A Corpus-Based Analysis of Eight English Synonymous Adjectives of Fear

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Abstract

This corpus-based study aims at investigating the similarities and differences that exist between *afraid, scared, frightened, terrified, startled, fearful, horrified* and *petrified*. Specifically, it compared and contrasted them in terms of dialectal differences, frequency of occurrence, distribution in different genres and core meanings. The data were collected from the British National Corpus (BNC), the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), the online Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDOCE) and the online Merriam Webster's Dictionary (MWD). The results of both corpora have revealed that the most frequent adjectives of fear are *"afraid", "scared"* and *"frightened"*. Moreover, the findings of both corpora have shown that nearly all adjectives appear to be mostly used in fiction and spoken genres. Furthermore, the results also unveiled that both the Americans and the British tend to avoid using such adjectives of fear in academic contexts. As for the core meanings, the findings have uncovered that the core meanings of these adjectives in dictionaries have shown that LDOCE gives more emphasis on idiomatic meanings of words under investigation. Unlike MWD, LDOCE offers more senses for the words *"afraid"*, *"scared"* and *"frightened"*. Further, the meanings of these adjectives in COCA have revealed that this corpus gives more space for idiomatic expressions related to the adjectives under investigation if compared to the results of MWD. Therefore, it can be concluded that the data

of the two corpora give extra meanings that are not found in these dictionaries. Also, the study concluded with some pedagogical implications.

1. Introduction

Learning vocabulary is part and parcel of learning any language. This idea was emphasized by (Gass and Selinker, 2008; Wilkins, 1972). Moreover, knowing a large amount of vocabulary is crucial for efficient communication since it enriches one's linguistic repertoire. Wilkins (1972, p.111) maintains that learning vocabulary to be more important in communication than learning the grammar of a language. He confirms that "while without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed". Instinctively, students often recognize the importance of learning vocabulary. This importance is embodied "by the oft-repeated observation that learners carry around dictionaries and not grammar books" (Schmitt,2010).

Learning the meanings of words is not only restricted to what these words refer to. It also includes the study of the relations that exist between different lexical items such as synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, hypernymy etc. Among the lexical relations that exist in all languages is synonymy which Saeed (1997, p. 65) defines as "different phonological words which have the same or very similar meaning". Synonymous words usually have similar "core semantic components" and are different only in terms of their "peripheral components" (Cruse, 1986). With regard to the English language, the vocabulary system is very rich due to the fact that it has extensively borrowed from various languages such as Anglo-Saxon, French, Latin and Greek (Palmer, 1981).

However, this lexical relation is gradable; some pairs are typical synonyms while others are not. This idea is confirmed by Cruse (1986, pp. 267-8) who clarifies that within the same group of synonyms, some pairs are more synonymous than others which may suggest that synonyms are placed on a scale. Moreover, Liu (2010) argues that a pair of synonyms is not completely interchangeable since both items are not entirely identical in meaning. Hence, the notion of synonyms varies according to the degree of similarity or sameness. Some are identical and are thus called absolute synonyms while others are near synonyms and are not used interchangeably in all contexts. Absolute synonyms are rarely found since it is not easy to find two words that fulfill the three required criteria set out by (Cruse,1986) and (Lyons,1995), i.e. no difference in terms of register or dialect, having the same expressive meaning and no collocational differences.

Near synonyms or so-called partial synonyms have more space in any language due to fewer restrictions. They usually meet the criterion of same expressive meaning but fail to fulfill the conditions of absolute synonymy. Speakers of any language often learn subconsciously when to use one lexeme and when to avoid another, while it might be a challenge for leaners of a foreign language. To illustrate, speakers of the English language tend to express their fear by one of the following adjectives viz., *afraid, scared, frightened, terrified, startled, fearful, horrified* and *petrified.* Superficially, these adjectives seem to be exactly the same since they carry similar core meanings and are used interchangeably. However, these adjectives cannot replace each other in some contexts. For instance, if somebody is easily frightened, we can say "*s/he is afraid/frightened/nervous/ scared of her/his own shadow*", but we cannot say "*terrified from her/his own shadow*". Another example is when somebody is very frightened,

we can say "*s/he is frightened/scared/terrified out of her/his wits*" but we cannot say "*s/he is afraid out of her/his wits*". In her article "What can a corpus tell about lexis?", Moon (2010) states that "corpora make it possible to test this by examining collocation, phraseological structure, genre, variety and frequency". She adds that "corpora can help disentangle" the different usages of problematic words like *wide* and *broad* (pp,207-208).

Therefore, this study is an attempt to explore subtle differences between *afraid, scared, frightened, terrified, startled, fearful, horrified* and *petrified*. More specifically, it compared and contrasted them in terms of these parameters: dialectal differences, frequency of occurrence, distribution in different genres and core meanings.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Synonymy discrimination is a challenging and thorny issue for English foreign language learners, teachers as well as for lexicographers (Tsui, 2004). In the past, the task of differentiating between synonyms was time consuming and laborious for lexicographers (Kamiński,2017). However, with the advent of computer technology and different software, things have changed drastically. This in return would help in synonymy discrimination since everything is automated and a large size of data can be easily analyzed and categorized. In fact, vocabulary studies have witnessed a great shift since the introduction of corpus evidence which provides "an empirical basis for determining vocabulary behavior, instead of relying on appeals to intuition or tradition" (Schmitt,2010, p.12). Thus, the present study will exploit the ability of corpus linguistics to spot the fine differences between *afraid, scared, frightened, terrified, startled, fearful, horrified* and *petrified* in BNC, COCA, LDOCE and MWD.

1.2 Questions of the Study

This study answered the following questions:

1) Based on BNC, COCA, which of this set of adjectives is the most frequently used: *afraid, scared, frightened, terrified, startled, fearful, horrified* and *petrified?*

2) Based on BNC, COCA, in which genres is each of the eight adjectives used?

3) Based on BNC, COCA, online LDOCE and MWD, what are the referential/core meanings of *afraid, scared, frightened, terrified, startled, fearful, horrified* and *petrified?*

1.3 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study stems from the fact that it addresses a wide set of synonyms that has not yet been thoroughly investigated from a corpus-based perspective. Long before the corpora came into existence, linguistic-related descriptions were highly dependent on both native speakers' intuitions and introspection. The former describes what people know about the language while the latter focuses on what people perceive language to be. Yet, neither of them how language is used. (Tsui,2004). According to Biber, Conrad and Reppen (1998, p.4) what makes a corpus-based approach different from other analytical approaches is that it allows researchers to analyze "the actual patterns of use in natural texts". Another feature is that it "utilizes a large and principled collection of natural texts, known as 'corpus'

as the basis for analysis. Moreover, it gives the chance for researchers to "make extensive use of computers for analysis, using both automatic and interactive techniques". What's more, it is a combination of quantitative and qualitative analytical techniques. The same idea was emphasized by Tsui (2004) who states that " the easy accessibility of huge bodies of naturally occurring texts on the computer has made it possible for us to test the robustness of linguistic descriptions which were based on introspection and elicitation, and to gain new linguistic insights into language structure and use" (p.40).

All the previous literature was based on a single corpus like BNC, COCA or BoE in addition to dictionaries that made their results less representative. However, only three of them resorted to both COCA and BNC. What is of vital importance is that this study did not only resort to dictionaries for meanings but also to corpora since they allow a researcher to investigate the senses of words by looking at their collocates (Biber, Conrad and Rappen, 1998) as well as their patterns.

Unlike previous studies which depended on a limited number of concordance lines, the current study covers all concordance lines. The outcomes of this study may also ignite the interest of learners of English as a second/foreign language, lexicographers and translators in using corpora efficiently. Furthermore, the findings are useful for EFL teachers. Many teachers feel that when they come across a set of synonyms, they can use them correctly but cannot articulate the differences between them (Tsui,2004). Also, the study is expected to come up with pedagogical implications.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Theoretical Literature

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defines a synonym as "a word with the same meaning as another word in the same language". Palmer (1981) confirms that synonymy refers to the idea of "sameness of meaning". In the same vein, Saeed (1997) states that synonyms are words that have different phonological forms but have a very similar meaning. In his book, Cruse (2006) notes that "a word is said to be a synonym of another word in the same language if one or more of its sense bears a sufficiently close similarity to one or more of the senses of the other word" (p.167). Turning to Griffiths' work in (2006), he defines synonymy as "equivalence of sense" (p.26). Meanwhile, Lyons (1995, p.90) reports that "expressions with the same meanings are synonymous". In this respect, Lyons' definition is not restricted to lexemes but is extended to cover "lexically complex expressions".

The notion of synonymy is a predominant lexical relation in the English language. Palmer clarifies that borrowing from other languages has enriched the system of synonymous vocabulary of English. What is more, English is originally a "Germanic language with Anglo Saxon as an earlier stage of its development" (ibid, p.88). Therefore, some words in English are "native" and others are "foreign". The former are originally from Anglo-Saxon, while the latter are from French, Greek or Latin origins.

In his book (1986), Cruse adds that synonyms are "lexical items whose senses are identical in respect of central semantic traits, but differ, if at all, only in respect of what we may

provisionally describe as minor or peripheral traits" (p.267). Such minute differences would place synonymity on a scale in which different degrees of semantic overlap may exist. Thus, Cruse places four kinds of synonyms on this scale. First, are absolute synonyms or so-called perfect or exact synonyms, which refer to the case whereby two lexical items have identical meanings as well as identical contextual relations. Thus, they are used interchangeably in any context. However, this type is rarely found in languages since no two lexemes can satisfy all the criteria. The unattainability of perfect synonyms was emphasized by Cruse (1986) who stated that "natural languages abhor absolute synonyms just as nature abhors a vacuum" (p.270). That is why any attempt to search for absolute synonyms will be a wild goose chase, since it is a theoretical concept and cannot be empirically proved. In other words, no two lexemes can reach a high degree of sameness since they might have a chance of some variation due to some shades of differences in affective, social or collocational meaning. The second kind on the scale is cognitive synonyms, in which lexical units have same/identical cognitive descriptive meanings (Lyons). Researchers have given them different labels such as descriptive synonyms, propositional synonyms, and referential synonyms. Notably, Lyons called them incomplete synonyms, non-absolute synonyms or partial synonyms.

The third category is cognitive contextual synonyms. This type refers to a pair of lexemes which are cognitive synonyms in some, but not in all contexts, and this is what Lyons called it "context-dependent synonymy". For instance, in the sentence "I will go to the bakery to get/buy some bread", the verbs get and buy are contextually synonymous and interchangeable in this sentence. However, in the sentence "I will go to my office to get my laptop", the verb get is not synonymous with the verb buy. With regard to near synonyms or plesionymy, they are two words/lexemes with a relatively close or more or less similar meaning. Murphy (2003) finds that there is some degree of overlapping in meaning and sense of such near synonyms, but such overlap does not reach a high degree of completeness. In other words, they are not completely overlapping.

Scholars point to some criteria for differentiating between synonyms. Palmer (1981) posits five parameters. The first one refers to dialectal differences, which is the main interest of dialectologists. In other words, members of groups of synonyms may belong to different dialects such as "apartment" in American English and "flat" in British English. As a result, speakers who are familiar with both dialects can interchangeably use these two words. The second parameter is related to difference in styles i.e., degree of formality such as "beginning" and "inception" whereby the former is informal and the latter is formal. Thirdly, some synonyms proved to differ in their "emotive" and "evaluative" meanings although their "cognitive" meaning is similar. For instance, the words "liberty" and "freedom" have similar cognitive meanings but differ in their emotive and evaluative meanings. The collocational restrictions are the fourth parameter in which two synonymous words have different collocations such as "rancid butter" and "addled eggs". The loose sense of synonymy is the fifth parameter in which a language offers a range of set of synonyms such as "free, inexact, relaxed, vague, lax" etc.

In the same area, Jackson (1988) offered some ways to spot differences between synonyms such as dialectal differences, level of formality, technicality of the word, connotation of the word as well as the use of euphemism.

Sinclair's model (1991) of the lexico-grammatical profile of a word took into consideration four different aspects, namely collocation, colligation, negative or positive semantic prosody as well as semantic preference of the word.

2.2 Empirical Literature on Near Synonymous Adjectives

In their book, Biber, Conrad and Reppen (1998) drew a distinction between big, large and great. More specifically, they aimed to find the collocates for these three adjectives in addition to their frequencies in both fiction and academic prose. The data were collected from Longman –Lancaster Corpus. The researchers focused on the top ten collocates and excluded those which occurred less than once per million. They concluded that although these three adjectives behave synonymously in isolation, their analysis showed that they can be used with different kinds of words.

In a larger set of near synonyms, Cai (2012) carried out a corpus-based analysis addressing the word great and its synonyms awesome, excellent, fabulous, fantastic, great, terrific, and wonderful. Specifically, it investigated these seven synonymous adjectives in terms of similarities and differences in their meanings, usage, collocates as well as frequencies. The data were compiled from COCA. The study concluded that the adjective great had scored the highest frequency among other equivalents. Then, what followed great was wonderful and excellent. Interestingly, awesome, fabulous, and fantastic have increasingly been used over time. Regarding the genre, fabulous, fantastic, great, terrific, and wonderful occurred more in spoken genre, whereas awesome and excellent are highly used in magazines. The results showed that the adverbs modifying these adjectives vary considerably and there is some degree of overlapping among nouns modified by these adjectives. Moreover, the results demonstrated that these adjectives usually modify abstract nouns. Additionally, the behavior of the corpus illustrated that excellent is used to modify and describe movements and events. With regard to awesome, data revealed that this adjective is distributed equally in modifying concepts/ideas and movements/events. A further finding is that these adjectives are mainly used in spoken language.

In a different study, Chanchotphattha (2013) attempted to compare and contrast the linguistic information profile of different, diverse and various. Particularly, the comparison was conducted in terms of different aspects including meaning, dialect, formality, collocations and grammatical patterns. It also examined information regarding these three adjectives as found in the dictionary. The data for investigation were gathered from 300 concordance lines drawn from BNC and the eighth edition of Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 2010. The analysis of the data proved that the three adjectives are not completely alike and cannot substitute each other in all contexts. That is, an adjective is suitable in one context but not in another context due to "dialect, formality, collocations and grammatical patterns" (ibid, p.30). It was observed that there were no differences in terms of dialect between diverse and various. Additionally, linking verbs, adverbs, prepositions and nouns are the main words that usually

attach to these adjectives. However, a collocation comprising "various+preposition" was not found at all.

In a wider set of synonyms, Hoffmann (2014) carried out a corpus-based study with the aim of investigating six near synonyms viz., nice, kind, lovely, friendly, gorgeous and pleasant. To help achieving the goals of the study, the definitions were taken from three online dictionaries namely, The Macmillan Dictionary, The Collins American Dictionary and The Merriam Webster Dictionary. Then, the similarities and differences among dictionaries were investigated and outlined. The top nominal collocates of the adjectives were classified into lexical patterns after being calculated from COCA. Moreover, the researcher investigated the stylistic variation of the six aforementioned adjectives across the different genres. The results of the corpus analysis challenged the definitions of the adjectives under investigation.

Laurea (2014) differentiated between four sets of near synonyms covering different parts of speech. For the time being, the focus will be on adjectives, namely obligatory, mandatory and compulsory. The study aimed at focusing on the syntactic and pragmatic similarities and differences among these adjectives that share the same semantic field. The data were gathered from two resources, namely different monolingual, bilingual and synonym dictionaries in addition to three corpora viz., COCA, BNC and Collins Wordbanks online. The overall results confirmed that the three synonyms are not interchangeable in all contexts although they share the same core meaning. Another distinction between these three adjectives is that while compulsory implies a punishment for those who do not respect the obligation, obligatory and mandatory do not. Moreover, only the adjective compulsory is used when something is done to keep people safe.

Nisani (2015) focused on three similar adjectives, possible, probable, and likely. The study compared and contrasted them in terms of four aspects i.e., their meaning, grammatical pattern, noun collocation, and degree of formality. The data were gathered from COCA and two online dictionaries viz., the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary and Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English. Due to differences among these adjectives in terms of meaning, grammatical pattern, noun collocations and stylistic related-information, these adjectives cannot replace each other in all contexts. Furthermore, the corpus proved to enrich the learners with additional linguistic information, which is not existent in dictionaries.

In the same fashion, Sirikan (2015) addressed the loose synonymous adjectives i.e., appalling, horrific, horrible, and hideous through a corpus-based approach. These synonyms were investigated in terms of comparing their grammatical patterns in American English and British English. It focused on the ten most frequent nouns that collocate with each adjective. The data were from different resources, particularly Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Oxford Collocation Dictionary, BNC and COCA. The first two resources were used for grammatical patterns and noun collocates, whereas the other two were utilized to list the ten most frequent noun collocates for each of the adjectives above. The sample of the study comprised the first 200 concordance lines for each word. The findings unveiled that dictionaries are not enough to provide us with thorough details. Moreover, some grammatical patterns appear less in Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary than in the two corpora.

Another interesting finding is that some of the noun collocates which are itemized in the Oxford Collocation Dictionary do not appear at the top ten list drawn from COCA. Finally, the corpora-based data proved that these words are not used interchangeably in all contexts. Hence, the corpora are advantageous and fruitful supplementary tools for further linguistic information that are not available in dictionaries in full details.

Turning to BNC, Supachal (2015) carried out a study to detect the similarities and differences in three adjectives, which are deadly, lethal, and fatal. The study focused on grammatical patterns, formality and collocational profile. The data were obtained from two sources; BNC and Oxford Online Advanced Learner's Dictionary 2010. To achieve the research objectives, one hundred concordance lines for each adjective were collected and analyzed. With regard to the first parameter, the results reported that the grammatical pattern of an "adjective and noun" is the most frequently used for each synonym. Then, this pattern was followed by a "linking verb and adjective". Furthermore, BNC provided more information on grammatical patterns than the dictionary did. In connection with the second parameter, the analysis indicated that all three adjectives are used in all contexts regardless of their formality. However, both lethal and fatal are used more in formal contexts, unlike the adjective deadly. Results obtained from BNC and the Oxford Online Advanced Learner's Dictionary confirmed that linking verbs, nouns, adverbs and prepositions are the basic collocates in these three adjectives. Another finding is that the three adjectives are used in their own context and cannot substitute each other in all contexts.

Likewise, Uba (2015) focused on the internal semantic structure of a set of near-synonym adjectives viz., important, essential, vital, necessary and crucial. The sample was chosen from BNC and nine traditional reference materials as source data. The researcher adopted a corpus-based approach focusing on the behavioral profile. The study cast some lights on the distributional patterns of the nouns that each adjective modifies. The analysis of the data challenged numerous existing definitions of this group of near-synonym adjectives by traditional reference materials. The results also showed that studying near-synonyms in traditional resources like dictionaries are considered inadequate in some instances.

Petcharat and Phoocharoensil (2017) paid a special attention to three adjectives i.e., appropriate, proper, and suitable. They were studied in terms of meaning, collocational restrictions and grammatical patterns. The sample was drawn from Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2014), Longman Advanced American Dictionary (2013), Macmillan Collocations Dictionary (2010) and COCA. The overall findings suggest that the three adjectives have the same core meaning but they differ in terms of their specific meanings, degree of formality, grammatical patterns as collocational profile. The results also reported that they are not interchangeable in all contexts. Another finding is that the corpus provides information that is not available in the dictionary.

Putri, Rajeg and Wandia (2017) investigated the adjective admirable and its near synonyms, namely admirable, commendable, laudable and estimable in COCA. The researchers studied the distribution of these four adjectives in COCA. They also examined their collocational structure as well as their meanings. The findings showed that these adjectives have different

frequencies in each genre. Admirable has the highest frequency i.e., 500 among other adjectives. As for estimable, it has scored the lowest frequency. The adjectives seem to collocate with nouns as in this frame "admirable + noun". The second frame is the "adverb + adjective". Regarding their functions, both attributive and predicative functions appear in the second type of the lexical collocation.

3. Methodology

3.1 Data Collection

The data were collected from the online LDOCE, MWD, COCA and BNC.

3.2 Investigated Words

The scope of the study is limited to eight synonymous adjectives, namely *afraid, scared, frightened, terrified, startled, fearful, horrified* and *petrified*. They were chosen for having near core meanings i.e., "state of fear".

3.3 Data Analysis

The frequencies for each adjective in COCA and BNC were gathered. Since the two corpora are different in size, the frequencies were normalized. Normalization allows the researchers to compare the frequency of each adjective in the two corpora by calculating them per million. Therefore, the results were discussed in terms of their frequency per million.

The genre in which each adjective was used is easily retrieved from both corpora by using the "Chart" command. This chart command available in both COCA and BNC interfaces allows a researcher to look for genres and sub-genres in which a word appears.

With regard to the core meanings of the eight adjectives, the researchers first searched for their meanings from the two dictionaries, namely MWD and LDOCE. Then, the results are represented in tables for each adjective. As for their meanings in the two corpora, the researchers focused on idiomatic expressions that usually come up with new meanings.

This paper adopted a triangulation research method in which there is combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis besides being a corpus-based approach. As for the quantitative, the researchers resorted to frequencies per million. Regarding the qualitative data, the researchers followed the descriptive, narrative analytical style to find justification and suitable analysis for the behavior of the corpus data.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Results and Discussion of Question One

Based on BNC, COCA, which of this set of adjectives is the most frequently used: afraid, scared, frightened, terrified, startled, fearful, horrified and petrified?

To help answering this question, the researchers visited the https://corpus.byu.edu/ which allows the users to choose the required corpus. After selecting the COCA, the researchers logged in and searched for the frequency of the eight adjectives under investigation. Then, the

researchers did the same for BNC. Since the COCA is 560 million and BNC is 100 million, the frequencies should be normalized. Therefore, the frequencies were calculated per million using http://www.thegrammarlab.com/?nor-portfolio=normalizing-word-counts and the results are listed in Table (1).

Table 1. The frequencies of the eight adjectives per million in COCA and BNC

COCA results				BNC results			
No.	Adjective	Fr.	PM		Adjective	Fr.	PM
1	Afraid	37319	66.64	1	Afraid	5490	54.90
2	Scared	15114	26.99	2	Frightened	1380	13.80
3	Frightened	5026	8.98	3	Scared	1072	10.72
4	Fearful	4314	7.70	4	Fearful	691	6.91
5	Terrified	2353	4.20	5	Terrified	358	3.58
6	Startled	2115	3.78	6	Startled	350	3.50
7	Petrified	917	1.64	7	Horrified	213	2.13
8	Horrified	893	1.59	8	Petrified	165	1.65

Fr. Frequencies   PM: Per Million

Table (1) shows the results of the frequencies of the eight adjectives after normalizing them. A quick look at this Table shows that the eight adjectives under investigation have a lot of similarity in their ranking with some slight variation. The data extracted from the Table illustrate that *"afraid", "scared"* and *"frightened"* have scored the highest ranks with highest frequencies per million (PM). Another observation is that the frequencies per million in COCA are higher for all adjectives except for *"frightened", "petrified"* and *"horrified"*.

In connection to COCA, the adjective "*afraid*" has the lion's share among all other adjectives. It has scored about (66.64) PM. *Scared* has been found to be the second adjective with a higher frequency in comparison to the others. This adjective has appeared (26.99) PM. Apparently, the adjective "*frightened*" has a relatively higher presence in which it has scored about (8.98) PM. What is also noticeable is that "*startled", "petrified*" and "*horrified*" have the lowest frequencies PM. They have scored frequencies of (3.78), (1.64) and (1.59) respectively.

With regard to BNC results, the behavior of the corpus demonstrates that "*afraid*" has reached the top of the ladder and it has scored (54.90) PM. Seemingly, the data show that "*frightened*" has another high frequency of (13.80) in comparison to the other adjectives. As for "*scared*", it has been ranked as the third highest adjective used in BNC. Surprisingly, "*startled*", "*horrified*" and "*petrified*" have the lowest frequencies (3.50), (2.13) and (1.65) respectively. Based on COCA and BNC, the overall results prove that the most frequent adjectives of fear are as follows: *"afraid", "scared"* and *"frightened"*.

The findings of both corpora revealed that the most frequent adjectives of fear are "*afraid*", "*scared*" and "*frightened*". Moreover, the findings also proved that "*startled*", "*petrified*" and "*horrified*" have scored the lowest frequencies. These findings might be ascribed to several

reasons. Firstly, the etymology of the words. These adjectives might have appeared earlier than the other adjectives. For instance, according to MWD, the word "*afraid*" has appeared firstly in the 14th century, "*scared*" and "*frightened*" in the 16th century. As for "*startled*", this has been used as a noun and verb in the 16th and 17th centuries. With regard to "*petrified*" and "*horrified*", the former appeared in the 16th century as a verb while the latter has been firstly used in the 18th century. This means that the earlier the words appear, the more frequencies they have.

Another reason is the fact that these three adjectives have appeared with more than one sense in both dictionaries as well as the two corpora. For instance, "*afraid*" has appeared in LDOCE with five senses and in MWD in three senses. As for "*scared*", the LDOCE has offered six senses and it appeared with two senses in the MWD. The adjective "*frightened*" has two meanings in LDOCE and two in MWD. Moreover, the high frequencies of the three adjectives might be due to their high usage in idiomatic expressions as it appeared in the question three of this paper.

4.2 Results and Discussion of Question Two

Based on BNC, COCA, in which genres is each of the eight adjectives used?

Table (2) shows the order of the eight adjectives according to their frequencies in different genres. The data of the Table indicate that all of them are highly used in fiction. Moreover, the Table shows that "*afraid*", "*scared*" and "*frightened*" are used highly in fiction and spoken genres. Furthermore, there is another tendency for the British to avoid using these adjectives in academic texts. What is also noticeable is the fact that "*terrified*", "*startled*" and "*horrified*" have scored the second rank in newspapers. This result is not so significant since the frequencies PM for each adjective is very low, namely eight, three, and five respectively.

Table 2. The order of the eight adjectives in BNC in different genres

Adjective	The order of adjectives according to their frequencies in genres					
Afraid	*Fiction*	*Spoken*	*Magazine*	*News*	*Non-Ac.*	*Academic*
Fr. Per million	*199.44*	*60.62*	*37.87*	*26.66*	*20.19*	*8.28*
Scared	*Fiction*	*Spoken*	*News*	*Magazine*	*Non-Ac.*	*Academic*
Fr. Per million	*32.1*	*13.7*	*12.6*	*8.68*	*4.36*	*1.04*
Frightened	*Fiction*	*Spoken*	*News*	*Magazine*	*Non-Ac.*	*Academic*
Fr. Per million	*47.71*	*13.75*	*12.33*	*8.54*	*5.33*	*3.2*
Terrified	*Fiction*	*News*	*Magazine*	*Spoken*	*Non-Ac.*	*Academic*
Fr. Per million	*10.81*	*9.17*	*2.48*	*0.9*	*0.67*	*0.52*
Startled	*Fiction*	*News*	*Magazine*	*Non-Ac.*	*Spoken*	*Academic*
Fr. Per million	*17.3*	*2.1*	*1.38*	*0.55*	*0.2*	*0.2*
Fearful	*Fiction*	*Non-Ac.*	*Academic*	*News*	*Magazine*	*Spoken*
Fr. Per million	*14.2*	*8.06*	*6.13*	*5.64*	*5.23*	*2.21*

Horrified	Fiction	News	Magazine	Non-Ac.	Spoken	Academic
Fr. Per million	7.73	3.92	0.96	0.73	0.3	0.33
Petrified	Fiction	Spoken	News	Magazine	Academic	Non-Ac.
Fr. Per million	3.58	2.51	1.62	1.51	0.72	0.67

Fr. Frequency   Non-Ac.: Non-Academic   News.: Newspapers

Table (3) shows the findings related to the order of the eight adjectives in COCA according to their frequencies per million in different genres. The tabulated data show that the eight adjectives have the highest presence in fiction. They have also scored another high presence in spoken for "*afraid*", "*scared*", "*frightened*" and "*fearful*". As for "*terrified*", "*startled*", "*horrified*" and "*petrified*", they have appeared highly in popular magazines. The data extracted from this Table show that the Americans tend to avoid using such adjectives of fear in academic contexts. Therefore, academic texts have scored the lowest frequencies. The spoken language has scored the second ranking for all adjectives except for "*startled*", "*petrified*" and "*horrified*".

Table 3. The order of the eight adjectives in COCA in different genres

Adjective	The order of adjectives according to their frequencies in genres				
Afraid	Fiction	Spoken	Magazine	Newspapers	Academic
Fr. Per million	142.4	86.48	43.44	40.68	14.33
Scared	Fiction	Spoken	Newspapers	Magazine	Academic
Fr. Per million	52.72	42.29	17.4	16.92	2.95
Frightened	Fiction	Spoken	Magazine	Newspapers	Academic
Fr. Per million	25.31	7.19	5.28	4.48	2.06
Terrified	Fiction	Magazine	Spoken	Newspapers	Academic
Fr. Per million	11.9	3.08	3.05	1.88	0.83
Startled	Fiction	Magazine	Newspapers	Spoken	Academic
Fr. Per million	15.4	1.74	0.96	0.44	0.26
Fearful	Fiction	Spoken	Newspapers	Magazine	Academic
Fr. Per million	9.92	7.22	7.04	7	6.7
Horrified	Fiction	Magazine	Newspapers	Spoken	Academic
Fr. Per million	4.63	1.14	0.93	0.86	0.32
Petrified	Fiction	Magazine	Spoken	Newspapers	Academic
Fr. Per million	3.39	1.7	1.12	1.1	0.74

Fr. Frequency

The overall findings of both COCA and BNC have revealed that nearly all adjectives tend to behave similarly with very slight variation. For instance, all adjectives appear to be mostly used in fiction. This result might be attributed to the fact that adjectives in general are part of

the descriptive words which are used to draw a vivid picture in the readers' minds. In fiction, writers are advised not to keep repeating the same word. Therefore, variety is a key issue that helps the writers to write in a successful way that appeals readers' senses.

Moreover, using this type of adjectives i.e., adjectives of fear would add more flavor to the text being read. They would also ensure bringing the readers' to the real scene as if they are attending and feeling the events. In other words, using the adjectives would, in one way or another, establish a vivid atmosphere. Furthermore, adjectives of fear are considered part of emotive language that usually evokes emotional responses for the audience or readers. Another justification for the appearance of these adjectives in fiction is due its persuasive function. For instance, if a speaker wants to persuade somebody that s/he was very frightened, the word "*petrified*" would be the most suitable candidate among these adjectives. Additionally, the appearance of the adjectives of fear in fiction may be justified by the desire of the writers to strengthen and clarify a certain image or a type of fear. The results appeared here partially match the views of Biber, Conrad and Rappen (1998) who focused on "*big*", "*large*" and "*great*" because they appeared mostly in fiction and prose.

Moreover, the spoken language has scored the second ranking for all adjectives except for "*startled*", "*petrified*" and "*horrified*" in COCA. With regard to BNC, the results have proved that most of these adjectives have also scored the second highest frequencies in spoken except for "*terrified*", "*startled*", "*fearful*" and "*horrified*". The results of both corpora might be ascribed to the low frequencies of these adjectives in both BNC and COCA as they appeared in the first question of this paper. In BNC, "*terrified*", "*startled*" and "*horrified*" have scored the second rank in newspapers. This result is not so significant since the frequencies PM for each adjective is eight, three, and five respectively.

The high frequency of the adjectives of fear in spoken language might also be due to several reasons. In this variety of language, speakers are under the pressure of time in which they have to respond directly. Therefore, they sometimes use gap fillers, incomplete constructions, repetition as well as paraphrasing/ rephrasing. The word repetition is a key word here. This may encourage the researchers to suggest that when people are exposed to a frightening situation, they may express the fear they have witnessed by either repeating the same word many times or using synonyms that would vividly express the fear.

The results of COCA and BNC also illustrate that both American and British speakers tend to avoid using such adjectives of fear in academic contexts. Therefore, academic texts have scored the lowest frequencies. It is worth mentioning that the academic texts here refer to articles published in 100 different peer-reviewed journals as cited in COCA website. This might be attributed to the features of academic texts. For instance, the main purpose of academic texts is to inform the readers rather than entertain them. Additionally, these academic texts are usually objective rather than being personal. This means that the authors' main focus is usually on the information without leaving any space for their feelings of happiness, fear or love. Moreover, academic texts tend to use formal language and these adjectives are mostly informal. Further, writing research papers usually requires precision in which the writers describe facts and figures accurately without adding their emotions.

4.3 Results and Discussion of Question Three

Based on BNC, COCA, online LDOCE and MWD, what are the referential/core meanings of afraid, scared, frightened, terrified, startled, fearful, horrified and petrified?

To help answering this question, the researchers resorted to online LDOCE, WMD, BNC and COCA. In the first section, the researchers looked up the meanings of the eight adjectives from the online LDOCE and MWD and the results are listed in a tabular form as shown below. In the second section, the researchers tabulated the results of the two corpora.

4.3.1 Meanings of the Adjectives in LDOCE and MWD

Table (4) illustrates the meanings of "*afraid*" as provided by online LDOCE and MWD. A general look at Table shows that LDOCE offers four senses while MWD offers three meanings of the word "*afraid*". Results extracted from the online LDOCE illustrate that "*afraid*" means either "frightened because you think that you may get hurt or that something bad may happen", "worried that something bad will happen as a result of your action", an adjective "used to politely tell someone something that may annoy, upset, or disappoint you" and "easily frightened or very nervous". With regard to the fourth meaning, this one is peculiar to the idiomatic expression "*afraid out of your own shadow*". MWD has also provided us with three different senses, namely "filled with fear of apprehension", "filled with concern or regret over an unwanted situation" and "having a dislike for something".

Table 4. Meaning of afraid in LDOCE and MWD

No	LDOCE	MWD
1	Frightened because you think that you may get hurt or that something bad may happen.	Filled with fear of apprehension.
2	Worried that something bad will happen as a result of your action.	Filled with concern or regret over an unwanted situation.
3	Used to politely to tell someone something that may annoy, upset, or disappoint you.	Having a dislike for something.
4	Easily frightened or very nervous "***Afraid out of your own shadow***"	

Turning to the meaning of "*scared*", Table (5) shows the meaning of "*scared*" in both LDOCE and MWD. The word "*scared*" seems to have six senses in LDOCE. The first definition deals with the meaning of "*scared*" in non-idiomatic expressions. The second definition is related to "*scared stiff*" and "*scared out of your wits*". These two expressions means "extremely frightened". With regard to the meaning of "*scared to death*", this expression is "used to emphasize that a feeling or emotion is very strong". Moreover, *scared*

means "easily frightened or very nervous" when it occurs idiomatically in "*scared out of your own shadow*". The dictionary entry also shows that "*scared*" means "feeling very frightened" when it comes in "*scared witless*". The Table also indicates that the sixth meaning of "*scared*" is "to make someone feel very frightened" as in "*scared somebody shitless*". In MWD, this word appears with two senses viz., "thrown into or being in a state of fear, fright, or panic", "very afraid".

Table 5. Meaning of scared in LDOCE and MWD

No	LDOCE	MWD
1	Frightened of something, or nervous about something.	Thrown into or being in a state of fear, fright, or panic.
2	Extremely frightened "**scared stiff**", "**scared out of your wits**"	Very afraid "**scared stiff**", "**Scared to death**"
3	Used to emphasize that a feeling or emotion is very strong "**scared to death**"	
4	Easily frightened or very nervous "**scared of your own shadow**"	
5	Feeling very frightened "**scared witless**"	
6	to make someone feel very frightened "**scared some body shitless**"	

Regarding the meaning of "*frightened*", Table (6) displays the meaning in the two dictionaries. LDOCE gave two definitions i.e., "feeling afraid" and "easily frightened or very nervous". The second definition is peculiar to the idiomatic expression "*frightened of your own shadow*". As for MWD results, this adjective seems to have two senses viz., "feeling fear" and "made to feel fear".

Table 6. Meaning of frightened in LDOCE and MWD

No	LDOCE	MWD
1	Feeling afraid	Feeling fear
2	easily frightened or very nervous "**frightened of your own shadow**"	Made to feel afraid

Table (7) shows the definitions of "*terrified*" in LDOCE and MWD. While LDOCE gave this adjective a higher degree of fear by defining it as "very frightened", MWD's definition is "filled with terror". Apparently, The LDOCE offers another definition for this adjective when it comes idiomatically as in " *terrified out of her wits*". This idiom means to be frightened by someone very much.

Table 7. Meaning of terrified in LDOCE and MWD

No	LDOCE	MWD
1	Very frightened	Filled with terror
2	To be frightened by someone very much **"Terrified out of her wits"**	

The results of the meaning of "*startled*" in both LDOCE and MWD are represented in Table (8). The first dictionary offers one sense for this adjective i.e., "to make someone suddenly surprised or slightly shocked". In MWD, the adjective "*startled*" has appeared with two senses, namely "to cause to move or jump suddenly (as in surprise or alarm)" and "frightened or surprised suddenly and usually not seriously".

Table 8. Meaning of startled in LDOCE and MWD

No	LDOCE	MWD
1	To make someone suddenly surprised or slightly shocked	To cause to move or jump suddenly (as in surprise or alarm).
2		Frightened or surprised suddenly and usually not seriously.

In connection to the meaning of "*fearful*", Table (9) shows the meanings in the two dictionaries. The meanings of "*fearful*" in LDOCE are "frightened that something bad might happen", "extremely bad" and "very frightening" whereas MWD defines it as "full of fear", "causing or likely to cause fear, fright, or alarm especially because of dangerous quality", "indicating or arising from fear", "inclined to fear", and "very great or bad-used as an intensive". Apparently, both dictionaries inclined to give us more than one sense.

Table 9. Meaning of fearful in LDOCE and MWD

No	LDOCE	MWD
1	Frightened that something bad might happen	Full of fear
2	Extremely bad	Causing or likely to cause fear, fright, or alarm especially because of dangerous quality
3	Very frightening	Indicating or arising from fear
4		Inclined to fear
5		Very great or bad —used as an intensive

Turning to the definitions of "*horrified*" in LDOCE and MWD as appeared in Table (10), LDOCE reveals that there is one sense for this adjective which indicates a higher degree of fear, namely "to make someone feel very shocked and upset or afraid". Turning to MWD's definitions, having looked up this dictionary, it shows that this word has two senses "to cause to feel horror" and "to fill with distaste".

Table 10. Meaning of horrified in LDOCE and MWD

No	LDOCE	MWD
1	to make someone feel very shocked and upset or afraid	to cause to feel horror
2		to fill with distaste

Finally, Table (11) indicates the results related to the word "*petrified*" in LDOCE and MWD. The data extracted from this Table illustrate that "*petrified*" appears with one sense in both dictionaries. While in LDOCE "*petrified*" means "extremely frightened, especially so frightened that you cannot move or think", in MWD it means "to confound with fear, amazement, or awe". It is worth mentioning that the researchers only focused on the meanings related to fear. Therefore, the meaning of "*petrified*" as "to become stone or stony hardness or rigidity" has been ignored.

Table 11. Meaning of petrified in LDOCE and MWD

No	LDOCE	MWD
1	extremely frightened, especially so frightened that you cannot move or think "***petrified with fear/fright***"	to confound with fear, amazement, or awe

In brief, what can be concluded from the results above is the fact that LDOCE gives more emphasis on idiomatic meanings of words under investigation. Unlike MWD, LDOCE offers more senses for the words "*afraid*", "*scared*" and "*frightened*".

4.3.2 Meanings of the Adjectives in COCA and BNC

In this section, the researchers paid special attention to the idiomatic expressions which usually come up with new meaning. Besides the well-known meanings that appeared in the two dictionaries, the researchers found out that there are other meanings that appear only in the two corpora. That is to say, the two dictionaries do not pay attention to them.

To avoid repeating the shared meanings among the dictionaries and the two corpora, the researchers preferred to focus on meanings that appear only in the two corpora, that is to say, these meanings don not appear in the dictionaries. Therefore, Table (12) is a summary of the meanings of some of the eight adjectives that do not appear in the two dictionaries. Findings of this Table show that MWD do not usually pay considerable attention to the idiomatic expressions related to a dictionary entry. For instance, MWD provides meanings related only to "*sacred to death*", "*scared stiff*", "*frightened to death*" and "*scared the hell out of me/my friend*". It is worth mentioning that the researchers consulted other dictionaries for the meanings of expressions that appeared in the two corpora and have not been given any attention in the two dictionaries. For examples from corpus, see Appendix (1).

Table 12. Meanings of some of the eight adjectives in the COCA

Expressions in COCA and MWD	Meaning
Scared to death / Scared stiff	very afraid
Frightened to death	to frighten (someone) very badly

Scared the hell out of me/my friend	To shock or frighten one very suddenly and/or severely
* Terrified out of her wits	to be frightened by someone very much
*Scared out of her wits	being frightened to an extent that you behave irrationally
*Scared/startled shitless	to be completely terrified, extremely frightened
*Scared/frightened witless	to be frightened very much
*Scared spitless	to be frightened to the point that your mouth goes dry
*Scared out of my minds	to be shocked or scared suddenly and/ severely. Hyperbolically alludes to be frightened to become insane
*Scared/afraid of his own shadow	very timid and fearful, timorous and frightened of every thing
*Frightened out of my wits / their minds	to be shocked or scared suddenly and/ severely. Hyperbolically alludes to be frightened to become insane
*Frightened stiff 1	extremely terrified so one cannot move
*Petrified with horror /fear	to benumb or paralyze with astonishment, horror or other strong feeling

(*) the star means that it only appears in COCA

( ) without the star means it appears in both MWD and COCA

As for the results of COCA, the data of the Table indicate that this corpus offers all possible idiomatic expressions of a word under investigation. For example, "*scared out of her wits*" offers a meaning of "being frightened to an extent that you behave irrationally". What is also noticeable is the fact that the MWD has ignored the meaning of "*scared shitless*" and "*startled shitless*" which both mean "to be completely terrified and extremely frightened". The idiomatic expression "*terrified out of her wits*" has only appeared in the COCA which means "to be frightened by someone very much". Moreover, the idiomatic expressions "*scared witless*" and "*frightened witless*" mean "to be frightened very much". The data reveal that the transparent idiom "*scared spitless*" has the meaning of "to be frightened to the point that your mouth goes dry". The corpus data also reveal that "*scared out of my minds*" is another idiomatic expression which means "to be shocked or scared suddenly and/ severely. Hyperbolically alludes to be frightened to become insane".

What is also striking is the fact that MWD leaves no space for the meaning of "*scared/afraid of his own shadow*". This means "very timid and fearful or timorous and frightened of everything". Additionally, as COCA reveals that the Americans tend to use "*frightened out of my wits/their minds*" idiomatically to indicate the meaning of " to be shocked or scared suddenly and/ severely. Hyperbolically alludes to be frightened to become insane". *Frightened* has also appeared idiomatically with "*stiff*" forming the idiomatic expression "*frightened stiff*". This idiom means "extremely terrified so one cannot move". Finally, MWD

does not allude to the meaning of "*petrified with horror/fear*". This idiom only appears in COCA to indicate the meaning of "to benumb or paralyze with astonishment, horror or other strong feeling".

Table (13) is a brief description of the meanings of idiomatic expressions related to the adjectives under investigation. A general look at the Table shows that the LDOCE compilers pay much attention to idiomatic expressions related to these adjectives of fear. Unlike MWD results, which only highlighted the meanings of three idiomatic expressions, LDOCE pays attention to eleven idioms as shown in the Table. As can be noticed, "*scared to death*, "*scared stiff*", "*scared out of my wits*", "*scared shitless/witless*", "*frightened /scared of my own shadow*", "*petrified with fear/fright*" and "*terrified out of her wits*" appear in both BNC and LDOCE.

Table 13. Meanings of some of the eight adjectives in the BNC

Expressions in BNC and LDOCE	Meaning
Scared to death	extremely frightened
Scared stiff	extremely frightened
Scared out of my wits	extremely frightened
Scared shitless	to make someone feel very frightened
Scared witless	to be frightened very much
Frightened / Scared of my own shadow 2	easily frightened or very nervous
Petrified with fear /fright	extremely frightened, especially so frightened that you cannot move or think
Terrified out of her wits	To be frightened by someone very much
*Scared out of my minds/ cerebellum/ brains	to shock or scare one very suddenly and/or severely. Hyperbolically alludes to frightening one so severely as to cause them to become insane
*Frightened out of their minds /wits	to be shocked or scared suddenly and/ severely. Hyperbolically alludes to be frightened to become insane
*Startled out of her wits 1	to frighten someone to such an extent that they behave irrationally
*Startled witless 1	to be frightened very much
*Frightened to death	to be shock or frightened very suddenly and/or severely. Hyperbolically alludes to frightening someone so badly as to cause them to die.
Afraid of your own shadow	easily frightened or very nervous (no presence in BNC)

(*) the star means that it only appears in BNC
( ) without the star means it appears in both LDOCE and BNC

Apparently, the first three expressions have the same meaning of "extremely frightened". Moreover, *scared shitless/witless* have nearly similar meanings of "feeling very frightened".

As for "*frightened/scared of my own shadow*", these two expressions have a different meaning from the previous expressions, namely "easily frightened or very nervous". A deeper look at the Table shows that "*petrified with fear /fright*" have another meaning of "extremely frightened, especially so frightened that you cannot move or think". Moreover, *terrified out of her wits* has appeared in both BNC and LDOCE to mean "to be frightened by someone very much". For examples from corpus, see Appendix (2).

Data extracted from the Table show that BNC has provided us with seven idiomatic expressions that were not mentioned in the LDOCE. The Table indicates that "*scared out of my minds", "scared of my cerebellum"*, "*scared out of my brains*", "*frightened to death*", "*frightened out of their minds*" and "*frightened out of their wits*" mean "to shock or scare one very suddenly and/or severely. Hyperbolically alludes to frightening one so severely as to cause them to become insane". Moreover, the expression "*startled out of her wits*" has also appeared only in the corpus and has no presence in the dictionary. Consulting some of the dictionaries, this idiom means "to frighten someone to such an extent that they behave irrationally". Furthermore, *startled witless* has only appeared once in the corpus to indicate the meaning of "to be frightened very much". Finally, the expression "*afraid of your own shadow*" has only appeared in the LDOCE and has not appeared in the whole BNC.

In brief, the results of COCA reveal that this corpus gives more space to idiomatic expressions related to the adjectives under investigation if compared to the results of MWD. Another striking result is the fact that there are some expressions that occur only in American English such as "*startled shitless*", "*frightened witless*", "*scared spitless*", " *frightened stiff*" and "*scared the hell out of me*". With regard to the results of BNC, this corpus seems to give much emphasis on idiomatic expressions related to these adjectives. Unlike the MWD, the LDOCE has taken into account the idiomatic expressions related to adjectives of fear. Additionally, two idiomatic expressions seem to be only used in British English viz., "*frightened of your own shadow*", "*startled out of her wits*" and "*startled witless*". Therefore, it can be concluded that the data of the two corpora give extra meanings that are not found in these dictionaries.

The findings related to the meanings of the eight adjectives in both LDOCE and MWD have shown that in comparison with MWD, LDOCE offers more senses for the words "*afraid*", "*scared*" and "*frightened*". This might be ascribed to the fact that LDOCE gives much more emphasis on idiomatic meanings of words under investigation.

Results of COCA have shown that this corpus gives more space to idiomatic expressions related to the adjectives under investigation if compared to the results of MWD. This might be due to the fact that COCA is always updated and takes into consideration all types of genres where the word appears unlike the dictionaries which are usually compiled based on the experience and intuition of lexicographers. The results here cast a new light on the ability of the corpus to give more meanings if compared to dictionaries. Therefore, this result provides a piece of evidence on some of the drawbacks found in the dictionaries.

Furthermore, the findings have unveiled that there are some expressions that only occur in American English such as "*startled shitless*", "*frightened witless*", "*scared spitless*",

"*frightened stiff*" and "*scared the hell out of me*". This result might be due to dialectal differences since each dialect has its own peculiarities, in other words, what can be used in one region might not be used in another region due to the availability of other alternatives. For instance, the British would use "*scared shitless*" instead of "*startled shitless*". They may consider "*scared*" as less formal so it is suitable to be used with informal idioms. The same may apply to "*scared witless*" instead of "*frightened witless*". It is worth mentioning that the researchers resorted to native speaker's intuition in justifying this result.

With regard to the results of BNC, the corpus seems to give emphasis on idiomatic expressions related to these adjectives. Unlike the MWD, the LDOCE has taken into account the idiomatic expressions related to adjectives of fear. This result can be justified by the fact the online LDOCE is linked with corpora. Therefore, much focus is paid for the idioms in this dictionary. Additionally, two idiomatic expressions seem to be only used in British English viz., "*frightened of your own shadow*", "*startled out of her wits*" and "*startled witless*". Again, this result can be attributed to dialectal differences and peculiarities. Therefore, it can be concluded that the data of the two corpora give extra meanings that are not found in these dictionaries. The results are partially in line with those of Nisani (2015), Sirikan (2015), Uba (2015) and Petcharat and Phoocharoensil (2017).

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

The overall analysis of the results have shown that although these adjectives seem to be similar in isolation, there are some cases where they cannot be interchangeably used in all contexts. The overall findings can be summarized as follows:

1. Based on COCA and BNC, the overall results have shown that the most frequent adjectives of fear are as follows: *"afraid", "scared"* and *"frightened"*. The results of both corpora have also revealed that "*startled*", "*horrified*" and "*petrified*" have scored the lowest frequencies.

2. The results of BNC have proved that there is a strong tendency for the eight adjectives to be highly used in fiction. Furthermore, there is another tendency for the British to avoid using these adjectives in academic texts. What is also noticeable is the fact that "*terrified*", "*startled*" and "*horrified*" have scored the second rank in newspapers.

3. The findings related to the core meanings of these adjectives in dictionaries have shown that LDOCE gives more emphasis on idiomatic meanings of words under investigation. Unlike MWD, LDOCE offers more senses for the words "*afraid*", "*scared*" and "*frightened*".

4. The meanings of these adjectives in COCA have revealed that this corpus gives more space for idiomatic expressions related to the adjectives under investigation if compared to the results of MWD. Another striking result is the fact that there are some expressions that occur only in American English such as "*startled shitless*", "*frightened witless*", "*scared spitless*", "*frightened stiff*" and "*scared the hell out of me*". With regard to the results of BNC, this corpus seems to give much emphasis on idiomatic expressions related to these adjectives. Unlike the MWD, the LDOCE has taken into

account the idiomatic expressions related to adjectives of fear. Additionally, two idiomatic expressions seem to be only used in British English viz., "*frightened of your own shadow*", "*startled out of her wits*" and "*startled witless*". Therefore, it can be concluded that the data of the two corpora give extra meanings that are not found in these dictionaries.

5. The results of COCA reveal that all adjectives tend to behave similarly with very slight variation. For instance, all adjectives appear to be mostly used in fiction. The data also show that the Americans tend to avoid using such adjectives of fear in academic contexts. Therefore, academic texts have scored the lowest frequencies. The spoken language has scored the second ranking for all adjectives except for "*startled*", "*petrified*" and "*horrified*".

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the results achieved in the current paper, the researchers propose the following recommendations:

1. A further corpus-based study to be conducted on the same adjectives dealing with collocational behaviors and patterns of these adjectives.
2. In fact, collocational knowledge can be an essential component in efficient vocabulary acquisition.
3. The findings came up with some pedagogical implications that encourage teachers and curricula planners to activate the use of corpora as a good supplementary tool in teaching English. For example, showing basic differences among synonyms etc.
4. A further study might be conducted on the same adjectives in Arabic based on Arabic corpus.
5. A further study might be conducted with the same adjectives based on the Corpus of Historical American English (COHA) that enables the researchers to trace the use of a word historically.

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Appendix

Appendix (1). A sample of concordance lines from COCA

" Her father's anger unsettled the horses some. " Scared of you, **scared to death** of you and your badge and your whole damn bunch! " #

, there wasn't a thing wrong with her except for the fact she was **scared to death** someone would see her other than her husband, me, or Jorge

should follow the orders of their local law enforcement. " # " I'm **scared to death**. I've never been through anything like this before, " one

of the two parties. Once it got to the floor, they were **scared stiff** to vote against it, and Chris Van Hollen and Marty Meehan dese

It puts a chill on you, " Greenhouse says. " People are **scared stiff**. " They were scared stiff in Iraq, too, and for good reason

, " Greenhouse says. " People are scared stiff. " They were **scared stiff** in Iraq, too, and for good reason. When civilian employees

ran a business. I see what's going on today, and I am **frightened to death**. NARRATOR# We have Republicans trying to

leave their wares behind, and watch a movie. # " Those guys are **frightened to death**, " Morton says. " They are cold a

Probably not. But I do know my own first three years, I was **frightened to death** much of the time. KING: Of? BREYER:

. I reacted. It was late and we'd had sex and this room **scared the hell out of** me. " # She smiled. " You run fast.

age. Homeless man found her an hour ago in a pile of trash. **Scared the hell out of** him. Killer wrapped her in c

* * * # " Jesus, Ellie! " cried Halvey. " You **scared the hell out of** me. Make some noise when you sneak up on a

(quietly) Or, someone else... # Fran is **terrified out of her wits** but holds her ground. Slowly, Ali backs away, eyes st

nothing will keep her indoors, not even if she's **terrified out of her wits**. " " Yes, children are funny that way, aren't

Well, not edgy exactlymore like **terrified out of his wits**. The feel of the wind whipping through his hair and the sight of telep

violent that the boy saw lights crisscrossing before his eyes! **Scared out of his wits**, he set off running from the Dotori Bridg

on a good front, though it was obvious he was **scared out of his wits** and well over his head. Abdallah had to keep remindir

satellite phone systems, not broken bodies -- and he was **scared out of his wits**. # I'm not the right person to get here first,

a crowd. " # I felt sick. " Maybe his neighbors are **scared shitless** of him. They ignore what goes on. " Where I grew up every

pull a firearm from its holster. Correcting for the fact that she was **scared shitless**, but that her gun was already trained on

it all over his face and in his eyes. He was furious, **scared shitless**, and completely helpless - with no option left but to beg.

dead from a bullet in the head. Fats is **startled shitless**. # # BASIL # Ladies and gentlemen... Helvis has left the building.

, " she said, clutching his sleeve, " that young man is **scared witless**, also something rhymes with witless, and he's on fire t

made bim smile. Yes, smile. Here be'd been stabbed, **scared witless** and very nearly sbitless, and bis bands tingled as tbe

I had four beautiful women in the plane behind me. And I was **scared witless** - though I didn't want anyone to know that. ˈ

·infested portions of the United States are annually **frightened witless** by grim predictions emanating from the "

killer, but I do know there are five women in Hollywood who are **scared spitless** right now. They are ramping up security

to the launch vehicle, would have been interesting if I hadn't been **scared spitless**. Nanoannie got excited and kept pointi

on him that he had unpredictable wind to contend with, he'd been **scared spitless**. Like now. The last card up his sleeve v

use that faith to get through this modeling gig. " Naturally, I'm **scared out of my mind** that I'm going to trip, " she says.

think. I was in shock. To tell you the truth, I was **scared out of my mind**. But I tried to act, to pretend that it

which marked the 20th anniversary of his first NFL telecast. He recalls being " **scared out of my mind** in Chicago at Sold

ourselves the Maggots would frighten people -- but Len was **scared of his own shadow**, so he wasn't the best gau

. Despite his formidable size and bark, Big Steve was **scared of his own shadow**. He ran from butterflies and squi

ecretly called the world's only walking invertebrate, a man **scared of his own shadow**. Her purported supervisor,

her heart broken at least twice. Instead, she was **afraid of her own shadow**, only talked to people when it was

going to do it, right? The person who's **afraid of her own shadow**, just going to take charge of that two-million-

had bought her back in May, underweight and shaky. **Afraid of her own shadow**, literally, or of anything else th

" # No need to caution her. She was already **frightened out of her wits**. Sirens grew closer. " I hear them. " # " Stay w

a " 1-2-3-Go! " Mary Emily's mother was almost **frightened out of her wits** when she saw her midget daughter run to

on the grass next to a little girl he had just **frightened out of her wits**. He buried his face in his hands for a moment ₐ

Refugees are coming across the border right now, **frightened out of their minds**. But this is war. I mean, that is

· ran out of the room. TROY-ROBERTS# So you must've been **frightened out of your mind**? EMILY-HAMILTON# Very

ran out of the room. TROY-ROBERTS# So you must've been **frightened out of your mind**. EMILY-HAMILTON# Very r

I thought, Now I know what it means to be **frightened stiff**. # We made a quick tour of the southern half of the campus

a wrinkled hag turned of seventy! I was struck dumb with amazement, and **petrified with horror**! " His being " stru

rather it turns to the language of terror (" amazement, " " **petrified with horror** ") current in the 1740s with such

was one Ksho had heard before; it meant what is your name? Still **petrified with fear**, she struggled to reply. " Xinecoti

providing free counseling and AIDS testing in our traveling AIDS Mobile. # We were **petrified with fear** when a particip

its legs against its will. I was a walking statue, cold, nearly **petrified with fear**, stiff with terror. # We arrived at the car. ₍

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Appendix (2). A sample of concordance lines from BNC

window first, make sure he didn't come back. He'd got me **scared to death**, Marie, I don't mind telling you. And ther

, he said. He was in a real funny mood. -- He looked **scared to death**. -- Went on about never coming back no more.

sure -- except James Lambert. There was summat wrong with him. He looked **scared to death**.' There was evil done,

. After a bit I got up and -- I went back. I was **scared stiff**. It was sort of creepy down there. I couldn't see nothing

it yesterday. The Head was livid. Some of the young kids have been **scared stiff**." It always comes up,' said Jamie

He just said the first impertinent thing that came into his head. He's **scared stiff** of going away to school and all

high above the floor. Frightened? Sonny, I was **scared out of my wits**. Scared shitless, and that's the t

for a pet. " Daphne: " I would be **scared out of my wits** to have a giraffe -- it's a wild animal and far to

He's driving.' Very good, Ace told herself. I'm **scared shitless**, but I remembered to re-set the laser. How many of the

a stiff upper lip and a devil-may-care sangfroid, no matter if he were **scared shitless**. That was the stuff that Johnny

floor. Frightened? Sonny, I was scared out of my wits. **Scared shitless**, and that's the truth. There's a chest across th

in the FTC case against Microsoft. Naturally a lot of people are **scared witless** of getting on Microsoft's blacklist and will only

y, he was often terrified. He described himself being' **scared witless**' when he went to Oxford, for example. Yet he conquered

ly incautious David Mellor to acknowledge that everyone, Central Office included, was **scared witless** on Thursday morning. T

There is a beautiful little iron-grey mare here that Alejandro has **frightened out of her wits** and says is too wet for polo.

on. Maura, tears running down her face, was **frightened out of her wits**. Anthony was dead... her brother Anthony who

hammering on the door and Jenna shot up in bed, **frightened out of her wits**. For a minute she didn't know where she w

But I can't go on like this, she thought; I'll be **scared of my own shadow** soon! Whatever Gran says about her,

Drive!' he snarled. The man was **petrified with fear**. He was a family man and, despite being a native New

o death but I had the advantage of surprise. He was **petrified with fear** as I held my knife in front of him.' I do

hey still recognised me. Despite the fact that I was **petrified with fear**, I was st ill their leader. I was back in control

The driver of the truck must now have assumed he was **petrified with fright**, unable to think, maybe even asleep as someti

r, and they could only watch helplessly as the child stood **petrified with fright** between the rails. They saw the mother drop

e chance of a lifetime, and although I was **petrified with fright**, I couldn't turn it down. We were taken the few

a matter of hours by the Head Girl then, absolutely **terrified out of her wits**, be put on stage the same night to pacify

present standard on the crazy little mare when he had been **terrified out of his wits** at the things she did.

I thought that here was Armageddon! I was **scared out of my mind**. The English Schools was an entirely new experience.

I'm poo-scared, I'm mega-fuckstruck. I'm also **scared out of my cerebellum**. What's going to happen now? #

for familiar things, as we all tend to do when **scared out of our brains**. After a while he let go of my head

she demanded angrily.' Those poor little girls must be **frightened out of their minds**! And if you don't let me go

There is a beautiful little iron-grey mare here that Alejandro has **frightened out of her wits** and says is too wet

on. Maura, tears running down her face, was **frightened out of her wits**. Anthony was dead... her brother Anth

hammering on the door and Jenna shot up in bed, **frightened out of her wits**. For a minute she didn't know wh

She was **startled out of her wits** by the clanging of a loud bell being rung over her head, and then

he cleaned up, netting the poor **startled witless** kids in droves. To pack and process them he needed staff,

Never goes near him. (SP:PS01B) She never goes near him. She's **frightened to death** of' im (SP:PS01F) (unclear)

't (unclear) (SP:PS04H) She listens to herself. (SP:PS04B) (unclear) she's **frightened to death**. (unclear) (SP:PS04B)

ver shout at my son like that again. Course he was **frightened to death** weren't he (unclear). And he said well he

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