

A Comparative Analysis of Dream of and Dream about in Two Corpora

Namkil Kang

Far East University, South Korea

ABSTRACT

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The ultimate goal of this paper is to provide a comparative analysis of *dream of* and *dream about* in the COCA and BNC. A major point to note is that in the COCA, *dream of* and *dream about* show the same pattern in three genres, whereas they do not show the same pattern in five genres. A further point to note is that in the COCA, *dream of* is the furthest type from *dream about* in the TV/movie genre, whereas *dream of* is the nearest type to *dream about* in the spoken genre. It is significant to note that in the BNC, *dream of* and *dream about* show the same pattern in three genres, whereas they show a different pattern in four genres. It is noteworthy that *dream of* is the furthest type from *dream about* in the fiction genre of the BNC, whereas *dream of* is the nearest type to *dream about* in the non-academic genre. The COCA clearly shows that *dream of freedom* is the most preferred by Americans, followed by *dream of love*, *dream of home*, and *dream of life*, in descending order. The COCA also shows that *dream about competition* is the most preferred by Americans, followed by *dream about girls*, and *dream about flying*, in that order. Additionally, it is interesting to note that only 14.28% of the total nouns belong to the collocations of both *dream of* and *dream about*. It is also interesting to point out that *dream of being* and *dream about being* are the most preferable ones for Americans. Finally, this paper argues that only 48.14% of the total gerunds belong to the collocations of both *dream of* and *dream about*.

Keywords:

type, token, corpus, COCA, BNC, dream of, dream about

1. INTRODUCTION

As Murphy (2016, 2019) points out, *dream of* and *dream about* are synonymously used. The main purpose of this paper is to provide a comparative analysis of *dream of* and *dream about* in the Corpus of Contemporary American English and the British National Corpus. First, we try to detect the subtle difference between two types by examining the eight genres of the COCA and the seven genres of the BNC. Second, we attempt to detect the subtle difference between two types by measuring the distance between them. Third, we try to differentiate between two types in terms of the collocations of *dream of* and *dream about* in the COCA. Additionally, we consider which type is the preferable one in America and the UK. Also, we observe which collocations are the preferable ones for Americans. We try to compare the collocations of *dream of* and those of *dream about* in the COCA. This is performed by the software NetMiner. The organization of this is as follows.

Corresponding Author: Namkil Kang

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In section 2.1, we argue that in the COCA, *dream of* and *dream about* show the same pattern in three genres, whereas they do not show the same pattern in five genres. In section 2.2, we further argue that in the COCA, *dream of* is the furthest type from *dream about* in the TV/movie genre, whereas *dream of* is the nearest type to *dream about* in the spoken genre. In section 3.1, we maintain that in the BNC, *dream of* and *dream about* show the same pattern in three genres, whereas they show a different pattern in four genres. We also maintain that *dream of* is the furthest type from *dream about* in the fiction genre, whereas *dream of* is the nearest type to *dream about* in the non-academic genre. In section 4.1, we contend that *dream of freedom* is the most preferred by Americans, followed by *dream of love*, *dream of home*, and *dream of life*, in descending order. We also contend that *dream about competition* is the most preferred by Americans, followed by *dream about girls*, and *dream about flying*, in that order. Additionally, we argue that only 14.28% of the total nouns belong to the collocations of both *dream of* and *dream about*. In section 4.2, we further argue that *dream of being* and *dream about being* are the most preferred by Americans. Finally, we show that only 48.14% of the total gerunds belong to the collocations of both *dream of* and *dream about*.

2. A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF DREAM OF AND DREAM ABOUT

2.1. A Genre Analysis of dream of and dream about in the COCA

In what follows, we aim to consider the subtle difference between *dream of* and *dream about* in the eight genres of the COCA. Table 1 shows the frequency of *dream of* and *dream about* in the COCA:

Table 1. Frequency of dream of and dream about in the COCA

GENRE	ALL	BLOG	WEB	TV/M	SPOK	FIC	MAG	NEWS	ACAD
Dream of	9,874	1,255	1,289	1,234	823	1,555	1,657	1,317	744
Dream about	2,457	231	212	764	239	498	247	197	69

An important question is “Which type is preferred by Americans?” Table 1 clearly indicates that the type *dream of* is the preferable one for Americans. This comes from the fact that the frequency of *dream of* is four times higher than that of *dream about*. It is thus reasonable to hypothesize that Americans prefer using the type *dream of* to using the type *dream about*.

An immediate question is “In which genre are *dream of* and *dream about* the most frequently used?” It is interesting to point out that the type *dream of* is the most widely used in the magazine genre, whereas the type *dream about* is the most commonly used in the TV/movie genre. Thus, the types *dream of* and *dream about* show a different pattern about their ranking in the magazine and TV/movie genres, thus showing no deep similarities in two genres. It should be noted that the type *dream of* is preferable to the type *dream about* in the magazine and TV/movie genres. The frequency of *dream of* is six times higher than that of *dream about* in the magazine genre. On the other hand, the frequency of the type *dream of* is 1,234 tokens in the TV/movie genre, whereas that of the type *dream about* is 764 tokens.

It is worth pointing out that the types *dream of* and *dream about* are the second most preferred ones in the fiction genre. These two types reveal the same pattern about their ranking in the fiction genre. This in turn suggests that the types *dream of* and *dream about* show a high degree of similarity in the fiction genre. It should be noted, however, that the frequency of *dream of* is three times higher than that of *dream about* in the fiction genre. It can thus be inferred that the type *dream of* is favored over the type *dream about* in the fiction genre.

It is interesting to note that the type *dream of* is the third most preferred one in the newspaper genre, whereas the type *dream about* is the third most preferred one in the magazine genre. More interestingly, two types *dream of* and *dream about* do not reveal the same property about their ranking in the newspaper and magazine genres, thus showing a slight difference. It should be pointed out that the frequency of *dream of* is six times higher than that of *dream about* in the newspaper genre. This in turn indicates that the type *dream of* is preferred over the type *dream about* by American journalists.

It would be worthwhile mentioning that the type *dream of* is the fourth most preferred one in the web genre, whereas the type *dream about* is the fourth most preferred one in the spoken

genre. Again, these two types do not reveal the same characteristic about their ranking in the web genre and the spoken genre, thus showing that they are low similarity synonyms. It should be pointed out that the type *dream of* is preferable to the type *dream about* in the web genre. This stems from the fact that the frequency of *dream of* is six times higher than that of *dream about*. It is interesting to note that the type *dream of* is favored over the type *dream about* in the spoken genre. The frequency of *dream about* is three times lower than that of *dream of*. This in turn implies that Americans prefer using *dream of* to using *dream about* in daily conversation.

It is worth mentioning that the types *dream of* and *dream about* are the fifth most preferred ones in the blog genre. These two types show the same property about their ranking in the blog genre. This in turn indicates that these two types show a high degree of similarity in the blog genre. It should be noted, however, that the frequency of *dream of* is five times higher than that of *dream about*. We take this as indicating that American bloggers prefer using *dream of* to using *dream about*.

It is noteworthy that the type *dream of* is the sixth most preferred one in the TV/movie genre, whereas the type *dream about* is the sixth most preferred one in the web genre. These two types do not show the same pattern about their ranking in the TV/movie and web genres. This in turn implies that two types do not show deep similarities in the TV/movie and web genres. Note that the type *dream about* is the most widely used in the TV/movie genre, whereas the type *dream of* is the sixth most preferred one. It must be noted, however, that *dream of* is preferred over *dream about* by American celebs in the TV/movie genre.

It is important to note that the type *dream of* is the seventh most preferred one in the spoken genre, whereas the type *dream about* is the seventh most preferred one in the newspaper genre. Again, these two types show a different property about their ranking in the spoken genre and the newspaper genre. This in turn implies that these two types do not reveal very close similarities in two genres. It should be pointed out that in the spoken genre, the frequency of *dream of* is three times higher than that of *dream about*. This indicates that *dream of* is favored over *dream about* in daily conversation.

It is interesting to point out that *dream of* and *dream about* are the eighth most preferred ones in the academic genre. These two types show a high degree of similarity in the academic

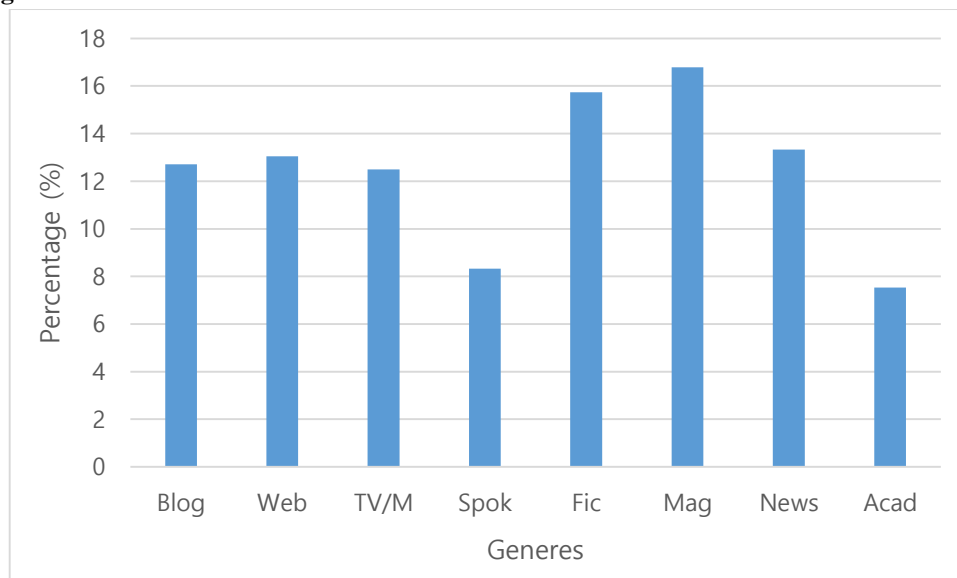
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genre. It should be noted, however, that the frequency of *dream of* is ten times higher than that of *dream about* in the academic genre. To sum up, the types *dream of* and *dream about* show the same pattern in the fiction and blog genres and the academic genre, whereas they do not show the same pattern in the newspaper, magazine, web, and TV/movie genres and the

spoken genre. In a word, the type *dream of* is 37.5% the same as the type *dream about*. It can thus be inferred that two types are low similarity synonyms.

Now attention is paid to the use of *dream of* and *dream about* in the eight genres of the COCA:

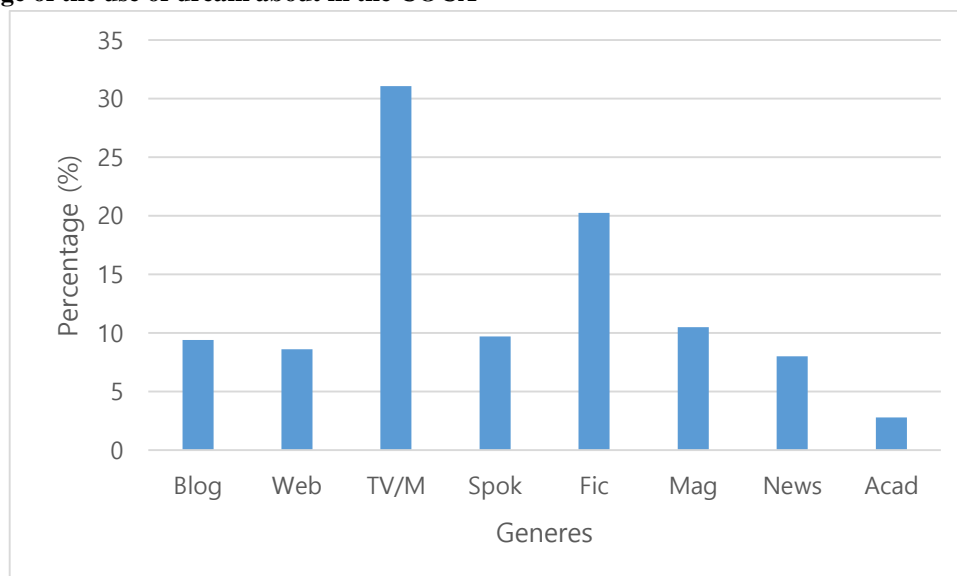
Figure 1. Percentage of the use of dream of in the COCA



It is worthwhile noting that the magazine genre is the most influenced by the type *dream of*, followed by the fiction genre, the newspaper genre, the web genre, the blog genre, the

TV/movie genre, the spoken genre, and the academic genre, in descending order.

Figure 2. Percentage of the use of dream about in the COCA



It is interesting to point out that the TV/movie genre is the most influenced by the type *dream about*, followed by the fiction genre, the magazine genre, the spoken genre, the blog genre, the web genre, the newspaper genre, and the academic genre, in that order.

2.2 The Euclidean distance

In what follows, we provide the Euclidean distance between *dream of* and *dream about* in the eight genres of the COCA. A lower figure indicates more similarity. The formula of the Euclidean distance is as follows:

(1) The Euclidean distance:

$$d(p, q) = \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^n (p_i - q_i)^2}$$

The following table shows the Euclidean distance between *dream of* and *dream about*:

Table 2. Euclidean distance between dream of and dream about

Genre	Blog	Web	TV/M	Spok	Fic	Mag	News	Acad
Percentage of dream of	12.71	13.05	12.49	8.33	15.74	16.78	13.33	7.53
Percentage of dream about	9.4	8.62	31.09	9.72	20.26	10.05	8.01	2.8
Euclidean distance between dream of and dream about	3.31	4.43	18.6	1.39	4.52	6.73	5.32	4.73

It is interesting to note that *dream of* is the furthest type from *dream about* in the TV/movie genre. On the other hand, *dream of* is the nearest type to *dream about* in the spoken genre. More specifically, the figure of the Euclidean distance in the spoken genre is 1.39, which is the lowest in the eight genres of the COCA. This in turn suggests that these two types show deep similarities. It is interesting to point out that the figure of the Euclidean distance in the blog genre is 3.31, which is the second lowest. This in turn indicates that *dream of* and *dream about* show very close similarities in the blog genre. We thus conclude that the types *dream of* and *dream about* reveal deep

similarities in the spoken genre, but they do not reveal them in the TV/movie genre.

3. A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF DREAM OF AND DREAM ABOUT

3.1. A Genre Analysis of dream of and dream about in the BNC

In this section, we provide a comparative analysis of *dream of* and *dream about* in the seven genres of the BNC. Table 3 shows the frequency of *dream of* and *dream about* in the BNC:

Table 3. Genre Frequency of dream of and dream about in the BNC

GENRE	ALL	SPOKEN	FICTION	MAGAZINE	NEWSPAPER	NON-ACAD	ACADEMIC	MISC
Dream of	710	30	221	84	119	83	37	136
Dream about	96	13	47	6	10	9	1	10

An important question is “Which type is the preferable one for the British?” Table 3 clearly indicates that the type *dream of* is preferred over the type *dream about* by the British. It is thus reasonable to assume that the British prefer using the type *dream of* to using the type *dream about*.

It is significant to note that the types *dream of* and *dream about* are the most frequently used ones in the fiction genre. These two types show the same property about their ranking in the fiction genre, thus showing very close similarities. It should be pointed out, however, that the type *dream of* is preferred over the type *dream about* by British writers. This can be derived from the fact that the frequency of *dream of* is four times higher than that of *dream about* in the fiction genre.

It is interesting to point out that the type *dream of* is the second most preferred one in the misc genre, whereas the type *dream about* is the second most preferred one in the spoken genre. More interestingly, these two types do not show the same characteristic about their ranking in the misc and spoken genres. It should be pointed out that the type *dream of* is preferable to the type *dream about* in the misc genre. This stems from the fact that the frequency of *dream of* is thirteen times higher than that of *dream about*. Likewise, the type *dream of* is favored over *dream about* in the spoken genre. More specifically, the frequency of *dream of* is 30 tokens, whereas that of *dream about* is 13 tokens. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that the

British prefer using *dream of* to using *dream about* in daily conversation.

It is worthwhile noting that the types *dream of* and *dream about* are the third most preferred ones in the newspaper genre. Interestingly, these two types show the same property about their ranking in the newspaper genre, thus implying that two types show deep similarities in the newspaper genre. It must be noted, however, that *dream of* is preferred over *dream about* by British journalists. The frequency of *dream of* is eleven times higher than that of *dream about* in the newspaper genre.

It is interesting to point out that *dream of* is the fourth most preferred one in the magazine genre, but in the case of *dream about*, there is no rank-four. The types *dream of* and *dream about* reveal a different property, thus showing no deep similarities. It is noteworthy that *dream of* and *dream about* are the fifth most preferred ones in the non-academic genre. The types *dream of* and *dream about* have a commonality of their ranking in the non-academic genre, thus showing a high degree of similarity. It should be noted, however, the frequency of *dream of* is nine times higher than that of *dream about*. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that *dream of* is preferable to *dream about* in the non-academic genre.

It is worthwhile pointing out that *dream of* is the sixth most preferred one in the academic genre, whereas *dream about* is the sixth most preferred one in the magazine genre.

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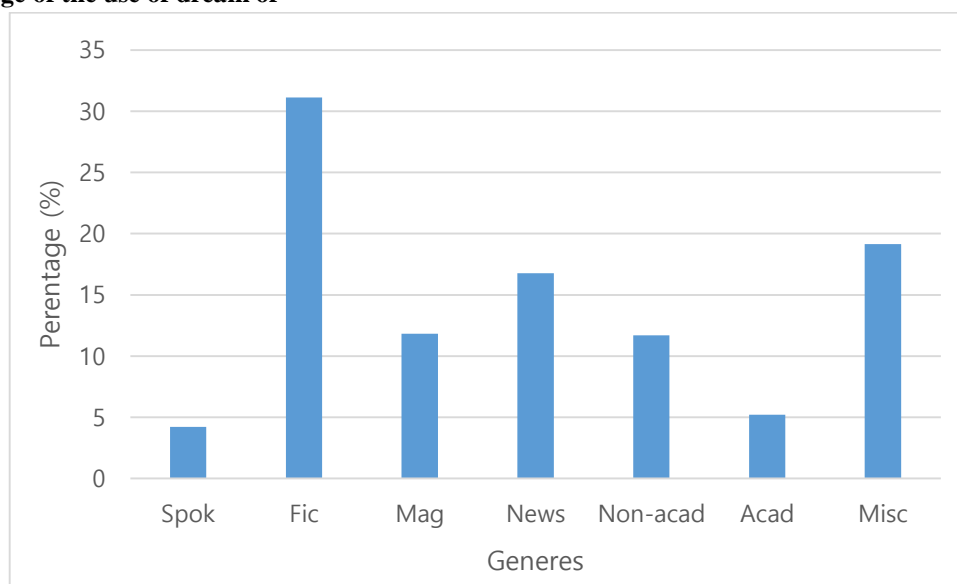
Interestingly, *dream of* and *dream about* show a different pattern, thus showing no deep similarities in the academic genre and the magazine genre. It must be pointed out that *dream of* is favored over *dream about* in the academic genre. This can be derived from the fact that the frequency of *dream of* is thirty seven times higher than that of *dream about*.

It is worth mentioning that *dream of* is the seventh most preferred one in the spoken genre, whereas *dream about* is the seventh most preferred one in the academic genre. Again, *dream of* and *dream about* show a different pattern about their ranking in the spoken and academic genres, hence no deep similarities. It must be pointed out that *dream of* is preferred

over are *dream about* by the British in daily conversation. To sum up, *dream of* and *dream about* show the same pattern in the fiction and newspaper genres and the non-academic genre, whereas they show a different pattern in the misc, academic, and spoken genres and the magazine genre. Simply put, the type *dream of* is 42.85% the same as the type *dream about*. One possible conclusion that can be derived from this is that *dream of* and *dream about* are slightly different from each other in their use.

Now attention is paid to the use of *dream of* and *dream about* in seven genres:

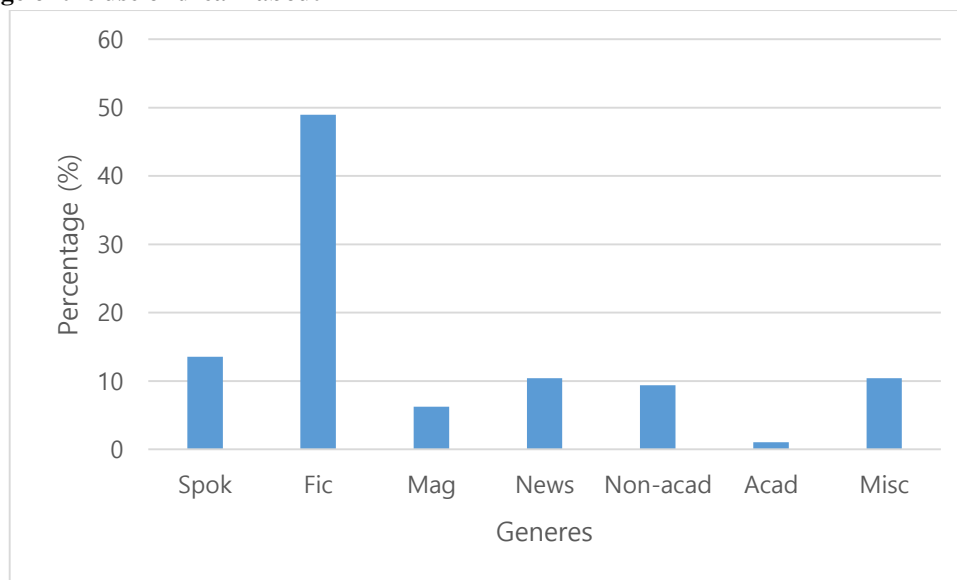
Figure 3. Percentage of the use of dream of



It is interesting to point out that the fiction genre is the most influenced by *dream of*, followed by the misc genre, the

newspaper genre, the magazine genre, the non-academic genre, the academic genre, and the spoken genre, in descending order.

Figure 4. Percentage of the use of dream about



It is worth noting that the fiction genre is the most influenced by *dream about*, followed by the spoken genre, the misc genre

(the newspaper genre), the non-academic genre, the magazine genre, and the academic genre, in that order.

3.2. The Euclidean distance

In what follows, we provide the similarity index about how

much *dream of* and *dream about* are related to each other in seven genres:

Table 4. Euclidean distance between dream of and dream about

Genre	Spok	Fic	Mag	News	Non-acad	Acad	Misc
Percentage of dream of	4.22	31.12	11.83	16.76	11.69	5.21	19.15
Percentage of dream about	13.54	48.95	6.25	10.41	9.37	1.04	10.41
Euclidean distance between dream of and dream about	9.32	17.83	5.58	6.35	2.32	4.17	8.74

It is important to point out that *dream of* is the furthest type from *dream about* in the fiction genre. On the other hand, *dream of* is the nearest type to *dream about* in the non-academic genre. To be more specific, the figure of the Euclidean distance between *dream of* and *dream about* is 2.32, which is the lowest. This in turn implies that *dream of* and *dream about* show deep similarities. When it comes to the Euclidean distance in the academic genre, its figure is 4.17, which is the second lowest. This in turn suggests that *dream of* and *dream about* show very close similarities. With respect to the Euclidean distance in the spoken genre, its figure is 9.32, which is the second highest.

This in turn shows that they do not show a high degree of similarity. We thus conclude that *dream of* and *dream about* are slightly different from each other in their use.

4. A COLLOCATION ANALYSIS OF DREAM OF AND DREAM ABOUT IN THE COCA

4.1. The Frequency of the collocations of dream of and dream about in the COCA

In this section, we consider the collocations of *dream of* and *dream about* in the COCA. Table 5 shows the frequency of the collocation of *dream of* in the top 20:

Table 5. Collocation of dream of in the COCA

Number	Collocation of dream of	Frequency
1	Dream of freedom	44
2	Dream of love	32
3	Dream of home	30
4	Dream of life	28
5	Dream of things	22
6	Dream of success	21
7	Dream of independence	20
8	Dream of homeownership	18
9	Dream of peace	18
10	Dream of spring	17
11	Dream of paradise	15
12	Dream of Californication	14
13	Dream of equality	14
14	Dream of dreams	13
15	Dream of space	13
16	Dream of flying	12
17	Dream of escape	11
18	Dream of flight	11
19	Dream of happiness	11
20	Dream of autumn	9

An important question is “Which collocation is the most preferred by Americans?” Table 5 clearly indicates that the expression *dream of freedom* is the most frequently used in America. This in turn suggests that *dream of freedom* is the most preferable one among Americans. As alluded to in Table 5, *dream of freedom* is the most preferred by Americans, followed by *dream of love*, *dream of home*, *dream of life*, *dream of things*, *dream of success*, and *dream of independence*, in

descending order. More interestingly, the expression *dream of life* is the fourth most preferred one in America. It is worthwhile pointing out that the expression *dream of success* is the sixth most preferred one in America. The expression *dream of peace* ranks ninth in the COCA, which in turn implies that Americans prefer using this collocation.

Now attention is paid to the collocation of *dream about* in the top 20:

Table 6. Collocation of dream about in the COCA

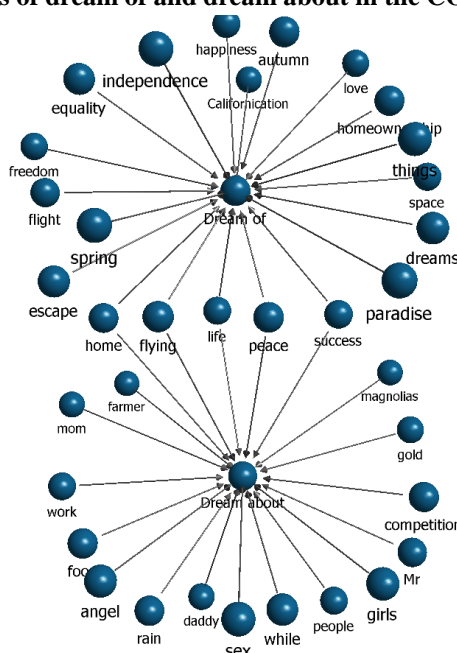
Number	Collocation of dream about	Frequency
1	Dream about competition	13
2	Dream about girls	5
3	Dream about flying	4
4	Dream about food	4
5	Dream about mom	4
6	Dream about Mr	4
7	Dream about people	4
8	Dream about life	3
9	Dream about daddy	3
10	Dream about peace	3
11	Dream about sex	3
12	Dream about success	3
13	Dream about while	3
14	Dream about work	3
15	Dream about angel	2
16	Dream about farmer	2
17	Dream about home	2
18	Dream about magnolias	2
19	Dream about gold	2
20	Dream about rain	2

An immediate question is “Which collocation is the most preferred by Americans?” Table 6 clearly shows that *dream about competition* is the most widely used in America. This in turn implies that *dream about competition* is the most preferable one for Americans. As illustrated in Table 6, *dream about competition* is the most preferred by Americans, followed by *dream about girls*, *dream about flying* (*dream about food*), in that order. It is interesting to note that *dream about life* ranks eighth in the COCA, whereas *dream of life*

ranks fourth. It is worth mentioning, on the other hand, that *dream about peace* and *dream of peace* rank eighth in the COCA. Additionally, it should be pointed out that *dream about success* ranks eighth in the COCA, whereas *dream of success* ranks sixth. We thus conclude that *dream about competition* is the most preferable one among Americans.

Now let us turn to the visualization of the collocations of *dream of* and *dream about* in the top 20:

Figure 5. Visualization of the collocations of dream of and dream about in the COCA



It is important to point out that particular nouns are linked to *dream of* and *dream about*, respectively. More importantly, five

of thirty five nouns are linked to both *dream of* and *dream about*. To be more specific, the nouns *life, peace, home, flying, and success* are the collocations of both *dream of* and *dream about*. Simply put, only 14.28% of the total nouns belong to the collocations of both *dream of* and *dream about*. This in turn indicates that *dream of* and *dream about* are interchangeably

used, they are slightly different from each other.

4.2. The Frequency of the collocations of dream of and dream about in the COCA

In this section, we aim to consider the collocations of *dream of* and *dream about* in the COCA. Table 7 shows the frequency of the collocations of *dream of* and *dream about* in the top 20:

Table 7. Collocations of dream of and dream about in the COCA

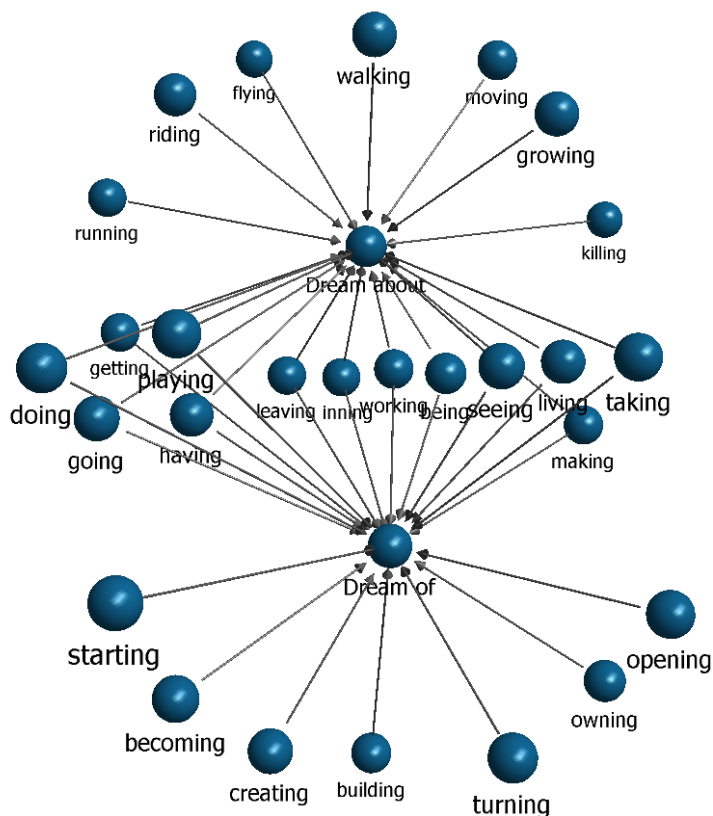
Number	Collocation	Frequency	Collocation	Frequency
1	Dream of being	381	Dream about being	62
2	Dream of becoming	335	Dream about having	3
3	Dream of having	167	Dream about going	14
4	Dream of doing	100	Dream about getting	10
5	Dream of going	94	Dream about doing	10
6	Dream of making	94	Dream about flying	9
7	Dream of playing	93	Dream about running	8
8	Dream of owning	80	Dream about winning	6
9	Dream of getting	66	Dream about growing	6
10	Dream of creating	49	Dream about taking	6
11	Dream of living	46	Dream about living	6
12	Dream of working	35	Dream about making	5
13	Dream of opening	34	Dream about riding	4
14	Dream of taking	33	Dream about killing	4
15	Dream of seeing	32	Dream about leaving	4
16	Dream of building	31	Dream about playing	4
17	Dream of leaving	31	Dream about moving	4
18	Dream of winning	31	Dream about working	3
19	Dream of starting	30	Dream about walking	3
20	Dream of turning	24	Dream about seeing	3

An important question is “Which gerund is the most frequently used with *dream of* and *dream about*?” Table 7 clearly shows that the gerund *being* is the most commonly used with *dream of* and *dream about*. This in turn suggests that *dream of being* and *dream about being* are the most preferred by Americans. When it comes to the collocation of *dream of*, *dream of being* is the most preferable one among Americans, followed by *dream of becoming*, *dream of having*, *dream of doing*, and *dream of going*, in that order. In the case of the collocation of *dream about*, *dream of being* is the most preferred by Americans, followed by *dream about having*, *dream about*

going, *dream about getting*, and *dream about doing*, in descending order. It is important to note that *dream about going* is the third most preferred one in America, whereas *dream of going* is the fifth most preferred one. On the other hand, *dream about living* and *dream of living* rank eleventh in the COCA. Interestingly, *dream about working* ranks eighteenth in the COCA, whereas *dream of working* ranks twelfth. We thus conclude that *dream of being* and *dream about being* are the most preferable ones among Americans.

Finally, attention is paid to the visualization of the collocations of *dream of* and *dream about*:

Figure 6. Visualization of the collocations of dream of and dream about



It is significant to note that thirteen of twenty seven gerunds are linked to both *dream of* and *dream about*. In Figure 6, thirteen gerunds are the collocations of both *dream of* and *dream about*. More specifically, the gerunds *being*, *having*, *going*, *getting*, *doing*, *winning*, *taking*, *living*, *making*, *leaving*, *playing*, *working*, and *seeing* are the collocations of both *dream of* and *dream about*. Simply put, only 48.14% of the total gerunds belong to the collocations of both *dream of* and *dream about*. One possible conclusion that can be derived from this is that *dream of* and *dream about* are interchangeably used, but they are somewhat different from each other in their use.

5. CONCLUSION

To sum up, we have provided a comparative analysis of *dream of* and *dream about* in the COCA and BNC. In section 2.1, we have argued that in the COCA, *dream of* and *dream about* show the same pattern in the fiction and blog genres and the academic genre, whereas they show a different pattern in the newspaper, magazine, web, and TV/movie genres and the spoken genre. In section 2.2, we have further argued that in the COCA, *dream of* is the furthest type from *dream about* in the TV/movie genre, whereas *dream of* is the nearest type to *dream about* in the spoken genre. In section 3, we have maintained that in the BNC, *dream of* and *dream about* show the same pattern in the fiction and newspaper genres and the non-academic genre, whereas they show a different pattern in the misc, academic, and spoken genres and the magazine genre. We have also maintained that

dream of is the furthest type from *dream about* in the fiction genre, whereas *dream of* is the nearest type to *dream about* in the non-academic genre. In section 4.1, we have contended that *dream of freedom* is the most preferred by Americans, followed by *dream of love*, *dream of home*, *dream of life*, and *dream of things*, in descending order. We have also contended that *dream about competition* is the most preferred by Americans, followed by *dream about girls*, and *dream about flying*, in that order. Additionally, we have argued that only 14.28% of the total nouns belong to the collocations of both *dream of* and *dream about*. In section 4.2, we have further argued that *dream of being* and *dream about being* are the most preferred by Americans. Finally, we have shown that only 48.14% of the total gerunds belong to the collocations of both *dream of* and *dream about*.

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