collocate of *pretty*. It was a sentence under the '*pretty*-only' pattern. Furthermore, *pretty head* means 'intelligence' in the instance and it is used to describe

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an ‘inner beauty’ of the person (male in 4-7-a). Overall, the sentence was composed of three variables; that is, ‘pretty-only’, ‘male’, and ‘inner beauty’. To avoid the confusion of meaning, if a word may cause confusion, such as *pretty head,* the Mandarin translation was provided in brackets. In (4-7-b), *nature* is an example of an object-stimuli and it is a strong collocation of *charming.* It is a sentence of ‘nature’ and ‘charming-only’ category.

The hypothesis of the questionnaire designed for person-related nouns is addressed in (4-8), and the hypothesis of object-related nouns is addressed in (4-9):

(4-8)

Hypothesis 1: *Pretty* seemed to be more commonly used to modify females’ outer beauty, whereas *charming* was more commonly used to describe males’ inner beauty. Here, we supposed that ‘source of beauty’ and’ ‘patterns’ have an effect on the participant’s judgement on the sentences.

(4-9)

Hypothesis 2: For sentences focusing on object-related nouns, it was hypothesized that the participants tend to use both *pretty* and *charming* to modify the beauty of ‘artifact’; while, they are more likely to use *pretty* to depict the beauty of ‘nature’.

Aside from the three controlled variables in the study (i.e., ‘gender’, ‘source of beauty’, and ‘patterns’), the participant’s gender is an important monitor variable for investigating whether there are different preferences of using *pretty* and *charming* for the participants with different genders. The hypothesis of the relation between the genders of the participants and the genders of the person in the sentences was established in (4-10).

(4-10)

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Hypothesis 3: For the sentences focusing on person-related nouns, 'genders', including the gender of the participant and the gender of the person in the sentence whose qualities are described in the sentences, have an effect on the participant' s acceptability of the sentences.

4.1.4 Participants and Procedures of Questionnaires

In the acceptability judgement task, there were two groups. Group A was constituted by forty-four undergraduate students majoring in Education in a university in northern Taiwan, twenty-two for each version. All of them are EFL learners with Mandarin as their native language. Their English proficiency was categorized into three levels: high, middle, and low based on their performances of the college entrance exam of English subject. The categorization was the same as the class grouping in the freshman's compulsory English course. The participants were randomly given a paper-based questionnaire.

Table 4- 3 Background Information of Participants in Group A

Version	Proficiency	Participant's Gender		Total
		Female	Male	
Questionnaire A	High	5	2	7
	Middle	6	2	8
	Low	5	2	7
	Total	16	6	22
Questionnaire B	High	9	2	11
	Middle	2	3	5
	Low	3	3	6
	Total	14	8	22

On the other hand, Group B was constituted by forty-five participants taking part in a Mandarin course in a university in Taiwan. These learners are foreign learners in Taiwan. Regarding the participants' native languages, Japanese (N=7) and Spanish (N=7) were the top one native language spoken by them, followed by German (N=6),

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Korean (N=5), Indonesia (N=4), and Czech (N=4). Among these top five native languages spoken by the participants, only German is similar to English since both languages are members of the West Germanic language branch. Overall, in spite of the varied native languages spoken by the participants in Group B, English can be regarded as their foreign language. The two groups were recruited to investigate whether the participants with different native language backgrounds would perform differently in judging the use of the two adjectives in describing someone's or something's attractiveness.

Table 4- 4 Background Information of Participants in Group B

	Version	Participant's Gender		Total
		Female	Male	
Group B	Questionnaire A	13	7	20
	Questionnaire B	16	9	25
	Total	29	16	45

The participants were informed that the task was not a language test, and it would not affect their grades and scores. Additionally, they were free to ask questions about the meaning of the sentences during the task. They were first asked to write down their background information in Part A of the questionnaire, such as gender, level of English class, nationality, and native language. They then were informed to read each sentence carefully and answer the questions as honestly as possible. The instruction were shown in Mandarin. Most participants in both groups completed the questionnaires within 15 minutes.

4.1.5 Data Analysis

In the study, two-way and three-way ANOVA were used for investigating the effects between the variables in SPSS. In addition, the cases with any types of missing data were deleted in the study. Via this procedure, we expected to understand which factors may affect learners' uses of the two adjectives—*pretty* and *charming*.

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4.2 Results of the Person-Stimuli

In this section, we will first present the results of the two versions of questionnaires by using the person-stimuli. Since the questions were selected mainly based on 'gender', 'patterns', and 'source of beauty', there will be three different variables in the analysis.

4.2.1 Overall Analysis of Group A and Group B

Test of homogeneity of variances. From the Levene's test, the result indicated that the variances (based on median) in the two groups were homogeneous, F (23,685) =1.337, p=.135. Thus, we can run an ANOVA test. Since all the participants were English learners, we will firstly include all the data of the two groups of participants to perform a three-way ANOVA. Then, Group A and Group B will be discussed separately.

The analysis of Group A and Group B. Among all the participants in Group A and Group B, the 'patterns' of collocates had a significant effect on the learner's uses of the adjectives to describe people's attractiveness, F (2, 703) =4.839, p<.01. From the estimated marginal means, one could find that the '*charming*-only' pattern was the most acceptable use among the three 'patterns', with the mean of 3.601, followed by the 'common' pattern (M=3.531), and '*pretty*-only' pattern (M=3.254). The results may indicate that the participants had no idea about the use of *pretty*. Using *pretty* to describe a person's 'outer beauty' (e.g., *dress*) or a person's 'inner beauty' (e.g., *head*) might be unfamiliar to the participants. There were some possible reasons for the lower degree of acceptance of these sentences in '*pretty*-only' pattern. Firstly, it is possible that the noun collocates selected in the study might be rarely seen by the participants which might cause confusions. Secondly, the use of *pretty* presented in the questionnaires might be different from the participant's English language learning materials. For the beginners of English learning in Taiwan, most of the textbooks emphasize on how to

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describe people's appearance by a simple present tense with an adjective. The common sentence pattern usually puts the adjective on a predicative position, such as *he is* ***tall***, he is ***thin***, and *she is* ***pretty***. However, it seems that the teaching materials seldom put an emphasis on that adjectives may have different uses with different syntactic roles. Some adjectives can not only pre-modify a noun (i.e., in an attributive position) but they can also function as a subject complement or an object complement by following copular verbs (i.e., in a predicative position). Specifically, the two target words in this study—*pretty* and *charming* can take both attributive and predicative position. Overall, the unfamiliarity of co-occurrence of the adjectives and nouns and the gap between the learning materials and the language use may raise the difficulties for the participants to make judgments on *pretty* in the sentences.

4.2.2 The Source of beauty x Patterns Interaction

In this section, in order to explore the effect of 'source of beauty' and 'patterns' on the participant's judgements of the sentences in each group, a three-way ANOVA was performed. Again, as explained in the previous section (4.1.1), 'source of beauty' represents both 'inner' and 'outer' beauty; 'patterns' refers to the three patterns of collocates, namely, *pretty*-only, *charming*-only, and common. They are the controlled variables in the study.

The analysis of Group A. In order to examine Group A's preferences for describing person-related nouns, a 2 ('inner' and 'outer' beauty) x 3 ('patterns', namely *pretty*-only, *charming*-only, and common) mix-measured ANOVA was conducted. From the analysis, the main effects in all the two variables were non-significant ('source of beauty' $F(1,345) = 0.945$, $p=0.332$, and 'patterns' $F(2,345) = 2.004$, $p=0.136$). Whereas, an interaction effect between 'patterns' and 'source of beauty' was found significantly, $F(2,345) = 3.5$, $p< .05$, indicating that in terms of 'source of beauty', the Taiwanese EFL learners showed different preference for the three 'patterns' used to

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describe someone's attractiveness.

To interpret the interaction, it may be easier to understand by looking at the estimated marginal means of acceptability.

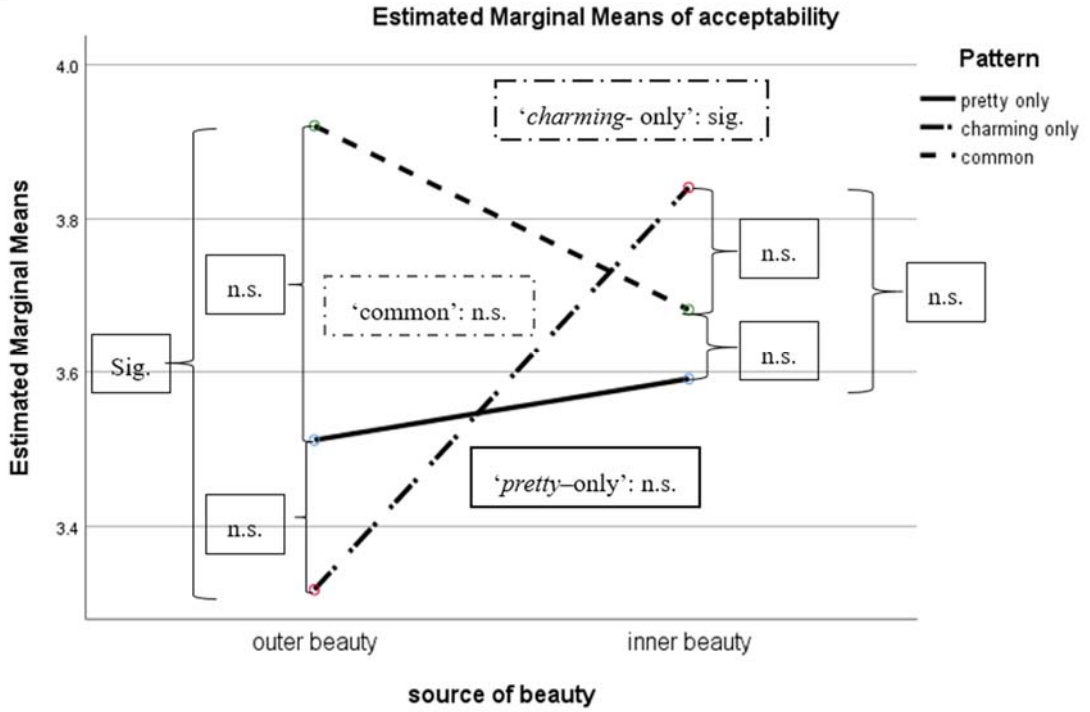

Figure 4-1 Group A's Estimated Marginal Means of Acceptability of Sentences Describing Person-Stimuli

From Figure 4-1, one could know that the effect of 'patterns' on the participant's acceptability of sentences was dependent on the 'source of beauty'. Under the '*pretty*-only pattern, the participants showed that using the adjective, *pretty*, to describe someone's outer beauty was highly acceptable (M=3.512, SD=0.169), but under the '*charming*-only' pattern, the effect was opposite, with the participants indicated the lowest degree of acceptability (M=3.318, SD=0.167) of the sentences using *charming* to describe someone's outer beauty. On the other hand, '*charming*-only pattern' (M=3.841, SD=0.167) was more acceptable than '*pretty*-only pattern' (M=3.591, SD=0.167) when they were used to describe someone's inner beauty.

However, the interaction effect did not indicate the differences between the six experimental conditions (i.e., 'source of beauty' x 'patterns' =2 x 3). We then

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conducted a one-way ANOVA analysis[3]to compare the six experimental conditions by using the Scheffé post hoc test.

The result of Scheffé post hoc comparison indicates that the significant 'source of beauty' x 'patterns' interaction was primarily due to the participants having a higher degree of acceptance when someone's 'inner beauty' was described by '*charming*-only' pattern. The result corresponded to our findings from the corpus analysis. Furthermore, the participants significantly tended to use both *pretty* and *charming* to describe a person's 'outer beauty' (i.e., *voice* in the 'common pattern'); whereas, the sentences depicting someone's 'outer beauty' under the '*charming*-only' pattern were significantly less acceptable. These results may suggest that Taiwanese EFL learners (i.e., Group A) had a significant tendency of using the adjective *charming t*o describe a person's inner beauty. However, they may be less familiar with the use of *charming* to describe a person's outer beauty. Moreover, when describing a person's outer beauty, the modified nouns which can co-occur with both *pretty* and *charming* were significantly strongly acceptable to the Taiwanese EFL learners.

The analysis of Group B. From the observations of the Group B's use of the adjectives, the interaction effect between 'patterns' and 'source of beauty' was not significant, $F(2,352) = 0.292$, $p=0.747$. In terms of the two main effects in the analysis, the 'source of beauty' was not significant ($F(1,352) =0.854$, $p=0.356$). However, different from Group A, the main effect of 'patterns' was significant, $F(2,352) =7.693$, $p<.01$, suggesting that the degree of acceptability of the descriptions of someone's attractiveness may be affected by the 'patterns' of collocates. By inquiring the estimated marginal means, one could see that the uses of '*charming*-only' pattern were

[3] As Ho (2006, p. 64) also suggested that in a factorial design, post hoc comparisons between the experimental conditions cannot be conducted directly. The only way to make post hoc comparison is through one-way ANOVA.

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

significantly more acceptable (M=3.622, SD=0.118) than those of the 'common' pattern (M=3.264, SD=0.084), and '*pretty*-only' pattern (M=2.967, SD=0.118). This indicates that the participants may be more familiar with the collocation use of '*charming*-only' pattern; that is, *charming smile* and *charming manner* shown in the questionnaires. As earlier mentioned, we assumed that this language performance may also be related to the learner's learning materials. It seems that most of the English teaching materials emphasize on describing a person's appearance (i.e., 'outer beauty') by adopting a simple present tense with a predicative adjective, such as *he is tall*. This common use may cause a misunderstanding that utilize a predicative adjective to describe someone's appearance is the most proper way of description.

4.2.3. The Source of Beauty x Patterns x Gender Interaction

To further find out whether the genders of participants may have an effect on the judgements on sentences describing someone's attractiveness, a mix-measured ANOVA was conducted. To be clearer, a 4 (the combinations of genders, namely [FemaleP x FemaleS], [FemaleP x MaleS], [MaleP x MaleS], and [MaleP x FemaleS]) x 2 ('source of beauty') x 3 ('patterns') ANOVA was performed. This analysis was different from the previous ones since we included 'the gender of participants' in the investigation and it was labelled as a monitor variable.

From a three-way ANOVA test, the interaction effect between 'source of beauty', 'patterns' and' gender' was not significant in either Group A or Group B (Group A: $F(6,327) = 1.069$, $p > .05$; Group B: $F(6,334) = 0.767$, $p > .05$). As the three-way interaction is not significant, it is legitimate to interpret the significant main effects (Ho, 2006, p. 83); that is , 'source of beauty', 'patterns', and the 'four combinations of gender' in the analysis. However, the results indicate that the main effects between the two groups were not significantly different except for the main effect of 'patterns' (i.e., *pretty*-only, *charming*-only, and common) which to be found significantly, $F(2,685) = 6.016$, $p < .05$.

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

The sentences in '*charming*-only' pattern was rated as the highest degree of acceptability (M=3.659, SD=0.124) than 'common' pattern (M=3.320, SD=0.088) and '*pretty*-only' pattern (M=2.963, SD=0.124). This showed the language use of all the participants seemed to be affected by the 'patterns' of collocates. They may be more likely to use *charming* to describe a person's attractiveness. While, the collocation use of '*pretty*-only' (i.e., *pretty head* and *pretty dress*) was less frequently used by them.

Based on the result, through the analysis, several interpretations can be attained. Firstly, the 'patterns' of collocates seemed to serve as a significant role in affecting the participant's judgements on acceptability of the sentences, in both Group A and Group B. The participants showed a higher degree of acceptability of sentences using collocates in *charming*-only to describe someone's attractiveness (e.g., *charming smile*, *charming manner*) than those in common pattern (e.g., *pretty traits, charming traits, pretty voice* and *charming voice*), and *pretty*-only pattern (e.g., *pretty head* and *pretty dress*). Secondly, the interaction effect of 'patterns' and 'source of beauty' was found significantly in Group A only, suggesting that the Taiwanese EFL learner's use of the two adjectives may have a similar tendency with the English native speakers as shown in the previous corpus results. They tended to describe someone's outer beauty by *pretty*; whereas, *charming* was more frequently used to describe someone's inner beauty (see Chapter 3, section 3.2.2). But this was not found in Group B. Thirdly, from deducing the three-way interaction for the monitor variable—'the gender of the participants and person's gender', the non-significant results suggested that the interaction effect between 'source of beauty', 'patterns', and 'the four combinations of genders' did not make significant differences between the participant's acceptability toward the sentences. That means that the judgments of all the participants were not significantly affected by the interaction effect. This may suggest that the participants with different genders didn't show significant different preferences of using both *pretty* and *charming*.

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Additionally, the varied tendencies of the two adjectives for describing 'inner' or 'outer beauty' may not be the primary consideration for the participant's judgments on the sentences.

In the following section, the participant's use of *pretty* and *charming* in sentences describing object-related nouns is demonstrated.

4.3 Results of the Object-Stimuli

After showing the data of the participant's acceptability of the person-stimuli, the next focus is to discuss the result of the object-stimuli. In this part of analysis, there are two types of controlled variables— 'source of beauty' (i.e., nature and artifact) and 'patterns' of collocates (*pretty*-only, *charming*-only, and common).

The Source of Beauty x Patterns Interaction

The analysis of Group A and B. When we included all the data of Group A and B, the interaction effect of 'source of beauty' x 'patterns' was significant, $F(2,703) = 5.400$, $p < .01$. From observing the estimated marginal means, one could know that the participants may have different ratings in terms of the three 'patterns' used to describe different 'sources of beauty', as demonstrated in Figure 4-3.

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

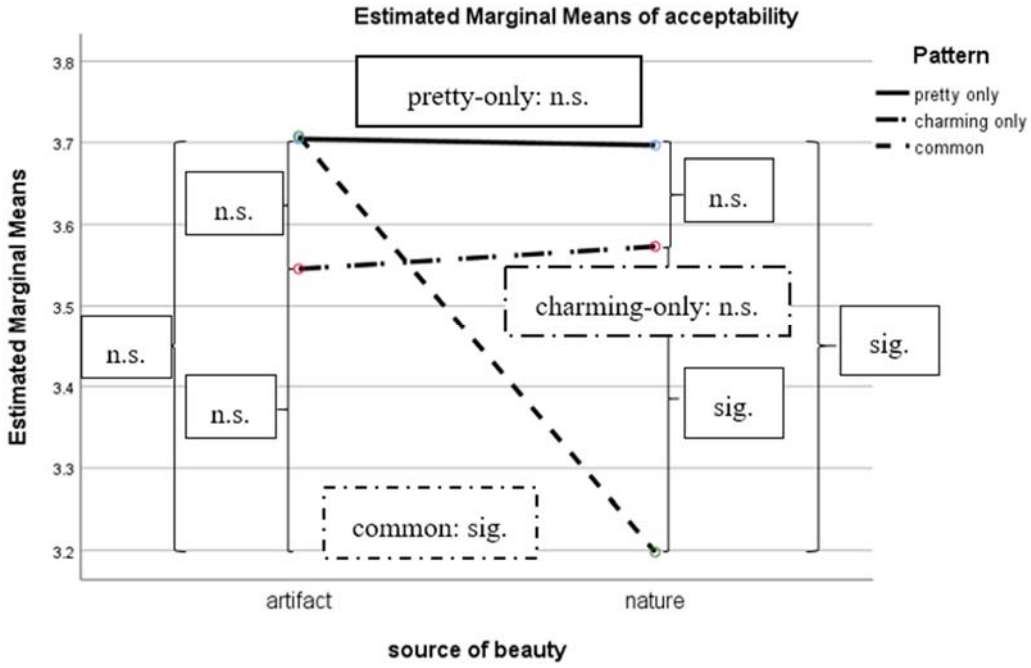

Figure 4-2 Overall Estimated Marginal Means of Acceptability of Sentences Describing Object-Stimuli

From Figure 4-2, it seemed that the participants showed that the object-related sentences within '*pretty*-only' pattern were highly acceptable when they were describing the beauty of 'nature' (M=3.697, SD=0.112) and the beauty of 'artifact' (M=3.705, SD=0.112). The mean score of these sentences was about 3.7. As for 'common' pattern, all the participants agreed that both the adjectives were highly acceptable (common pattern: M=3.708, SD=0.079) to describe the beauty of the 'artifact'—s*tory*; whereas, they showed that the sentences within 'common' pattern were the least acceptable sentences (M=3.198, SD=0.079) when they were depicting the beauty of 'nature'—*scenery*. This results may suggest that the participants agreed with that *pretty* and *charming* were interchangeable when the adjectives were used to describe something created by a person (i.e., 'artifact'). However, in terms of modifying the beauty of 'nature', the participants preferred to use *pretty* exclusively. They may be unfamiliar with the use of describing 'nature' in 'common' pattern.

To explore the differences of language use between Group A and Group B, in the

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

following parts, we analysis the two group separately.

The analysis of Group A. The two-way ANOVA was conducted and revealed that the main effects of 'source of beauty' and 'patterns' were not significant ('source of beauty': F (1,344) =1.290, p=0.257; 'patterns': (2,344) =1.500, p=0.225). However, there was a significant interaction effect between 'source of beauty' and 'patterns', F (2,344) =3.833, p<.05. By looking at the estimated marginal means, shown in Figure 4-4 some interpretations can be made.

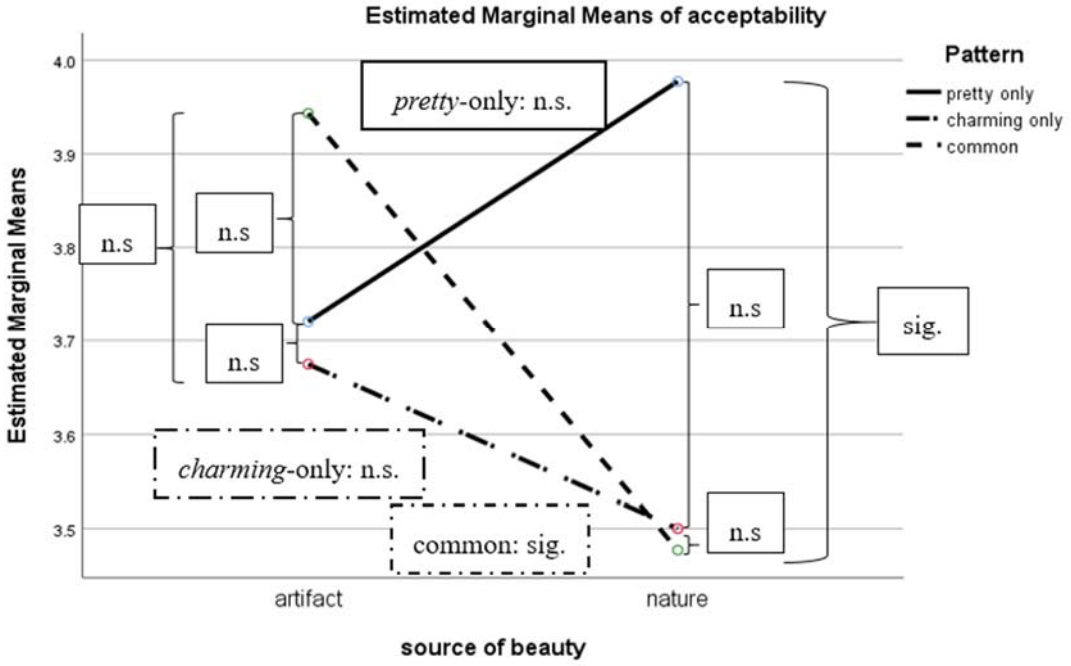

Figure 4-3 Group A's Estimated Marginal Means of Acceptability of Sentences Describing Object-Stimuli

Figure 4-3 suggested that the participants showed higher acceptability of sentences describing the beauty of 'nature' in '*pretty*-only' pattern (M=3.977, SD= 0.15) than those in '*charming*-only' pattern (M=3.500, SD=0.150), and in 'common' pattern (M=3.477, SD=0.106). This is the reverse of the person-stimuli. More specifically, in terms of describing the beauty of 'artifact', it seemed that the participants were more likely to use *pretty* (M=3.721, SD=0.152) to describe the attractiveness than *charming* (M=3.674, SD=0.152). Furthermore, among the three 'patterns', the 'common' pattern

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was regarded as the most acceptable pattern (M=3.943, SD=0.106) in describing the artifacts. The results were in line with the corpus analysis (see Chapter 3). Both *pretty* and *charming* were commonly used to describe something created by a person (i.e., 'artifact'). The beauty of 'artifact' was the most frequently type depicted by the two adjectives, accounting about 52% for *pretty* and 45% for *charming* shown in the COCA. The Taiwanese EFL learners (i.e., Group A) had a similar preference of describing 'artifact'. The sentences describing the 'artifact' in 'common pattern' were significantly more acceptable for the participants. However, in terms of describing the beauty of 'nature', sentences in 'common' pattern were the least acceptable for the participants. They showed significant preferences of using *pretty* to describe the beauty of 'nature' (i.e., *flower*). From the results, we may suggest that the Taiwanese EFL learners were familiar with the use of both the two adjectives to describe 'artifact'. Whereas, they seem to have a preference of describing the beauty of 'nature' by *pretty* exclusively.

The analysis of Group B. A two-way ANOVA was conducted and indicated that the significant 'source of beauty' x 'patterns' interaction ($F(2,353) = 3.945$, $p < .05$) was due to the participants' higher degree of acceptability of the sentences describing the beauty of 'artifact' in *pretty*-only pattern (M=3.689, SD=0.160) than in the other two patterns. Among the two 'sources of beauty', the participants showed higher degree of acceptability toward the sentences describing the beauty of 'nature' in *charming*-only pattern (M=3.644, SD=0.160) than in other two patterns. In general, the participants in Group A and Group B had the similar tendency of describing the object-related nouns in 'common' pattern. They agreed with that using both the adjectives to describe 'artifact' were acceptable; whereas they tended to describe 'nature' in *pretty*-only pattern. The results can be easier demonstrated in Figure 4-4.

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

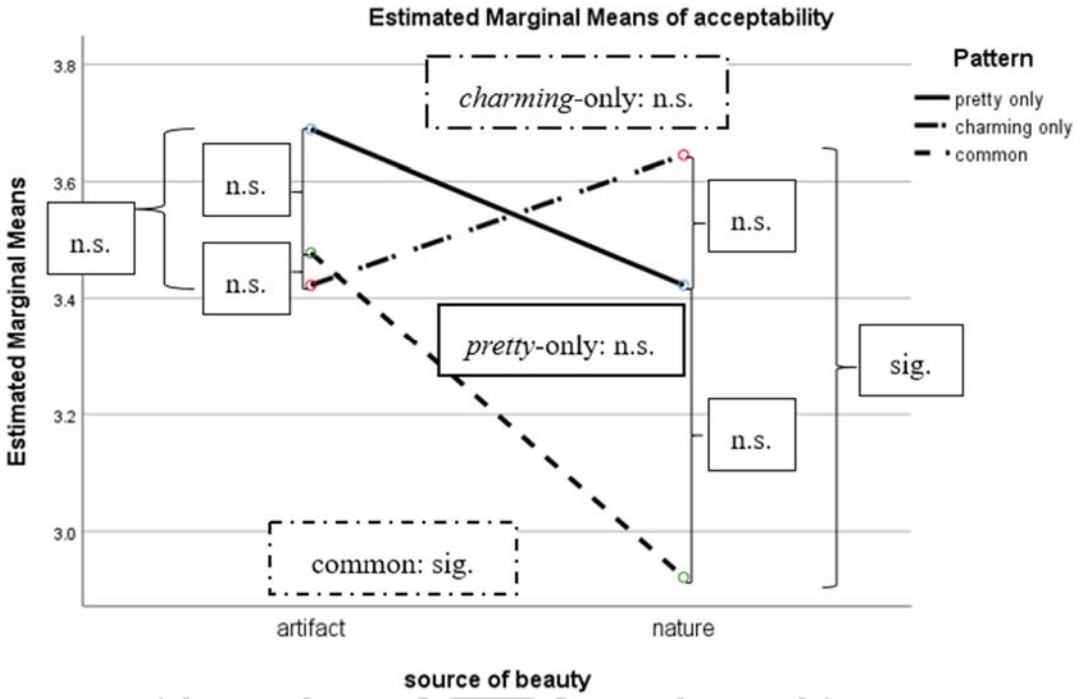

Figure 4-4 Group B's Estimated Marginal Means of Acceptability of Sentences Describing Object-Stimuli

In addition, the main effect of 'patterns' was found significantly in Group B, $F(2,353) = 4.641$, $p<.05$, suggesting that the participants may have different degrees of acceptability with regard to different patterns. Overall, from the analysis, the results showed that the object-related sentences within '*pretty*-only' pattern (M=3.556, SD=0.113) were rated higher than '*charming*-only' pattern (M=3.533, SD=0.113), and 'common' pattern (M=3.200, SD=0.080).

To summarize what we found from the analysis of sentences focused on the object-related nouns, some points can be addressed. Firstly, the interaction effect between 'source of beauty' and 'patterns' seemed to serve as a vital factor that influence the judgements of both participants in Group A and Group B. However, the interaction effect performed differently in each group. The participants had different degrees of acceptability of the sentences describing something's attractiveness in terms of the three 'patterns'. For describing the beauty of 'nature', sentences within *pretty*-only pattern (i.e., *pretty flower*) was rated as the most acceptable description among the three

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patterns in the Group A, while in the Group B, the participants showed that sentences within '*charming*-only' (i.e., *charming nature*) were the most acceptable sentence followed by '*pretty*-only' pattern and 'common' pattern. As for sentences depicting the beauty of 'artifact', the participants in Group A showed that *story* described by both *pretty* and *charming* (i.e., 'common pattern') were highly acceptable compared to the other two patterns. While, Group B had different opinions, they showed that sentences with '*pretty*-only' pattern (i.e., *pretty harbor*) was more acceptable. Secondly, both Group A and Group B had similar tendency of describing 'artifacts' in 'common pattern'. Overall, these results may suggest that the participants were not certain of the collocation use related to 'artifact' in both *pretty*-only and *charming*-only pattern. The two adjectives seemed to be regarded as an interchangeable pair of adjectives when describing 'artifacts'.

Thirdly, we found that, regarding the three 'patterns', sentences within '*pretty*-only' pattern were seen as the most acceptable when they were describing the beauty of 'nature'. The results corresponded to the results of corpus analysis in the thesis. From the corpus analysis, it indicates that 'nature' was the second most frequent type of semantic categories that modified by *pretty*, accounting about 14% of all the instances in the study (see Chapter 3, section 3.2). One possible explanation is that all the learners were already familiar with the collocation use of '*pretty*-only' used to modify 'nature'. However, the other two 'patterns' of collocates (i.e., '*charming*-only' and 'common' pattern) may be less commonly used by the participants to describe 'nature'. Clearly, the different semantic preferences of *pretty* and *charming* in describing object–related nouns could be further incorporated in the English language learning materials.

In the next chapter, the findings of both corpus analysis and the psycholinguistic judgement task would be discussed so as to solve the problems of distinguishing the similarities and differences between *pretty* and *charming* as well as clarifying the

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

factors that may affect the EFL learner's acceptability of the sentences. It is expected that we could bring some teaching suggestions for the future.

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DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

There are two main foci of the thesis: the issues of (a) how to distinguish the differences and similarities of the two synonymous adjectives—*pretty* and *charming*, and (b) how EFL learners acquire them. This chapter is divided into two sections. Firstly, we would like to give a summary of the major findings in this thesis in section 5.1. Then, in section 5.2, there will be some teaching suggestions for learning the set of near-synonyms—*pretty* and *charming*.

5.1 Major Findings in the Present Study

From the literature, the difficulty of the lexical choice between near-synonyms has been seen as one of the commonest language learning problems. Studies have tried to differentiate the differences between sets of near-synonyms through semantic roles of the words, collocational information, syntactic structure as well as their different performance in varied registers. Thus, in this thesis, we investigated all these information of the pair of near synonym—*pretty* and *charming* from the COCA. In order to explore the language learner's use of the two adjectives, a psycholinguistic judgment task was adopted in the study as well. Additionally, we focused on the relation between gender and language for the reason that language use may reflect one's social expectation or attitude toward different genders. Gender was used as a monitor variable in the psycholinguistic task to find out whether it would affect their language use. This integrated approach is different from those related studies because previous studies seemed to only focus on either the language use of native speakers or language learners. In this section, the major findings of the thesis will be summarized.

First, regarding the semantic analysis of *pretty* and *charming* from the corpus, the results showed that both the adjectives had a similar tendency to describe the

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attractiveness of a person or a thing. Both of them were more likely to describe person-related nouns compared to object-related nouns. The main differences between them were types of attractiveness they modified. For modifying a person, *pretty* tended to describe someone's outer beauty; whereas, *charming* in most cases indicated someone having an attractive character. In terms of modifying an object, *pretty* tended to depict something created by people (i.e., 'artifact'), such as *dress*, *table*, etc., followed by modifying the natural beauty ('nature'), such as *flower*, *tree*, etc. Whereas, *charming* was mainly used to describe the attractiveness of an 'artifact' and a 'place', accounting for about 79% of the total instances. Furthermore, the use of the two adjectives seemed to correspond to the social expectation of females. Females were more likely to be *pretty*; they were attractive in a delicate way (be slight, fragile, airy, and have beauty). Thus, from the semantic analysis of the pair of near-synonyms, we could know that the differences between *pretty* and *charming* could be identified from their preferences of describing varied types of attractiveness. Moreover, regarding the relation between the use of the two adjectives and gender, *pretty* tended to describe female's outer beauty; while, *charming* preferred to describe male's inner beauty.

Second, although from the semantic analysis, few instances were found that males were *pretty*. According to the collocational information of person-related nouns, *boy* and *boys* were strong collocates with *pretty*. The results indicated that not only the sex roles but also the age of the modified person may be related to the discourse functions of *pretty*. *Pretty* can be used to express both compliment and insult. For *charming woman* (*woman* was one of overlapped noun collocates of the two target words within the top 20), we found that *charming* can be used to describe the woman's attractiveness in both outer beauty and inner beauty. In terms of collocational analysis of object-related nouns, the results were in line with those in semantic analysis—*pretty* tended to describe outer beauty (e.g., *pretty* <u>*dress*</u>, *pretty* <u>*clothes*</u>); *charming* was apt to describe

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

inner beauty (e.g., *charming* book, *charming* town). Thus, from the collocational analysis, one could know that although the two adjectives had their own preferences to describe a particular gender of person (*pretty* for females; *charming* for males), they can be used to describe the two genders with both positive and negative discourse functions. In addition, since the two adjectives had a distinct preference for describing different sources of beauty (i.e., inner beauty and outer beauty), *pretty* tended to describe the outer beauty of a person or an object and *charming* preferred to describe the inner beauty, it seems that identifying the source of beauty of the modified nouns can be an effective way to differentiate the use of the two near-synonyms.

Third, from the investigation of the syntactic roles of the two adjectives, we found that both *pretty* and *charming* were more likely to appear in the attributive position. However, what makes them different was the syntactic position which they applied when describing different categories of modified nouns. When describing person-related nouns, *pretty* did not show its preferences of syntactic positions (about 49% for both attributive and predicative position); whereas, *charming* showed a slight tendency to appear in predicative position (accounting about 57%). On the other hand, when modifying object-related nouns, both *pretty* and *charming* more frequently took the attributive position (about 55% for *pretty* and 69% for *charming*) than the predicative position.

Fourth, among the five registers showed in the corpus, *pretty* and *charming* commonly appeared in the fictional register. Their use in the academy register was the least. From the analysis, we could know the two adjectives were more likely to show in informal registers.

Fifth, following the findings in the corpus, we intended to explore what factors might influence EFL learners' use of *pretty* and *charming* through a psycholinguistic judgment task. Three controlled variables were used to design the questionnaire; that is,

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(a) the 'gender' of a person who has the qualities being described in the sentences (b) 'patterns' of collocates (i.e., *pretty*-only, *charming*-only, and common), and (c) 'source of beauty' (i.e., inner beauty and outer beauty). In addition, the combinations of the participant's gender and person's gender were labelled as a monitor variable in the analysis. Some results of psycholinguistic judgement task were in line with the corpus analysis. Firstly, when describing person-stimuli, *charming* was used significantly more frequently in describing someone's inner beauty by the Taiwanese participants (i.e., Group A). Secondly, it seems that *pretty* and *charming* were regarded as interchangeable pair of adjectives to describe the attractiveness of 'artifact' by the participants in both Group A and Group B. The result was in agreement with corpus data since 'artifact' was the most commonly type of noun modified by the two target words. However, different from the corpus data, the combinations of genders were not a significant factor affecting the participant's acceptability of the sentences. The language learners did not show a tendency of using the two adjective to describe male or female exclusively.

From the results, some possible dilemma of learning the set of near-synonyms were found and these findings may bring some teaching suggestions for the future. Firstly, 'patterns' of collocates served as a significant factor affecting the participants' use of the two adjectives. The sentences within the '*pretty*-only' pattern were less acceptable for the most of the participants, with a mean score of 3.25. The results may suggest that the language learners in both Group A and Group B seemed to be uncertain about the use of collocates of *pretty*. Secondly, for describing the beauty of 'nature', the noun within 'common' pattern (i.e., *pretty scenery*, *charming scenery*) were less acceptable than the other two patterns. It appears that all the participants thought that *pretty* and *charming* were non-interchangeable in this context. Furthermore, the participants in Group A indicated that among the three patterns, *pretty* was the most

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suitable adjective to describe the beauty of 'nature'. However, the participants in Group B held a contrasting opinion—they thought that *charming* was the most appropriate word for describing 'nature'. The findings may show that the participants had different tendencies of using the two adjectives in terms of depicting the beauty of 'nature'. From these findings, some implications for pedagogical practices could be generated. In the next section, we will present one of possible ways of designing language learning task to provide learners with opportunities to notice the gap between their own language use and the target language.

5.2 Teaching Suggestions

Based on the results in the present study, we found that the language learners seem to be more unfamiliar with the collocational use of *pretty* and the different uses of *pretty* and *charming* in terms of describing the attractiveness of an object. One of possible ways to help the language learners to make a better lexical choice from this set of near-synonyms is to teach them to identify the main difference between the two adjectives—*pretty* tended to describe the outer beauty of a person or an object. The attractiveness of outer beauty was like a visual stimulus which makes you feel instantly pleased. While, *charming* was apt to describe the inner beauty which needs the language user to think and to experience the attractiveness. It may take more time to find out the attractiveness of inner beauty.

The following language learning task was adapted from one of tasks mentioned in the Keck and Kim's (2014, p. 114) *Pedagogical Grammar*. It is expected that the learning task can be used to raise the learners' awareness of subtle differences between *pretty* and *charming*. The aim of the task is to help them notice the differences between the pair of near-synonyms from identifying the sources of beauty of noun collocates.

To begin with the language task, each student will receive one worksheet. In the task, eight noun collocates of the two adjectives were selected from the top 20 R1 noun

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

collocates from the COCA (see Chapter 3, Table 3-12).

Table 5- 1 The Design of the Language Learning Task

Types of Stimuli	Sources of beauty	Patterns	Modified Nouns	Items
Person-stimuli	Outer beauty	*pretty*-only	*dresses*	(1)
			face	(2)
Person-stimuli	Inner beauty	*charming*-only	*accent*	(3)
			personality	(4)
Object-stimuli	Outer beauty	*pretty*-only	*flowers*	(5)
			pictures	(6)
Object-stimuli	Inner beauty	*charming*-only	*story*	(7)
			book	(8)

As demonstrated in Table 5-1, the eight noun collocates indicate the differences between *pretty* and *charming* in terms of their preferences of describing different sources of beauty. For *pretty*-only pattern, four noun collocates (i.e., *dresses*, *face*, *flowers*, and *pictures*) were selected as stimuli to indicate its preference of describing outer beauty. On the other hand, since the inner beauty was more likely to be described by *charming*, *accent*, *personality*, *story*, and *book* were chosen as the stimuli in the task. Illustrations of the stimuli were provided to assist the learners in making judgements. We searched the images of all the eight noun collocates describing by either *pretty* or *charming* on Google Images and all the illustrations can be 'free to use, share, or modify' as labelled on the search engine. In order to enhance the engagement of the learning task, the students are allowed to discuss with their group members to find out the inner beauty and outer beauty being described in the sentences. In addition, all the sentences are adapted from the COCA. The task is demonstrated as below.

Instructions:

Read each sentence below and discuss with your group members. Focus on the nouns described by either *pretty* or *charming*, whether it is an outer beauty (someone's

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or something's attractiveness can be immediately seen) or an inner beauty (someone's or something's attractiveness needs to take more time to experience or think.). Then, write down your answers, 'O' for outer beauty; 'I' for inner beauty, in the bracket.

(1)	( )		She thought that queens were beautiful and wore *pretty* dresses in all the fairy tales.
(2)	( )		He had muscles, flawless skin, and a *pretty* face too, with his perfect teeth.
(3)	( )		He is a friendly, 62-year-old man with a *charming* accent.
(4)	( )		He really has this *charming* personality bringing happiness to everyone.
(5)	( )		Every day I'd pick *pretty* flowers and put them in her room for her.
(6)	( )		You both had fun making *pretty* pictures with all the colors.
(7)	( )		This is a very *charming* story, and you're just going to love the adorable hero.
(8)	( )		This *charming* book that helps children see why manners are useful in our society.

However, there were some exceptions if we only differentiate *pretty* and *charming* by identifying the source of beauty of the modified noun. For examples, the nouns which can be collocated with the two adjectives (i.e., in the common pattern), *traits* and

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

voice, may be hard to make the lexical choice only based this rule. In addition, in terms of the instance of *charming* <u>*smile*</u>, *smile* seems to be a physical appearance which can catch someone's eyes instantly. It should be a person's outer beauty. In these circumstances, the rule of making the lexical choice of the two adjectives based on the modified noun's source of beauty may be violated. What we want to emphasize here is that the rule is not definite but general. However, it could be used for language learning and teaching of the set of near-synonyms—*pretty* and *charming*. To further solve the problems, teachers can help learners gain access to a number of data, which can be retrieved from the corpus based on the frequency of the words or collocational information. Providing learners with opportunities to observe and analyze the language data may allow them to notice the different language use between themselves and the native speakers. In turn, it can help learners to modify their output to be more close to the target language norms (Keck & Kim's 2014, p. 106).

In Chapter 6, the main findings of the thesis will be summarized. Limitations of this study and suggestions for future study will also be addressed.

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CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This chapter, we will firstly summarize the whole thesis in section 6.1. Section 6.2 will discuss the limitations found in the corpus analysis and psycholinguistic judgement task. Suggestions for future related study will also be addressed.

6.1 Overall Summary

Through the whole thesis, in Chapter One, the background and motivation of the study were addressed, including the difficulties of differentiating sets of near-synonyms. Due to the subtle differences between them, the learning difficulty of making lexical choices was the focus of the thesis as well. In Chapter Two, some previous studies related to near-synonyms were reviewed. The prior studies investigated near-synonyms from corpus data, focusing on different linguistic aspects such as semantic, collocation, syntax, and register. Aside from investigating the differences from the linguistic aspect, some research also focus on the effect of aspects of society, suggesting that the language use can reflect one's attitude. In order to know the language use of learners, some studies adopted psycholinguistic judgement tasks to attain the goal. Based on these studies, this thesis attempted to conduct an integrated approach, including both corpus analysis and a psycholinguistic experiment, to identify the difficulties of learning a set of near-synonyms.

For the choice of a set of near-synonyms, we focused on the adjective form of *pretty* and *charming*. Both the two adjectives can be used to describe an attractiveness of a person or an object. In Chapter Three of corpus analysis, we firstly introduced the methodology of analyzing *pretty* and *charming* through the corpus data (i.e., COCA). In the semantic analysis, the data were identified based on the categories established by the word senses found in the dictionary and the results of most frequently appearing

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

nouns modified by the two target words. From this analysis, we may observe that the semantic preferences of *pretty* and *charming* were more similar where the top one category of object-related modified nouns was 'artifact' (i.e., something created by people). Whereas, what makes them different was the gender of the person described in the sentences and the source of beauty of the modified noun. To be more specific, females' attractiveness tended to be modified by *pretty*; whereas, males' attractiveness was apt to be described by *charming*. Furthermore, *pretty* preferred to describe an attractiveness which can be seen instantly (i.e., outer beauty). While, *charming* tended to depict an inner beauty which takes times to experience or to think.

From the sub-classification of adjectives, *pretty* and *charming* had similar behaviors on the syntactic position and registers provided by the corpus. Both the two adjectives tended to show in informal registers and they were more commonly used in the attributive position. However, the corpus analysis may not directly explain language learner's difficulties of using the two adjectives. In Chapter Four, a psycholinguistic judgment task was conducted to explore the effect of 'source of beauty', 'patterns' of collocates (i.e., *pretty*-only, *charming*-only, and common), as well as the combinations of 'gender'. Based on the findings, one could know that the 'patterns' had a significant effect on the degree of acceptability of the participants. They were more unfamiliar with the collocational use of *pretty*-only pattern as well as the lexical choices between the two adjectives when describing the beauty of nature. Thus, in Chapter Five, we interpreted how *pretty* and *charming* were used by the native English speakers so as to distinguish the differences between the set of near-synonyms. The main difficulty of acquiring the two adjectives were identified from the psycholinguistic judgment task. Based on these information, we provide one of possible ways to teach learners to differentiate *pretty* and *charming* through observing the source of beauty of modified nouns. In the following section, limitations and suggestions for future related studies

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

will be discussed.

6.2 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Studies

In this thesis, an integrated approach including both corpus analysis and a psycholinguistic judgement task was adopted. However, some limitations exist in these two approaches and they will be discussed in this section for improving the designs of research methods in related studies in the future.

First, for the scope of corpus analysis, we only focused on the adjective form of *pretty* and *charming*. Within the set of near-synonyms, the adjectives can be used to describe an attractiveness of a person or a thing. However, we expect that future studies can broaden the research scope within other adjectives, such as *lovely*, *beautiful*, and *nice*. The comparison between these adjectives may provide a whole picture of this group of near-synonyms.

Second, as for the different behaviors of the two adjectives shown in the corpus data, we focused on several aspects to explore their differences, such as semantic, collocation, syntactic role, and register. In the thesis, we also found some instances showing that both adjectives had both positive and negative meanings. However, some aspects could be further investigated to demonstrate the discourse functions of the target words. For future studies, the researchers could investigate the adjectives from metaphors or meaning extensions.

Third, concerning the design of psycholinguistic judgment task, the collocates within three 'patterns' (i.e., *pretty*-only, *charming*-only, and common) were taken from the Sketch Engine. It provides the information about the grammatical behavior of the two lemmas and shows what patterns they share or are more typical of. However, the information provided by Sketch Engine was derived from the British National Corpus (BNC), which mainly represent British English. There may be some subtle different preferences in collocational use between British English and American English since

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

the COCA was adopted as the source data in this thesis, which mainly focused on American English. In future studies, a further comparison of collocational use between British and American English could be undertaken before the design of the psycholinguistic judgement task.

Fourth, with respect to the psycholinguistic judgement task, the number of female and male participants in the study was unequal because of the difficulties of finding participants for the research. One of possible reasons of the imbalanced gender ratio in the study was related to the participant's major subject. Most of the participants majoring in either Education or English and were females. In this circumstance, it may be hard to explore whether different genders would have different preferences in using *pretty* and *charming*. In future studies, online survey may serve as a tool to gather data automatically and reduce the difficulties of accessing individuals. The participants can complete the task at any time and place. Although online survey was convenient to conduct research, we should be aware of some disadvantages as well.

In sum, the thesis presented a corpus-based research method with quantitative approach to identify the differences between the two near-synonymous adjectives—*pretty* and *charming*. This approach has proposed a clearer description of the two adjectives' preferences for types of modified nouns, syntactic position along with registers. The language use of learners has also been discussed so as to find out their difficulties of acquisition and provide some pedagogical implications for learning near-synonymous adjectives. Based on the work of this thesis, the results could be utilized to further investigating other sets of near-synonymous adjectives. The limitations could provide some suggestions for the design of methods for future study. In addition, some insights into designs of language learning materials and the ways of teaching can be offered by the thesis.

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

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APPENDIX ONE

Questionnaire A

Dear participant:

I am a graduate student majoring in TESOL program at National Chengchi University. The aim of this questionnaire is to understand your uses of English. This is not a language test and it has nothing to do with your grades and scores. Please answer the following questions as honestly as possible. The collected data will be used only for academic analysis. Thank you very much.

Department of English National Chengchi University

Advisor: Dr. Siaw-Fong Chung

Student: Ya-Lan Yu

Part A: Background Information

1. English Name: ( )	2. Gender: ☐Male ☐Female
3. Nationality: ( )	4. Native language: ( )

Part B:

Instruction: There are sixteen questions in total. Please read each sentence carefully and circle the acceptability rating of each sentence. 1 means a sentence is 'totally unacceptable' to you and 5 means it is 'perfectly acceptable' to you.

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Questions	Totally Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Neutral	Perfectly acceptable	Perfectly acceptable
(1) Sandy couldn't deny she had been attracted to his charming smile.	1	2	3	4	5
(2) Let yourself be attracted by the charming nature and extraordinary landscapes.	1	2	3	4	5
(3) It's his extreme good fortune that he can use his charming voice to earn a living.	1	2	3	4	5
(4) We took the railway for a closer view of the pretty harbor.	1	2	3	4	5
(5) The charming inn incorporates the natural beauty of Canada through its architecture.	1	2	3	4	5
(6) She has a charming manner and she always likes to make jokes about herself.	1	2	3	4	5
(7) She imagined that waking up to the charming scenery of the beach.	1	2	3	4	5
(8) It is a pretty story about the country life of a girl with a cat.	1	2	3	4	5
(9) She likes to make pretty flower arrangements with lots of colors.	1	2	3	4	5
(10) I like the idea of you shooting the pretty scenery of beach.	1	2	3	4	5
(11) That was another of his charming traits. He was never to blame for anything.	1	2	3	4	5
(12) She is using that pretty head of her to calculate which product is better.	1	2	3	4	5
(13) She always uses that pretty voice to say ‘Good morning’ to everyone.	1	2	3	4	5
(14) This charming story is drawn from the true adventures of the author.	1	2	3	4	5
(15) This woman has many pretty traits. She was willing to admit her mistakes.	1	2	3	4	5
(16) John sat there imagining all the pretty clothes he would have when he went to the party.	1	2	3	4	5

The end of the questionnaire. Thank you very much!

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APPENDIX TWO

Questionnaire B

Dear participant:

I am a graduate student majoring in TESOL program at National Chengchi University. The aim of this questionnaire is to understand your uses of English. This is not a language test and it has nothing to do with your grades and scores. Please answer the following questions as honestly as possible. The collected data will be used only for academic analysis. Thank you very much.

Department of English, National Chengchi University

Advisor: Dr. Siaw-Fong Chung

Student: Ya-Lan Yu

Part A: Background Information

1. English Name: ( )	2. Gender: ☐Male ☐Female
3. Nationality: ( )	4. Native language: ( )

Part B:

Instruction: There are sixteen questions in total. Please read each sentence carefully and circle the acceptability rating of each sentence. 1 means a sentence is 'totally unacceptable' to you and 5 means it is 'perfectly acceptable' to you.

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900111

Questions	Totally Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Neutral	Perfectly acceptable	Perfectly acceptable
(1) She lowered her window and gave the man her most charming smile.	1	2	3	4	5
(2) He has a charming manner and he always likes to make jokes about himself.	1	2	3	4	5
(3) It is a pretty story about the country life of a girl with a cat.	1	2	3	4	5
(4) This charming story is drawn from the true adventures of the author.	1	2	3	4	5
(5) She likes to make pretty flower arrangements with lots of colors.	1	2	3	4	5
(6) That was another of her charming traits. She was never to blame for anything.	1	2	3	4	5
(7) I like the idea of you shooting the pretty scenery of beach.	1	2	3	4	5
(8) Judy sat there imaging all the pretty clothes she would have when she went to the party.	1	2	3	4	5
(9) This man has many pretty traits. He was willing to admit his mistakes.	1	2	3	4	5
(10) He always uses that pretty voice to say ‘Good morning’ to everyone.	1	2	3	4	5
(11) Let yourself be attracted by the charming nature and extraordinary landscapes.	1	2	3	4	5
(12) It's her extreme good fortune that she can use her charming voice to earn a living.	1	2	3	4	5
(13) We took the railway for a closer view of the pretty harbor.	1	2	3	4	5
(14) The charming inn incorporates the natural beauty of Canada through its architecture.	1	2	3	4	5
(15) She imagined that waking up to the charming scenery of the beach.	1	2	3	4	5
(16) He is using that pretty head of his to calculate which product is better.	1	2	3	4	5

The end of the questionnaire. Thank you very much!

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