

## **A Corpus Based Analysis of Adjectives *Adorable, Charming, and Cute* in *Corpus Contemporary American English (COCA)***

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### **Abstract**

In order to avoid misunderstanding in the process of communication, knowing well the meaning of a word is important. Especially, when the two or three words share similar meaning and often used interchangeably in the sentences such as the adjectives word; *adorable, charming, and cute*. Therefore, this study aimed to find and to analyse the collocative meaning of the three adjectives. In this study, the data were collected from Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) by applying the documentation method with the note-taking technique. This study used a corpus-based analysis, with the help of the theory of collocative meaning and supported theory of lexical collocation were applied. The result showed that the collocative meaning of the three adjectives share similar meanings which collocated with the word attractive. Moreover, the three adjectives were most likely to co-occur with nouns such as; baby, guy, boys, and etc. The three adjectives were also commonly paired up with adverbs such as; quite, so, always and etc.

**Keywords:** collocation, collocative meaning, corpus, *COCA*

### **Abstrak**

Untuk menghindari kesalahpahaman dalam proses komunikasi, penting untuk mengetahui arti kata dengan baik terutama ketika dua atau tiga kata memiliki arti yang sama dan sering digunakan secara bergantian dalam kalimat seperti kata sifat; *adorable, charming, dan cute*. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menemukan dan menganalisis makna kolokatif dari ketiga kata sifat tersebut. Dalam penelitian ini, data dikumpulkan dari *Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)* dengan menggunakan metode dokumentasi dengan teknik mencatat. Penelitian ini menggunakan analisis berbasis korpus, dengan bantuan teori makna kolokatif, dan didukung teori kolokasi leksikal. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa makna kolokatif dari ketiga adjektiva tersebut memiliki kesamaan makna yang dikolokasikan dengan kata *attractive*. Selain itu, ketiga kata sifat tersebut sering muncul bersamaan dengan kata benda seperti; *baby, guy, boys* dan lainnya. Ketiga kata sifat itu juga biasanya dipasangkan dengan kata keterangan seperti; *quite, so, always* dan lain-lain.

**Kata Kunci:** kolokasi, makna kolokatif, korpus, *COCA*

### **Introduction**

Word is a unit of language which consists of one or more spoken sounds that function as a principal carrier of meaning. In order to avoid misunderstanding in the process of communication, knowing well the meaning of a word is important. The study that is concerned with word meanings is called semantic. Semantics is oriented to examining the meaning of signs and the study of relations between different linguistic units and compounds, such as synonyms. Synonyms are two or more forms, with very closely related meanings, which are often, but not always intersubstitutable in sentences (Yule, 1985). In this case, collocation occurs when the use of synonyms may not be absolutely interchangeable. According to Larson

(1984: 155), collocation is concerned with how words go together. However, a pair of words may not be completely incorrect, and people will understand what they mean, but they may not be natural, because sometimes some words are only suitable for specific situations.

Corpus linguistics was used because it is capable of helping people to make it easier to learn and understand the collocation. In corpus linguistics, the concordance line is the list of each occurrence word in a text of corpus which is presented with the words surrounding it. Reading concordances may give a vision of words meaning in their context of occurrence in the text, allows the reader to see the meaning of its word in the text, and guides to see how each meaning is created in

the particular case. In doing so, it is vital to comprehend its type of word class that follows after or before the word in question, so that the word that comes in the term of collocation can be determined.

Therefore, a specific topic is chosen in this study, a corpus-based study between English adjective word *adorable* and its synonyms; *charming* and *cute*. This study is chosen to be conducted in order to help the readers avoid the misunderstanding about the meaning of a word, especially the collocative meaning of adjectives *adorable*, *charming*, and *cute*.

## Method

This research is a corpus-based study in which the data was collected from COCA in the form of sentences that using the English adjectives *adorable*, *charming*, and *cute*. The data was taken from The Corpus of Contemporary American English on (<https://www.english-corpora.org/coca/>). The Corpus COCA was created in 2008 by Mark Davies, Professor of Corpus Linguistics at Brigham Young University. This data source was chosen because Corpus COCA is one of the largest currently available corpora and is the only publicly available corpus of American English. In corpus, there are more than one billion words of text (20 million words each year from 1990 until 2019) from eight genres, including spoken, fiction, popular magazines, newspapers, academic texts, and in March 2020, the COCA update and add TV and Movies subtitles, blogs, and other web pages to their genres.

The data was collected through the documentation method by accessing COCA on (<https://www.english-corpora.org/coca/>). The technique used in collecting data is the note-taking technique, where the data obtained were noted, highlighted and printed, before then being sorted up into a table. Key Word in Context (KWIC) featured was used in this study to find the distribution of the English adjectives *adorable*, *charming*, and *cute*. Further, find out the collocated words in each concordance lines. Therefore, by applying the theory of collocative meaning (Leech, 1974), the meaning of each collocated words will also be presented.

This study is a corpus-based analysis, therefore it applied qualitative methods in analyzing data. The qualitative method is used to explain the data descriptively. There are two steps applied to analyse the data in this study. The first

step finding out collocate words in concordance lines by looking at the (adjective + noun) and (adv + adjective) types based on the supporting theory about lexical collocation purposed by Benson et.al (1986). The second step is to examine the meaning of each collocated words found by applying the theory of collocative meaning by Leech (1974).

This study used an informal method in presenting the data. the informal method was used to present the analysis of the distribution and the collocative meaning descriptively.

## Result And Discussion

This section showed the analysis of the collocative meaning of the English adjective *adorable*, *charming*, and *cute* that is found in COCA. The analysis focuses on the (adjective + noun) and (adverb + adjective) collocation of the three adjectives.

- [1] We've got 3 boys! Congrats on your ***adorable baby*** Henry! [COCA, BLOG:...lthytippingpoint.com]

The application of collocative meaning was found in the data above. The phrase *adorable baby* occurs in the environment because of the usual co-occurrence with certain types, adjective + noun. Thus, it has the meaning when the adjective *adorable* going together with the noun *baby*. This kind of meaning is used to describe words that regularly appear together in common use. Hence, the collocated words mean "an expression to describe a new born who is lovely and worthy of being adored."

- [2] You're ***always adorable*** Andy. [COCA, FIC: Analog]

The phrase *always adorable* occurs in the environment because of the usual co-occurrence with certain types, adverb + adjective. Thus, it has the meaning when the adverb *always* going together with the adjective *adorable*. This kind of meaning is used to describe words that regularly appear together in common use. Hence, the collocated words have the meaning of "someone who looks attractive all the time"

- [3] I met this ***charming guy*** yesterday. [COCA, TV: The Mindy Project]

The collocative meaning appears in the data above. The phrase above is included as collocative meaning because the adjective *charming* is followed by the noun *guy* and it conveys a meaning. The phrase *charming guy* occurs in the environment according to adjective + noun types. This type of meaning brings the function of collocative meaning for describing words that commonly appear together. Hence, *charming guy* means “a male who has a pleasant and attractive characteristic.”

[4] “...she says, you were **quite charming** and hilarious.” [COCA, FIC: Arkansas Rev]

The collocative meaning appears in the data above. The phrase above is included as collocative meaning because the adverb *quite* is followed by the adjective *charming* and it conveys a meaning. The phrase *quite charming* occurs in the environment according to adverb + adjective type. This type of meaning brings the function of collocative meaning for describing words that commonly appear together. Thus, the collocated words mean “someone who has a fairly pleasant characteristic.”

[5] There are those **cute boys** again. [COCA, MOV: The Dukes of Hazzard]

The collocative meaning appears in the data above. The phrase above is included as collocative meaning because the adjective *cute* is followed by the noun *boys* and it conveys a meaning. The phrase *cute boys occur* in the environment according to adjective + noun types. This type of meaning brings the function of collocative meaning for describing words that commonly appear together. Hence, the collocated words mean “a male child who has a pleasing appearance and very attractive.”

[6] They're **so cute** at this age, aren't they? [COCA, MOV: Life with Mikey]

The application of collocative meaning was found in the data above. The phrase *so cute* occurs in the environment because of the usual co-occurrence with certain types, adverb + adjective. Therefore, it has the meaning when the adverb *so* going together with the adjective *cute*. This kind of meaning is used to describe words that regularly appear together in common use. Thus, the collocated word has the meaning of “someone who is extremely attractive.”

## Conclusion

This study illustrated that the collocative meaning in the three adjectives, the three adjectives share similar meanings which collocated with the word attractive. The adjective *adorable*, *charming*, and *cute* indicates that these adjectives are commonly used when people want to describe the attractiveness of something. The collocative meaning of these adjectives is also considered by their usages in the sentences.

The adjective *adorable* is usually used to describe someone or something that has characteristics or appearances that are attractive and likable for others. Meanwhile, the adjective *charming* seems to have a deeper degree of attractiveness compared with the adjective *adorable* and is likely used to portray someone or something that brings joy and delight towards others who sees them. Further, the adjective *cute* is generally used to describe the attractiveness of the lovely and funny traits of a person or thing that makes another person overwhelmed with joy. Based on the data found, the three adjectives *adorable*, *charming*, and *cute* have some nouns that co-occurs such as: baby, guy, boys, and etc. The three adjectives were also commonly paired up with adverbs such as; quite, so, always and etc. Thus, it indicates the three adjectives share similar meanings and can be used interchangeably in some particular context.

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