A Corpus-Based Study of English Adjectives: 'Wondrous', 'Prodigious' and 'Stupendous' in BNC

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	The present study focuses on the frequency, collocations, noun modification, and semantic similarities and differences of three English adjectives: wondrous, prodigious, and stupendous to compare and contrast the similarities and differences in terms of meaning and collocation. Corpus-based Analysis of these seemingly synonymous adjectives will help us verify whether these adjectives are also used in similar ways in real-life or not. The data was collected from the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English and The British National Corpus. The three adjectives were found to have the same fundamental meaning but differ in terms of specific meanings, degrees of formality, noun modification, and collocational patterns. Consequently, the three Adjectives cannot be used inter changeably in all situations. In addition, it was found that the corpus provides some additional data which is non-existent in the dictionary.

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1.   Introduction

The British National Corpus (BNC) comprises 100 million words of modern British English, 90 million of which are written words and the remaining ten million are spoken words (of various text forms). In natural language processing, Wiebe (2000) claimed that Corpora have been used to obtain linguistic information. According to Wilkins (1972) without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed (p.111). An adjective is a word in grammar whose primary syntactic function is to modify a noun or pronoun by providing additional information about the noun or pronoun's referent. The study of meaning has long been confounded by semantically complicated linguistic structures. Adjectival meaning has proven to be a particular issue, as a result of the semantic complexities attached with it. In this regard, the current research is based on a frequency and collocational analysis of three adjectives in the BNC corpus to determine their semantic similarities and differences. In order to analyze the senses of words by looking at their collection of the selected adjectives, the study utilizes not only a dictionary but also BNC, which allows a researcher to understand semantic differences and similarities. It also examines the various types of noun modification with the adjectives.

This study is based on three English adjectives: prodigious, stupendous, and wondrous with a focus on their semantic and collocational similarities and differences. British National Corpus (BNC) has been used as data and analyzing tool both. "Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English Online" was consulted for the purpose of comparison with the dictionary use.

The ability to analyze "the real patterns of language use in natural texts distinguishes a corpus-based method from other analytical approaches (Ahmad, Hashmi, Shehzadi, & Nawaz,

2021), Therefore, looking for adjectives in a large corpus like BNC could be beneficial. Secondly, using a corpus-based adjective study could aid foreign language students in becoming more aware of the usage patterns of adjectives in various registers. Thirdly, providing learners with real facts (Corpus data) can help them enhance their language skills and adjective usage.

2.   Literature Review

A number of studies have focused on the analysis of Adjectives by using corpus- based data from a variety of large corpora, such as the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) or the British National Corpus (BNC). The most common criteria most of the researchers used to analyze adjectives were meanings, collocations, grammatical patterns, and formality degree. J. R. Taylor (2003), for example, explored the discrepancies in the meanings of two adjectives: high and tall. The Lancaster-Oslo/Bergen Corpus provided the information (LOB). Samson (2006) conducted small corpus research in economic speech and found that evaluative adjectives have more than one function at the same time and they differ across genres and registers. Swales and Burke (2003) investigated evaluative adjectives in various academic registers and found that adjectival evaluation is employed more often in the spoken register.

Stotesbury (2003) looked at 300 papers from 51 publications, 100 of which were in the humanities, social sciences, and scientific sciences. He discovered that publications in the humanities and social sciences have more evaluative qualities than papers in the scientific sciences.

Cai (2012) looked at the words outstanding, excellent, fabulous, fantastic, terrific, and wonderful, as well as their six synonyms. The information was compiled using the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). The findings show that 'great' is used more often than the other synonyms (Shehzadi, 2018). Bergdahl (2009) investigated three Adjectives: beautiful, handsome and good-looking. The data was collected from five contemporary dictionaries and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). The results demonstrated that the three words have the same core meaning, "pleasing to look at." However, beautiful is more associated with a woman than a man, while handsome is used more often with a man. Good-looking is considered gender-neutral by the dictionaries, but in the corpus samples, it is used with men more often.

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. 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. 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 Advanced American Dictionary (2014), Longman Advanced American Dictionary (2013), Macmillan Collocation Dictionary (2010) and COCA. The overall findings suggest that the three adjectives have the same core meaning but they differ in terms of their semantic connotations. This study was intended for two main purposes;

• To examine the similarities and differences among Stupendous, Prodigious, and Wonderous in terms of meanings, degrees of formality, collocation, and noun modification patterns
• To compare and contrast the data obtained from the dictionary with those obtained from the BNC corpus.

This study was limited to a corpus-based analysis of only three English adjectives, namely, stupendous, prodigious, and wondrous. The research questions addressed in this study are as follows;

• What are the frequencies of the selected adjectives, do they occur roughly the same

number of times?
- What are the semantic similarities and differences of the selected adjectives through collocational analysis?
- How do these adjectives differ according to the types of nouns they modify?
- Has the corpus shed some light on any of the aspects that the dictionary omits?

This study utilized the British National Corpus (BNC). BNC was used for this research because it is free to access, and it includes over 1000000 million words. This means that it has very comprehensive and highly representative data.

3. Analysis
3.1 What are the frequencies of the selected adjectives, do these adjectives occur roughly the same number of times?

This study investigated adjectives with the help of a British National Corpus (BNC).The results of this study revealed that the adjective *'Prodigious'* is the most frequent, as compared to the other two adjectives i.e *'Stupendous'* and *'Wondrous'*.(See Table 1). Moreover, *'Wondrous'* is found as least in the frequency ratio and *'Stupendous'* is 2nd most frequent among the three selected Adjectives.

Table 1

Words	Hits in the Whole Corpus	Texts	Total Words	Frequency/ Million Words	Frequency-Wise Ranking of the selected Adjectives
Wondrous	103	94	98,313,429	1.05	Least Frequent
{Wondrous/A}	103	94	98,313,429	1.05	
Stupendous	106	92	98,313,429	1.08	2nd Most Frequent
{Stupendous/A}	106	92	98,313,429	1.08	
Prodigious	168	148	98,313,429	1.71	Most Frequent
{Prodigious/A}	168	148	98,313,429	1.71	

3.1.1 Comparison of Frequencies in the Sub Corpora

It is interesting to find that Prodigious is more frequently found in the written Sub-corpora, wondrous has been used as the least frequent Adjective in written corpora, however, 2nd most frequent in spoken corpora as indicated in the table. More importantly, all these three adjectives are found more frequent in the written corpus and hardly occur in the spoken corpora.
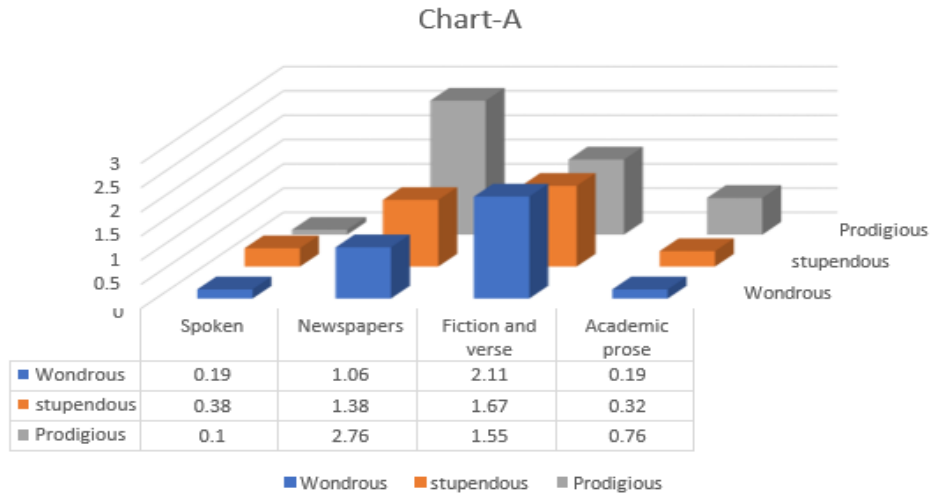
Table 2

Words	Hits in Written Corpus/ Frequency Per Million Words		Hits in Spoken Corpus/ Frequency Per Million Words		Sub Corpora Wise Frequency Ranking of selected Adjectives
Wondrous	101	1.15	2	0.19	Least frequent in the written corpus
{wondrous/A}	101	1.15	2	0.19	2nd Most Frequent in the spoken
Stupendous	102	1.16	04	0.38	2nd Frequent in the Written corpus
{stupendous/A}	102	1.16	04	0.38	Most frequent in the spoken Corpus
Prodigious	167	1.9	01	0.1	Most frequent in the Written corpus
{Prodigious/A}	167	1.9	01	0.1	Least Frequent in the Spoken Corpus

3.1.2 Comparison of the frequencies of the selected Adjectives in Some other major sub-corpora

Figure 1 analyses the frequencies of the selected adjectives in some other sub- corpora of BNC and reveals that the adjective 'Wondrous' is more frequent in the sub-corpora 'Fiction and Verse'. No other adjective is as frequent in Fiction and Prose as is the adjective 'Wondrous'. Fictional language is about the world of fiction and the adjectives like 'Wondrous' suit it. Moreover, its use in academic prose is the least which clearly shows the least interest of the academic writers for it. 'Prodigious' is least frequent in the spoken corpora while it is the most frequent adjective found in newspapers.
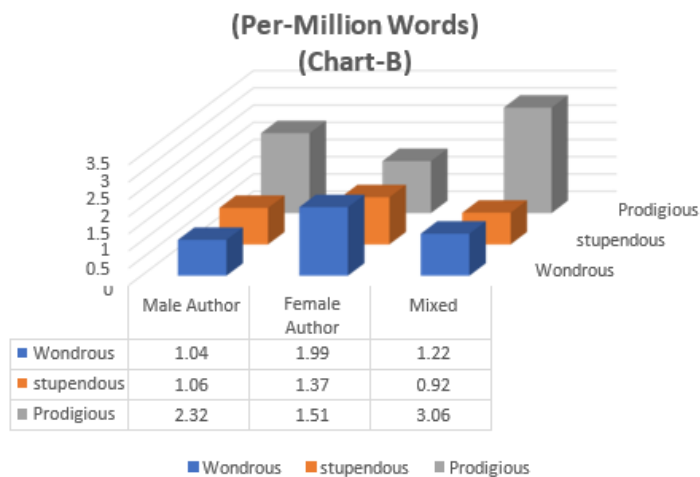
Figure 1

Chart-A

	Spoken	Newspapers	Fiction and verse	Academic prose
■ Wondrous	0.19	1.06	2.11	0.19
■ stupendous	0.38	1.38	1.67	0.32
■ Prodigious	0.1	2.76	1.55	0.76

■Wondrous ■stupendous ■Prodigious

3.1.3 Comparison of Frequency of on the basis of Sex of Authors

The analysis of the frequencies of the selected adjective is yet another interesting study that reveals that there is a significant difference in the use of these adjectives between male and female authors. The male authors use 'Prodigious' more frequently while female authors tend to use 'Wondrous' more often. However, when it comes to using an adjective by mixed authors, we see 'Prodigious' is preferred.
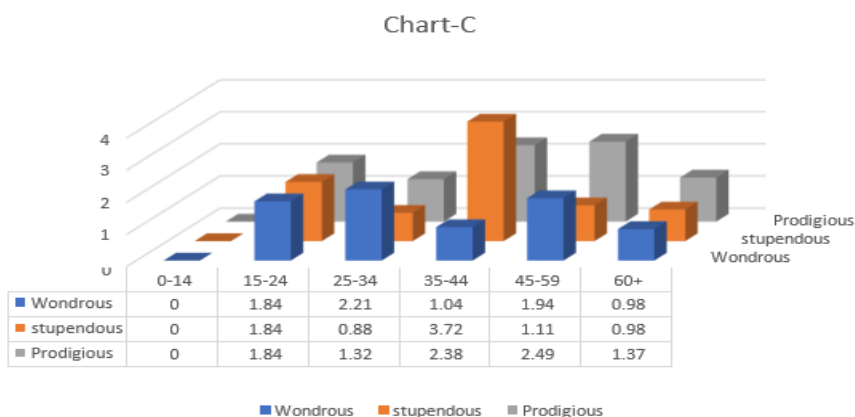
Figure 2

(Per-Million Words)
(Chart-B)

	Male Author	Female Author	Mixed
■ Wondrous	1.04	1.99	1.22
■ stupendous	1.06	1.37	0.92
■ Prodigious	2.32	1.51	3.06

■Wondrous ■stupendous ■Prodigious

3.1.4 Comparison of Frequencies of the selected Adjectives on the basis of Age of Author

Comparing the frequencies of selected adjectives on the basis of 'Age of Author' is somewhat very crucial in terms of analyses of how much these adjectives are popular among the authors of different ages.

Figure 3

Chart-C

	0-14	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-59	60+
■ Wondrous	0	1.84	2.21	1.04	1.94	0.98
■ stupendous	0	1.84	0.88	3.72	1.11	0.98
■ Prodigious	0	1.84	1.32	2.38	2.49	1.37

■Wondrous ■stupendous ■Prodigious

A very significant feature of this chart is that these adjectives are not at all used by the authors of 0-14 of age. They are not very popular among the authors of 60+ either. Overall, these adjectives are common among the mature authors aged between 35- 59.

3.1.5 Concluding Analyses of the Frequencies of the Selected Adjectives

Table 3

Adjectives	The Adjectives Frequency Ranking Overall	Most Frequent in Sub Corpora	Least Frequent in Sub Corpora	Most Frequent Between Male and Female Authors ('Mix' Category Excluded)	Most Frequent in Age of Author	Least Frequent in Age of Author
Wondrous	Least Frequent	Fiction & Verse	Spoken and academic Prose	Female Authors	25-34	0-14
Stupendous	2nd Most Frequent	Fiction & Verse	Academic Prose	Female Authors	35-44	0-14
Prodigious	Most Frequent	Newspapers	Spoken	Male Authors	45-59	0-14

3.2 Identify the semantic similarities and differences of the selected adjectives through collocational analysis?

The Present study analyzes the meaning and context of three adjectives in BNC to trace their semantic similarities and differences. Semantic similarities and differences refer to the idea that meaning is created beyond the boundaries of the single word that a 'unit of meaning' is found in the co-occurrences of this lexical item. Meanings of adjectives were investigated from the dictionary definitions (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (Dictionary, 2014)) and the collocational analysis from BNC to find the similarities and differences in meanings of selected adjectives. The selected Adjectives i.e., Prodigious, wondrous, and stupendous are near- synonyms in terms of the meaning because they are not absolute in meaning, but they do share looser similarities of sense. For example, Prodigious, wondrous, and stupendous have the same sense of great and impressive, but they are not interchangeable in the same context. Example of Prodigious derived from BNC:

In his report, Coleman suggested that the 'prodigious' loss of horses was due to expert advice not having been sought when the outbreak started'.

In the above example, Prodigious has been used in a negative context. Moreover, it cannot be replaced with wondrous because prodigious refers to something very big in size or quantity, gigantic, colossal, huge while wondrous is mostly used in the context of good or impressive in a surprising way. Similarly, it cannot be substituted with Stupendous as the latter implies a power to stun or astound.

3.2.1 Degree of formality among Prodigious, stupendous and Wondrous

The most noticeable point from the above table is that the many academic disciplines prefer Prodigious in the academic prose which supports the assumption that it has a higher degree of formality than the other adjectives i.e. wondrous and Stupendous.

Table 4

	Prodigious	Per Million	Stupendous	Per Million	Wondrous	Per Million
Academic Prose	12 hits in 12 different texts	0.76 instances per million words	5 hits in 5 different Texts	0.32 instances Per Million Words	3 hits in 3 Different Texts	0.19 instances per million words

3.2.2 Comparison of Meaning in BNC

The compare results from BNC revealed that the use of Adjectives, prodigious, wonderous, and stupendous in various meanings depend on context and collocation.

Table 5

Prodigious	Hannah opens her **prodigious** mail
Wondrous	The **wondrous** architecture of the world,
Stupendous	Did he get the limp in a flying accident on one of his **stupendous** runs, I asked.

3.2.3 Examples of the concordance lines of Selected Adjectives in BNC

- Hark the Herald Tribune sings, advertising **wondrous** things,' sang Tom Lehrer.
- Thought of Mackie, her face alive with the **wondrous** joy of discovering she was pregnant.
- Clive was a **stupendous** captain.
- A roc was a bird of **stupendous** size that appears several times in The Arabian Nights
- Your Shoulders stand **prodigious** high:

The examples of concordance lines illustrate the meaning of the Adjectives. Nouns which are modifying Adjectives are also contributing to the meaning. The semantic similarity is that three adjectives wonderous, stupendous and prodigious are attributive Adjectives. While semantic differences lie in their various shades of meanings in which prodigious and stupendous refer to very enlarge or enormous size. This semantic connotation is missing in wondrous. Therefore, despite of their overlapping meanings the selected Adjectives i.e. prodigious, wondrous and stupendous cannot occur interchangeably in all the contexts.

3.3 Collocation with Nouns

The selected Adjectives collocates with a number of specific lexical sets which is documented in the dictionaries. For example, the Longman dictionary of contemporary English revealed the given data:

3.3.1 Prodigious

- It was designed by the prodigious bridge-builder, Thomas Bouch.
- This was written in 1824 when the prodigious composer was only15.
- He fell in love, via a prodigious email correspondence, with another academic whom he had met fleetingly at a conference
- Building the bridge was a prodigious feat of engineering and finance.
- He was noted for his prodigious memory, was deeply religious, and a staunch advocate of temperance
- Fund-raisers used fears of destruction to raise the prodigious sums that fueled the entire machine.

The above examples show the tendency of Prodigious to co-occur as the pre- modifier of head noun. The next step is to confirm the semantic preference of prodigious as pre–modifier from the collocational analysis of it from the source data BNC.

3.3.2 Examples from BNC

- Hannah opens her **prodigious** mail
- Besides seeking his help in religious controversies, the King made use of Andrewes' **prodigious** learning in other ways

There is no significant difference between Dictionary and BNC Collocational patterns. Both of the sources confirm the use of Prodigious as a Pre-modifier.

3.4 Collocational database for Prodigious_AJ0

Table 6

S. No	Word	Total No in whole BNC	Expected collocate frequency	Observed collocate frequency	No of Texts
1	Memory	7,399	0.031	6	6
2	output	5,786	0.024	6	6
3	amount	14,494	0.061	5	5

| 4 | amounts | 2,448 | 0.010 | 5 | 5 |

3.4.1 Stupendous
Collocational patterns in Longman dictionary of contemporary English:

- A **stupendous** cinema epic, reduced to assort offrantics currying in a gold fish bowl, might merely seem ridiculous
- Despite myself, my regard was still held by the **stupendous** figure prone before me.
- Did he get the limp in a flying accident on one of his **stupendous** runs, I asked.
- The **stupendous** storm was the result.
- An algorithm purporting to match what is presumed to be operating in a human brain would need to be a **stupendous** thing.
- The towers were jammed together so tightly, he could feel them ass and **stupendous** weight.

3.4.2 Example from BNC
Did he get the limp in a flying accident on one of his **stupendous** runs, I asked BNC and LDOCE depicted the use of Adjective 'Stupendous' as a pre modifier.

3.5 Collocational database for Stupendious_AJ0

Table 7

S.No	Word	Total No in whole BNC	Expected collocate frequency	Observed Collocate frequency	No of Texts
1	Achievement	3065	0.008	3	3
2	View	23386	0.060	3	3
3	Views	7300	0.019	3	3
4	Number	48716	0.124	2	2

3.5.1 Wondrous
Collocational patterns in Longman dictionary of contemporary English

- A wondrous city, its high towers resembling the Jukeboxes of the Gods.
- And in his mind there was firmly sown, a lovely and a wondrous dream.
- Stalactites and stalagmites in wondrous formations diminish the sense of bare rock walls.
- His amazement can be imagined when there appeared be-fore him the wondrous forms of the three great goddesses.
- After hoisting aboard the almost wondrous performance of the aircraft probably the most important single element to master was asymmetric flying.
- Suddenly, he held up a wondrous ring upon his finger, and vanished from sight.

Wondrous has been used in the Longman dictionary of contemporary English as a pre modifier of the nouns as shown in the above examples and with a positive connotation.

3.5.2 Examples from BNC
- A wondrous thing; and God
- It was a wondrous sequence, which would later move millions of viewers.

BNC showed the same results i.e. Wonderous has been used with the positive connotation and as a pre modifier of noun.

3.6 Collocational database for Wondrous_AJ0
Table 8

S.No	Word	Total No in whole BNC	Expected collocate Frequency	Observed collocate frequency	No of Texts
1	Things	40836	0.108	6	6
2	Thing	33871	0.090	4	4
3	Life	54906	0.145	2	2
4	City	22815	0.060	2	2

The study demonstrates that adjectives i.e prodigious, stupendous and wondrous and their collocational patterns play a vital role in the meaning making process. The three selected adjectives have positive connotation but change in the collocational patterns can change the meaning. The selected adjectives are similar in their positive connotation and collocational patterns as the pre-modifier of nouns in BNC. However, differences can be traced in their various shades of meaning which depends on their context and collocational patterns.

4. Analyze the types of Noun Modifications with these Adjectives?

The findings about the types of noun modification with the selected adjectives in BNC revealed the following results;

Table 9: Wondrous: data with Noun Modification in BNC

{wondrous/ A} _ NN1	Per Million	"{wondrous/ A} _ NN2	Per Million	{wondrous/A} _ NP0"	Per Million
44 hits in 44 different texts	0.45 instances per million words)	22 hits in 21 different texts	0.22 instances per million words	1 hit in 1 text	0.01 instances per million words

Table 10: The types of noun modification with the Adjective 'wondrous' in BNC

S.NO	"{wondrous/A} _NN1	"{wondrous/A} _NN2	"{wondrous/A} _NP0
1	Event	Possibilities	wondrous Mrs Fallon
2	Thing	Things	
3	Possibility	Organs	
4	Creature	Sights	
5	God	Fiddlers	
6	Life	Times	
7	City	Deeds	
8	Use	Animals	
9	Light	Expressions	
10	Architecture	Workings	

In the above list, it is noticeable that the most common types of collocations that collocate with Wondrous were nouns implying pre modification of the adjective. The most-frequent noun collocates of Adjective 'Wondrous' has positive connotation in BNC. For Example:

- The highlight of the gardens is a **wondrous** Baroque fish pond that most definitely should be seen, even if there is occasionally just a little too much rubbish in the water.
- Later installments disclosed the **wondrous** sights the astronomer had been privileged to see.
- Aye, thought Lexandro, before he was fully inducted his body would house many new **wondrous organs**.

4.1 Prodigious

Table 11

{Prodigious/ A} _NN1	Per Million	"{Prodigious/ A} _NN2	Per Million	{prodigious/ A} _NP0"	Per Million	{Prodigious/ A} _NN0"	Per Million
93 hits in 85 different texts	0.95 instances per million words	32 hits in 32 different texts	0.33 instances per million words	1 hit in 1 text	0.01 instances per million words	1 hit in 1 text	0.01 instances per million words

Table 12: The types of Noun Modification with the Adjective 'Prodigious' in BNC

S.NO	"{PRODIGIOUS/A} _NN1	"{prodigious/A} _NN2	"{prodigious/A} _NP0	"{prodigious/A} _NN0
1	Fuel	Shoots	prodigious Johnny	prodigious works
2	Email	Achievements		

3	power	Amounts
4	Horse	Diggers
5	Radio	memories
6	report	Increases
7	consumption	Leapers
8	Shape	Royalties
9	footballer	Feats
10	mother	penalties

4.2 Examples from BNC
- The Maharajahs of Bharatpur were dedicated hunters, famous for their

4.3 Prodigious Shoots
- Wilson used to train in the mountains and emerge in the nick of time to perform his **prodigious exploits**.

Prodigious has been used as a pre-modifier of singular and plural nouns in a high frequency, however, the data revealed that it has been used once with a proper and common noun.

Table 13: Stupendous

{Stupendous/A} _NN1	Per Million	"{Stupendous /A} _NN2	Per Million
50 hits in 49 different texts	0.51 instances per million words	23 hits in 21 different texts	0.23 instances per million words

Table 14: The types of noun modification with the Adjective 'Stupendous' in BNC

S.NO	"{Stupendous/ A} _NN1	"{Stupendous/ A} _NN2	"{Stupendous /A} _NP0	"{Stupendous /A} _NN0
1	Equipment	Costs		
2	Captain	Runs		
3	Effort	Views		
4	Company	achievements		
5	Cinema	proportions	There are no matches for your query.	
6	Surprise	Pictures		
7	Talent	Views		
8	Goal	Caves		
9	Road	Places		
10	Work			

4.4 Examples from BNC
- Given the **stupendous costs** involved, should the city be looking to powerful private developers working with big firms of commercial architects to take the lead and replace like with like, albeit in a more acceptable architectural garb?
- I've finished the job and I've got the most **stupendous pictures**.
- Did he get the limp in a flying accident on one of his **stupendous runs**, I asked.

Stupendous has been used in BNC in a high frequency mostly as a pre modifier of singular and plural nouns in BNC. However, it has not been used with the common and proper nouns in BNC.

The study revealed that the three selected adjectives i.e., Prodigious, wondrous and stupendous has been used as an attributive adjective in BNC which occurred adjacent to the nouns they modify. The selected adjectives found as pre-modifiers of the nouns. The common syntactic pattern has been used in the examples of the selected three adjectives in BNC i.e. Adj + Head Noun.

5. Has the corpus shed some light on any of the aspects that the dictionary omits?

Figure 4

wondrous

Word family (noun) **wonder** **wonderment** (adjective) **wonderful** **wonder** **wondrous** (verb) **wonder** (adverb) **wonderfully**

From Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English

won·drous /ˈwʌndrəs/ **adjective** *literary* 🔊 🔊

good or impressive in a surprising way

Examples from the Corpus

wondrous
- The versatility of the space is increased and the quality of its output is supposed to be **wondrous**.
- Both Clinton and Reagan showed their **wondrous** can-do spirit from the start.
- A **wondrous** city, its high towers resembling the Jukeboxes of the Gods.
- And in his mind there was firmly sown, A lovely and a **wondrous** dream.
- Stalactites and stalagmites in **wondrous** formations diminish the sense of bare rock walls.
- His amazement can be imagined when there appeared be-fore him the **wondrous** forms of the three great goddesses.
- After hoisting aboard the almost **wondrous** performance of the aircraft probably the most important single element to master was asymmetric flying.
- Suddenly, he held up a **wondrous** ring upon his finger, and vanished from sight.

Origin **wondrous** (1400-1500) wonders "wondrous" ((13-17 centuries)), from the possessive form of wonder; influenced by marvelous

Most of the data in BNC confirms the definition of wondrous (Positive Adjective) as given in the dictionary. But in the following example wonderous is referring to the absurdity of language.

Politicians, accountants, television producers, newspaper editors and all such mandarins who have set themselves up as authorities with power to say yea or nay to us, to shift right from wrong, good from bad, lawful from criminal, and to decide what the rest of us may know and what we may not ('All the News that's Fit to Print') exploit this ***wondrous*** paradoxical nature of language with uncanny skill to attain and retain their hegemony over other.

Figure 5

prodigious

From Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English

pro·di·gious /prəˈdɪdʒəs/ **adjective** **[usually before noun]** 🔊 🔊

very large or great in a surprising or impressive way
   prodigious amounts/quantities of something
     🔊 Some galaxies seem to release prodigious amounts of energy.
     🔊 the artist's prodigious output

—**prodigiously** **adverb**

Examples from the Corpus

prodigious
- It was designed by the **prodigious** bridge-builder, Thomas Bouch.
- This was written in 1824 when the **prodigious** composer was only 15.
- He fell in love, via a **prodigious** email correspondence, with another academic whom he had met fleetingly at a conference.
- Building the bridge was a **prodigious** feat of engineering and finance.
- He scored a try, dropped a goal and controlled the game with some **prodigious** kicking mixed with some beautifully balanced running.
- The building was a **prodigious** limestone parthenon done in the early thirties in the Civic Moderne style.
- He was noted for his **prodigious** memory, was deeply religious, and a staunch advocate of temperance.
- Fund-raisers used fears of destruction to raise the **prodigious** sums that fueled the entire machine.

prodigious amounts/quantities of something
- A major tsunami will deposit broken trees near the high-water mark and move **prodigious amounts of** sediment.

5.1 BNC
- Hannah opens her **prodigious** mail
- Besides seeking his help in religious controversies, the King made use of Andrewes' **Prodigious** learning in other ways.

There is no significant difference between Dictionary meaning and meaning of BNC of the Adjective Prodigious. It has been used in the meaning of large or impressive way. However, the study has found one difference. According to the LDOCE, it has been used for positive connotation but in BNC the Adjective Prodigious in some of the instances has been used in negative context. For example:

- I consider him a prodigious nuisance, and an enormous superstition.

Now 31, McMaster was a prolific points gatherer in his heyday, running in triesor kicking prodigious penalties.

Figure 6

In the above examples the adjective 'stupendous' has been used as something larger, bigger and greater than expected. It has further used as very big, large, amazingly bigger, greater, and unbelievably huge. The adjective has not only been used to the largeness of size and number also for the wondrous and amazing quality of something. Looking at the instances available in the BNC;

- Thirdly, even if the **stupendous** funds demanded were available, should one not look a little more carefully at the begging queue?
- *The People's Palace opened its doors and its Winter Gardens to a **stupendous** half a million visitors within the first five months.*
- It would be somewhat difficult to pick the best of the Villa San Paolo's many attractions, but, if we were pushed to it, we would go for the **stupendous** view from the swimming pool.
- In terms of miles covered and energy expended during his missionary travels, Paul's achievement is **stupendous**.
- ''Among the ruined temples there, *2478* **Stupendous** columns, and wild images *2479* Of more than man, where marble daemons watch *2480* The Zodiac's brazen mystery, and dead men *2481* Hang their mute thoughts on the mute walls around, *2482* He lingered, pouring on memorials *2483* Of the world's youth
- In northern and central France, a **stupendous** number of cathedrals and large churches were constructed in the thirteenth century.

6.   Findings of the study

The study was aimed at investigation the semantic differences and similarities among three Adjectives namely, prodigious, Stupendous and wondrous. This study used a corpus-based methodology to investigate the differences of the three Adjectives. The information on prodigious, stupendous, and wondrous was derived from Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English and BNC. The summary of the findings is given below:

- The findings of the study revealed the frequency of selected three adjectives in BNC. As per results, adjective 'Prodigious' is the most frequent, as compared to the other two adjectives i.e 'Stupendous' and 'Wondrous'. 'Wondrous' is found as least in the

- frequency ratio and 'Stupendous' is 2nd most frequent among the three selected Adjectives.
- The study found that Prodigious is more frequently used in the written Sub- corpora, while wondrous has been used as the least frequent Adjective in written corpora however, 2nd most frequent in spoken corpora. More importantly, all these three adjectives are found more frequent in the written corpus and hardly occur in the spoken corpora.
- As far as frequencies of the selected adjectives are concerned in some other sub-corpora of BNC the study depicted the adjective 'Wondrous' as the most frequent in the sub-corpora 'Fiction and Verse'. However, its use in academic prose is least which clearly shows least interest of the academic writers for it. 'Prodigious' is least frequent in the spoken corpora while it is the most frequent adjective found in newspapers.
- The gender-based analysis of the frequencies of the selected adjectives revealed there is a significant difference in the use of these adjectives between male and female authors. The male authors use 'Prodigious' more frequently while female authors tend to use 'Wondrous' more often. However, when it comes to using an adjective by mixed authors, we see 'Prodigious' is preferred.
- The age wise analysis of the selected adjectives revealed the unpopularity of these adjectives among the age group of 0-14, and the authors of 60+. Overall, these adjectives are common among the mature authors aged between35-59.
- The comparison of dictionary based and corpus-based data helped to conclude that wondrous, prodigious and stupendous are near-synonyms in terms of the meaning because they are not absolute in meaning, but they do share looser similarities of sense. For example, Prodigious, wondrous and stupendous have the same sense of great and impressive, but they are not interchangeable in the same context.
- As per analysis the many academic disciplines prefer Prodigious in the academic prose which support the assumption that it has a higher degree of formality than the other two adjectives i.e., wondrous and Stupendous.
- The compare results from BNC revealed that the use of Adjectives prodigious, wondrous and stupendous in various meanings depends on context and collocations.
- There is no significant difference between Dictionary and BNC Collocational patterns. Prodigious, wondrous and stupendous has been used as Pre-modifiers. The study has found one significant difference between Dictionary meaning and meaning of BNC of the Adjective Prodigious. According to the dictionary prodigious has positive connotation but in BNC the Adjective Prodigious in some of the instances has been used in negative context.
- The meaning of adjective 'stupendous' categorized it as something larger, bigger and greater than expected. It has further used as very big, large, amazingly bigger, greater, and unbelievably huge.
- Most of the data in BNC confirms the definition of wondrous as given in the dictionary.
- The collocational analysis depicted that prodigious, wondrous and stupendous collocated with singular and plural nouns in a high frequency as compared to common and proper nouns.

7.   Conclusion

The semantic similarities and contrasts of three adjectives were investigated using a corpus – based methodology in this research**.** The meanings and example sentences were gathered from LDOCE to compare with the meanings from the concordance lines drawn from BNC to find more information not mentioned in the dictionaries. It can be concluded that prodigious, stupendous, and wondrous have diverse meanings. In the senses of "excellent" and "outstanding," the three adjectives have the same underlying meanings. Although the adjective Prodigious and stupendous share the meanings in the senses of size and degree, while the adjective wondrous has the meaning of remarkable, as it is used in the senses of very good at a particular thing. It can be seen that the senses of meaning of each adjective is not absolutely the same and they cannot substitute for each other in every context as can be seen in the differences of the senses of meanings.

Dictionary information on vocabulary may be insufficient for describing the variations and uses of Adjectives. As a result, L2 learners should use the corpus database to gain a better understanding of adjectives so that they can use them correctly. Apart from

dictionaries, English teachers should use the corpus database to provide more information on words for teaching English language.

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