CORPUS ANALYSIS AS A MEANS OF MEANING DISAMBIGUATION: COLLOCATIONAL ANALYSIS OF NEAR-SYNONYMS OF THE VERB 'DESTROY'

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Abstract: The current paper is aimed at corpus-based differentiation of near-synonymous lexemes with the meaning 'to destroy'. The research implies a series of consecutive steps: to discuss synonymy-related problems in modern linguistics; to compile a list of near-synonymous lexemes with the meaning 'to destroy' by means of Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA); to analyze and compare definitions of the chosen verbs in Merriam-Webster Dictionary (MWD); to generate lists of right-context collocates for each of the verbs in COCA; to put the collocates into semantic clusters and compare the obtained clusters. The list of lexemes under study contains such verbs as 'destroy', 'ruin', 'break', 'obliterate', 'raze', 'annihilate', 'crush', 'devastate', 'wreck', and 'demolish'. As a result, semantic clusterisation of the right-context collocates helped establish that all verbs of the group collocate with the lexemes representing values and threats where destroying values evokes negative feelings and associations while destroying threats is perceived as a positive action. The verb 'ruin' is typically used with the clusters 'meals and food', 'holidays', 'leisure activities', 'entertainment' and 'human relations', meaning deprivation of enjoyment and happiness. The verb 'break' has a wide array of collocates resulting in a variety of conventionalized expressions. The results of the corpus-based research of lexical semantics may be helpful to those professionally engaged in second language teaching as well as in translation and lexicographic practice.

Keywords: near-synonyms, construction grammar, semantic clusterisation, corpus linguistics, collocational semantics, collocation, the verb 'destroy'.

1. INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, synonymy is defined as a semantic equivalence between two or more lexemes that results in their substitutability in various contexts. P. Edmonds and G. Hirst point out that until recently, this language phenomenon was seen as a "clear-cut" case: identical lexemes were labelled as synonyms and the rest were overlooked and not given proper attention [Edmonds & Hirst, 2002, p. 106]. D. Pettersson-Traba states that even to this day, synonymy is believed to be so common, straightforward and unproblematic that dictionaries still define synonyms in terms of their similarities and create certain misconceptions by providing reductive descriptions [Pettersson-Traba, 2016, p. 1]. C.-Y. Lee and J. Liu underline that "dictionaries and thesauri often overlook the evaluative distinctions among synonyms and end up showing certain circularity" [Lee & Liu, 2009, p. 206]. However, as mentioned by M.P. Kamiński, "complete synonymy presupposes a rather unlikely situation in language" leading to the fact that it becomes necessary to extend the definition of synonymy to cover words that have comparable collocational patterns disregarding differences in language variety, register, connotation, emotive content and degree of specificity [Kamiński, 2017, p. 239]. As a result, in modern linguistics, synonymy encompasses all semantically related lexemes.

So far, two tiers of lexical synonymy have been identified: namely, strict, complete, or absolute synonymy and loose, or near-synonymy. At present, the major distinction between the tiers lies in the degree of semantic, contextual, stylistic and connotational equivalence between the lexemes under study. S. Uba and Ju. Irudayasamy suppose that by having a complex nature and exhibiting varied collocational and semantic prosody behavior, near-synonyms express similar linguistic concepts but from different perspectives and contexts [Uba & Irudayasamy, 2023, p. 2]. T. Kruawong and S. Phoocharoensil posit that despite having very similar meanings, some near-synonyms may differ in their collocational behavior [Kruawong & Phoocharoensil, 2022, p. 76]. Comparing the near-synonyms of 'persist' and 'persevere', S. Phoocharoensil concludes that "analysis of not only the noun collocates but also other surrounding lexical items signifying the semantic prosody, reveals the genuine meaning or connotation to which the synonyms are attached" [Phoocharoensil, 2021, p. 256]. Additionally, C.-Y. Lee and J. Liu specify that while some lexemes may denote favorable conditions, their near-synonyms may as well refer to unfavorable situations and where some lexemes indicate approval, their near-synonyms may imply disapproval [Lee & Liu, 2009, pp. 206–207]. Regarding the matter, E.E. Golubkova suggests representing groups of near-synonyms as a gradation scale that reflects their degree of similarity. Close examination of their semantics will enable us to move along the scale identifying differences and similarities in their semantics including denotative level and connotations [Golubkova, 2015, p. 22].

The problematic nature of synonymy is further emphasized by the fact that the existence of lexemes with almost similar meanings violates the principle of expressive efficiency of the language as a semiotic system as they convey roughly the same information. However, as is seen from numerous studies [Gao, 2001; Edmonds & Hirst, 2002; Divjak & Arppe, 2013; Golubkova, 2015; Basinskaja, 2019; Rusakova, 2019; Yang, 2020; Mendesheva, 2021; Phoocharoensil, 2021; Al-Otaibi, 2022; Kruawong & Phoocharoensil, 2022; Uba & Irudayasamy, 2023; Ivanova & Dovgopiat, 2023], near-synonyms permeate natural languages and remain an inherent part of them. Researchers working within Construction Grammar tenets tried to explain this paradox by developing "the principle of no synonymy", the term being coined by A. Goldberg in 1995. According to the principle, the differences in structure or lexical content of constructions should result in their

semantic or pragmatic peculiarities hence making absolute synonymy non-existent. B. Leclercq and C. Morin, however, suggest renaming the principle into "the principle of no equivalence" thus making it more precise and explanatory. And while competition and distributional niche of near-synonyms remain essential to the principle, the researchers offer to take into account the "social" aspect of meaning along with denotative and pragmatic components [Leclercq & Morin, 2023]. Consequently, studying near-synonyms helps uncover linguocultural implications of the lexemes under study and as is specified by N.N. Boldyrev, taking into account wider cultural context proves to be a logical step that makes it possible to better understand and solve linguistic problems [Boldyrev, 2021, 57–58].

It can be assumed that the extended notion of synonymy has revived interest in this problem and, as H.H. Gao puts it, has led researchers to raise an exploratory enquiry: 'In which aspect and to what extent are near-synonyms not identical?' [Gao, 2001, p. 1]. As if in response to the enquiry D. Divjak and A. Arppe notice that "a whole battery of statistical techniques, ranging from exploratory techniques to full-blown multivariate predictive models, has been called into service to explore the similarity of near-synonymous items and study their contextual similarities and differences" [Divjak & Arppe, 2013, pp. 230–231]. D. Pettersson-Traba supposes that this spark of interest serves as evidence of a significant gap in this area of research that needs to be filled in order to gain a better understanding of how specific synonyms differ [Pettersson-Traba, 2016, p. 2]. As a result, the rediscovered problem of synonymy has offered new prospects for unveiling the semantic complexity of lexis. To support the idea originally formulated by E.S. Kubrjakova, it is worth mentioning that although being valuable as it is, resolving various problems of linguistic theory such as synonymy, polysemy or antonymy consequently makes a significant contribution to lexicography [Kubrjakova, 2008, p. 11].

To summarize, corpus-based studies of lexical semantics make a significant contribution to three major areas of modern linguistics. The first one is second language teaching and learning practice. Today corpora serve as one of the most efficient and versatile tools in linguistics, specifically, for disambiguation and clarification of lexical meaning. They combine both massive authentic language data and an easy-to-use toolbox to search for whatever curious minds want to find out. It is with the help of corpora that researchers, translators, teachers and learners can track down formulaic expressions and contextual behavior of various constructions, and make useful observations concerning minor shifts in their structure and content over time and across genres. In other words, corpora provide food for thought and encourage agency and freedom. They neither give ready-to-follow advice nor establish any strict rules but instead help users apply their analytical skills to make generalizations and draw their own conclusions. Moreover, corpora have already become an essential part of modern translation studies – they provide insights into idiomaticity as well as the social meaning of certain expressions through their context.

The second area that can greatly benefit from corpus-based studies is lexicography as corpora facilitate the process of collecting and working with massive language data. What is more, some corpora offer built-in statistical tools that provide quantifiable results thus supplying lexicographers with objective and reliable information.

Finally, corpus-based studies have revived research in the field of lexical semantics, particularly, synonymy. Before that, the problem of synonymy was solved by means of definitional analysis, which was limited and limiting in its nature. Basically, researchers made conclusions atop the ones drawn by lexicographers in various dictionaries. It is also worth mentioning that the majority of dictionaries target teachers and learners and not language scholars. Nevertheless, it was – and still technically is – impossible to encompass all contexts and meanings of a lexeme in just a defi-

nition because it is supposed to be concise and comprehensive enough. In other words, when they appeared, corpora provided researchers with a vast array of contexts to examine and made them reconsider the seemingly simple problem of synonymy and consequently rediscover synonyms.

All these factors contribute to the topicality of the present research that is aimed at enhancing our knowledge of the developed and well-represented group of near-synonyms of the verb 'destroy' that could be helpful in all those spheres of professional discourse and communication mentioned above.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

According to M.P. Kamiński, until recently differentiation of synonyms was a time-consuming and laborious task for lexicographers as it entailed careful and manual selection of sources and sometimes involved intuition and introspection [Kamiński, 2018, p. 238]. Today, however, linguistic corpora enable us to identify trends and intricate details in the semantics of near-synonyms as well as track down reallocation of meaning among the lexemes under study [Golubkova, 2015, p. 21]. The role of corpora cannot be overestimated as the abundance of empiric data helps solve the traditional problem of studies in the field of lexical semantics and cognitive linguistics, namely, their introspective nature resulting in subjectivity and lack of evidence [Golubkova, 2017, p. 395]. Additionally, G.M. Al-Otaibi specifies that "precedence of use and frequency over meaning of individual words" in corpus linguistics has led to a significant change in the way synonymy was approached and encouraged research in this area [Al-Otaibi, 2022, p. 48].

Thus, the objective of the present study lies in the field of collocational semantics and is aimed at investigating collocational preferences and semantic peculiarities of near-synonymous verbs with the initial meaning 'to destroy'. The investigation entails the following procedures: to create a list of verbs with the meaning 'to destroy' in the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA); to analyze and compare the definitions of each verb in the group provided in Merriam-Webster Dictionary (MWD); to generate a frequency list of right-context collocates in COCA for each of the verbs; to put the right-context collocates into distinct semantic clusters and consequently, to compare the clusters belonging to each of the verbs. The methodology of the study involves analysis and comparison, as well as linguistic methods of corpus analysis, definitional analysis, and semantic clusterisation.

The research starts with creating the list of synonymous verbs with 'destroy' as their shared meaning. The query =DESTROY in the List section of COCA helps obtain the synonyms of the verb in question. These verbs can be subdivided into the following semantic categories: (1) to end ('end', 'finish', 'extinguish'); (2) to cancel ('rescind', 'terminate', 'abolish'); (3) to win over ('defeat', 'subdue', 'overthrow'); (4) to damage ('spoil') and (5) 'to destroy' which includes the verbs whose meaning implies incurring extreme damage to an object resulting in the cessation of its existence – 'destroy', 'ruin', 'annihilate', 'break', 'crush', 'devastate', 'wreck', 'demolish', 'obliterate', 'raze'. In this paper, the last category of verbs has been chosen for the analysis.

According to MWD, the verbs under study have the following definitions:

Destroy – to ruin the structure, organic existence, or condition of; to ruin as if by tearing to shreds; to put out of existence;

Ruin – to damage irreparably; to subject to frustration, failure, or disaster;

Break – to separate into parts with suddenness or violence;

Crush – to squeeze or force by pressure so as to alter or destroy structure; to reduce to particles by pounding or grinding;

Wreck – to reduce to a ruinous state by or as if by violence; to ruin, damage, or imperil by a wreck;

Demolish – tear down, raze; to break to pieces;

Obliterate – destroy utterly all trace, indication, or significance of;

Annihilate – to cause to cease to exist: to do away with entirely so that nothing remains; to destroy a considerable part of;

Raze – to destroy to the ground;

Devastate – to bring to ruin or desolation by violent action [Merriam-Webster Dictionary].

The given definitions show that some of the verbs, for example, 'crush', 'destroy', 'demolish' and 'break', imply disintegration of the object in a certain manner such as tearing, pounding, pressing, shredding, grinding or squeezing. Meanwhile, the verbs 'devastate', 'wreck' and 'break' share the seme 'violence'. The semantics of the verbs 'annihilate', 'obliterate', 'devastate', 'crush', 'ruin', 'raze' and 'destroy' includes both the intensity and result of destruction ('so as nothing remains', 'to do irreparable damage', 'to destroy utterly all trace', 'to destroy a considerable part of', 'to bring to desolation', 'to alter structure', etc.). The verb 'break' has the seme of speed – 'suddenly' – while 'ruin' causes negative emotions such as frustration. Moreover, the semes of manner, result and intensity can hint at the type of object to be destroyed. For example, grinding, tearing and shredding are applicable to solid material objects, and to-the-ground intensity refers to buildings and other large structures. However, the given definitions do not account for the metaphorical use of the verbs. Additionally, each of the verbs is defined by using its synonyms, which creates the so-called "vicious circle of lexicography". Thus, the objective of the current research is to disambiguate the meanings of the given lexemes and get insight into their semantic peculiarities by analyzing their lexico-semantic preferences.

The necessity of studying right-context collocates can be justified by the fact that the verbs belonging to the group 'destroy' are transitive. Basically, they mean 'to cause or to be the cause of destruction', where 'to cause destruction' implies an animate, active and volitive agent while in 'to be the cause of destruction' the agent is either inanimate and not intending or willing to cause destruction. Still, despite the more or less obvious nature of the agent, the properties of an object remain unclear.

To obtain information about the object, it is necessary to generate frequency lists by using the queries DESTROY_v NOUN, RUIN_v NOUN, BREAK_v NOUN, ANNIHILATE_v NOUN, CRUSH_v NOUN, DEVASTATE_v NOUN, WRECK_v NOUN, DEMOLISH_v NOUN, OBLITERATE_v NOUN, RAZE_v NOUN in COCA, where the verbs written in capitals are lemmas encompassing all of their grammatical forms, tag _v states the part of speech as verb (to avoid such results as 'devastated face', 'break dance', 'annihilating look', 'wrecking ball') and NOUN denotes all nouns in the right context of the verbs under study – in single and plural forms, range +1. The lists are sorted by frequency.

Further on, the collocates of each lexeme are put into semantic clusters. In this paper, the notion of 'semantic cluster' is used to denote a group of lexemes that are semantically close ('buildings and infrastructure', 'natural environments and biomes', 'parts of the body', 'society-related concepts', etc.). Additionally, some lexemes possess hypo-hyperemic relations within the cluster they belong to, for example, 'ruin games', 'ruin sports' and 'ruin baseball'. Moreover, metonymy and the speaker's perspective cause semantic clusters to intersect and juxtapose. For example, the collocations 'devastate cities' is metonymically connected to 'devastate societies', 'devastate communities', and 'devastate areas' while 'devastate crops' is connected to 'devastate fields' and

'devastate farmers'. As for the speaker's perspective, 'crops' can be seen as property, area, tangible object or food. Analysis of the right-context collocates helps to obtain, systemize, compare and identify shared and unique clusters of the verbs under study.

3. STUDY AND RESULTS

3.1. The verb 'Destroy'
The collocates of the verb 'destroy' fall into the next clusters:

1. Locations and buildings – cities, buildings, houses, homes.
2. Nature and biomes – nature, habitat, wetlands, forests.
3. Information – data, evidence, documents, records.
4. Medical and health-related entities – subcluster 'organs and parts of the body': brain, embryos; subcluster 'ailments and health hazards': pathogens, bacteria, cancer cells.
5. Chemical elements and substances – ozone, oil.
6. Society-related concepts – collocates with positive denotative connotation, subcluster 'values': Christmas, jobs, democracy, competition, civilization, careers, freedom, lives, mankind, humanity, society; collocates with neutral or context-dependent connotation: capitalism, government, Islam, nations, religion; collocates with negative denotative connotation, subcluster 'threats': weapons, slavery, ISIL.
7. Property – property, things, crops.
8. Humans – people – where the verb 'destroy' gets the meaning 'to kill'.
9. Opponent – Trump.

All clusters considered, it can be assumed that the verb 'destroy' is used both literally – with concrete nouns – and metaphorically – with abstract nouns. Destruction is evil, but if the collocate has a negative denotative connotation, e.g. 'slavery', 'ISIL' and even 'Trump', the verb 'destroy' has the meaning 'to defeat, to win over' which reflects the popularized image of not tolerating the evil but fighting against it by using its own methods, i.e. destruction, and most importantly – winning. The use of lexemes with denotative connotations helps evaluate situations, actions and people and make judgements based on societal norms and moral values [Ivanova, 2019, p. 527]. In other words, if destruction is aimed at the enemy and leads to victory, it is a positive form of destruction. Similarly, destruction aimed at values is a negative form of destruction.

Moreover, as mentioned by M.M. Mendesheva, synonyms are both value-based and ambiguous in their nature [Mendesheva, 2021, p. 256]. This combination constitutes the social aspect of lexical meaning. The statement is supported by the fact that the right-context collocates of 'destroy'-verbs are partially represented by lexemes from the subclusters of 'values' and 'threats' and while destruction as it is evokes negative feelings and associations, destroying threats and winning are regarded as something positive.

Regarding the matter, V.E. Chernyavskaya states that social meaning is a marker that refers to a specific context and established social practice of using a lexeme or phrase. Consequently, this component of meaning represents those communicative augmentations to meaning that reflect social ideology. Social meaning occurs in connection with a situation or social event, and its interpretation involves further references to it. The connection between the social meaning of the lexeme and its typical, expected context creates a frame of reference and established frames of interpretation [Chernyavskaya, 2021, pp. 384–386]. As such, linguistic forms become "socially meaningful" [Nefedov & Chernyavskaya, 2021, p. 1558]. Additionally, N.N. Boldyrev points out that language is both social and individualistic in its nature. The social component of language

reflects collective beliefs, norms, values and assumptions incorporated into how the individual conceptualizes and interprets the world. Yet the individualistic component entails personal mental models. The combination of the two enables the speaker to interpret the world and the knowledge of the world from a sociocultural perspective [Boldyrev & Dubrovskaya, 2019, p. 1785]. To summarize, "social meaning pinpoints what linguistic forms convey about the social identity of the users, about their personality, social features and ideologically, value-based orientations" [Chernyavskaya & Nefedov, 2021, p. 1557]. The ideological augmentations accumulate and get modified throughout the whole lifecycle of the lexeme or phrase. With this in mind, linguistic items can be considered as precious artefacts.

3.2 The verb 'ruin'
Meanwhile, the verb 'ruin' has collocates belonging to the following clusters:
1.   Sports and leisure activities – games, sports, baseball, domino, fishing.
2.   Holidays – Halloween, Birthday, Thanksgiving, Easter, Christmas.
3.   Meals and food – food, crops, dinner, breakfast, brunch, salmon, cheese, apple pie.
4.   Society-related concepts – subcluster 'economics': careers, sales, credit; subcluster 'human relations': reputation, neighborhood, marriage, friendship, relationships; subcluster 'science' – science; subcluster 'religion': sin.
5.   Material or resource – water, leather.
6.   People – women, kids, people, men, niggas, guys, mankind, groups.
7.   Media as entertainment – site, movies, music, saga.
8.   Infrastructure – roads, neighborhood.
9.   Things, plans, theory
10. Opponent – Obama.

Judging from the clusters obtained, it can be assumed that the seme 'frustration' inherent to the meaning of the verb 'ruin' empowers the perspective of pleasure – whether from human relations, food, sports, holidays or entertainment.

3.3 The verb 'break'
Being one of the most frequent verbs in COCA, the verb 'break' has collocates belonging to the following clusters:
1.   Tangible objects – subcluster 'property': windows, glass, things, stuff – to do damage; subcluster 'natural objects': rocks, ice, waves – to harness nature, to eliminate threats from elements, to make place for objects of infrastructure; subcluster 'food': eggs – to use in cooking. Although, it is worth mentioning that the expression 'break rocks' is strongly associated with any form of hard labor as a form of punishment for prisoners, for example: *The prisoners, when they weren't breaking rocks, passed their sentences by founding their own highly organized sports league, with divisions and referees. / I was sentenced to 24 years in prison on a little island at the bottom of Africa, Robben Island. There were almost 1000 of us. Mostly men like me, found guilty of treason. Men who spent their days breaking rocks.* The expression is also used when describing extremely tiring and difficult activities – *It was like breaking rocks writing those historical novels.* In religious contexts though, the expression 'break rocks' is a trope to describe the power of someone or something – *Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord.* To summarize, 'break rocks' can be seen as a collocation based on

metaphtonymy – 'breaking rocks' does not always mean actually breaking rocks but serves as a euphemism for getting into prison whereas hard labor has a stereotyped representation of breaking rocks – the type of activity strongly associated with imprisonment.

The expression 'break ice' used without the definite article is used literally: *A Canadian C-130 aircraft, a Coast Guard helicopter from Detroit, a 110-foot Coast Guard cutter that had been breaking ice in the Cleveland area and 25-foot and 41-foot boats from the Lorain Coast Guard station participated in the search,* – while 'break the ice' has a metaphorical meaning – 'to get acquainted and start a friendly conversation' – *I wish I could just break the ice and show them how fun I am, you know. / It's frightening because we may be unfamiliar with how to break the ice around new people, or we are dreadfully afraid of public speaking.* Thus, the definite article becomes an inherent element of the metaphorical collocation.

2. Human relations, hierarchy, subordination, connections – ranks, ties, faith. Used with the collocates from this cluster, the verb 'break' gets a different meaning – 'to betray, to lose loyalty and solidarity' specifically in such competitive fields as the military, business, sports, and politics where hierarchy and subordination are vital for winning, for example: *"I will not turn my back. We have made an investment in you and you have made an investment in the Coast Guard and I will not break faith," Zukunft said. / You cannot break faith with those who depend upon you. / It's their business model to collect this data, they're not going to use that data in ways that will break faith with their customers. / Chaos ensued as the soldiers broke ranks and surged towards Ney, rending the air with shouts of joy. / Then, Missouri senator Roy Blunt broke ranks with his party, saying in an interview that the "dependent coverage" provision "should continue to be the case".*

3. Rules, standards and regulations – laws, rules, promise, confidentiality, protocol, curfew. Collocations with the lexemes from this cluster cause the verb 'break' to change its meaning – to act contrary to rules, conventions and standards. For example: *Yes, the agent broke protocol by ushering the hooded figures onto the plane without identification, but he wasn't one to play by the rules anyway.*

4. Parts of the body – bones – to injure.

5. People – with the meaning 'to get information/ force confession through psychological pressure or torture'.

6. Information – news, stories (with the meaning 'to tell').

7. Borders – barriers, orbit ('to overcome'). In COCA, the collocation 'break orbit' is mostly used in sci-fi books in its literal meaning where 'orbit' is the gravity field that the spacecraft needs to overcome in order to get into open space. Meanwhile, the collocation 'break barriers' is generally used metaphorically and the verb 'break' helps to convey the idea of forcing one's way through resistance. The resistance is typically represented by prejudice as well as restricting and harmful societal norms and expectations, for example: *Bill Cosby wasn't just an entertainer, he was a role model, at one time a hero in the black community who broke barriers in real life and on screen, portraying a dignity and affluence that had previously been denied to black characters. / Critics say their gender identity amounts to an unfair advantage, expressing a familiar argument in a complex debate for transgender athletes as they break barriers across sports around the world from high school to the pros. / It really was too bad that she died at age 61, a woman who was really someone who broke barriers. Every step of her life was something new and something inspirational for those around her.* As is seen from the context, breaking such barriers helps overcome stereotypes and biases, and makes people communicate openly, share their thoughts as well as exhibit their personality and identity. These collocations substantiate the idea formulated by S.T. Nefedov and V.E. Chernyavskaya, according to whom "culture reflects forms of human's

material and spiritual life and ways of their regulating; it means a set of rules which prescribe and at the same time limit ideas about what is considered as a norm and as accepted behaviour in a society; culture manifests itself in a social context; culture takes some shape relying on semiotic tools for its expression" [Chernyavskaya & Nefedov, 2021, p. 1558].

Further on, the list of the clusters contains unique collocates that form idiomatic expressions with the verb 'break':

8. Camp – to set/ to make a camp.

9. Hearts – to disappoint.

10. Bread – to have a friendly talk. The expression originates from the Bible and represents the sense of fellowship and trust among those who break bread, for example: *My past mentors sit down with me and sort of break bread. / He assumes the shape of man to visit his most devout disciples and break bread with them. / I would love to break bread with them and find out some really cool stories about what happened to that studio.*

11. Records – to set a new record in sports.

12. Ground – to take up doing something. Initially, the collocation 'break ground' was used in the construction industry and literally meant 'to start excavation for construction works' but later on it was given the metaphorical meaning 'to undertake to do something', for example: *We aren't really going to push it hard. We think once we start breaking ground it is going to start fundraising itself when people start seeing progress," Kolfage observed.* Such generalization of meaning can be accounted for the structural metaphor 'activity is a building' where the participants are construction workers, the activity itself is a building that can be constructed, damaged, repaired, modernized and completed.

13. Motion and interaction – stride, (eye) contact – to stop moving or looking into the eyes correspondingly.

14. Character (in movies) – to fail to act on stage or screen in a compelling manner, for example: *His over-the-top portrayal caused castmembers Mikey Day, Kenan Thompson and Leslie Jones to break character several times during the sketch.*

15. Wind – a euphemism for the verb 'fart'.

16. Cover – to leave shelter, to stop hiding.

The idiomatic expressions with the verb 'break' have different origins, such as religion, construction works, theatre, sports, etc. and can be seen as occasional collocations. The right-context collocates in the idioms are typically unique and do not form any systemic connections with other collocates.

3.4. The verb 'crush'

The verb 'crush' has collocates belonging to the following clusters:

1. Food and ingredients – berries, cereal, cardamon, chestnut, cinnamon, coriander, garlic, grain, ice, flowers and leaves, mint, potato, saffron, tomatoes, walnuts, cookies – to grind and mash in order to use in cooking. The COCA provides the following examples: *Don't you remember? I used to crush flowers and roots, boil them? And stick material in the brew. / With a wooden spoon, crush leaves with the sugar until thoroughly bruised.*

2. Societal groups, people – subcluster 'politics' with dependent hypoclusters 'society' (resistance, protest, dissent, opposition, insurgents, protesters) and hypocluster 'political parties and politicians' (Republicans, Trump, president); subcluster 'economy' with hypocluster 'workers' (unions, labor, middle class, workers) and hypocluster 'businesses' (competition, competitors, rivals) – to fight against, to oppress, to subdue, to defeat. The most general and unspecified collocate

in the cluster is 'people': *Why don't we focus on the groups with huge influence who have repeatedly tried to crush people for disagreements?* Moreover, the cluster includes several abstract nouns ('labor', 'resistance', 'middle class', etc.) that metonymically denote the corresponding societal groups. The use of the verb 'crush', which also means 'to suppress or overwhelm as if by pressure or weight; to subdue completely', denotes the cruel and ruthless nature of the fight for power and influence. The agents in the collocations are typically represented by state leaders, political parties in subcluster 'politics' and corporations in subcluster 'economy', although political agents can be mentioned with regards to the economy as well. For example: *When necessary, Mobutu used the army and secret services to crush opposition. / If our answer is yes, then we should support current state legislative proposals to reduce child labor protections; back federal legislation to eliminate all environmental, wage and workplace safety laws; and applaud corporations that crush unions and further reduce wages in America. / Regulators worried that Microsoft was using its dominant position in the software industry to crush competitors and would-be competitors, and so they sued. / Time to put more blame on the GOP (Grand Old Party – the Republicans) for purposely trying to continue to sabotage the economy and crush labor and the middle class. / King Hamad of Bahrain has repeatedly shown he is willing to use brutal force to crush protesters, including live fire just yesterday on unarmed, peaceful protesters who were given no warning. / South Korea's U.S.-backed dictator, Park Chung Hee, was using the police to crush dissent.* When compared to the counteraction between equal forces in the subcluster 'political parties and politician', the attack on societal groups is strongly criticized in the media and perceived as anti-democratic and disruptive. As is seen from the list of right-context collocates, the conflict in politics is based on disagreement ('opposition', 'resistance', 'protest', 'dissent') while the core of the conflict in the economy is represented by relations between the actors and their interests ('corporation' – 'competitors', 'corporation – workers').

Society-related concepts – subcluster 'values': dreams, freedom, jobs, creativity, democracy, welfare, individuality; subcluster 'threat': inflation, crime. The agent in the collocations, as is the case with the cluster 'societal groups', is represented by the major groups of power – political parties and state officials as well as corporations, for example: *They want to own you and crush freedom and free enterprise. / They're going to find less freedom. Because this is a period in which enough political clout has been activated to really try to crush creativity in this country. / Restoring pride to this community by focusing on the positive history, increasing jobs and activities, and uniting the community to work closer with the police to crush crime will inevitably enhance the quality of life in our neighborhoods. / Paul Volcker was using the shock therapy of high interest rates and lower money supply growth to crush inflation in the early 1980s. / It will only mean Americans realized that Liberal policies, when put in place, crush jobs today… and budgets for decades.* So far, the examples from COCA have shown that subclusters 'values' and 'threats' combine economic ('jobs', 'budgets', 'welfare', 'inflation', 'unemployment') and societal notions ('creativity', 'freedom', 'liberty', 'equality', 'crime'). Thus, it can be assumed that from the linguistic standpoint, the lexemes of the subcluster 'values' constitute "core values" for American mentality [Ivanova, 2018, p. 56]. Again, in these cases, we can see that the destruction of values is perceived as a threat and evokes negative emotions and associations while the destruction of threats is viewed as positive. The collocations under study prove the thesis of corpus linguistics that to convey negative or positive meanings, certain words are used with specific collocates [Al-Otaibi, 2022, p. 48].

3. Tangible objects – subcluster 'property': cars, vehicles, lamps, machinery, flowers; subcluster 'natural objects': leaves, ice, rock, planet – to break or destroy. The subcluster 'property' implies doing intentional damage in the form of destructive testing of safety (crash tests) ('cars'

and 'vehicles') or expressing aggression and violence. At the same time, the subcluster 'natural objects' means breaking with a loud noise. COCA provides the following examples: *He wanted to set buildings on fire, beat something with a hammer, crush flowers. / Heavy footsteps break twigs and crush leaves. / Students could calculate the forces needed to crush vehicles of varying resisting strengths.*

4. Parts of the body – bones, skulls – to injure badly by breaking into small pieces.

5. Living beings – people, insects – to kill violently and in huge amounts.

6. Stereotyped expressions – beer cans (on one's (fore)head) – to fool around, to sit around idly, to spend time in a meaningless way that causes mental deterioration. The expression refers to a popular TV trope called "Can-Crushing Cranium". On the website tvtropes.org, the phenomenon is described as follows: "Can-Crushing Cranium often starts by a drunken person wanting to show how tough they are, and hey, they just HAPPEN to have an empty beer can in their hand... Sometimes it's a macho thing, and sometimes it's played for laughs. The most frequent variation involves the can being full, with resulting cranial trauma" [TVTropes.org]. Crushing beer cans on one's forehead is either done to have a laugh or to prove one's worth in the only way available to the person. The fun aspect of crushing beer cans on one's forehead is connected to a college drinking game called Detonator, or Shake Shake Bang Bang, where the players smash an unopened beer can on their heads in turn until it ruptures. The meaning of the trope becomes apparent from the contexts in COCA: *While you were learning to crush beer cans on your head, we future engineers were developing our minds. / Look, Auntie Jane! I want to be just like that when I grow up, and get drunk and crush cans on my forehead.* In the first example from COCA those people who crash beer cans on their heads are contrasted with future engineers who are developing their minds. The second example represents the behavior that attracts the child's attention. Thus, it can be assumed that the tropes like 'breaking rocks' or 'crushing beer cans on one's head' used in popular culture, specifically in movies and series, get the verbal form and denote personal characteristics, behaviors or situations through semantic stereotyping.

3.5. The verb 'wreck'

The verb 'wreck' has collocates belonging to the following clusters:

1. Property – things, cars, TV, stuff, homes, furniture – to break.

2. People, nerves, lives – to put psychological pressure and make people lose control and go mad.

3. Parts of the body – knees – to injure.

4. Society-related concepts – subcluster 'human relations': marriage, family; subcluster 'events': chances, moments, Christmas; subcluster 'economy': price controls, livelihoods – to ruin.

5. Idiomatic colloquial expressions – wreck shop, wreck house – to do something successfully and thus enthusiastically and actively. The idioms are widely used in sports, for example: *Also, as a sidenote I think a lot of people aren't having fun in PvP because one high-skilled player will completely wreck house in a match and can literally go 20/0. / Come on, South Side, we don't need the league, man! We don't need the Players Association. Let them battle that sh** out over network rights and splits for the next few months while you, me and a few others, we wreck shop! Paid event by event, like... boxing. But without the brain damage.*

6. To cause chaos – wreck havoc – to damage things, people, part of the body, economy, relations, etc., for example: *Dogs which aren't disciplined can wreck havoc on a home. / Well, although, that fellow has gone, he has left many others to wreck havoc on the people of this country.*

/ Even if it's from someone else's cigarette, smoke can wreck havoc on your skin. / Unfortunately I fear we will have to endure a catastrophic ordeal first, for their is no doubt that the policies of Obama and the progressive socialist liberals will wreck havoc on the economy as well as the social and cultural aspects of America. Although in COCA both collocations are represented, in MWD the query 'wreak havoc' yields results while 'wreck havoc' does not. In the corpus 'wreak havoc' has a frequency of 1638 while 'wreck havoc' provides only 50 entries, which leads to the conclusion that the phrase 'wreck havoc' is still considered non-standard. It can be assumed that in both idioms the verbs 'to wreak' and 'to wreck' are used interchangeably. We believe that the cause of it lies in semantics and phonetics. First of all, the verbs 'to wreak' meaning 'to cause something to happen in a violent and often uncontrolled way' and 'to wreck' meaning 'to destroy or badly damage something' denote causation and share the semes of 'violence' and 'damage'. Moreover, according to MWD, in American English, the verb 'to wreak' can be pronounced both as [ri:k] and [rek] thus making 'to wreck' and 'to wreak' homophones. The combination of semantic and phonetic factors creates a competitive environment for the verbs and can lead to some changes in their meanings.

3.6. The verb 'demolish'

The verb 'demolish' may collocate with the following clusters:

1. Buildings and infrastructure – cluster 'locations': places; cluster 'engineered structures': structures, buildings including such subclusters as 'industrial buildings': factories, plants; 'housing': properties, dwellings, houses, homes, tents, slums, shelters; 'tourist attractions': monuments, sphinx, strongholds; 'infrastructure': stations, bridges; as well as hypocluster 'parts of buildings': walls – to bring to the ground, to deconstruct.

2. Property – produce, cars, saplings – to do damage to.

3. Discussion and argument – subcluster 'opinions and images': arguments, obstacles, myth, ideas, theories, stereotypes; subcluster 'parties of discussion': teams, opponents, government – to counteract, to defeat, to criticize, to overcome, to prove wrong. The following examples from COCA provide a wider context: *He's got the best chance of winning and is a proven businessman who can get people together to find solutions rather than demolish government when people need it most. / The scientific process, after all, consists of gathering data from observations and experiments and using the knowledge gained to construct or demolish theories about how the world works. / It was said that, without a doubt, the Brandos had come to this world to demolish stereotypes. / To explain how a supposed monopolist could lose its grip without government intervention, we must demolish Myth No. 3 – that today's software industry is governed by the same dynamics as the railroad, steel and oil industries that spurred the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890.* The expression 'to construct or demolish theories' shows that both verbs are used metaphorically as their literal meaning is connected to construction of buildings. Thus, the metaphor 'opinion is a building' can be identified. To expand further on this metaphorical representation, it can be assumed that if a certain opinion, theory or myth can be constructed, they can be demolished as well.

4. People – neighborhoods, Palestinians – to kill or destroy in warfare, for example: *Israel punch Palestinians in the nose, Palestinians finally have enough and fight back, Israel express outrage and demolish Palestinians. / But whatever the risks, the Kabul of today is almost unrecognizable as the austere city ruled not long ago by the Taliban – or as the place where warring Islamic militias demolished neighborhood after neighborhood, or where Soviets presided over a rebellious socialist state.*

5. Society-related concepts: subcluster 'values': markets, liberty, societies; subcluster 'threat': privileges. Privilege is defined in MWD as 'a right or immunity granted as a peculiar benefit, advantage, or favour; especially such a right or immunity attached specifically to a position or an office' and is seen as a threat as privileges cause inequality and are attributed to people in power, i. e. the party elite, for example: *He fought to demolish privileges of the party elite.* The seemingly neutral collocate 'market' is perceived as a value because it is contextually connected to jobs: *The instant global marketplace that the Internet produced hasn't just created a few mega-egos, of course. It has demolished markets, too. It has left thousands upon thousands out of work.*

6. Distance and time – to shorten, to overcome: *Jet airplanes, telephones, and broadcasting demolished distance and made the world a global village. / Reading has the power not only to demolish time and span the ages, but also the capacity to make one feel more human.* Both nouns 'distance' and 'time' are abstract, which is reflected in the meaning of the phrases, as neither time, nor distance can be destroyed, the only thing possible is to shorten them.

7. Set a record – in the idiom the verb 'demolish' is used instead of 'break' to emphasize the feeling of surprise at the football player's performance and encourage the viewer's emotional involvement: *Messi's impeccable form has seen him demolish record after record this year, with Pel's 75 goals in a calendar year his most recent smash.*

3.7. The verb 'obliterate'

The verb 'obliterate' collocates with the following clusters:

1. Discussion and argument – views, arguments.

2. Society-related concepts – subcluster 'values': identity, individuality, institutions, humanity, jobs, tradition, genders, legacy, culture, business, creativity, billions of wealth; subcluster 'threats': class, Roe v. Wade (abortion rights), search warrants, drugs, marijuana, student loan debt; subcluster 'people': nations, employees, children.

3. Information – words, texts, evidence, records, cassette tapes, bloatware (unwanted software) – to delete.

4. Watermelons, tents, cars, objects, matter, spacecraft – to damage and destroy – *They thought space junk could obliterate spacecraft.*

5. Living beings – life, existence – to bring to extinction.

6. Time – to escape, to become invulnerable to or oblivious of – *That is why, periodically, we attempt to obliterate time, creatively through meditation, prayer, and aesthetic experiences, and destructively, through drugs, escapist entertainment, and other methods of oblivion. / He wants to think of time the way a tree does, a decade as nothing more than some slight addition to his girth… Most of all, like all addicts, he wants to obliterate time. He wants to die, or, at the very least, to not live.*

7. Locations and buildings – subcluster 'settlements': cities, fishing towns; subcluster 'locations': cemeteries, docks, farms; subcluster 'parts of structures': portions of the murals, fence lines.

8. Nature and biomes – coastlines, trees, streams and valleys, parts of intracoastal waterway, part of the Ballona Wetlands.

9. Warfare – invaders, challengers, fields (sport), column after column of Iraqi tanks, enemy, targets.

10. Politicians – Trump, Obama – to defeat.

11. Emotions – rage – to calm down – *With it, we anesthetize grief, annihilate jealousy, obliterate rage.*

12. Medical and health-related entities – subcluster 'organs and parts of the body': insulin receptors; subcluster 'ailments and health hazards': lumbar lordosis, virus, pneumococcus, spider veins, pain.

13. Cognition and senses – sight, perception, sound, memory, consciousness – to hinder and distort – *Turbulence in Earth's atmosphere inevitably obliterated surface details during the long time exposures required by 19th-century emulsions, whereas the eye stood ready for those fleeting moments when the planetary surface snapped into vivid focus.* In some cases, not senses but the objects perceived get distorted, for example surface details, shades of gray, scenes: *We had learned to work that way with Doug because of his use of the smoke room and how much that obliterated detail, obliterated shades of gray distinctions, distinctiveness. / Out and out they went; thing followed thing, scene obliterated scene.*

14. Flight schedules – to disrupt.

15. Access – to hinder, to deny access.

16. Obstacles – to overcome.

3.8. The verb 'annihilate'

The verb 'annihilate' implies the following clusters:

1. To kill – life, mankind, humanity, humans, mortals, people, villagers, non-wizards; to commit genocide – blacks, Asians, Jews, non-Muhammadans, Muslims.

2. To defeat, to oppress – armies, insurgents.

3. Society-related concepts – subcluster 'values': democracy, morality, spirit, imagination, memories, distinctions, emotions, truth, growth, feminism, Buddhism, Islam; subcluster 'threats': oppression, evil, threat, poverty, jealousy.

4. Locations – suburbia, metropolis, cities – to demolish.

5. Natural objects and animals – Earth, asteroids, trees, reindeer, dinosaurs – to kill or destroy.

6. Space and time – to shorten – *When Alexander Graham Bell died at age 75, Thomas Edison, who would die nine years later at age 84, had this to say, 'My late friend, Alexander Graham Bell, whose world-famed invention annihilated space and time, brought the human family in closer touch.'*

3.9. The verb 'raze'

The verb 'raze' appears in the following clusters:

1. Locations and buildings – subcluster 'settlements': villages, cities, towns; subcluster 'housing': houses, blocks, huts, homes; subcluster 'religious and cult buildings': monasteries, churches, synagogues, pyramids, mosques; 'historical buildings': strongholds – to demolish. It is worth mentioning that all collocates in the cluster are used in plural form to show how massive the destruction is.

2. Biomes and natural objects – forests, trees, mountains, habitat.

3. Society-related concepts – history, banks (as financial institutions).

3.10. The verb 'devastate'

The verb 'devastate' may occur in the following clusters:

1. Regions, locations and buildings – subcluster 'regions': Africa, country, countries, areas; subcluster 'settlements': city, cities, towns, villages, neighborhoods, districts; subcluster 'housing': homes, block, property; subcluster 'infrastructure': port, streets.

2. Nature – planet, environment, ecosystem, landscape, archipelago, coastline, ocean, sea, forests.

3. Agriculture – crops, swaths, harvests, crop, corn and soy production, coconut industry, rice fields.

4. Animals – bee colonies, bat populations, insect and fish populations.

5. Humans – humanity, civilization, populations, nation, societies, society, people, families, children – to kill or to cause financial or mental problems.

6. To cause extreme disappointment – fans – *Harry Styles recently devastated fans worldwide when he cut off his signature Big Hair in favor of scraggly bowl cut.*

7. To defeat – opponents – *Mr. Foreman once devastated opponents with brutal, staccato punches short on artistry and long on force.*

8. Society-related concepts – economy, economies, science, research and development, banks, airlines, non-profits, communities, farmers, retirees, retailers.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In conclusion, the present research provided insights into the semantics of near-synonymous lexemes of the verb 'destroy', which could be valuable for understanding their functioning. First of all, the majority of the verbs can be used with tangible objects, pieces of property as well as materials and thus literally mean incurring various types of damage. Additionally, the verbs 'destroy', 'ruin', 'crush', 'wreck', 'demolish', 'annihilate' and 'devastate' collocate with the semantic cluster 'human beings' where 'crush' and 'demolish' denote physical extermination while the verb 'annihilate' has a specific subcluster of collocates – 'race, ethnicity and religion' – to denote genocide. Meanwhile, the verbs 'break' and 'wreck' are used to denote putting immense pressure as a way of torture in order to get information, 'devastate' – for causing financial and mental problems and 'ruin' – for causing reputational and financial losses or bringing relations to an end. The verbs 'wreck', 'obliterate' and 'annihilate' collocate with the cluster 'morale and emotions' meaning either discouragement or suppression of negative feelings. Moreover, the cluster 'locations and buildings' typically attracts such verbs as 'destroy', 'ruin', 'wreck', 'demolish', 'obliterate', 'annihilate', 'raze', and 'devastate'. However, 'raze' tends to collocate with nouns in their plural form thus denoting massive destruction. The verb 'ruin' combines with the lexemes from the semantic clusters 'media as entertainment', 'holidays and leisure activities' and 'food and meals' meaning 'to cause frustration or to deprive of enjoyment'. At the same time, the verb 'crush' is used with the cluster 'ingredients' to denote the process of grinding and mashing solid foods in cooking. Such verbs as 'destroy', 'obliterate', 'raze' and 'devastate' form collocations with the clusters 'nature and biomes' while the verbs 'crush', 'demolish', 'raze' and 'devastate' attract the cluster 'plants and animals'. It is worth mentioning that the verb 'devastate' with the lexemes from this cluster denotes the near-extinction of the species or animal population due to some uncontrolled force – usually a plague or an environmental disaster. The cluster 'opponents' can be broken down into the subclusters 'political parties and politicians', 'societal groups' and 'warfare', and used with such verbs as 'destroy', 'crush', 'demolish', 'obliterate', 'annihilate' and 'devastate' where the verbs combined with the subcluster 'political parties and politicians' mean 'to defeat in debates, to prove right', the verbs and the cluster 'societal groups' mean 'to oppress' and the verbs plus 'warfare' mean 'to defeat in a battle, to make the opponent retreat'.

Thus, it can be assumed that the defining semes of the collocates help specify the literal or metaphorical use of the verb and make it match the listeners' or readers' expectations based on common knowledge and experience. For example, politicians do not participate in battles, wield weapons or command armies but promote and advocate for certain decisions, and to destroy a politician means making this politician lose the support of their voters. Political discourse can be aggressive and the communicating parties use a variety of linguistic means to express their negative attitude towards situations [Khlopotunov & Khramchenko, 2020, p. 67]. One of the most efficient tools is metaphor. As a result, the verbs from 'destroy'-group are actively used with lexemes belonging to the cluster 'values'. Politicians appeal to their voters by pointing out that their competitors' actions lead to the destruction of national core values, thus evoking fear, anxiety and unfairness.

Furthermore, the verbs 'destroy' and 'obliterate' are used with the cluster 'information' and mean 'to delete information or get rid of the evidence' while the meaning of the verb 'break' transforms into 'to tell, to share information'. When used with the nouns denoting parts of the body, the verbs 'break', 'crush', 'wreck' mean 'to injure' while the use of the verbs 'destroy', 'break' and 'obliterate' with smaller entities, ailments and health hazards, such as 'bacteria', 'brain cells', 'cancer cells', 'pathogens', 'pain', 'virus', etc. means 'to cause to disintegrate either leading to the alleviation or aggravation of the health condition'. Therefore the verb 'break' has an additional cluster related to chemicals.

Moreover, the majority of the verbs collocate with the nouns related to society – economics, politics, religion, culture, civil rights, organizations and movements, interpersonal relations and crime. The nouns can be broken down into two major clusters – 'values' and 'threats'. The subcluster 'values' typically includes nouns with positive denotative connotations such as the abstract nouns 'welfare', 'creativity', 'freedom', 'civilization', 'democracy', 'individuality', 'liberty', 'identity', 'humanity', 'competition' and the concrete nouns 'non-profits', 'unions', 'jobs', 'businesses', 'careers'. The subcluster 'threats' includes such nouns as 'oppression', 'inflation' 'evil', 'poverty', 'slavery', 'ISIL', 'privileges', 'student loan debt', 'crime', 'drugs'. As is seen from the nouns in the subclusters, economy-related lexemes constitute a great proportion in the 'values' and 'threats' subclusters.

It is also worth noticing that the verb 'break' in collocations with the nouns of hierarchy, subordination, connections such as 'ranks', 'ties' and 'faith' gets the meaning 'to betray, to lose loyalty'. Furthermore, if the verbs 'ruin', 'demolish', 'obliterate' are used with the lexemes of discussion, opinions and argument, they change their meaning into 'to counteract, to prove wrong'. The verbs 'demolish' and 'obliterate' used with the lexemes 'time' and 'space' mean 'to shorten, to erase, to make negligible' usually with regards to new means of transportation and communication or spiritual practices and escapist activities. The verb 'break' can be used with a unique cluster 'rules, standards and regulations' and thus means 'to deceive, to act contrary to agreements'. The verb 'obliterate' used with the cluster 'cognition and senses' means 'to distort, to hinder the view, to blur'.

Finally, it has been established that the verb 'break' has the most versatile array of collocates and thus can dramatically change its meaning. For example, the idiom 'break bread' originates from the Bible and means 'to have a friendly talk'. The expression 'to break ground' came from the construction industry and nowadays can be used metaphorically as a synonym to the verb 'to start doing something' usually with regards to a project or research. At the same time, the collocation 'break a camp' serves as a variation to 'set a camp'. The expression 'break character' means the actor's failure to act on stage or screen in a compelling manner. 'Break the ice' is a metaphorical expression for alleviating tension through establishing contact with a person or a group of people, although, without the definite article, the expression gets a literal interpretation. Furthermore, the collocation 'break rocks' has several interpretations: in religious contexts, it is used as a trope to

describe the power and strength of someone or something, in other contexts though, 'break rocks' can denote doing hard labor as a form of punishment thus serving as a euphemism for imprisonment based on semantic stereotyping ('breaking rocks' means 'hard labor' means 'imprisonment'). The same mechanism of semantic stereotyping is applied to the expression 'crush beer cans on one's (fore) head' where it means 'to show one's strength' or 'to fool around'.

5. CONCLUSIONS

To summarize, the near-synonymous verbs of 'destroy' form a complex network of shared and unique clusters, which creates great opportunities for thorough investigation. As D. Biber, S. Conrad and R. Reppen put it, "studying language use enables us to investigate how speakers and writers exploit the resources of their language" [Biber et al., 1998, p. 4]. What is more, exploring seemingly culture-neutral verb+noun constructions in linguistic corpora inevitably brings the necessity of diving deep into underlying linguocultural phenomena. We believe that further research in this area can be extended by applying statistical methods as well as discourse and liguocultural analysis to the study of the verbs in question. On the other hand, this study testifies to the fact that corpus analysis can be quite helpful in alleviating ambiguity caused by lexical synonymy.

Conflict of interest
The authors state that there is no conflict of interest.

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