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A DIACHRONIC ANALYSIS OF COLLOCATIONAL BEHAVIOR OF GENDERED NOUN PAIR KING AND QUEEN

Abstract:

This paper focuses on the collocational behavior of a gendered noun pair 'king' and 'queen'. The Corpus of Historical American English (COHA), developed by Davies (2010), was used to investigate collocational patterns of the two target words across twenty time periods starting from 1810 to 2010. The Corpus of Contemporary American English (Davies, 2008) was used to conduct the same analysis with a focus on the more modern time periods. The aim was to investigate all the frequency counts and collocational patterns for both target words in order to analyze any similarities and differences across the time periods, as well as between the two target words. The results reveal changes in the frequency counts for both 'king' and 'queen' across the years, as well as different frequency counts between the two words, i.e., a higher frequency count for 'queen'. In addition, more novel collocational patterns are also noted for this same target word (e.g., beauty queen, scream queen, etc.). The results of this research call for further studies of diachronic collocational patterns, as they can result in a better insight into the potential semantic shifts and, consequently, have practical applications, such as in lexicography.

Keywords: collocations, king, queen, corpus, diachronic.

INTRODUCTION

In corpus linguistics collocations represent one of the most prominent notions, along with frequency counts and concordances (Baker, 2014). Szudarski (2023) warns that, in terms of the proposed and employed terminology, the concept of collocations is quite complex, especially if we look at it as a part of the much larger and incredibly rich formulaic language landscape. However, researchers within the corpus linguistics mainly adopt a frequency based approach to collocations. In other words, collocations are defined as word combinations which are "more frequent than could be expected if words combined randomly in a language" (Nesselhauf, 2005, pp. 11-12). Furthermore, a plethora of research on collocations on the basis

of corpus linguistics methodology reveals what it is that makes these combinations so important and why collocations are one of the most important notions essential to corpus studies.

Collocations, or to be more precise, collocational patterns and behavior of specific, target words, can provide us with a greater insight into these words in a number of ways. Baker (2014) proposes that the manner in which words are used and combined could be reflective of the underlying concepts and implied meanings that, as such, developed and coexisted over time. This is a longstanding idea as collocations have been recognized as important elements of full linguistic profile of words very early on, with Firth (1947) stating that: “you shall judge a word by the company it keeps” (Firth, 1947, p. 11). This is precisely why corpus linguistics investigations into the collocational behavior of particular target words can be of help in shedding more light as to the various linguistic and extralinguistic questions that one may have about those particular words. Such research studies have often focused on the language and gender connection as language and gender field represents one of the generally prolific areas of studies and one that may benefit from corpus linguistics methodology in a number of ways. For example, collocational patterns can be very helpful in the process of language neutralization, which is one of the strategies in the English language reformation guidelines (Hellinger & Bußmann, 2001). Needless to say, diachronic studies of collocational behavior of particular words carry an additional value. For example, McEnery, Brezina and Baker (2019) postulate that it is precisely collocations which, in historical corpora, make it possible for us to investigate changes that affect various types of linguistic relationships, such as semantic and grammatical ones. Therefore, collocational behavior of words over different time periods could be indicative of the differences in a way in which these words have been used throughout those time periods. In fact, under this belief, an entire methodology of usage fluctuation analysis (McEnery et al., 2019) was developed with a goal of investigating shifts in historical discourses.

Linguists engaged in diachronic research study the aforementioned changes that happen over time and that are labeled as ‘semantic shifts’. The term itself was defined by Bloomfield (1933) as “innovations which change the lexical meaning rather than the grammatical function of a form”. Hence, with the changes of word meaning, word usage changes as well and that is shown through collocations. Hilpert (2008) directly proposes that changes of collocational patterns are reflective of changes of words’ meanings and hence talks about shifting collocational preferences with a focus on diachronic studies. Traugott (2017) comes to similar conclusions. That is exactly why investigations into the collocational behavior of specific words can potentially tell us more about their use over time. In particular, collocational behavior of

sets of words, such as gendered pairs, can reveal differences between the contrasted items. Kutuzov and others (2018) summarize this stating that “semantic shifts are often reflected in large corpora through change in the context of the word which is undergoing a shift, as measured by co-occurring words” (Kutuzov et al., 2018, p. 1386).

Examples of the existing corpus linguistics studies of gendered language include investigations into the frequency of gendered terms, their collocational behaviors, genre differences, etc. (Horton, 2001; Sigley & Holmes, 2002; Taylor, 2013; Caldas-Coulthard & Moon, 2010; Macalister, 2011). One of the most pertinent examples is Pearce’s (2008) paper on collocational behavior of gendered noun pair *man* and *woman* that brought forth the need for similar investigations into the other gendered nominal pairs. This is another prompt that revealed the need for further research into the gendered language pairs and their collocational behavior. Combined with the existing need for continuous research into the ongoing semantic shifts, the current paper, therefore, centers on the investigations into the collocational behavior of gendered nominal pair *king* and *queen* across different time periods of the Corpus of Historical American English (COHA).

The Corpus of Historical American English (COHA) has frequently been used by historical linguists as well as other language researchers. For example, Eger and Mehler (2016) used COHA as one of the three corpora for their analysis of semantic change. Hilpert and Perek (2015) used COHA to investigate the behavior of a specific combination (many a + NOUN) in the period from 1810 to 2000. In terms of similar research, Mark Davies (2012), the creator of COHA, states that changes of collocates of words can perhaps be indicative of semantic changes, and that the actual COHA architecture fosters and aids the process of research into collocations for this particular purpose.

The chosen nominal pair *king* and *queen* is a good example of not only gendered language but also language used by many different communities which makes it more susceptible to potential semantic changes. For example, the terms *king* and *queen* are used in African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and language of queer communities (Šprajc, 2021). Therefore, further investigations into the collocational behavior of these words, especially across the years, could paint a clearer picture of ongoing semantic changes that, as suggested prior, are potentially reflective of various socio-cultural changes. The main hypothesis of this paper is that the frequency of use as well as the collocational behavior of the chosen gendered pair *king* and *queen* will differ over the years. In addition, it is expected that there will be some noticeable differences between the two target words themselves. The aim is

to extract all the frequency counts along with the most common collocational patterns over the different time periods and notice any changes, especially between the two gendered nouns. A further contribution of this research is as a potential source of data for further investigations into the collocational behavior of nouns; especially research focusing on gendered language pairs as Hilpert (2008) warns that frequency and lists of collocates are not objectives on their own but rather stepping stones for further research.

Gendered pair *king* and *queen*

In order to understand the noted changes that the extracted and analyzed data shows, especially as they are potentially reflected in the collocational patterns, it is necessary to present the full semantic profile of the two target words.

For the target word *queen*, various meanings can be summarized under the following nine categories

¹:

1. a woman or a wife of a king or other important man
2. a female ruler/sovereign
3. female with a standing similar to that of a queen
4. excelling woman; woman best at what she does
5. national anthem or legal proceeding on behalf of this ruler
6. for games (such as cards and chess)
7. for nature (such as bees)
8. derogatory use for men, usually gay men, who seem effeminate
9. an attractive female

For the meanings of *king*, there is also a total of nine categories as follows:

1. a male ruler/sovereign
2. male with standing similar to that of a king
3. in mythology, legends, etc. for a god or supreme being
4. used to show that one is the best of its group (be it animals, people, or things)
5. a man in charge of a ceremony, celebration, festival, carnival etc.
6. for games (such as cards and chess)

¹ Meanings from two different online dictionaries (Oxford and Cambridge) were compiled and a singular list with all the individual meanings of both sources was created.

7. national anthem or legal proceeding on behalf of this ruler
8. used as part of the name for something that is larger than the usual member of the type
9. a person, company, or organization that is considered to be the best or most successful.

Methodology

For the purpose of this study, apart from the Corpus of Historical American English (COHA), the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) was also used to provide better insight into the current collocational patterns. COHA contains over 475 million words of text from the 1820s to the 2010s, which are balanced throughout the decades and across its five genres. On the other hand, COCA contains over a billion words across eight genres and six time periods from 1990 to 2019. Mark Davies is the creator of both of these corpora.

To obtain the necessary results, the first research step included frequency searches. These searches were done using the COHA and COCA main interface, entering the target words in the search bar and selecting the *Noun* part of speech option, as well as *Sections* option. This step resulted in clear frequency counts of the two target words across all the COHA/COCA time periods. Next, a search for collocations was conducted using the *Collocates* COHA option, setting the collocational window to three words left and right of our target word. This resulted in the lists of top collocates across all the offered time periods, much like the frequency counts, as well as Mutual Information (MI) scores for the noted examples. MI score represents one of the basic collocational measures that is commonly used and that is frequently, such as in this case, an integral part of the software (Stefanowitsch, 2020). MI score limit was set to above three, which is a typical cut-off point (Baker, 2014), while, at the same time, cut-off frequency count was that of 30 examples. A list of all the examples of collocations satisfying both of those criteria was extracted from the top 200 results. Furthermore, the final list did not include any collocates connected to only one, single, time period from COHA. This was done to avoid the inclusion of data coming from a singular source, which might produce high MI results despite it not being truly representative of the overall collocational patterns of the two target words.

It is important to note that COCA offers a new way of investigating collocates through their *WORD* option, which results in adjectival, nominal and verbal collocates of the target word. This option is unavailable in COHA where we have the standard *COLLOCATES* search through the COHA interface. Therefore, COCA collocates search was conducted differently due to the aforementioned change in the COCA interface. COCA collocates search included using the *WORD* option, choosing *Collocates*, and setting up MI score to over 3, just like for

COHA. Following this, frequency and collocates tables were created to present the data. All the tables with the lists of collocates were created according to their MI scores, in descending order. Collocates were also analyzed on the basis of their semantic domains corresponding to the dictionary entries for our target words, which resulted in a total of seven categories: names of royals/rulers/influential/famous figures and their territories, royal/political/governmental terms, games, nature, mythology/legends/magic, descriptors for members of groups/those best at something, names of objects/businesses/things. All the shared examples between the two target words were noted in bold.

Results and Discussion

The first set of results includes separate frequency counts of the two target words across all twenty time periods of COHA.

WORD	TIME PERIOD IN COHA									
	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910
KING	1370	3283	4982	3912	3760	3994	3416	5104	5235	3996
	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910
QUEEN	427	887	1329	1656	1134	1349	1245	1475	1394	1052
	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
KING	4259	4419	3281	4735	3986	3930	4948	3680	4149	3331
	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
QUEEN	1939	1915	1386	1823	1905	1724	1804	1944	1623	1917

Table 1. Frequency of target words across COHA decades.

As can be seen from Table 1, the male word *king* is more frequently used throughout all the decades of COHA compared to its female counterpart *queen*. Even though the frequency counts do not show identical distribution throughout the decades, there are very similar patterns of increase and decrease throughout the years. For example, both words show an increase in the first three decades from 1820 to 1840, followed by a decline. However, while *king* in the most recent decade of COHA is nowhere close to its maximum frequency of 5104 from the 1890s, with a frequency count of 3331, *queen* is very close to its maximum frequency of 1944 from the 1890s with the latest frequency count of 1917. This indicates that the members of this gendered pair do not show the identical frequency changes throughout the years.

When it comes to the actual collocates, the situation differs as well. As Table 2 shows, the target word *king* has more collocate pairs according to the chosen criteria of frequency count over 30, and MI score over 3, with 178 collocates compared to only 73 collocates for *queen*. The most frequent grouping is that of names, with 108 and 31 examples for *king* and *queen*,

respectively. Interestingly, in terms of the meaning indicating that one is best at something and describing members of a larger group, there are more examples for *queen* than *king* (*prom king vs beauty queen, drag queen, homecoming queen, drama queen*). The same can be said for the meanings reserved for mythology, legends and magic, where only *queen* is used.

DOMAIN	ALL	EXAMPLES	ALL	EXAMPLES
NAMES OF ROYALS/RULER S/INFLUENTIAL/ FAMOUS FIGURES and THEIR TERRITORIES	108	GEORGE, JAMES, CHARLES, HENRY, EDWARD, ARTHUR, WILLIAM, LOUIS, RICHARD, PHILIP, FREDERICK, SOLOMON, SAUD, LEOPOLD, FERDINAND, ALFONSO, ALFRED, NAVARRE, STEPHEN, FAISAL, COLE, HEROD, RODERICK, FAROUK, ABDULLAH, RODNEY, CONSTANTINE, SAUL, TUT, HASSAN, JUDAH, MACKENZIE, EMMANUEL, CARLOS, FEISAL, MUNSTER, HAAKON, ARAGON, KAISER, FAHD, MIDAS, PHILIPPE, GUSTAF, LUDWIG, JULIE, AMANULLAH, FUAD, CANUTE, RUFUS, HUSSEIN, MARTIN, LUTHER, BRADY, NAT, KONG, LEAR, <i>ENGLAND</i> , FRANCE, <i>SPAIN</i> , PRUSSIA, JORDAN, ISRAEL, <i>EGYPT</i> , <i>SCOTS</i> , DENMARK, SCOTLAND, NAPLES, SWEDEN, POLAND, PORTUGAL, BELGIANS, BABYLON, NORWAY, SIAM, HUNGARY, PERSIA, NETHERLANDS, BELGIUM, ARABIA, BAVARIA, SICILY, RUMANIA, CASTILE, MOROCCO, SPARTA, SARDINIA, MINERAL, <i>II</i> , JR, III, VI, V, VII, IV, VIII, JR., XIII, XVI, XIV, SAUDI, MOORISH, DANISH, PRUSSIAN, ASSYRIAN, SCOTTISH, SWEDISH, SAXON, PERSIAN,	31	ELIZABETH, VICTORIA, MARY, ANNE, CHRISTINA, SHEBA, MARTHA, MARIE, HENRIETTA, BESS, SOPHIA, ISABELLA, CHARLOTTE, ALEXANDRA, MAB, MARIA, WILHELMINA, ESTHER, JULIANA, RUMANIA, ELLERY, CLEOPATRA, ELEANOR, LATIFAH, <i>ENGLAND</i> , <i>SCOTS</i> , <i>SPAIN</i> , BROOKLYN, <i>EGYPT</i> , <i>II</i> , AFRICAN,
ROYAL/POLITICAL/GOVERNMENTAL TERMS	63	<i>MAJESTY</i> , <i>PALACE</i> , <i>REIGN</i> , <i>CROWN</i> , <i>THRONE</i> , PARLIAMENT, BENCH, NOBLES, MINISTERS, LORDS, EMPERORS, EMPEROR, ALLEGIANCE, PRIESTS, RANSOM, <i>WARRIOR</i> , TERRORS, BEASTS, PETITION, CORONATION, CHAPEL, <i>SOVEREIGN</i> , PALACES, COMMANDS, ARCHBISHOP, COURTIER, JESTER, BARONS, PROCLAMATION, PREROGATIVE, IDYLLS, SIRE, RULER, JUSTICES, TOMBS, HOMAGE, CARNIVAL, PHARAOH, DOMINIONS, PROPHETS, JEWS, PIRATE, <i>KING</i> , <i>KINGS</i> , <i>QUEEN</i> , <i>PRINCES</i> , QUEENS, PROCLAIM, <i>HAIL</i> , <i>CROWNED</i> , DIVINE, RULED, PROCLAIMED, LOYAL, RIGHTFUL, <i>GRACIOUS</i> , <i>REIGNING</i> , REIGNED, DEPOSED, EXILED, ANOINTED, UNCROWNED, HEREDITARY,	24	<i>MAJESTY</i> , <i>REIGN</i> , <i>PALACE</i> , <i>ROYAL</i> , <i>CROWN</i> , REGENT, DOWAGER, <i>THRONE</i> , TRAGEDY, BOROUGH, CONSORT, SOVEREIGN, POSTS, <i>WARRIOR</i> , <i>KING</i> , <i>QUEEN</i> , PRINCE, <i>PRINCESS</i> , <i>KINGS</i> , <i>HAIL</i> , VIRGIN, <i>CROWNED</i> , <i>REIGNING</i> , <i>GRACIOUS</i> ,
GAMES	3	ACE, <i>SPADES</i> , <i>PAWN</i>	6	HEARTS, DIAMONDS, <i>SPADES</i> , <i>PAWN</i> , BISHOP, KNIGHT
NATURE	2	COBRA, LION	3	BEE, BEES, HIVE
MYTHOLOGY, LEGENDS, MAGIC	0		2	FAIRY, FAIRIES,

BEST AT SOMETHING/DESCRIPTOR FOR MEMBERS OF GROUPS	1	PROM	4	BEAUTY, DRAG, HOMECOMING, DRAMA,
NAMES OF OBJECTS/BUSINESSES/THINGS	1	BURGER	3	DAIRY, LACE, COPPER
TOTAL	178		73	

Table 2. Collocates of king and queen in COHA.

The frequency of the target words *king* and *queen* in COCA shows very interesting results. Table 3 shows a rather clear decline in the frequency of use of *king* compared to that of *queen* with *king* losing almost 6000 examples from 1990-94 to 2015-19. On the other hand, *queen* remains stable and even shows a slight increase with just over a thousand additional examples in the 2015-19 period compared to 1990-94.

Word	Total	1990-94	1995-99	2000-04	2005-09	2010-14	2015-19
KING	101583	17877	12680	13492	11992	11103	11979
QUEEN	34788	4601	4951	4314	4522	5007	5621

Table 3. Frequency of target words across COCA time periods.

What is even more interesting is that the analysis of collocational patterns shows several more novel collocational pairs for *queen* compared to *king* which shows that there is a connection between increased frequency counts and more developed collocational patterns that can prove revealing of the semantic changes. For example, new collocational patterns for *queen* in COHA include *beauty queen*, *drag queen*, *drama queen*, and *homecoming queen*. The COCA list of collocates, as Table 4 indicates, adds even more examples such as *pop queen* and *scream queen*. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that these are all meanings that are correspondent to the more modern semantic profile of the word *queen* based on the years when they first appear. COCA results show that similar changes are happening to the target word *king* as well, but they are not as frequent and do not result in the equally prolific collocational patterns. For example, we can also talk about *pop kings*, but *drama kings* and *scream kings* do not show up as significant collocates. Overall, *king* still boasts more collocates with 62 examples, compared to 42 for *queen*, but the difference between the two words is now less prominent compared to that noted in COHA.

DOMAIN	ALL	EXAMPLES	ALL	EXAMPLES
NAMES OF PLACES/JURISDICTIONS	2	boulevard, landing,	0	
ROYAL/POLITICAL/GOVERNMENTAL TERMS	36	queen, warlord, coronation, reign , majesty , ransom, pharaoh, tomb, tyrant, throne , dominion, monarch, assassination, palace , ruler , emperor, messiah, verdict, crown , dynasty, prince , castle , kingdom , allegiance, heir, riot, royal , reigning , dutiful, divine, crown , assassinate, reign, hail , bow, command	21	jubilee, majesty , king, reign , princess, welfare, throne , prince , ruler , crown , palace , castle , kingdom , warrior, royal , evil, all powerful, reigning , knight, crown , hail
GAMES	2	knight, ace	2	spade, diamond
NATURE	8	mackerel, tout, spaniel, lion, cobra, scorpion, crab, salmon	4	bee, hive, ant, colony
MYTHOLOGY/LEGENDS/MAGIC	0		2	fairy, dragon,
BEST AT SOMETHING/MEMBER OF A GROUP	9	beating, prom , promoter, jungle, break, pop , undisputed, commercial, legendary,	11	prom , homecoming, drag, conch, beauty, mum, scream, dancing, soul, pop , pageant,
NAMES OF OBJECTS/BUSINESSES/THINGS	5	burger, videotape, clip, crimson, version,	2	dairy, lace
TOTAL	62		42	

Table 4. Collocates of king and queen in COCA.

CONCLUSION

Investigations into the collocational behavior of words can reveal more about the various linguistic and extralinguistic factors that interact with the said words and whose influence is reflected in the words themselves. Diachronic analyses of this type can be especially useful to note any changes over the years that may have resulted in significant semantic shifts. If diachronic corpus linguistics analysis of collocational patterns is applied to any word pairs, complementary or contrastive, there is even more room for the investigations into the possible differences between the members of the said pairs. Gendered language pairs in particular may benefit from such investigations, as these words do show semantic shifts over the years.

This research showed that it may very well be the case that collocational patterns will coincide with word changes reflected both in their frequency as well as their semantics. Both of the analyzed target words showed changes in frequency counts as well as collocational patterns over the different time periods under consideration. There were also some differences between the two words, such as increased frequency of queen and more new collocational

pattern for this target word as well. Therefore, the results show that such patterns may be used as another discerning factor between gendered words, as the differences and similarities between the collocational patterns of the words do not have to show the exact same level of semantic change or the same speed. This is precisely why further research into the semantics behind words with novel collocates can aid future research in other areas, such as lexicography.

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DIJAHRONIJSKA ANALIZA KOLOKACIJSKOG PONAŠANJA RODNO ODREĐENOG IMENIČKOG PARA KRALJ I KRALJICA

Sažetak

Ovaj rad se bavi kolokacijskim ponašanjem rodno određenog para imenica “kralj” i “kraljica”. Korpus historijskog američkog engleskog jezika (COHA), koji je razvio Davies (2010), korišten je za istraživanje kolokacijskih obrazaca ciljanih riječi u dvadeset razdoblja počevši od 1810. do 2010. godine. Korpus savremenog američkog engleskog jezika (Davies, 2008) korišten je za provođenje iste analize s naglaskom na novija razdoblja. Cilj je bio istražiti sve podatke o učestalosti upotrebe i kolokacijskim obrascima obje izabrane riječi kako bi se analizirale sve sličnosti i razlike kroz vremenske periode, kao i razlike između izabranih riječi. Rezultati otkrivaju različitu učestalost upotrebe riječi “kralj” i “kraljica” kroz vrijeme kao i različitu učestalost upotrebe između ove dvije riječi, tj. zabilježena je češća učestalost upotrebe riječi “kraljica”. Pored toga, za ovu istu riječ zabilježeno je i više novih kolokacijskih obrazaca (npr. “beauty queen”, “scream queen”, itd.). Rezultati ovog istraživanja pozivaju na daljnja istraživanja dijahronijskih kolokacijskih obrazaca jer nam oni mogu pružiti bolji uvid u potencijalne semantičke pomake i, posljedično, imaju praktičnu primjenu, poput onih leksikografskih.

Ključne riječi: kolokacije, kralj, kraljica, korpus, dijahronijski.