



## Distinguishing synonymous adjectives – *Calm, Peaceful, Silent, and Quiet*

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### Article Info

#### Article history:

Received 14 December 2023

Revised 3 April 2024

Accepted 23 April 2024

Available online 27 June 2025

#### Keywords:

componential analysis,  
Corpus-based analysis,  
near-synonyms

### Abstract

Synonyms are regarded as important elements to enhance students' lexical ability. In the present study, specific synonymous adjectives—*calm*, *peaceful*, *silent*, and *quiet*—were explored by using corpus-based analysis and componential analysis. The results suggest that these four synonymous adjectives are near-synonyms since they cannot be used interchangeably in all contexts. In terms of formality, *silent* and *peaceful* are quite formal, while *calm* is quite informal. However, the adjective *quiet* can be both formal and informal. Semantic preference and semantic prosody also yield differences in the collocates used with the four adjectives. In the componential analysis, there are some shared components and individual components for the meanings of the four adjectives, which signify the characteristics of near-synonyms. The semantic components that can be shared with all four adjectives are health, body condition, sound or voice, strangeness, and movement. The semantic components that can be shared the least are entertainment, relationships, changes, food and beverages, pride, number or population, money or currency, and humans.

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### Introduction

Vocabulary teaching and learning are important components of ELT (Hemchua & Schmitt, 2006 as cited in Sangseekaew, 2023). In either deliberate or incidental vocabulary learning, synonyms always play an important role. Learners who know more vocabulary typically have better language skills, can produce more meaningful sentences, and have more word choices to select based on particular situations. Although synonyms

offer the opportunity for learners to be able to use more suitable words in different contexts, synonyms can be confusing if the learner does not master those synonyms (Rozakis, 2011). In hotel contexts, adjectives such as *calm*, *peaceful*, *silent*, and *quiet* are seen frequently to express the state of being quiet, especially to modify the places or situations. The adjectives appear in adverts and leaflets in the hotel context. Take the examples below from hotel leaflets.

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*“In the heart of historic and commercial Montbauron, Mercure Versailles Château ensures a calm stay in a charming hotel. With 60 rooms fully renovated in 2020, our hotel still has a family feel”*

(Accor Live Limitless, 2019).

*“If you’re looking for a peaceful place to rest your head, after a day of exploring Edinburgh’s many attractions, book a stay with us at Parliament House Hotel”*

(Parliament House Hotel Edinburgh, n.d.).

*“A silent disco 13 stories in the sky with stunning views of St Louis’ best views! Ticket includes dual-channel silent disco headphones where you can choose between Top 40 and throwback RandB at your leisure, with tunes being spun by DJ Sinamin, Justin Michael, and DJ Ashton Marton”*

(Angad Arts Hotel, 2023).

*“All our guest rooms feature double glazing with either a street or a garden view. For those who wish to book a quiet hotel room with a garden view, just choose one of our Superior Rooms and add as a comment that you wish to have a garden view, during your booking procedure”*

(Hotel Jardin de Villers, n.d.).

From the above examples, these four synonymous adjectives certainly appear in the hotel context and are used to express the feeling of a quiet place. Students who learn English for hotel business at one university in Bangkok often find these four adjectives in the leaflets or hotel textbooks. However, it can often be difficult for students who do not have sufficient vocabulary to differentiate the use of them. Moreover, these four adjectives appear in the first 3,000 words in BNC/COCA lists, which indicate that they are found frequently in the general context as well. Therefore, finding out how these four adjectives are used is essential for students, especially students who study English for hotel business or English for hospitalities and would like to master vocabulary in general.

Synonyms can be distinguished in several ways, such as corpus-based analysis by looking at the degree of formality, collocation, semantic preference, semantic prosody, and grammatical pattern. However, componential analysis combined with corpus-based analysis has rarely been used to distinguish the synonyms. In this regard,

this research aims to signify the similarities and differences of the synonymous adjectives *calm*, *peaceful*, *silent*, and *quiet* by using corpus-based analysis and componential analysis.

Research question: What are the similarities and differences of the synonymous adjectives *calm*, *peaceful*, *silent*, and *quiet* after exploring the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) in terms of degree of formality, collocations, and semantic features?

This study can yield insightful information of either the similarities or differences of the synonymous words. Corpus-based analysis can provide useful information to signify the similarities or the differences of the synonymous words. Relying solely on answers from dictionaries is not adequate to differentiate the synonymous words, so corpus-based analysis can be useful to provide more information with bigger datasets.

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## Literature Review

### *Dictionaries*

When exploring the meaning of an unknown word, dictionaries are always the first source to be consulted since dictionaries offer the meaning of the words together with thesaurus and word families. They provide related and synonymous word choices. However, consulting solely dictionaries is not adequate to indicate whether synonymous words are similar or different. It is difficult for learners to distinguish the target synonyms with the help of dictionaries only because under the synonymous word choices, there are some conditions related to lexis and grammar which could be obstacles for learners in choosing.

Table 1 below presents the meanings of the target synonymous adjectives from three dictionaries, namely, Oxford Learners dictionary (Oxford University Press, n.d.), Macmillan Dictionary (Macmillan Education, n.d.), and Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (Longman, n.d.).

**Table 1** Dictionary results

Words	Oxford Learners dictionary	Macmillan Dictionary	Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English
Calm	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. not excited, nervous, or upset</li> <li>2. (of the sea) without large waves</li> <li>3. (of the weather) without wind</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. not affected by strong emotions such as excitement, anger, shock, or fear</li> <li>2. calm water does not move very much</li> <li>3. if the weather is calm, there is very little wind</li> <li>4. peaceful and not affected by violence, fighting, or excited activity</li> <li>5. used by young people to mean “lovely” or “fine”</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. relaxed and quiet, not angry, nervous, or upset</li> <li>2. if a place, period, or situation is calm, there is less activity, trouble etc. than there sometimes is, or than there has been recently</li> <li>3. a sea, lake etc. that is calm is smooth or has only gentle waves</li> </ol>
Peaceful	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. not involving a war, violence or argument</li> <li>2. quiet and calm; not worried or upset in any way</li> <li>3. trying to create peace or to live in peace; not liking violence or argument</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. not involving war or violence <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1a) not willing to take part in war or violence</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. calm and quiet</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. a peaceful time, place, or situation is quiet and calm without any worry or excitement</li> <li>2. not involving war, fighting, or violence</li> <li>3. peaceful people do not like violence and do not behave in a violent way</li> </ol>
Silent	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. where there is little or no sound; making little or no sound</li> <li>2. (of a person) not speaking</li> <li>3. [only before noun] not expressed with words or sound</li> <li>4. (of a letter in a word) written but not pronounced</li> <li>5. [only before noun] (of old films) with pictures but no sound</li> <li>6. [only before noun] not talking very much</li> <li>7. silent (on/about something) not giving information about something; refusing to speak about something</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. a silent person or group of people does not talk, laugh, or make any noise <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1a) used about a person who does not usually talk to other people very much</li> <li>1b) refusing to provide information or to talk about something</li> <li>1c) a silent action or activity is done without talking or making any sounds</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. a silent place is very quiet</li> <li>3. if something such as a disease or problem is silent, there are no noticeable signs that it exists</li> <li>4. a silent letter is a letter in a word that has no sound when you say the word but that must be used when the word is spelled or written</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. not speaking <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1a) not saying anything</li> <li>1b) [only before noun] not talking much to other people</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. not communicating -&gt; failing or refusing to talk about something or express an opinion silent on/about</li> <li>3. quiet -&gt; without any sound, or not making any sound</li> <li>4. films [only before noun] a silent film has pictures but no sound</li> <li>5. letter a silent letter in a word is not pronounced</li> </ol>
Quiet	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. making very little noise</li> <li>2. without many people or much noise or activity</li> <li>3. peaceful; without being interrupted</li> <li>4. (of a person) tending not to talk very much</li> <li>5. (of a feeling or an attitude) definite but not expressed in an obvious way</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. making very little or no noise <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1a) used about people who are not talking or who do not usually talk much</li> <li>1b) used about places in which there is little noise</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. if a place is quiet, it is not very busy <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2a) if a situation or period of time is quiet, there is very little activity happening at the time</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. used about feelings that someone has but does not show or talk about</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. not making much noise, or making no noise at all</li> <li>2. not speaking <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2a) not saying much or not saying anything</li> <li>2b) someone who is quiet does not usually talk very much</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. be quiet</li> <li>4. a quiet place has no noise or not much noise</li> <li>5. without much activity or many people</li> <li>6. (business) if business is quiet, there are not many customers</li> </ol>

The meanings from the three dictionaries above show that *calm*, *peaceful*, *silent*, and *quiet* share some core meanings of making less noise or sound. Many of them suggest the meaning of each other. For example,

the Macmillan Dictionary suggests the meaning of the word *calm* as ‘*peaceful and not affected by violence, fighting, or excited activity*’, while the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English suggests one meaning of *calm* as

'relaxed and quiet, not angry, nervous, or upset'. For the word *peaceful*, the Oxford Learner Dictionary provides one meaning as 'quiet and calm; not worried or upset in any way', and the Macmillan Dictionary suggests one meaning of the word *peaceful* as 'calm and quiet'. For the word *quiet*, the Oxford Learner Dictionary suggests one meaning as 'peaceful; without being interrupted'. *Silent* has many elements which are obviously synonymous to *quiet*. In the dictionaries, these four words share semantic domain of places. This means that *calm place*, *peaceful place*, *silent place*, and *quiet place* can be confusing in terms of which adjectives should be used to modify the state of a place with little noise. Since they have partial similarity in meaning, some meaning of the four words may be ambiguous when solely consulting dictionaries. At this stage, relying on dictionaries alone is barely effective to distinguish these synonymous adjectives. This is a circular problem with dictionaries, so this research seeks to yield some answers which dictionary are unable to provide. To tackle this issue, other methods are suggested to differentiate the use of these synonymous adjectives.

### Corpus-Based Analysis to Distinguish Synonyms

#### Degree of formality

In terms of writing, it is essential to use language that fits the audience and purpose (Purdue University, n.d.). In terms of style and register, formal register is a style of writing used when writing essays and papers for college classes. There are many elements included to identify the formal register. Besides style and register, genres can be

used to identify the formality. Martin (2001, p. 25) defines genre as a "staged, goal-directed, purposeful activity in which speakers engage as members of our culture", and genre analysis is a way of examining a type or style of writing in order to better understand the conventions, expectations, purpose, and target audience for that genre (Purdue University, n.d.). Therefore, genre can be used as one classification in identifying the formality of the words.

Degree of formality is one criterion that many researchers have used to distinguish the formality of the synonyms. Most researchers use data provided in COCA to identify the degree of formality (Chalermsook, 2014; Petcharat & Phoocharoensil, 2017; Pimjuntug, 2015; Phoocharoensil, 2020; Srithanyarat, 2016; Supachai, 2014). Eight genres in COCA including TV or movies, spoken, magazines, fiction, blogs, websites, the news, and academic have been used to identify the degree of formality of synonymous words. Davies (2020) suggested TV or movies and spoken as informal, while academic is denoted as formal, and magazines, fiction, blogs, websites, and the news are between formal and informal. Thus, the researchers who studied synonymous words have used the formality signified by Davies (2020) to distinguish the near-synonyms in terms of their formality.

Degree of formality has been proven to be a useful tool to differentiate near-synonyms. One word may be used more formally than the others, so the degree of formality for the synonymous adjectives *calm*, *peaceful*, *silent*, and *quiet* is explored in the present study with the assistance of COCA.

**Table 2** Studies which explore synonyms using degree of formality

Author(s)	Year	Synonyms	Tool(s)
Punyasuth	2014	Adjourn/postpone	COCA
Chalermsook	2015	Increase/raise	COCA, Longman Dictionary
Supachai	2015	Deadly/lethal/fatal	Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, BNC
Pimjuntug	2015	Respond/reply/answer	Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, BNC, COCA
Srithanyarat	2016	To be sorry/apologize	BNC, COCA, Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary and Thesaurus
Petcharat and Phoocharoensil	2017	Appropriate/proper/suitable	
Phoocharoensil	2020	Consequence/result/outcome	COCA
Lertcharoenwanich and Phoocharoensil	2022	Purpose/goal/objective	COCA
Lertcharoenwanich	2023	Blank/empty/vacant	COCA
Chaengchenkit	2023	Cease/halt/stop	COCA
Sangseekaew	2023	Normal/regular/common/ordinary/usual	Oxford Learners' Dictionary, Macmillan Dictionaries, COCA
Kongcharoen, and Thummanuruk	2023	Perfect/flawless/ impeccable	Oxford Learners' Dictionary, Macmillan Dictionary, and Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, COCA

### Collocations

Collocation is another useful criterion to distinguish synonyms. Many researchers have used collocation as a criterion to distinguish synonyms (Aroonmanakun, 2015; Cai, 2012; Chalermsook, 2014; Chung, 2011; Gu, 2017; Musikarn, 2016; Panyapayatjati, 2016; Petcharat & Phoocharoensil, 2017; Pimjuntug, 2015; Phoocharoensil, 2020; Sirikan, 2015; Srithanyarat, 2016; Supachai, 2014; Wongrat, 2018; Yang, 2016). Consistent with these studies, the noun collocations and adverb collocations in this research were examined through COCA. Collocation, which is classified as a strong collocate, normally relies on the mutual information (MI) score, which is provided by COCA and describes how far observed co-occurrence frequency deviates from expected frequency (Collins Wordbanks Online, 2008). Imsa-ard and Phoocharoensil (2022) insisted that a high MI score can signify a strong association for that collocation. To comply with Imsa-ard and Phoocharoensil (2022), Kongcharoen and Thummanuruk (2023) also used MI which scores lower than 3 as the cut-off score to explore the synonymous adjectives *perfect*, *flawless*, and *impeccable*. Therefore, collocations with MI scores lower than 3 are terminated since such scores can imply a weak collocation. Noun collocates and adverb collocates were explored in the present study to provide more information for this study.

### Semantic preference and semantic prosody

The originators who coined the term semantic prosody are Sinclair (1991) and Louw (1993). Louw publicly coined the term “semantic prosody” in 1993, which remains the most regularly cited source when dealing with semantic prosody. Stubbs (2002) stated his point of view on Sinclair’s concept of semantic prosody and called it ‘discourse prosody’ which signifies semantic relations between nodes and collocates. Stubbs (2002, p. 225) divided semantic prosody into three categories, positive, negative, and neutral. Semantic prosody and

semantic preference are closely related to collocations, while collocates are based on their mutual expectancy and their co-occurrence frequencies. Collocations may also sharpen the focus of the constituents meaning (Philip, 2011, p. 42). In this research, noun collocations together with adverb collocations are scrutinized through COCA. After identifying the collocations, each collocate will be categorized by semantic preference and semantic prosody.

From Table 3, semantic prosody and semantic preference have been popular as tools to distinguish synonyms and it has proven to be a useful tool for identifying the differences between near-synonyms. In this research, semantic preference and semantic prosody are used to classify the target synonymous adjectives.

### Componential analysis

Componential analysis is widely used to identify the semantic components of a word. Nida (1975) defined componential analysis as “part of the analysis of a text which aims to discover and organize the semantic components of words” (p. 229). Aitchison (2003, p. 92) suggested that small components of lexis can be found through componential analysis. Analysis to define the meaning of a word can be done by a set of semantic markings using (+) or (-) as the semantic signs (Nida, 1975, p. 131). The semantic sign “+” means the feature is present, while the semantic sign “-” signifies the feature is absent. The classic example proposed by Leech (1976, p. 96) uses the words *man*, *woman*, *boy*, and *girl*, as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4** Componential analysis

Components	Man	Woman	Boy	Girl
Human	+	+	+	+
Adult	+	+	-	-
Male	+	-	+	-
Female	-	+	-	+

**Table 3** Researchers who classified synonyms by semantic preference or semantic prosody

Author(s)	Year	Synonyms	Tool(s)
Hu	2015	Initial/preliminary, following/ subsequent, sufficient/adequate	Collin Thesaurus, Webster-Merriam Online Dictionaries
Jarunwaraphan and Mallikamas	2020	Chance/ opportunity	COCA, online dictionaries
Phoocharoensil	2021	Predict/foresee	COCA
Phoocharoensil	2021	Persist/persevere	Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 6 <sup>th</sup> Edition (LDOCE), COCA
Lertcharoenwanich and Phoocharoensil	2022	Purpose/goal/objective	COCA
Lertcharoenwanich	2023	Blank/empty/vacant	COCA

From Table 4, the semantic domain of the words *man*, *woman*, *boy*, and *girl*, *human* is the common component, and they are distinguishable from *adult*, *male*, and *female*.

Besides, Nida (1975, p. 15) also indicated that “there are four principal ways in which the meaning of different semantic units may be related to one another: inclusion, overlapping, complementation, and contiguity”. Inclusion means the meaning of one word may be included within the meaning of another, while overlapping means the features for the relatedness of meaning is the tendency for meaning to overlap. Such is also called synonyms. Complementation involves shared features of meaning but showing certain marked contrasts. The last type is contiguity in which “Contiguity is decidedly the most important since it represents the relations between closely related meanings occupying a well-defined, restricted semantic domain, and exhibiting certain well-marked contrast” (Nida, 1975, p. 18). Most of the synonyms are overlapping since Nida (1975, p. 98) indicated that “Terms whose meanings overlap are generally called synonyms. Such terms are usually substitutable one for the other in at least certain contexts; but rarely, if ever, are two terms substitutable for each other in any and all contexts”. Therefore, this research uses componential analysis to classify the use of the synonymous adjectives *calm*, *peaceful*, *silent*, and *quiet* by looking at the overlapping semantic elements.

## Methodology

### Corpus-Based Analysis to Distinguish Synonyms

Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA, 2023) was used to extract the degree of formality, noun collocations, and adverb collocations for the synonyms *calm*, *peaceful*, *silent*, and *quiet*. For the noun collocations and adverb collocations, the function ‘word’ in the search page in COCA was used. After hitting the button, the data of the searched word were shown. The ‘COLLOCATES’ function was then clicked and further explored.

Collocations, identified as robust collocates, typically depend on the Mutual Information (MI) score, a measure provided by the Collins Wordbanks Online, which indicates the degree of deviation between observed co-occurrence frequency and expected frequency (Collins Wordbanks Online, 2008). According to Imsa-ard and Phoocharoensil (2022), a high MI score suggests a strong association for that specific collocation. Following this perspective, Kongcharoen and Thummanuruk (2023) adopted an MI score cutoff of less than 3 to investigate the synonymous adjectives *perfect*, *flawless*, and *impeccable*. Consequently, collocations with MI scores below 3 are excluded from this research. After that, semantic preference and semantic prosody were explored through the noun collocates and adverb collocates of each adjective. The noun collocations were grouped based on their semantic preference and adverb collocations were grouped based on their semantic prosody, which were later verified by inter-coders who were native speakers



Figure 1 Sample data from COCA

of English with experience in language classrooms and language teaching for 20 years. The inter-coders look at each collocation and decide which category it is most related to or is often used. If it can, however, be used with multiple categories, they decide which category it is used with the most. As for adverb collocations and semantic prosody, the inter-coders consider whether each collocation creates positive or negative energy or thought. If it does not give positive or negative thought, then it could be possibly put in the neutral category.

### Componential Analysis

In this research, the synonymous adjectives *calm*, *peaceful*, *silent*, and *quiet* are classified using the componential analysis of meaning suggested by Nida (1975). Nida (1975, p. 15) indicated four types of relations between related meanings, including inclusion, overlapping, complementation, and contiguity. The synonyms fall into the overlapping type which is worth exploring further. After exploring the noun collocations and adverb collections, the semantic preferences were grouped based on their semantic similarity and following Nida's componential analysis framework. Nida's (1975, pp. 58–61) framework in distinguishing the meaning of the words can be summarized into six steps. First, select the meanings that evolve from various components. Second, examine all the possible meanings that the node words possess. Third, explore the variability of the meanings which are reflected by the node words

and determine which elements are appropriate. Fourth, register all the distinguished features of meaning for each node word. Fifth, test the analysis by naming the elements and relate the statements of the elements of the node words. Sixth, set the systems to indicate the significant sets of contrast. In this research, Nida's (1975) framework was adjusted and adopted in the final step to identify the differences of meaning in the synonymous adjectives *calm*, *peaceful*, *silent*, and *quiet*.

## Results and Discussion

### Results from COCA

#### Degree of formality

From the data provided by COCA, this research focused only on per million words. From Table 5, the adjective *quiet* was used the most with an overall frequency of 59.71 words per million followed by *calm*, *silent* and *peaceful*, respectively. From eight genres in COCA, Davies (2020) suggested TV or movies and spoken as informal, while academic is classified as formal and magazines, fiction, blogs, websites, and the news are between formal and informal. Therefore, when looking at each genre to indicate the formality, *silent* was used the most in the academic genre with a frequency of 22.09 words per million, followed by the adjective *quiet* with 19.60 words per million and the adjective *peaceful* with 19.36 words per million.

**Table 5** COCA results to show degree of formality

Total words in COCA	Genres	Calm		Total Words in COCA	Genres	Peaceful	
		Frequency	Per million			Frequency	Per million
993	Overall	37,874	38.14	993	Overall	16,970	17.09
128.1	TV/Movie	12,132	94.73	126.1	Spoken	2,768	27.94
118.3	Fiction	9,024	76.27	119.8	Academic	2,319	19.36
126.1	Magazines	3,717	29.48	124.3	Web	2,379	19.15
126.1	Spoken	3,476	27.56	121.7	News	2,185	17.95
124.3	Web	2,956	23.79	118.3	Fiction	1,998	16.89
121.7	News	2,847	23.39	128.6	Blog	2,075	16.13
128.6	Blog	2,743	21.33	126.1	Magazines	1,867	14.81
119.8	Academic	979	8.17	128.1	TV/Movie	1,379	10.77
Total Words in COCA	Genres	Silent		Total Words in COCA	Genres	Quiet	
		Frequency	Per million			Frequency	Per million
993	Overall	34,002	34.25	993	Overall	59,296	59.71
118.3	Fiction	14,065	118.7	118.3	Fiction	18,693	157.82
124.3	Web	3,485	28.05	128.1	TV/Movie	11,077	86.49
126.1	Magazines	3,298	26.16	126.1	Magazine	7,271	57.66
121.7	News	2,836	23.30	121.7	News	6,012	49.38
128.6	Blog	2,874	22.35	124.3	Web	4,973	40.02
128.1	TV/Movie	2,850	22.25	126.1	Spoken	4,831	38.30
119.8	Academic	2,646	22.09	128.6	Blog	4,111	31.96
126.1	Spoken	1,948	15.44	119.8	Academic	2,348	19.60

The adjective *calm* appears to be the least formal with only 8.17 words per million in the academic genre. When looking at TV or movies and spoken genres—which are indicated as informal—the adjective *quiet* is used the most with 86.49 words per million in TV or movies and 38.30 words per million in the spoken genre, followed by the adjective *calm* with 94.73 words per million in TV or movies and 27.56 words per million in spoken. The adjectives *peaceful* and *silent* are used very infrequently in both TV or movies and spoken genres. This suggests that *silent* and *peaceful* are quite formal, while *calm* is quite informal. However, the adjective *quiet* can be both formal and informal since the data show a high degree of usage in the academic genre, which indicates formality, and in TV or movies and spoken genres, which indicate informality.

*Noun Collocations*

Table 6 shows noun collocates drawn from COCA. Only the top 30 most frequent words with MI scores equivalent to 3 or over were included in this research since this score can indicate a strong association between two words. According to semantic preference, there are 20 categories from the noun collocation data provided by COCA. Previous researchers including Jarunwaraphan and Mallikamas (2020) and Supanfai (2022) have used semantic preferences to justify synonyms and semantic preferences which are grouped based on their semantic similarity. In this research, noun collocations can be grouped into themes based on their semantic similarity as follows (Table 7–10).

**Table 6** COCA results to show noun collocates with MI scores

Noun collocates	Calm		Noun collocates	Peaceful		Noun collocates	Silent		Noun collocates	Quiet	
	Raw Frequency	MI score		Raw Frequency	MI score		Raw Frequency	MI score		Raw Frequency	MI score
voice	500	4.85	protest	654	7.28	right	981	3.20	moment	1033	3.13
water	334	3.35	solution	485	5.37	moment	880	3.71	voice	923	3.41
sea	242	4.87	resolution	428	6.37	auction	667	7.70	peace	884	4.35
demeanor	139	8.58	coexistence	341	10.83	film	621	3.69	neighborhood	384	3.46
tone	99	4.77	mean	288	4.95	reading	469	4.71	noise	198	3.33
manner	96	4.41	demonstration	283	6.75	majority	366	3.88	dark	151	3.14
wind	94	3.65	transition	282	5.82	prayer	334	4.93	desperation	141	5.78
weather	78	3.84	purpose	254	5.82	hill	280	3.76	calm	127	4.84
lake	54	3.00	settlement	243	5.88	treatment	277	3.11	down	115	3.87
ocean	51	3.48	protester	173	6.57	spring	276	3.61	dignity	102	3.89
smile	49	3.20	revolution	159	4.86	partner	260	3.39	reflection	93	3.02
atmosphere	40	3.61	relation	142	4.02	while	205	3.19	contemplation	92	6.33
exterior	25	5.97	conflict	117	3.67	crowd	174	3.27	suburb	92	3.67
acceptance	24	3.86	transfer	112	4.92	killer	153	3.93	solitude	69	5.27
breathing	21	4.18	reunification	103	8.73	alarm	147	4.90	diplomacy	67	4.18
nerve	20	3.24	democracy	102	3.90	era	124	3.39	demeanor	54	4.89
assurance	17	4.47	manner	86	3.73	tear	119	3.34	riot	54	3.21
gaze	17	3.28	sleep	80	3.61	scream	102	5.29	breathing	52	3.16
lagoon	14	5.81	demonstrator	76	6.93	dark	89	3.19	stillness	50	5.46
deliberation	14	5.08	valley	75	3.58	protest	83	3.30	whisper	49	3.75
certainty	14	3.93	dispute	74	4.62	fluency	79	6.18	cul-de-sac	47	6.69
panic	13	3.21	negotiation	71	4.14	retreat	71	4.64	meditation	45	3.50
serenity	12	6.04	assembly	68	4.28	beat	57	3.09	cove	37	4.44
dignity	11	3.01	evolution	65	4.00	cocktail	55	4.11	hum	30	4.52
temperament	10	4.59	intention	62	3.82	reception	49	3.58	countryside	29	3.04
oasis	8	4.85	cooperation	61	4.27	epidemic	48	3.97	murmur	28	4.66
cove	8	4.56	rally	52	4.62	cry	44	3.07	nook	19	3.74
resolve	8	4.54	existence	51	3.25	cinema	42	4.15	elegance	19	3.73
facade	8	4.39	dialogue	49	3.83	meditation	39	4.10	resolve	19	3.46
			calm	44	5.12	comprehension	39	3.91	sob	16	3.55

**Table 7** Results of semantic preference for the synonymous adjective – calm

Themes	Noun collocations
Place-related	Water, sea, lake, ocean, exterior, lagoon, oasis, cove, façade
Environment-related	Wind, weather, atmosphere
Health-related	Breathing, nerves
Expressions	Voice, demeanor, tone, manner, smile, gaze, panic
Decision-making	Acceptance, deliberation
Characteristic	Dignity, temperament
Intention	Assurance, certainty, resolve
Abstract	Serenity

**Table 8** Results of semantic preference for the synonymous adjective – peaceful

Themes	Noun collocations
Decision-making	Solution, resolution, dialogue, conflict, dispute, negotiation, cooperation
Political	Protest, protestor, revolution, democracy, reunification, assembly, really
Appearance	Coexistence, existence
Changes	Transition, transfer, evolution
Intentions	Mean, purpose, intention
Relationships	Relation
Action	Sleep
Place-related	Settlement
Abstract	Calm

**Table 9** Results of semantic preference for the synonymous adjective – silent

Themes	Noun collocations
Place-related	Hill, retreat, reception, cinema
Political	Rights, protest,
Environment-related	Spring
Expressions	Tear, scream, cry, treatment
Action	Auction, reading, alarm
Time-related	Moment, while, era,
Entertainment-related	Film, beat
Religious	Prayer, meditation
Health-related	Epidemic
Human	Partner, crowd, killer
Ability	Fluency
Food/Beverage	cocktail
Abstract	majority, dark, comprehension

**Table 10** Results of semantic preference for the synonymous adjective – quiet

Themes	Noun collocations
Place-related	Neighborhood, suburb, cul-de-sac, cove, countryside, nook
Political	Voice, peace, democracy, riot
Expressions	Desperation, calm, down, demeanor, sob
Intentions	Resolve
Time-related	Moment
Actions	Reflection, contemplation, whisper, hum, murmur, stillness
Characteristic	Dignity, voice
Health-related	Breathing
Religious	Meditation
Appearance	Elegance
Abstract	Noise, dark, solitude

The semantic preference for each synonymous adjective in this research can be summarized in Table 11. From the data above, the four adjectives only share the noun collocation under the abstract theme. *Silent* and *quiet* appear to share the most noun collocations with eight themes. In terms of noun collocations, this shows that *silent* and *quiet* are quite similar when compared with the other two.

**Table 11** Summarized table of semantic preference

Theme	Calm	Peaceful	Silent	Quiet
Place-related	✓		✓	✓
Environment-related	✓		✓	
Health-related	✓			
Expressions	✓		✓	✓
Decision-making	✓	✓		
Intentions	✓	✓		✓
Abstract	✓	✓	✓	✓
Political		✓	✓	✓
Appearance		✓		✓
Changes		✓		
Relationship		✓		
Actions		✓	✓	✓
Time-related			✓	✓
Entertainment-related			✓	
Religious			✓	✓
Health-related			✓	✓
Human			✓	
Characteristic	✓			✓
Ability			✓	
Food/Beverage			✓	

However, when considering the themes which could be used in hotel contexts such as place-related, environment-related, expression, appearance, and food or beverage, *silent* appears to be the most appropriate in hotel contexts under the four themes. For instance, take the following example of *silent retreat*:

“Experience a *Silent Retreat* in Thailand that will offer you: 7 Days in Paradise”

(Vikasa, n.d.).

Others which can be used in hotel context are *silent reception*, *silent spring*, and *silent cocktail*. Besides *silent*, *calm* is another word that is suggested to be used in hotel contexts, for instance *calm water*, *calm sea*, *calm lake*, *calm ocean*, *calm exterior*, *calm lagoon*, *calm oasis*, *calm cove*, *calm façade*, *calm wind*, *calm weather*, and *calm atmosphere*, which can be used to explain the condition of places or an excursion. Moreover,

*calm voice*, *calm demeanor*, *calm tone*, *calm manner*, and *calm smile* can be used to express the character of hotel staff.

### Adverb Collocations

The selected adverb collocates in this research were among the top 30 most frequent words with MI scores equivalent to 3 or over. However, the minimum frequency of the cooccurrence of the adverb collocates was 2. Therefore, some adverb collocates were not included for further analysis since they did not pass the threshold for this study. Stubbs (2002, p. 225) classified semantic prosody into three categories, positive, negative, and neutral. To comply with Stubbs (2002, p. 225), the adverb collocates for the synonymous adjectives *calm*, *peaceful*, *silent*, and *quiet* were divided into groups based on their semantic similarity when co-occurring with each adjective as shown in Table 13–16.

**Table 12** COCA results to show adverb collocates with MI scores

Adverb collocates	Calm		Adverb collocates	Peaceful		Adverb collocates	Silent		Adverb collocates	Quiet	
	Raw Frequency	MI score		Raw Frequency	MI score		Raw Frequency	MI score		Raw Frequency	MI score
dead	73	6.05	relatively	162	4.51	largely	137	3.44	relatively	379	3.92
relatively	62	3.64	largely	83	3.72	strangely	87	5.67	eerily	172	7.71
remarkably	19	4.49	exclusively	31	4.13	dead	83	4.71	awfully	121	5.59
surprisingly	15	3.14	anything	24	4.05	eerily	73	7.29	unusually	109	5.22
eerily	13	6.32	purely	19	3.57	utterly	58	4.22	dead	100	4.17
unusually	13	4.48	remarkably	17	3.81	conspicuously	36	6.56	strangely	88	4.88
outwardly	11	6.77	deceptively	9	5.97	abruptly	31	3.84	pleasantly	84	5.97
strangely	10	4.07	mutually	9	3.62	uncharacterist-ically	28	6.84	someplace	65	4.23
preternaturally	6	8.30	inherently	9	3.32	ominously			remarkably	35	3.04
amazingly	6	3.70	strangely	7	3.03	oddly	23	6.47	oddly	32	3.27
oddly	6	3.19	violently	6	3.25	noticeably	21	3.47	uncharacterist-ically	31	6.17
comparatively	5	4.06	wrongly	5	3.61	curiously	13	4.30	unnaturally		
weirdly	4	5.21	ostensibly	5	3.32	unnaturally	12	3.66	noticeably	29	6.42
maddeningly	3	6.48	serenely	3	5.44	stubbornly	11	5.83	ominously	18	3.96
offhand	3	6.39	lovingly	3	3.35	momentarily	11	4.51	weirdly	14	4.95
alternately	3	3.79	religiously	3	3.20	mercifully	11	3.46	conspicuously	11	4.34
exceedingly	3	3.37	verifiably	2	7.41	grimly	10	5.20	blissfully	11	4.04
infuriatingly	2	7.64	tolerably	2	6.61	awkwardly	8	4.20	mercifully	10	4.62
unnervingly	2	7.52	senselessly	2	6.57	respectfully	8	3.48	deceptively	10	4.39
seismically	2	7.43	phenomenally	2	4.83	deafeningly	8	3.28	suspiciously	10	4.31
bizarrely	2	5.23	delightfully	2	4.14	hitherto	7	9.06	mighty	10	3.38
unnaturally	2	4.89	blissfully	2	4.11	uncomfortably	7	4.20	preternaturally	7	3.41
uncharacterist-ically	2	4.55	singularly	2	3.87	suspiciously	7	3.88	scarily	6	5.97
admirably			resolutely	2	3.74	mysteriously	7	3.68	blessedly	5	5.90
singularly	2	4.44	weirdly	2	3.69	thoughtfully	7	3.48	hauntingly	5	5.08
deceptively	2	4.39	wild	2	3.49	stonily	6	3.32	abnormally	5	4.88
lazily	2	4.32	eerily	2	3.10	resolutely	6	8.25	impressively	4	3.17
supremely	2	4.31	sweetly	2	3.06	clinically	6	4.32	spookily	4	3.02
side-by-side	2	4.06				heretofore	6	3.04	acoustically	3	6.94
	2	3.78				obstinately	5	3.93	uncommonly	3	4.95
							4	6.31		3	3.44

**Table 13** Results of semantic prosody for the synonymous adjective – calm

Semantic prosody	Adverbs
Positive	Remarkably, surprisingly, amazingly, exceedingly, admirably, supremely, side-by-side, singularly
Negative	Dead, eerily, unusually, offhand, strangely, preternaturally, oddly, weirdly, maddeningly, infuriatingly, unnervingly, seismically, bizarrely, unnaturally, uncharacteristically, deceptively, lazily
Neutral	Outwardly, comparatively, alternately, relatively, singularly

**Table 14** Results of semantic prosody for the synonymous adjective – peaceful

Semantic prosody	Adverbs
Positive	Largely, exclusively, purely, remarkably, mutually, serenely, lovingly, religiously, phenomenally, delightfully, blissfully, singularly, sweetly
Negative	Deceptively, strangely, violently, wrongly, senselessly, singularly, weirdly, wildly, eerily, tolerably
Neutral	Anything, inherently, ostensibly, verifiably, resolutely, relatively

**Table 15** Results of semantic prosody for the synonymous adjective – silent

Semantic prosody	Adverbs
Positive	Largely, conspicuously, mercifully, respectfully, thoughtfully
Negative	Strangely, dead, eerily, abruptly, uncharacteristically, ominously, oddly, unnaturally, stubbornly, grimly, awkwardly, uncomfortably, suspiciously, mysteriously, stonily, clinically, obstinately, deafeningly
Neutral	Utterly, noticeably, curiously, momentarily, hitherto, resolutely, clinically, heretofore

**Table 16** Results of semantic prosody for the synonymous adjective – quiet

Semantic prosody	Adverbs
Positive	Pleasantly, remarkably, conspicuously, blissfully, mercifully, mighty, blessedly, Impressively
Negative	Eerily, awfully, unusually, dead, strangely, oddly, uncharacteristically, unnaturally, ominously, weirdly, deceptively, suspiciously, preternaturally, scarily, hauntingly, abnormally, spookily, uncommonly, hauntingly
Neutral	Someplace, noticeably, resolutely, clinically, heretofore, relatively

After classifying the adverb collocates into the groups suggested by Stubbs (2002, p. 225), the adverbs most collocated with the synonymous adjectives *calm*, *silent*, and *quiet* fell into the negative category, while the majority of the adverbs most collocated with the synonymous adjective *peaceful* fell into the positive category. This suggests that *peaceful* is more likely to be used positively. All of these synonymous adjectives appear to be positive in meaning. However, when collocating with adverbs, the synonymous adjectives *calm*, *silent*, and *quiet* tend to be collocated with adverbs that convey negative meaning. The synonymous adjective *peaceful* seems to collocate with adverbs with a positive meaning. From the data above, all these synonymous adjectives can be used differently in terms of adverb collocation.

### Results from Componential Analysis

After exploring the noun collocations and adverb collocations, semantic preferences of both noun collocations and adverb collocations were extracted to show the semantic elements of each synonymous word. The themes from semantic preference of noun collocation and adverb collocations were grouped together. The themes of adverb collocations were extracted into seven themes: Quantity or number, feeling, strangeness,

movement, time, intention, and abstract. However, some themes overlapped with the noun collocations, so in the componential analysis the themes of both noun collocations and adverb collocations were combined. The data show that the four adjectives can be used differently. Hereafter, the semantic preference themes are used to extract the semantic components of the four adjectives *calm*, *peaceful*, *silent*, and *quiet* which are in Table 17.

Due to space limitations for the present article, the only noun collocations and adverb collocations included in this research were those that matched the criteria for frequency and MI score. From Table 17, the semantic components that can be shared with all four adjectives are health, body condition, sound or voice, strangeness, and movement. The semantic components that can be shared the least are entertainment, relationships, changes, food and beverages, pride, number or population, money or currency, and humans. The four adjectives show the characteristics of near-synonyms since they have both shared and distinct components. The overlapping of the components suggested by Nida (1975) for these four adjectives can yield the shared meaning of each adjective. Meanwhile, some components can be used individually which can signify the differences in the meanings of these four adjectives and as certain the characteristics of near-synonyms.

**Table 17** Componential analysis results from

Adjective	Calm	Peaceful	Silent	Quiet
Use with place and environment	+	-	+	+
Use with political situation	-	+	+	+
Use with health and body condition	+	+	+	+
Use with expression, emotion, or feelings	+	-	+	+
Use with intention, purpose, or decision	+	+	-	+
Use with time	-	-	+	+
Use with religion	-	-	+	+
Use with entertainment	-	-	+	-
Use with quality	-	-	+	+
Use with relationship	-	+	-	-
Use with appearance	-	+	-	+
Use with change	-	+	-	-
Use with thought, comprehension and understanding	-	-	+	+
Use with food and beverages	-	-	+	-
Use with color	-	-	+	+
Use with sound or voice	+	+	+	+
Use with pride	+	-	-	-
Use with quantity, number or population	-	-	+	-
Use with money or currency	-	-	+	-
Use with human	-	-	+	-
Use with strangeness	+	+	+	+
Use with movement	+	+	+	+

## Conclusion and Recommendations

The synonymous adjectives - *calm*, *peaceful*, *silent*, and *quiet* are near-synonyms that cannot be used interchangeably in all contexts. When trying to find definitions or the usage of unknown words, dictionaries are typically the first source to be consulted. However, the information from dictionaries is not adequate to provide insightful information for the word usage, especially for synonymous words. Therefore, the assistance of corpus tools can be helpful. In this research, the synonymous adjectives *calm*, *peaceful*, *silent*, and *quiet* are explored through corpus-based analysis and componential analysis. In terms of the degree of formality, *silent*, *quiet*, and *peaceful* are formal since they appear frequently in the academic genre. However, *quiet* is also used frequently in the TV or movies and spoken genres, which signify informality. The adjectives *peaceful* and *silent* are used very infrequently in both TV or movies and spoken genres, which suggests they are quite formal, while *calm* is quite informal. *Calm* is an adjective that signifies the least formality since it is used the least in the academic genre and appears frequently in the TV or movies and spoken genres. Meanwhile, the adjective *quiet* can be either formal or informal since the data show a high degree of usage in the academic genre, which indicates formality,

as well as in the TV or movies and spoken genres, which indicate informality.

Noun collocations can be categorized into 20 themes based on semantic similarity. Only an abstract theme can be shared with all four adjectives. *Silent* and *quiet* appear to share the most noun collocations, signifying a close relation in terms of semantic preference. When looking at adverb collocations that are classified into three groups based on their semantic prosody, most of the adverbs collocated with the synonymous adjectives *calm*, *silent*, and *quiet* fell into the negative category, while most of the adverbs collocated with the synonymous adjective *peaceful* fell into the positive category. This suggests that *peaceful* is more likely to be used with positive meanings.

Concerning the componential analysis, the semantic components of health, body condition, sound or voice, strangeness, and movement can be shared with all four adjectives, while entertainment, relationships, changes, food and beverages, pride, number or population, money or currency, and humans are individual components. This signifies that the four adjectives are near-synonyms since they share semantic components while they also have distinct semantic components.

Teachers can use the data from this research to create materials or classroom activities to enhance students' lexical abilities. For example, teachers can suggest students to identify which adjectives can be

used more formally and in what context each adjective fits. Degree of formality in COCA is an easy method to explore if the interested synonymous words are similar or different. Besides the degree of formality, collocation is another good method to see the differences usage of the synonymous words. Teachers can ask students to form sentences by using noun collocations or adverb collocations based on their semantic preference and semantic prosody. These activities could enhance students' ability to use these four synonymous adjectives more accurately and appropriately in context.

In this research, the noun collocations and adverb collocations that were used to extract the semantic components were only those from COCA, in which the frequency and MI score matched the criteria. Therefore, other noun and adverb collocates were not included in the componential analysis due to the large number of the collocations and the limitation of space in the article. Further research that solely explores componential analysis is recommended.

Since the corpus-based analysis was conducted through COCA, only general English is included in the present study. It is recommended that a hotel related corpus is created in order to provide more insightful data in hotel contexts. The hotel related corpus could offer useful English language information for hotel business and hospitality business.

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## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests.

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## Fundings

This research was funded by the Department of Foreign Languages, Faculty of Humanities, Kasetsart University.

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