

A Corpus-based Analysis of the Evaluative Adjectives *Interesting* and *Nice* in Written and Spoken English

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Abstract

The ability to use of evaluative adjectives in giving praise or positive comments is an important aspect of language use. This paper focuses on the use of two near-synonymous evaluative adjectives, *interesting* and *nice*, in academic writing and speaking. The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE), Google Books, and a mini-corpus consisting of over 50 conversations were used for an analysis of the grammatical and functional patterns of *interesting* and *nice* in giving evaluations. Based on the analysis, I present a set of teaching materials for about five hours of instruction that are designed to increase students' attention to, and usage of, these two adjectives.

Evaluative Adjectives in Language Use

When it comes to positive and negative evaluation, Hyland (2000) found that praise is more popular in academic writing than criticism. In an analysis of 160 book reviews in eight disciplines including cell biology, electrical engineering, mechanical engineering, physics, marketing, applied linguistics, philosophy, and sociology, he found that the evaluative adjectives *useful*, *important*, and *interesting* are the most popular in all the eight disciplines above, while *detailed*, and *up-to-date* are the most common in hard sciences. The most frequently used negative adjective in all of the above disciplines is *difficult*. Along similar lines, Swales (2004), showed that positive adjectives such as *strong*, *better*, and *victory* are found much more commonly than negative ones like *weak*, *worse*, and *defeat* both inside and outside of the classroom context. He believed that positive evaluation is found in both academic speech and academic writing. Studying evaluative adjectives in blog discussions, Luzon (2012) found that evaluative adjectives are used not only for the purpose of giving comments and evaluation, but also for maintaining social relationships and interactions between readers and authors, such as expressing congratulation, agreement, or disagreement. Drawing on findings from previous studies by Hewings (2004), Martin and White (2005), Thompson and Huston (2000), Luzon concluded that evaluative adjectives in academic blogs are used in the following ways:

1. *Interest* adjectives (e.g., *interesting*, *new*, *exciting*, *boring*) express the presence or absence of qualities such as interest or novelty.
2. *Accuracy* adjectives evaluate entities in terms of truth, accuracy, or validity (e.g., *reliable*, *false*, *incorrect*) and care when carrying out research (e.g., *rigorous*, *sloppy*).
3. *Importance* adjectives (e.g., *important*, *significant*, *useless*) evaluate entities in terms of importance or usefulness.
4. *Sufficiency* adjectives (e.g., *detailed*, *small*) are used to assess whether an entity is sufficient for a particular purpose, whether there is more than desirable of an entity (e.g., *redundant*) or whether there is too little (e.g., *undefined*).
5. *Comprehensibility* adjectives (e.g., *clear*, *incoherent*) have to do with comprehensibility, organization, and cohesion.
6. *Quality* adjectives are more-general evaluative adjectives (e.g., *good*, *great*, *unacceptable*, *poor*) that evaluate quality or acceptability.
7. *Certainty* adjectives are used to express the degree of certainty or uncertainty that the writer feels toward the truth of a proposition (e.g., *possible*, *obvious*, but also *unsure*, *confident*).
8. *Emotion* adjectives express emotional responses (e.g., *impressed*, *disappointed*, *annoying*, *glad*).
9. *Judgment* adjectives (e.g., *sensible*, *stupid*) are mainly to do with qualities that are attributed to people. (p. 150)

Luzon's (2012) study was based on a corpus of ten academic weblogs. The entry corpus



contains 201,305 words and the comments corpus involves 201,326 words. Her findings show that *interesting* ranks second after *new* in blog entries of published research, online publications, published articles, and news, with a frequency of 121 occurrences (p. 152). It is mainly used to praise an author's contribution in a blog, such as *interesting study, interesting results, or interesting paper*. *Interesting* also ranks first in blog comments in online publication, action, published research, and results, with a frequency of 168. Luzon's (2012) results indicate that interest adjectives rank first in both blog entries and comments with positive meanings. However, she did not study the grammatical structures that frequently involve those adjectives.

To fill this gap, Hunston and Francis (2000) identified the three patterns in which evaluative adjectives tend to appear in academic writings. According to these authors, evaluative adjectives mostly occur in "there + be + indefinite pronoun (*something/anything/nothing*) + graded adjectives + about + noun phrase..." such as:

- There is something oddly noble about Charles.
- There was something familiar about his voice.
- There was nothing malicious about anything he did. (p. 189)

The second pattern that involves evaluative adjectives is "it + be + adjective + that-clause" such as:

- It is awful that it should end like this.
- At home, it is sometimes necessary that children have to share rooms.
- Isn't it a bit odd that she lives with two husbands? (p. 190)

The third structure that goes with evaluative adjectives is "it + be + adjective + to-infinitive clause," such as:

- It's more expensive to live alone, and it can be very isolating.
- When Japanese people visit friends, it's customary to bring a gift.
- It's important to check the success of a university's graduates on the job market. (p. 190)

In general, according to recent studies, evaluative adjectives are mostly used to give praise or positive comments in both academic speech and writing. However, the usage and grammatical patterns of the two near-synonymous evaluative adjectives *interesting* and *nice* have not been compared and contrasted. How these adjectives are used and in which structures they mostly appear in academic speech and writing will be the focus of my analysis.

Research Questions

In this paper, I aim to address the following questions:

1. What is the frequency difference between *interesting* and *nice*?
2. Which grammatical patterns do *interesting* and *nice* mostly appear with in academic writing and spoken context?
3. What are the differences in collocation and discourse functions between *interesting* and *nice*?

Corpora

A corpus refers to a large collection of naturally occurring spoken and/or written language that is collected for specific purposes and stored electronically (Reppen, 2010). For the analysis of the real-life usage of *interesting* and *nice*, four corpora were used. The first was the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). Created by Mark Davies of Brigham Young University, COCA is considered the largest online corpus of American English with more than 450 million words from 1990 to 2012 at the time of this study. Data in COCA is collected from a wide range of authentic contexts that is divided into spoken, fiction, magazines, newspaper, and academic texts, and is annually updated. In this paper, I focus on the spoken and academic contexts in which *interesting* and *nice* appear. The second corpus that I employed in this research is the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE). MICASE is a specialized corpus and focuses on the language that occurs in academic speech. Specifically, MICASE is a collection of up to 1.8 million words of academic spoken English in the University of Michigan. Texts transcribed in MICASE were collected from speech events such as classroom discussions,

lectures, lab sections, seminars, advising sessions by students and researchers from English Language Institute of the University of Michigan. The third corpus used for this paper is the Google Books collection, accessed by Google's corpus tool N-gram Viewer. According to Davies (2011), the N-gram Viewer, developed by Jon Orwant and Will Brockman, provides graphs of words or phrases used in over 5.2 million books digitized by Google (at the time of this study). Finally, I used the software Antconc3.2.4m for further analysis of the usage of *interesting* and *nice* in a fourth, small corpus of 56 daily conversations and talk shows from TalkBank and the David Letterman show (11, 961 words).¹ Antconc offers "a comprehensive set of tools including a powerful concordance, word and keyword frequency generators, tools for

cluster and lexical bundle analysis, and a word distribution plot." (Anthony, 2004, p. 7)

Corpus Analysis of *Interesting* and *Nice*

In this section, I report on the usage, functions, and grammatical patterns in which *interesting* and *nice* appear, using data from the four corpora mentioned above.

Frequency

Google Books N-gram Viewer (Figure 1) shows a comparison of the frequency level of *interesting* and *nice* in books. *Interesting* is used more frequently than *nice* in academic discourse, especially during the 1920s. Although there has been a moderate decrease in the use of *interesting* recently, it is still popular in formal writing.

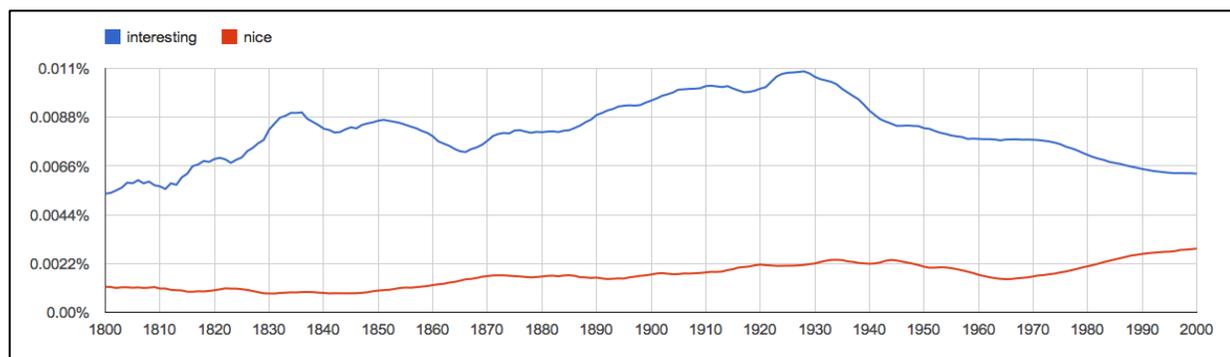


Figure 1. The frequency of *interesting* and *nice* in Google Books (Ngram Viewer, accessed 2013)

Statistics from MICASE² (Table 1) indicate that *interesting* and *nice* are not used with the same frequency in most different academic fields, speech event types, genders, and academic roles.

In the humanities, *interesting* is used more than twice the frequency of *nice* and in social sciences and education, the difference is even more noticeable, with *interesting* being used about three times more than *nice*. In contrast, *nice* is used slightly more frequently in biological and health sciences. This difference is perhaps due to the fact that personal comments or evaluation are more relevant in the spoken discourse of humanities, social sciences, and education, where interest evaluations are often relevant, than in biological and health sciences, where an objective stance toward data is usually promoted. This finding supports Luzon's (2012) observation cited above).

Regarding interactivity, both adjectives are used frequently in highly interactive discourse

such as office hours, advising sessions, tutoring sessions, study groups, lab discussions, and interviews. In highly monologic discourse such as lectures, *interesting* has more hits than *nice*. *Interesting* is also more frequent than *nice* in discourses considered mostly interactive, such as board meetings, seminars, and student presentations, and mostly monologic, such as some lectures and colloquia.

The data in MICASE indicate that both females and males use *interesting* more than *nice* at about the same frequency distinction. With respect to academic roles, faculty members use *interesting* about 1.5 times more than they use *nice*, while graduate students use far more *interesting* than *nice*, about 3.5 times more. Undergraduate students use the two adjectives with about the same frequency.

Table 1
 Interesting and Nice In Spoken Academic Discourse (MICASE)

<i>Interesting</i>		<i>Nice</i>	
Academic Division			
Type	Hits	Type	Hits
Biological and Health Sciences	88	Biological and Health Sciences	92
Humanities	292	Humanities	114
Not Applicable/Other	49	Not Applicable/Other	76
Physical Sciences and Engineering	65	Physical Sciences and Engineering	53
Social Sciences and Education	210	Social Sciences and Education	76
Interactivity Rating			
Type	Hits	Type	Hits
Highly interactive	187	Highly interactive	189
Highly monologic	57	Highly monologic	27
Mostly interactive	187	Mostly interactive	72
Mostly monologic	144	Mostly monologic	68
Mixed	129	Mixed	55
Gender distribution			
Gender	Hits	Gender	Hits
Female	401	Female	232
Male	303	Male	179
Academic role distribution			
Role	Hits	Role	Hits
Faculty	363	Faculty	203
Graduate	185	Graduate	53
Other	53	Other	57
Undergraduate	103	Undergraduate	98

Figures 2a and 2b show the frequency levels of *interesting* and *nice* in the Corpus of “Contemporary American English (COCA). Both *interesting* and *nice* are mostly used in spoken language with very similar frequency, but *interesting* is much more common in academic contexts than *nice*, and *nice* is used

more frequently than *interesting* in fiction. The corpus result also indicates that both adjectives have increased slightly in their overall frequency over time: *interesting* went from 80.15 per million words in 1990-1994 to 101.10 in 2010-2012, and *nice* went from 93.01 to 123.32 in the same time period.

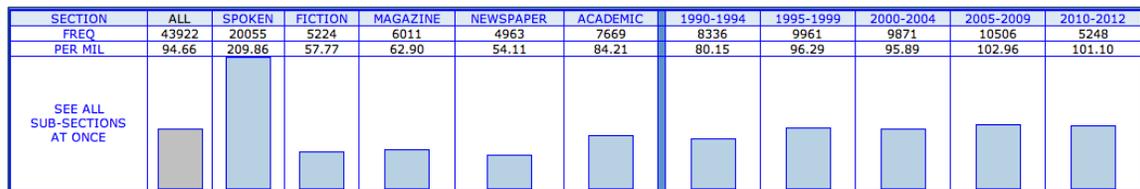


Figure 2a. The frequency of *interesting* in different contexts from COCA

SECTION	ALL	SPOKEN	FICTION	MAGAZINE	NEWSPAPER	ACADEMIC	1990-1994	1995-1999	2000-2004	2005-2009	2010-2012
FREQ	51781	18831	16563	7881	7022	1484	9673	12467	11160	12085	6396
PER MIL	111.59	197.05	183.16	82.47	76.56	16.30	93.01	120.52	108.41	118.43	123.22

Figure 2b. The frequency of *nice* in different contexts from COCA

In the mini-corpus of conversations (ordinary conversations and a TV show) gathered for this study, *nice* is more common than *interesting*. While *nice* is ranked 289 over 11,961 in the wordlist with 101 hits, *interesting* is ranked 417 with only 64 hits.

Grammatical Behaviors

Interesting

According to Master (1996), an attributive adjective precedes a noun and modifies that noun while a predicate adjective follows linking verbs such as *seem*, *be*, and *sound*, and requires no noun after it. In academic writing, *interesting* appears as an attributive adjective (with 17,142 tokens) more often than as a predicate adjective (with 11,036 token). Examples of *interesting* in attributive position are presented in (1).

- (1) The editors document the epic effect of manga and anime with *interesting* essays and statistics from a variety of well-known experts.

This research study offers *interesting* insight into the perceptions of teachers in high-need high schools regarding teacher success, ...

Smith conducted an *interesting* study of the overlap of print and electronic backfiles.

Carbon dioxide has some *interesting* properties, however.

In academic settings, *interesting* tends to appear in some common grammatical structures to indicate positive evaluation. First, *interesting* occurs mostly in the pattern “*it + be + interesting + to infinitive + that + clause*” with 5.00 hits per million among the total 84.21 hits per million of *interesting* in academic

context. Examples from COCA to illustrate this are in (2).

- (2) It would be *interesting* to replicate this study with words that are unknown to the children.

It is *interesting* to see that there is much more power given to the International Monetary Fund.

It is *interesting* to note that after failing over, the client retrieves the missing data from CCN.

It is *interesting* to note that the frequent use of demonstrating an action (gesture) was found.

Furthermore, the pattern “*it + be + interesting + to note + that + clause*” appears with 4.16 hits per million frequency out of the 5.44 hits per million frequency of the pattern “*it + be + interesting + to infinitive + that + clause*” (see examples in (3)).

- (3) It is *interesting* to note that our students gained more words correct per minute than the norm group.

However, it was *interesting* to note that the number of observations varied extensively.

It is *interesting* to note that they correspond to different stabilizing control laws.

It is *interesting* to note that students will stretch their imagination and creativity when using computer technologies!

In addition, the verb *consider* in the *-ing* form can be found to follow *interesting* in this pattern although with lower frequency (0.05 per million), as in the two examples from COCA (4).

- (4) This is particularly *interesting considering* the multitude of independent risk factors identified in this study ...

This is very *interesting considering* that many department heads have been hired primarily because of their extensive list of publications ...

Second, another frequently used structure with *interesting* that can be found in authentic written English is "... *find + it + interesting + ...*" This pattern seems to be used to express personal evaluation. There seems to be some variation in this structure with *interesting*. Most common is the structure "... *find + it + interesting + that + clause*" (118 hits) (5).

- (5) The author *finds it interesting* that phonological processing also explained growth in mathematics.

I *find it interesting* that he dwells on this point after so much information describing the techniques that were ...

I *found it interesting* that people from one group didn't seem to talk to those from other groups.

Less common than the structure with *that* is "... *find + it + interesting + to infinitive ...*" with 22 hits (6).

- (6) The reader may *find it interesting* to note the manner in which the lines between challenges of curriculum and challenges of staffing become blurred.

The teachers may *find it interesting* to compare those results with the results published here.

Even less common is the structure "... *find + it + interesting + V-ing ...*," which appears only twice in this corpus (7).

- (7) I *found it interesting* listening to Kent Hughes and Alan Nymark discuss the modest amount of government funding for innovation.

And there are even colored patients, and Mother has *found it interesting* working out relationships with them.

Finally, the structure "... *make + noun phrase + interesting ...*" is also found with some noticeable frequency (145 hits) (see examples in (8)).

- (8) To *make the game interesting*, a programmer must populate the virtual world with places and things that have rich behavior.

We have to be able to do the same if we're going to *make their lives interesting*.

By *making a lesson interesting*, teachers can hold young peoples' attention and make their learning easier.

The application of ICTs will enable educators and students to play active roles in teaching and learning activities, hence *making the teaching of different subjects interesting* and fascinating to students.

Nice

Data from COCA showed that *nice* appears as both a predicate adjective and attributive adjective. Particularly, *nice* is used more frequently in attributive position than in a predicate position (with 19,021 tokens and 11,328 tokens respectively). Set (9) shows some examples of *nice* in the attributive position as in the structure "... (*a/an*) *nice + noun + ...*".

- (9) Google Books has a *nice* preview to give you a sense of the book.

The Learning Network at the New York Times presents a *nice* article series on teaching with infographics across content areas.

David felt his mentor did a *nice* job

... and they said they had a really *nice* time

Coming last to the party, you can bring a *nice* bottle of wine

Among the grammatical structures with *nice*, the most frequent one is "*it + be + nice + to infinitive + ...*" with 1,899 tokens. This structure is mostly used to express attitudes or common comments (10).

(10) It was *nice* to connect the names with faces.

Eileen thought it was " *nice* to hear about other classes "

It's *nice* to have someone you know who has gone through the program and ...

... get stuck in my ideas and the way I do something, so it is *nice* to hear other ideas.

It's *nice* to keep the ball in this ballpark.

It's always *nice* to hear those kind of things, to be wanted, to have someone like ...

It's just *nice* to share your enthusiasm for classic cars.

It's *nice* to see the organization showing loyalty to him

Interestingly, *nice* appears less frequently in the near-equivalent structure "*it + be + nice + that/when + clause*," with only 165 tokens (11).

(11) It's *nice* that I can sit back now and be proud of what we did

Sergeant is being so *nice* today that he picked a place we can get to without going through ducts

It's *nice* when the designer does the work for you, right?

My clients might think it's *nice* that I'm taking time with nay kids, but think their primary focus ...

But it would be *nice* if there was just one spokesperson for all of that in a federal seat.

It is important to note that *nice* is employed to make unreal conditions as in the structure "*it/that + would + be/have been + nice + to infinitive + ...*" (469 tokens), as in (12).

(12) Wouldn't it be *nice* to elect a fiscal conservative to Ted Kennedy's seat in the United States Senate ...?

Wouldn't that be *nice*, to be put out of

business?

Wouldn't it be *nice* to tell a judge or jury that you really didn't intend to run that ...

So it would be *nice* to skip the bottle opener
It'd be *nice* to have fresh clothes, right? I could clean these and have them right ...

It would be *nice* to have the recordings and book packaged together.

It would have been *nice* to get more help from HOPE, but you just find the money and piece ...

Nice also appears in the structure "*it/that + would + be/have been + nice + if + clause*" for unreal conditions, but with a lower frequency (301 tokens) (13).

(13) But it would have been *nice* if the record-setting run at Irsching had gotten even a fraction of the hoopla that ...

It would be *nice* if all channels were created equal'

It would be *nice* if the pay were a bit more

It would be *nice* if there was somewhere you could go and get rid of all the pent up anger and stress.

But it would be *nice* if there was just one spokesperson for all of that in a federal seat.

Additionally, *nice* is also used, in spite of a lower frequency (66 tokens), to describe people's positive behaviors in the structure "*... be nice to + noun + ...*" (14).

(14) ... having learned that life is better when you are *nice* to others, and also when you keep a tidy bedroom.

Maybe they're being *nice* to me now because they know I'll be fat again by fall of next

I remember how everyone was genuinely *nice* to her

... and from where I came from, you had to earn someone being *nice* to you.

She camp counselor was *nice* to me; ...

And finally, like *interesting*, *nice* appears in the structure "... *make* + noun phrase + *nice* ..." with only 22 tokens, as seen in (15).

- (15) For instance, *to make a cauliflower nice* and *white*, tie the outer leaves around its head.

This is where man has gone in and *made the walls nice* and concrete, very clean.

Chinese officials demanded that citizens refrain from spitting on the sidewalks *to make their house nice* for guests.

It saves time getting ready, and it *definitely makes our weekends nice* and steamy.

... they laugh, which makes life very good for them, and *makes life nice* for me; ...

To summarize, both *interesting* and *nice* share some structures together despite some differences. First, *interesting* and *nice* can both function as attributive and predicate adjectives, but the frequency of *nice* exceeds much higher than *interesting*. Particularly, *nice* appears as an attributive adjective with 19,021 hits, and as a predicative one with 11,328 hits while *interesting* plays the role of an attributive adjective with only 17,124 hits, and a predicate one with only 11,036 hits. Second, *nice* is similar to *interesting* in some structures such as "*it* + *be* + *interesting/nice* + *that* + *clause*" and "*make* + noun phrase + *nice/interesting*". On the other hand, *nice* never or almost never appears in several structures in which *interesting* commonly appears. Particularly, *nice* is hardly found in such structures as "... *find it nice* + V-ing ..." (zero hit), "... *find it nice that* + *clause*" (1 hit), or "*it be nice to note that* + *clause*" (1 hit). Likewise, *interesting* is never seen in the structure "*that would have been interesting* + *to infinitive*." The corpus results thus indicate that *interesting* and *nice* have overlapping as well as distinctive grammatical behaviors.

We now turn to the lexical collocation similarities and differences between *interesting* and *nice*.

Lexical Collocations

Interesting

Interesting tends to occur with adverbs of degree, such as *very* and *really* (16).

- (16) The case of the Journal of Medical Speech-Language Pathology is *very interesting*.

On both freelancesuccess.com and Facebook, it's *very interesting* to read about projects that writers I respect have been pursuing.

There is some other *very interesting* material: a hobby horse of mine.

But the *really interesting* findings appear on images showing your brain's activity pattern.

Stephens loves to share *really interesting* stuff with the kids in her advisory class, and all the kids in the library.

Additionally, *more* and *most* frequently precede *interesting* (10). While *most* is often used with *interesting* in a superlative comparison, it is also used as a modifier, as in the third example in (17).

- (17) The new site is really a virtual performance venue, which is a *more interesting* aspect than the political side.

The underlying question may be *more interesting*: Why does religion continue to have a stranglehold on U.S. politics?

This is a *most interesting* compilation of information about manga and anime.

Perhaps the *most interesting* analysis, however, was Diane Ravitch's.

This is considered one of the *most interesting* factors being studied by the current research through the study of personality traits represented in the Big-Five factors model of personality.

Figure 3 shows the collocation of *interesting* in COCA. The five adverbs that frequently precede *interesting* are *very*, *most*, *really*, *particularly*, and *quite*. Furthermore, as seen in this chart,

common nouns such as *thing(s)*, *question*, *story* and *finding* frequently follow *interesting*. The verb *note* also mostly appears after *interesting*,

especially in the pattern “*it + be + interesting + to note + that + clause*” mentioned above.

	<input type="checkbox"/>	CONTEXT	FREQ	ALL	%	MI	
1	<input type="checkbox"/>	AN	6636	1495851	0.44	3.55	
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	VERY	4126	481392	0.86	4.50	
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	MOST	2035	503716	0.40	3.42	
4	<input type="checkbox"/>	THING	1281	212169	0.60	4.00	
5	<input type="checkbox"/>	REALLY	1220	309387	0.39	3.38	
6	<input type="checkbox"/>	THINGS	885	255318	0.35	3.20	
7	<input type="checkbox"/>	QUESTION	779	145090	0.54	3.83	
8	<input type="checkbox"/>	NOTE	778	44663	1.74	5.52	
9	<input type="checkbox"/>	STORY	448	138598	0.32	3.09	
10	<input type="checkbox"/>	PARTICULARLY	345	57100	0.60	4.00	
11	<input type="checkbox"/>	QUITE	291	79251	0.37	3.28	
12	<input type="checkbox"/>	FINDING	158	35877	0.44	3.54	

Figure 3. Top collocations of *interesting* in COCA

Nice

Figure 4 shows the collocations of *nice*. As seen from the figure, *very*, *really*, and *pretty* are the three most frequent adverbs that precede *nice*. Nouns referring to humans such as *guy*,

girl, and *lady* are commonly found to follow *nice*. While the two verbs *see* and *meet* frequently follow *nice* for greeting in spoken language, *weekend* also follows *nice* to form closing expressions.

	<input type="checkbox"/>	CONTEXT	FREQ	ALL	%	MI	
1	<input type="checkbox"/>	VERY	4001	481392	0.83	4.22	
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	SEE	2339	484021	0.48	3.44	
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	REALLY	1491	309387	0.48	3.43	
4	<input type="checkbox"/>	GUY	1247	83067	1.50	5.07	
5	<input type="checkbox"/>	MEET	966	64621	1.49	5.07	
6	<input type="checkbox"/>	PRETTY	341	74413	0.46	3.36	
7	<input type="checkbox"/>	GIRL	336	74844	0.45	3.33	
8	<input type="checkbox"/>	TOUCH	292	34683	0.84	4.24	
9	<input type="checkbox"/>	GUYS	242	56606	0.43	3.26	
10	<input type="checkbox"/>	NICE	211	51823	0.41	3.19	
11	<input type="checkbox"/>	LADY	205	31139	0.66	3.88	
12	<input type="checkbox"/>	WARM	176	33719	0.52	3.55	
13	<input type="checkbox"/>	CLEAN	172	36843	0.47	3.39	
14	<input type="checkbox"/>	WEATHER	161	27873	0.58	3.69	
15	<input type="checkbox"/>	WEEKEND	156	33359	0.47	3.39	
16	<input type="checkbox"/>	CLOTHES	149	30855	0.48	3.44	

Figure 4. Top collocations of *nice* in COCA

Nice mostly appears before some certain nouns such as *guy*, *things*, *thing*, *day*, and *people*.

Figure 5 summarizes the nouns that are frequently used with *nice*.

	CONTEXT	FREQ
1	NICE GUY	1058
2	NICE THINGS	524
3	NICE THING	512
4	NICE DAY	452
5	NICE PEOPLE	406
6	NICE PLACE	390
7	NICE MAN	369
8	NICE JOB	351
9	NICE WAY	333
10	NICE PERSON	303
11	NICE TOUCH	264
12	NICE GIRL	250
13	NICE GUYS	209
14	NICE WORK	205
15	NICE HOUSE	194

Figure 5. Top collocations of *nice* with noun in COCA

Examples of *nice* being used with the most common collocations with nouns are shown in (18).

(18) I mean, Senator Santorum is a *nice guy*, but he does not understand how the economy works.

... so many of you have contacted us, thousands and thousands of people, saying *nice things* about THE FIVE and we very much appreciate it.

You continue to remind people, Have a *nice day*, and do the best that you can do.

... and we're all having fun. Met a lot of *nice people* so far and it's been a great ride.

The *nice thing* about Signature is it proves you're not only as good as your most recent play.

Table 2 displays the contrast in the collocation with nouns between *interesting* and *nice*. The ten nouns that mostly go only after either *interesting* or *nice* are listed.

Table 2

Collocations with nouns: contrast between *nice* and *interesting* in COCA

Nouns most frequently following <i>interesting</i> but not <i>nice</i>	Nouns most frequently following <i>nice</i> but not <i>interesting</i>
issue	try
possibility	smile
comparison	surprise
creation	gesture
history	clothes
observation	dress
experiment	restaurant
insight	room
facts	present
phenomenon	meal

As shown in Figure 5, ten nouns that most frequently follow *interesting* are often abstract and academic nouns. On the other

hand, nouns referring to specific everyday objects tend to follow *nice*. This contrast can be seen in example set (19).

- (19) Some *interesting point* other than the fact that he didn't mention me, is that we came into the segment.

He chose to settle in Italy because a very *interesting experiment* was under way there.

Mr. McClusky told me that it would be a *nice gesture* to give the lantern to Polly's mother, and ...

Another *interesting comparisons* found in looking at the impact that the food labeling has had on food preparation

Nice try, Jerry, thanks very much for the call. Let's see if ...

It was a *nice smile*, actually, and she offered him a grudging one in return.

Discourse Functions

Interesting

In spoken language, *interesting* is used to give personal opinions, especially positive ones. When used to answer questions about opinions, *interesting* is commonly used in the first part of a response turn, as in the two following conversations from COCA (20)

- (20) Conversation 1:

BAIER: What do you think?
LIZ-MARLANTES-CHR: It's been interesting. I would have to say despite the polling, which is a little bit all over the map, I anticipate that we will see Gingrich take a little bit of a hit based on the way he has been backpedaling on some of these attacks on Romney. We have seen a ton of conservative support actually rush over to Romney's in reaction to Gingrich's attacks.
BAIER: Do you think these polls indicate it just hasn't caught up yet?
MARLANTES: I think it's hurting both of them

Conversation 2:

ERICA-HILL: What have you heard from people?
ELIZABETH-BERNSTEI: Well, it's *interesting*. I hear because it's a journal. A lot of men will write.

Interesting is also used as a response token to indicate agreement in spoken language (21).

- (21) Conversation 3:

GRAPHICS PEDESTRIAN-1MALE: It's okay. Don't worry. You're mom means very well. You're gonna be okay. Don't worry. Everything's all right.
JOHN-QUI-ONES-1-(Off-camera): You were gentle in your approach.
PEDESTRIAN-1MALE: Yeah. No, I don't wanna freak her out that's why I called the girl in her office, because I thought it'd be less intimidating if another woman came down.
JOHN-QUI-ONES-1-(Off-camera): *Interesting*.
PEDESTRIAN-1MALE: And we would have figured out how to follow her wherever she was going.

Conversation 4:

KOTB: And the happiest state in the country is ...
GIFFORD: Hello.
KOTB and GIFFORD: (In unison) Hawaii.
KOTB: I wonder ...
GIFFORD: Yes.
KOTB: Yeah. Interesting. The weather might ...

A speaker may also use *interesting* to re-enter a conversation and take a long turn (22). In this conversation, after not speaking for a

few turns, Erica-Hill begins her turn with *interesting* and then launch a new turn to speak.

(22) Conversation 5:

- CHARLIE-ROSE: A little rocking hug, yeah.
GAYLE-KING: ... yes, rock -- because it was such a genuine tender hug.
ERICA-HILL: Yeah.
GAYLE-KING: It ...
CHARLIE-ROSE: Mm.
GAYLE-KING: You never see that.
ERICA-HILL: Interesting, too. Two -- two of the most poignant moments we've seen of Congress coming together over the few months. And Gabby Giffords showed up for that first time

Nice

As mentioned above, *nice* is much more frequently used in spoken language than in academic contexts. Data from COCA shows that *nice* is used to give general and positive comments on feelings, events, objects, and people. In these cases, *nice* means kind, attractive, pleasant, and enjoyable (23).

(23) Well, there's a *nice* study out that shows that the nicest compliment you can give a woman is that she's lost weight.

Nice hair, that's also a little creepy.

I like this jacket, what do you think, you know, I think it looks *nice*. What did you think when you saw it?

... we are *nice* to each other

Her brother got up and said a few *nice* words.

I know. But I'm *nice*. You wanna come with me?

Frequently, *nice* is used to describe people, especially positive comments on personality (24).

(24) He's a *nice* guy, but you wouldn't get along with him because he talks politics all the time.

No, you are really *nice* guy. Really nice guy. Rick.

But what if the person asking you to watch his belongings isn't so *nice* and polite?

I'm not sure why we had that segment, but he's a *nice* guy.

He was sexy, smooth, a gentleman, and a *nice* guy, contrary to popular belief.

Senator Santorum is a *nice* guy, but he's never had a job in the private sector.

Nice is found to give encouragement and express praises on achievement (25).

(25) Conversation 6:

- ERICA-HILL: Which of the candidates has the best message and the best plan to help people in Florida and around the country do that?
SENATOR-MARCO-RUBI: Yeah. Yeah. Nice try. I'm not endorsing this. But --
CHARLIE-ROSE: It's good. Endorse it --
SENATOR-MARCO-RUBI: -- but I'm not endorsing. Yeah, let me tell you something.

Conversation 7:

- LAUER: All right. So I think you did very well with your cheat sheet, Janice. We really appreciate that.
Ms-MIN: Thank you.

LAUER: Nice job. And again, we are now going to be joined by the cast from "The Artist."
They just had a very big morning.

In spoken language, *nice* is frequently used for closing a conversation (26).

(26) ... It's a good time to say we hope you have a *nice* weekend.

We will see you online and again here Monday. Have a *nice* evening. Thank you, and good night.

Vice President Joe Biden. Mr. Biden, it's *nice* to see you. Thanks very much Vice Pres.

Additionally, *nice* can precede the two verb *see* and *meet* to form greetings when introduced to a new person (27).

(27) Conversation 8:

EREZ-1ACTOR2: I don't even know who he is.
WILL-1DINER2: My name is Will. It's *nice* to meet you.
JULIE-1DINER2: This is Julie.
EREZ-1ACTOR2: Hi, my parents just dropped me off here.
WILL-1DINER2: Yeah, I know

Conversation 9:

BETH-1RICHARD'S-W: This is my husband, Richard.
DREW-SOLLENBERGER: Hi.
RICHARD-1BETH'S H: How are you doing?
DREW-SOLLENBERGER: *Nice* to meet you.
RICHARD-1BETH'S H: *Nice* to meet you too.

Conversation 10:

MAN: Hello.
RICHARD-MOURDOCK: Good morning.
MAN: Nice meeting you.
RICHARD-MOURDOCK: *Nice* meeting you, sir.

Conversation 11:

ERICA-HILL: ... And Jackie Collins is with us this morning. *Nice* to have you here this morning.
JACKIE-COLLINS-1A: *Nice* to be here. I love the studio.
GAYLE-KING: I did, too.
JACKIE-COLLINS: It's great. So fun.
GAYLE-KING: Thanks. I think so, too

In conversations, when functioning as a response token, *nice* appears alone in a response and shows an approval with a strong emotion (28).

(28) Conversation 12:

GIFFORD: Well, we're -- you know the wonderful John Tartaglia from "Avenue Q" ...
KOTB: Oh.
GIFFORD: ... is going to be here with your special song that we've written for you.
And I think he's going to bring along a puppet friend or two.
KOTB: Oh! Nice.
GIFFORD: Uh-huh. Because she started this wonderful ...

Conversation 13:

ERICA-HILL: Mary, thanks. Don't worry. I'm coming back. And I've –
I've even found you a present. Just don't tell the boys.

MARYSOL-CASTRO: Nice.

ERICA-HILL: Time now for a little cake. We learned over the weekend and that William
will have one cake. Kate has chosen another.

In other cases like the following conversations from COCA, *nice* indicates speakers' interest in the other speaker's topic or idea (29).

(29) Conversation 14:

PICKLER: Oh, look at you.

KOTB: Cute.

Ms-THOMAS: And flip-flop season's around the corner, so everyone can get in on this,
even dad for Father's Day.

KOTB: *Nice*. I like. Yeah.

Ms-THOMAS: And then I know you have ...

Conversation 15:

O'DONNELL: Well, we have a little clip from "The Soup" which we're going to
look at right now together.

MCHALE: Oh, *nice*. *Nice*.

O'DONNELL: OK. It's not that one. It's on one of those

And finally, *nice* is also used to show appreciation in spoken language (30).

(30) Conversation 16:

TERRY-GROSS: Rachel Maddow, it's been great to talk with you.
I want to thank you very much.

RACHEL-MADDOW: Terry, thank you.
It's really *nice* of you to give me this much time. Thanks.

Conversation 17:

RAPPAPORT: Comedy aside, you happen to have a very good voice.

Mr-SANDLER: That's *nice* of you. Thank you. My mom's going to be happy to hear that.
She used to spring for lessons on occasion.

Summary

Table 3 summarizes the similarities and differences between *interesting* and *nice* as indicated by corpus data. Data from the COCA confirms previous research of Hyland (2000) and Swales (2004) that both *interesting* and *nice* are commonly used in giving positive comments in both written and spoken language. However, there are many differences in grammatical behavior, lexical collocation, and discourse functions between these two evaluative adjectives. First, although

they are both used more frequently in attributive than predicate positions, they appear in different grammatical structures with various frequency although they sometimes share the same ones. Second, *interesting* and *nice* differ in lexical collocation although there are some adverbs, such as *very* and *really*, that collocate with both of them. And finally, *nice* is used with more discourse functions than *interesting*.

Table 3
Similarities and Differences Between Interesting And Nice

	<i>Interesting</i>	<i>Nice</i>
Grammatical Behaviors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attributive adjective (17,124 hits) - Predicate adjective (11,036 hits) - “<i>it + be + interesting + that + clause</i>” (846 hits) - “... <i>find it interesting that + clause</i>” (118 hits) - “... <i>find it interesting to ...</i>” (22 hits) - “... <i>find it interesting + V-ing ...</i>” (2 hits) - “... <i>make + noun phrase + interesting ...</i>” (145 hits) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attributive adjective (19,021 hits) - Predicate adjective (11,328 hits) - “<i>it + be + nice + that/when + clause</i>” (165 hits) n/a - “<i>it + be + nice + to infinitive</i>” (1,899 hits) - “... <i>make + noun phrase + nice ...</i>” (22 hits) “... <i>be nice to + noun phrase</i>”
Lexical Collocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adverbs: <i>very, most, really, particularly, quite</i> - Nouns: <i>things, question, story, finding</i> - Verbs: <i>note</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adverbs: <i>very, really, pretty</i> - Nouns: <i>guy, girl, lady</i> - Verbs: <i>see, meet</i>
Discourse Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Giving positive opinions - Agreeing - Re-entering a conversation and taking a long turn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Giving general and positive comments on feelings, events, objects, and people. - Describing people, especially positive comments on personality - Giving encouragement and express praises on achievement - Closing a conversation - Greetings when introduced to a new person - Responding and showing an approval with a strong emotion - Showing speakers’ interest in the other speaker’s topic or idea - Showing appreciation in spoken language

Based on the findings above, teaching materials for five hours of instruction were created. These materials are meant to be illustrations of how corpus findings can be applied in language teaching and thus not all of the findings above will make their way into

this set of sample materials. The materials employ Data-Driven Learning (DDL) developed by Johns and King (1991) to encourage students to discover language rules based on corpus data.

Teaching Materials

Using *interesting* and *nice* to give evaluation in written and spoken language

BACKGROUND

Description of the program

The materials created in this paper are based on an EFL program of the Department of English Language Studies in a public university in Vietnam. The program aims to develop students' academic and communicative abilities in English through an integration of language skills such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Description of students

The students in this course are 18- to 30-year-old freshmen. There are about 20 students in a class. The students' levels of English rank from upper-intermediate to low advanced. Students have learned English as a foreign language for over seven years.

Purpose of the created materials

The five-hour set of teaching materials in the following part of this paper aims to improve students' skills in using evaluative adjectives in academic writing and spoken language. Particularly, these teaching materials focus on the use of *interesting* in grammatical patterns. Additionally, different functions of *nice* in spoken language are emphasized through specific tasks in the materials. (The answer key to all activities are in the Appendix.)

TEACHING MATERIALS

Activity 1 (60 minutes): Discovering grammatical patterns

1. Study the following sentences in groups of three students.
2. Organize the sentences into six grammatical patterns with the word *interesting*. The first one has been done for you (shown in the example box).
3. Compare your results with the other groups.
4. Present your group's results on the board.

Pattern: "It + be + *interesting* + to infinitive"

Sentences: 2, 14, 16, 21, 26

2. It would be **interesting** to replicate this study with words that are unknown to the children.

14. Finally, it is also **interesting** to notice that the argument would apply to any readily identifiable group.

16. It is **interesting** to note that the frequent use of demonstrating an action (gesture) was found...

21. It is **interesting** to see that everybody has made their strategic bets.

26. It is **interesting** to find that only six participants could realize the fact that the relationship between English language learning and globalization is most likely to have an impact on the field of education.

1. It was **interesting** sitting there listening to the justices talk about the behavior of these two men.
2. It would be **interesting** to replicate this study with words that are unknown to the children.
3. I find it **interesting** to see how many of them have been adopted.
4. These were the things that made life **interesting**.
5. I think people find it **interesting** to read about it in black and white.
6. I found it **interesting** listening to Kent Hughes and Alan Nymark discuss the modest amount of government funding for innovation.
7. This is very **interesting** considering that many department heads have been hired primarily because of their extensive list of publications ...
8. The application of ICTs will enable educators and students to play active roles in teaching and learning activities, hence making the teaching of different subjects **interesting** and fascinating to students.
9. It is **interesting** going back to the car, I think.
10. The author finds it **interesting** that phonological processing also explained growth in mathematics.
11. And there are even colored patients, and Mother has found it **interesting** working out relationships with them.
12. I found it **interesting** that people from one group didn't seem to talk to those from other groups.
13. I found it most **interesting** looking back at the bad years, a few years ago, where the statistics were really pushing things in the direction.
14. Finally, it is also **interesting** to notice that the argument would apply to any readily identifiable group.
15. I find it **interesting** that you use the term "father figure" to describe what he'd be to your future children.
16. It is **interesting** to note that the frequent use of demonstrating an action (gesture) was found.
17. I found it interesting that you could write as a woman.
18. Some people found it **interesting** to be interviewed by someone who they felt was a lot younger than they were expecting.
19. Sidebar Political, religious, and cultural differences make life **interesting** when you're dating.
20. He finds it **interesting** to study Mayan mathematics and their axioms and principles in mathematics.
21. It is **interesting** to see that everybody has made their strategic bets.
22. I found it **interesting** watching the news, where they were talking about Jesse Helms trying to cut off NEA funding.
23. To make the game **interesting**, a programmer must populate the virtual world with places and things that have rich behavior.

24. I find it **interesting** that he dwells on this point after so much information describing the techniques that were ...
25. The teachers may find it **interesting** to compare those results with the results published here.
26. It is **interesting** to find that only six participants could realize the fact that the relationship between English language learning and globalization is most likely to have an impact on the field of education.
27. This is particularly **interesting** considering the multitude of independent risk factors identified in this study ...
28. Its breezy style, attractive photos and helpful charts, lists, diagrams and guides actually make housework **interesting** to read about.

Activity 2 (50 minutes): Practice

Use any of the above grammatical patterns to express your evaluation on the following ideas with your group members. (The first one has been done for you.)

1. Eating avocado: An avocado can provide about 20 essential nutrients.

Your sentence: It is interesting to discover that eating avocados can be good for you.

2. Overusing cell phones: Overusing cell phones can cause some problem with our health.

Your sentence: _____

3. Learning language: Learning a new language helps us know more about the culture and the people in the country where that language is used.

Your sentence: _____

4. Consuming olive oil: Consuming olive oil can bring us a healthy heart.

Your sentence: _____

5. Practicing Yoga: Practicing Yoga helps in building a strong mind.

Your sentence: _____

6. Swimming: Swimming consumes a great deal of energy.

Your sentence:

Activity 3 (50 minutes): Collocation Contrasts

issue, possibility, comparison, creation, history, observation, experiment, try, smile, surprise, gesture, clothes, dress, restaurant, meal, present, insights, facts, phenomenon, room

The box above contains 10 nouns that most frequently follow *interesting* but not *nice* and 10 nouns that most frequently follow *nice* but not *interesting* in COCA. In groups of three, study these nouns and:

1. Guess their collocation with *interesting* and *nice* by putting them in the correct columns below.
2. Compare your answers with the other groups.
3. Verify your guesses by using COCA to look up actual examples of the collocations.
 - a. Sign in to the COCA website
 - b. Click on COMPARE in DISPLAY
 - c. Fill in *interesting* and *nice* in SEARCH STRING, and choose 2 for COLLOCATES
 - d. Click SEARCH to see the result
 - e. Answer the following questions:
 - i. What kinds of nouns tend to follow *interesting* but not *nice*?
 - ii. What kinds of nouns tend to follow *nice* but not *interesting*?

Nouns most frequently following <i>interesting</i> but not <i>nice</i>	Nouns most frequently following <i>nice</i> but not <i>interesting</i>

Activity 4 (50 minutes): Practice

Study the sentences and conversations below in pairs, and:

Fill in the blanks with *interesting* or *nice*

Compare your results with the other classmates

1. In her discussion of the evaluation of guidance she made a(n) _____ **observ-
tion** concerning the nature of such studies.
2. Babe! What a(n) _____ **surprise**. I didn't expect to see you today. Let me give
you a hug.
3. This is a dish called "The Napoleon Eggplant Salad." It is a(n) _____ **creation**, a
take-off on the Milanese idea.
4. Her parents had put her in a(n) _____ **dress** for the picture.
5. We had a few laughs and a(n) _____ **meal**, but I knew that was as far as it would
go.
6. Yet, his analysis does raise a(n) _____ **issue**.
7. Take your child out to a(n) _____ **restaurant** so that he or she can begin to use
their etiquette skills.
8. Kathy Christie presents a(n) _____ **history** of adolescent education in this
country.
9. This is an extremely _____ **experiment** to see whether it can be done.
10. She had a(n) _____ **smile** and a kind voice.

Activity 5 (50 minutes): Discourse Functions of *Nice*

In spoken language, *nice* has various functions. Match the functions of *nice* in the first column with the examples in the second column by drawing lines. Then, compare your results with a partner.

Functions	Sentences
1. Indicating appreciation	A. They're really good. Really nice job .
2. Showing interest	B. - COLLEGE-STUDENT-1# The one in your hand. Yes, you may have that one. I won't take it away. - WILL-1ACTOR2-# Thank you for being so nice , you guys. - COLLEGE-STUDENT-1# You're welcome, guy. Thanks for stealing our beer.
3. Greeting or closing a conversation	C. - Ms-RONEY: That's what it's all about. Very personal. - SENNY: Very nice. - LAUER: That's a nice idea .
4. Praising an achievement	D. - RAZ-1ACTOR2-# What you are drinking? What is this drink? - CUSTOMER-1FEMALE# Chai. - RAZ-1ACTOR2-# Chai? Nice , maybe I will order one. - CUSTOMER-1FEMALE# Yeah, you should.
5. Approving	E. Good evening, sir. Nice to see you, Dr. Baden

Activity 6 (40 minutes): Practice

In pairs, practice a conversation in which you try to use *nice* with multiple functions. The context is: You and your partner meet in class after Tet, the Vietnamese Lunar New Year holiday. Each of you will be given a conversation sheet. Try to follow the task assigned in your own sheet.

Student A: (You starts the conversation first)

Greet B

Ask B about Tet holiday

Give some compliments

Tell B about your plans for the summer

Close the conversation (you have to meet your professor now)

Student B:

Greet A

Answer B's questions, and talk about your Tet holiday

Ask A about his/her plans for the summer vacation

Respond with some compliments

Say goodbye

Conclusion

In conclusion, the corpus analysis above shows that while *interesting* and *nice* are near synonyms, they differ in grammatical behaviors, lexical collocations, and pragmatic functions. The five-hour teaching materials are designed to help increase students' awareness and use of these adjectives in giving evaluation in both speech and writing. The tasks in the six activities involve students in examining and using *interesting* and *nice*. Particularly, students' attention is drawn to the grammatical patterns with *interesting* and the functions of *nice* in speech.

To implement the above corpus-informed materials effectively, instructors need to keep the following points in mind. Firstly, learners of English should get exposure to the way these two evaluate adjectives are used. Therefore, an introduction of grammatical structures in which these two adjectives frequently appear is useful. It is more

effective when learners get involved in figuring out the structures themselves. Secondly, the meaning differences between near-synonyms such as *interesting* and *nice* are very subtle. This can be challenging to learners of lower proficiency. Therefore, raising learners' awareness of the functions of these two adjectives can help. Next, getting learners to know more about and use a corpus, such as COCA, could increase their curiosity and interest in exploring language patterns in use. Finally, when learners have learned about the meaning, the structures, and the functions, they can use the target near-synonyms in real life situations through classroom conversation practice. Teachers and students are encouraged to carry out analyses of any other near-synonyms by using the corpus tools as outlined in this paper in order to become more familiar with language patterns in actual usage.

Notes

¹ I would like to thank Hanne Hakonsen and Linda Karlsson, MA TESOL students at Hawaii Pacific University, for preparing this corpus for analysis.

² MICASE counts are not normalized, that is, hits are not reported per million words. This allows only

comparisons between the two target words within the same category of speaker and context, and not comparisons across these categories.

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Appendix: Answer Keys

Activity 1:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 1. “ <i>It + be + interesting + to infinitive + that + clause</i> ”: | Sentences 2, 14, 16, 21, & 26 |
| 2. “ <i>This/It + be + interesting + V-ING ...</i> ”: | Sentences 1, 7, 9, & 27 |
| 3. “... <i>find + it + interesting + that + clause</i> ”: | Sentences: 10, 12, 15, 17, & 24 |
| 4. “... <i>find + it + interesting + to infinitive ...</i> ”: | Sentences: 3, 5, 18, 20 & 25 |
| 5. “... <i>find + it + interesting + V-ing ...</i> ”: | Sentences: 6, 11, 13, & 22 |
| 6. “... <i>make + object + interesting ...</i> ”: | Sentences: 4, 8, 19, 23, & 28 |

Activity 2:

Sample answers:

1. Your sentence: It is interesting to discover that eating avocados can be good for you.
2. Your sentence: It is interesting to find that overusing cell phones can cause some problem with our health.
3. Your sentence: It is interesting that learning a new language helps us know more about the culture and the people in the country where that language is used.
4. Your sentence: It is interesting that consuming olive oil can bring us a healthy heart.
5. Your sentence: I find it interesting that practicing Yoga helps in building a strong mind.
6. Your sentence: I find it interesting that swimming consumes a great deal of energy.

Activity 3:

Nouns most frequently following <i>interesting</i> but not <i>nice</i>	Nouns most frequently following <i>nice</i> but not <i>interesting</i>
Issue Possibility Comparison Creation History Observation Experiment Insight Facts Phenomenon	Try Smile Surprise Gesture Clothes Dress Restaurant Room Present Meal

- 10 nouns that most frequently follow *interesting* but not *nice* are: *issue, possibility, comparison, creation, history, observation, experiment, insight, facts, and phenomenon*. It is likely that abstract nouns and academic nouns tend to follow *interesting*.

- 10 nouns that most frequently follow *nice* but not *interesting* are: *try, smile, surprise, gesture, clothes, dress, restaurant, room, present and meal*. Nouns referring to specific objects tend to follow *nice*.

Activity 4: 1. interesting 2. nice 3. interesting 4. nice 5. nice
6. interesting 7. nice 8. interesting 9. interesting 10. nice

Activity 5: 1. B 2. D 3. E 4. A 5. C

Activity 6:

Sample conversation:

Sample conversation:

A: Hi B (student B's name)! Long time no see. How have you been?

B: Hi A (student A's name)! I've been fine, thanks. And you?

A: I'm OK. Did you have a good Tet? Did you go somewhere interesting?

B: Well, I really had a great time. My family made a trip to Phu Quoc Island, the biggest island of the country.

A: Nice!

B: Yeah! It's a really beautiful place. I am thinking of going again. How about this summer? Do you have any plans yet?

A: Uhm, I haven't decided yet. Phu Quoc is a nice place, but my cousin from Halong Bay is getting married this summer. Maybe I will take a trip there.

B: Wow, nice idea! I love Halong Bay, too.

A: Sorry, I must go now. I have an appointment with my professor. It's nice seeing you. Bye!

B: Nice seeing you, too. Bye!