



**A CORPUS-BASED ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH SYNONYM  
VERBS: OBTAIN, GAIN, AND RECEIVE**

**BY**

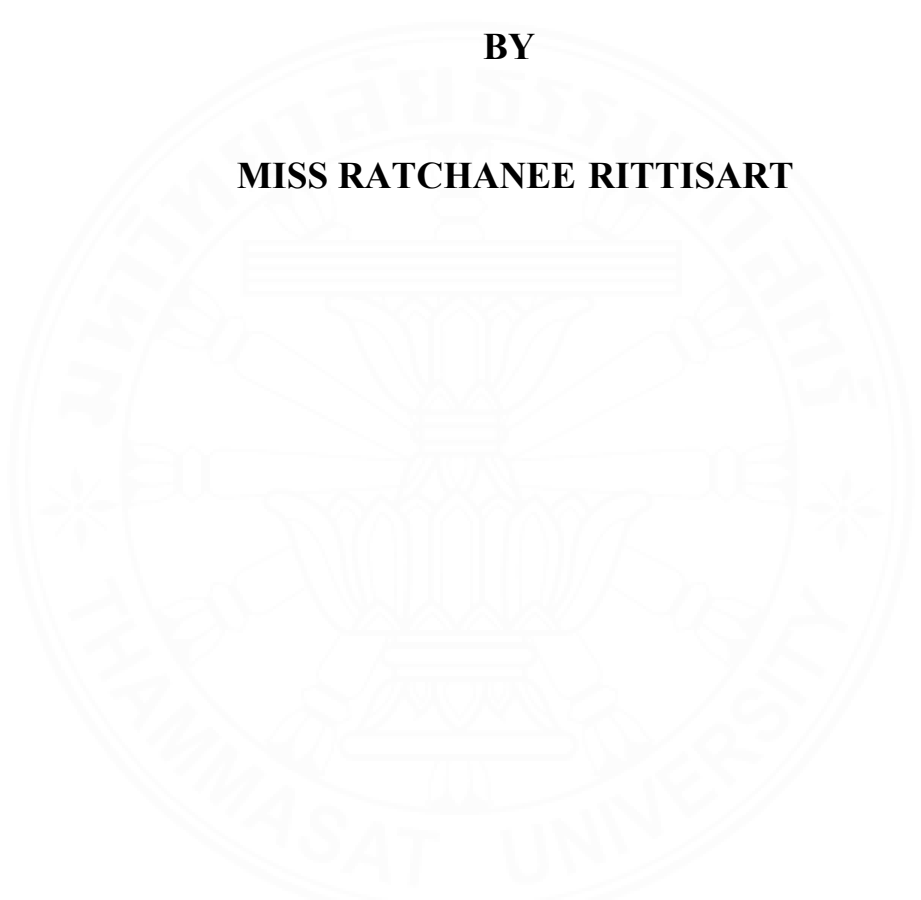
**MISS RATCHANEE RITTISART**

**AN INDEPENDENT STUDY SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL  
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
OF MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING  
LANGUAGE INSTITUTE  
THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY  
ACADEMIC YEAR 2021  
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ENTITLED

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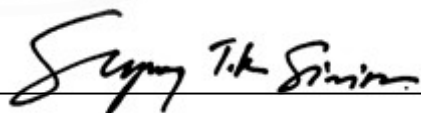
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the degree of Master of Arts in English Language Teaching

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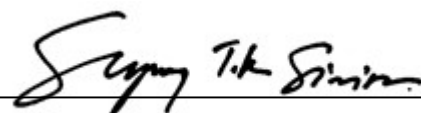
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Independent Study Title	A CORPUS-BASED ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH SYNONYM VERBS: OBTAIN, GAIN, AND RECEIVE
Author	Miss Ratchanee Rittisart
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Major Field/Faculty/University	English Language Teaching Language Institute Thammasat University
Independent Study Advisor	Associate Professor Spong Tangkiengsirisin, Ph.D.
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## ABSTRACT

This corpus-based study investigates a set of synonymous verbs *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive*, concentrating on their grammatical patterns, degree of formality, and collocations. The data were derived from Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (online version) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). Regarding the grammatical patterns, although *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive* share the majority of the grammatical structures, some different patterns can be found. In terms of the degree of formality, the findings revealed that *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive* are commonly used in formal context. Nevertheless, when considering the frequency of occurrence, *receive* has the highest degree of formality followed by *gain*, and *obtain*. For noun collocations of *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive*, the results demonstrated a significant difference among the three synonymous verbs as they tend to share a small number of noun collocates. For these reasons *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive* are near-synonyms and they cannot be used to substitute for one another in every context.

**Keywords:** Synonyms, Corpus, Grammatical patterns, Degree of formality, Collocations

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>Symbols/Abbreviations</b>	<b>Terms</b>
Adj.	Adjective
Adv.	Adverb
BEC	Business English Corpus
BNC	British National Corpus
COBUILD	Collins Birmingham University International Language Database
COCA	Corpus of Contemporary American English
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
GAT	General Aptitude Test
KWIC	Key Word in Context
L1	The first language
L2	The second language
LDOCE	Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English
O-NET	Ordinary National Educational Test
sb	Somebody
sth	Something
vi.	Intransitive verb

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

English is widely recognized as a worldwide lingua franca and the most helpful language for international communication amongst people. McCarthy (1990) pointed out that a lack of vocabulary understanding showed that students could not interact effectively, although students may grasp the grammar and sounds of a language well. According to Gass and Selinker (2008), vocabulary is the most significant aspect of English. Knowing a variety of vocabulary is the most critical thing for L2 learners in order to communicate effectively. Schmitt (2008) stated that a large vocabulary was needed in order to master a second language proficiency. L2 learners, on the other hand, may come across vocabulary that is dissimilar but shares the core meaning, known as synonyms.

As we all know, English has a vast number of synonyms. One of the obstacles that L2 learners face in learning vocabulary, according to Laufer (1990), is synonyms. In fact, while words communicate essentially the same idea, not every synonym may be replaceable in all contexts. One must be applied in a specific situation, while another is suitable for other circumstances. Since synonyms can influence learners in selecting suitable words to use in writing and speaking based on context and situation, learners must be able to differentiate the similarities and differences among synonyms.

To investigate the similarities and differences among synonyms is challenging as most language learners depend on the use of dictionaries. In fact, dictionaries are unable to provide sufficient explanations and examples for learners to rely on for synonyms discrimination (Lee and Liu, 2009). Even native speakers, when judging their language use, rely on their intuition and their L1 as well as their experience. Sometimes, native speakers may not always be able to provide an explicit answer or a clear explanation of how these words relate to one another or how these sentence structures must be used. It is undeniably difficult for non-native speakers to recognize synonyms.

Nowadays, using technology in the field of corpus, which is identified as “a large collection of authentic texts that have been selected and organized according to precise linguistic criteria” (Sinclair, 1991, 1996; Leech, 1991; Williams, 2003), for linguistic analysis can provide learners with explicit clarification based on reliable evidence to investigate occurrences of synonymous words. The corpus-based method is more dependable since actual information, rather than intuition, can help language learners as well as researchers to explore disparities in the language use (Shahzadi et al., 2019).

As a foreign language instructor, my main responsibilities are to improve students’ English competence and raise their test results. The importance of learning synonymous vocabulary is especially advantageous for grade 12 students who have to take high-stakes English tests, particularly in cloze tests and meaning in context sections, where they encounter difficulties of word selections. As a result, students are interested in learning how certain terms are employed in diverse settings. As these words *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive* frequently appeared in previous examinations, e.g. the Ordinary National Educational Test (O-NET) and General Aptitude Test (GAT), they are significantly advantageous to study.

In this study, these three synonyms were examined systematically by using the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English online version (LDOCE), to obtain the referential meaning of these verbs *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive*, and then the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) was utilized to explore the related information with a focus on grammatical patterns, degree of formality, and collocations. Regarding the implications of this study, the results will clarify English usage for the three synonymous verbs, allowing researchers, teachers, and learners to be more comprehensive in how the words are used in various contexts and so utilize them more appropriately.

## 1.2 Research Objective

To examine the similarities and differences among *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive* in terms of their grammatical patterns, degree of formality, and collocations.

### 1.3 Research Question

What are the similarities and differences among *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive* in terms of their grammatical patterns, degree of formality, and collocations?

### 1.4 Statement of Problem

As we all know, English learners may believe that the words *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive* have similar meanings. To examine these verbs in authentic texts, however, the meanings seem to be insignificantly different. The problem of using *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive* is that learners may not understand exactly which words can be appropriately utilized in certain situations and they sometimes are confused about whether *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive* can all be replaced with one another in all contexts. This is a serious issue for Thai students, particularly those in grade 12, who have to take high-stakes English tests. As a result, most students desire to know exactly how *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive* are used in diverse contexts. This inspired me to examine the similarities and differences between these synonym verbs in-depth based on their grammatical patterns, degree of formality, and collocations in order to improve students' synonymy comprehension and help them develop their communicative proficiency.

### 1.5 Definitions of Key Terms

#### 1.5.1 Synonym

Synonym refers to “a group of words which are close in meaning but cannot be used interchangeably with each other in every context” (Harley, 2006, p. 146). Although synonyms have similar core meanings, they are different in linguistic aspects, e.g. grammatical patterns (Phoocharoensil, 2010) and connotation, collocation (Jackson & Amvela, 2000). In this study synonymous verbs *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive* are selected for the investigation.

#### 1.5.2 Strict Synonym

Strict synonym refers to words which have the same meaning in the same language. They can be used interchangeably in all contexts without affecting any changes in meaning but they are rare or non-existent.

### **1.5.3 Near-Synonym**

Near-synonym is a term with virtually identical meaning and a large overlap in meaning, but they cannot be used interchangeably in all situations because they differ in some ways. For instance, the verbs *'find'* and *'discover'* are near-synonyms. Though both *'find'* and *'discover'* are similar in meaning, they cannot be used to replace each other in all contexts (Jackson, 1988).

### **1.5.4 Corpus or Corpora**

Corpus or Corpora is a collection of real text made up of both written and spoken language that is supplied on a computer and can be derived systematically and explored by utilizing a corpus analysis database.

### **1.5.5 The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)**

The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) is the world's biggest readily accessible corpus of English that represents American English. The corpus contains over one billion words of text with the around 25 million words added every year beginning in 1990 until 2019. It provides five genres, e.g. spoken, fiction, magazines, newspapers, and academic texts, including the three new updates in March 2020, e.g. TV and movies subtitles, blogs, and other web pages.

### **1.5.6 Concordance Line**

Concordance line refers to the output of a corpus software which presents the searched keyword in the middle of each line in contexts known as KWIC.

### **1.5.7 Collocation**

Collocation refers to words statistically appearing or coexisting more commonly than randomly, such as *high frequency* not *\*tall frequency*.

### **1.5.8 Degree of Formality**

Degree of formality refers to a style of information expression which is determined by the speaker's objectives and the context in which it is employed.

### **1.5.9 Grammatical Pattern**

Grammatical pattern is the structure of the words when forming a sentence or clause.

### **1.5.10 Semantic Preference**

Semantic preference refers to the relationship of a single word with a group of semantic themes.

## **1.6 Scope of the Study**

The present study focuses on the investigation of these synonyms namely *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive*. To explore the differences and similarities of this set of synonymous verbs, the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) was applied as a major tool in this research. With regard to the research question of the study, to identify the grammatical patterns of these three synonym verbs, 200 concordance lines from COCA were collected to analyze the sentence structures of these three verbs. In terms of degree of formality, the data collected from COCA presented the frequencies of the three synonymous verbs across genres to identify the degree of formality. The first 30 highest frequency noun collocates of the three verbs *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive* with MI score  $\geq 3$  were then collected and categorized into groups based on semantic features and usages to investigate differences and similarities of noun collocates.

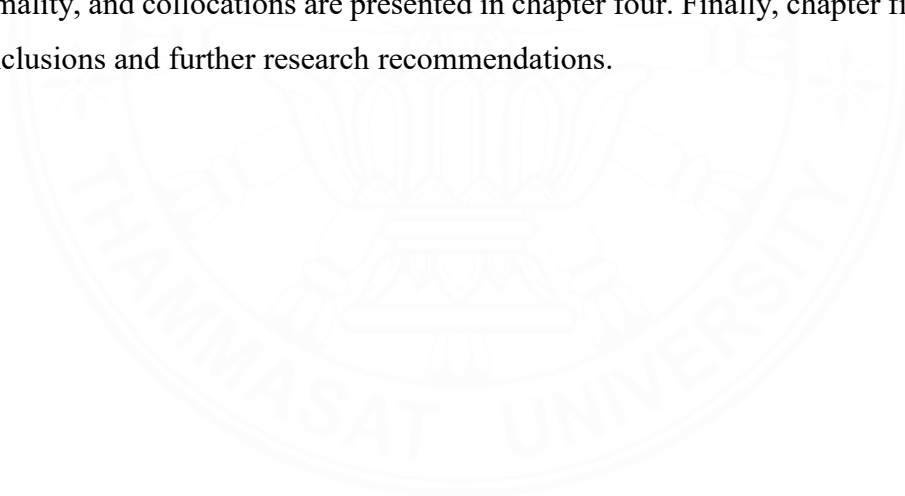
## **1.7 Significance of the Study**

English synonyms play an important role in vocabulary acquisition for L2 learners. Learners must be concerned and comprehend synonyms so that they can develop their English skills. Although dictionaries can assist learners with definitions and examples, they cannot give enough clarification. They are limited in their ability to provide sufficient clarity. Learners will benefit from using a corpus, namely the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) to detect grammatical patterns, degrees of formality, and collocations of three verbs *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive*. This will help them better comprehend this vocabulary set and apply these three synonyms in context appropriately. Learners can also use this research as a reference for separating terms in

a group of synonyms. Moreover, this research also includes a corpus-based analysis that could be valuable for not only L2 learners but also English teachers who want to apply the COCA as a supplementary tool while learning and teaching English apart from depending on dictionaries.

### **1.8 Organization of the Study**

Firstly, chapter one begins with an introduction of the study, which illustrates the background of the study, objective and research question of the study, explanation of the problem, the definitions of key terms, scope and significance of the study as well as organization of the study. Secondly, chapter two includes a review of academic literature regarding the theoretical concept of synonym and corpus and then related studies. Next, chapter three explains the study's methodology in terms of target synonyms and materials, as well as the procedure of collecting data and data analysis techniques. The study's findings in the areas of grammatical patterns, degree of formality, and collocations are presented in chapter four. Finally, chapter five describes conclusions and further research recommendations.





## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter divides the literature into four main parts. The first part focuses on synonyms. The criteria for distinguishing the three target synonyms are discussed in the second part. The third part introduces the concept of corpora. Finally, the fourth part presents relevant research.

#### 2.1 The Concept of Synonym

In a language, synonym can be considered as a fundamental concept in lexicology. Synonyms are defined as “a word or phrase which has the same or nearly the same meaning as another word or phrase in the same language”, based on Cambridge Dictionary (online version). The word ‘*wrong*’ is, for example, a synonym for ‘*incorrect*’. According to the Oxford Learner’s Dictionary (online version), synonym is “a term or expression that has the same or almost the same meaning as another in the same language”, i.e. the words ‘*big*’ and ‘*large*’. Synonymy refers to as “the idea of a word or phrase that has the similar meaning as another word or phrase”, according to Webb and Nation (2017, p. 284). Cruse (2006, p.167) confirmed that “a word is said to be a synonym of another word in the same language if one or more of its senses carries an adequately close similarity to one or more of the senses of the other word”. In modern semantics and lexicology, the term synonym conveys a sense of the same meaning that holds between the two words (Jackson and Amvela, 2007). Synonyms are generally categorized into two primary types which are strict and near-synonyms.

##### 2.1.1 Strict Synonym

Cruse (1986) claimed that strict or perfect synonyms can be interchanged in all instances. This indicates that a synonym for one word can be freely substituted without affecting the context’s original meaning, style, or connotation. According to English language history, whenever two words had a very similar meaning, both words were likely to become obsolete in the language. For example, the words ‘*heaven*’ and ‘*sky*’ both had physical and spiritual meanings in the old days. Currently, the term ‘*sky*’ refers

to the physical firmament, whereas *'heaven'* refers to the spiritual realm of God and the angels (Jackson & Amvela, 2000, p. 93). According to linguistic study, strict synonyms are rare or non-existent; instead, we constantly encounter pairings of words that are near-synonyms.

### **2.1.2 Near-Synonym**

Near-synonyms are terms which have similar meanings in one or more senses; however, they are different in other senses from one another and cannot be interchangeable in every context. Synonyms, according to Jackson & Amvela (2000), are terms that have similar meanings but cannot substitute for one another in all contexts. Since strict synonyms are uncommon in the actual world, the majority of synonyms are near-synonyms more than strict synonyms. The words *'mad'* and *'insane'*, for example, are similar in meaning as *'angry'*, but they have different grammatical forms. The native speakers will use *'at'* after the word *'mad'* but they do not use *'at'* with the word *'insane'* (Phoocharoensil, 2010). Similarly, the words *'quick'* and *'fast'* have the same meaning as *'perform something quickly'*, but they cannot be used interchangeably. For example, people will use *'quick meal'* rather than *'fast meal'* no one will say *'quick food'*, though it is similar to *'fast food'* (Aroonmanakun, 2015).

## **2.2 The Criteria to Distinguish Synonyms**

The aim of the present study was to explore three verbs, *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive*, in terms of four primary criteria: (1) grammatical patterns (2) degree of formality (3) collocations and (4) semantic reference.

### **2.2.1 Grammatical Pattern**

In English, grammatical pattern is one of the characteristics used to distinguish synonyms, as presented by Phoocharoensil (2010). Although synonyms are nearly similar in meaning, they cannot represent all the identical grammatical features. For instance, the words *'ask'* and *'beg'* were studied for the similarities and differences in grammatical structures. The study showed that *'ask'* can be used in "*ask* + (sb) + if/whether". For example, "If you are a member of a trade union, *ask* if they can supply a lawyer" while *'beg'* cannot be used in this grammatical structure. In contrast, *'beg'*

can be used in “*beg* + (sth) + (from + sb)”. For example, “A judge at one of the shows *begged* some “Dallas” from me last year” but ‘*ask*’ cannot be used in this grammatical structure. Though the two verbs ‘*ask*’ and ‘*beg*’ are almost similar in meaning, both have distinct patterns that one can fit into while the other is unlikely to.

### **2.2.2 Degree of Formality**

The English language, according to Kummerdchard (2013), can be classified as formal or informal usage. The formality of the context that synonyms appear in is one of criteria to distinguish synonymous words. COCA provides a variety of texts to utilize as references to categorize the words used in formal or informal language in order to discern near-synonyms based on the degree of formality across genres. Informal English can be found in TV and movie subtitles, fiction, and spoken language, while formal English is mostly employed in written texts like webpages, blogs, magazines, and newspapers. The language learners should be capable of detecting between the various levels of formality in the context. Phoocharoensil (2021), who studied the degree of formality between ‘*persist*’ and ‘*preserve*’, found that ‘*persist*’ occurs more frequently in academic writings, but ‘*persevere*’ occurs most frequently in webpages, indicating that ‘*persist*’ is related to a greater degree of formality than ‘*persevere*’. Meanwhile, the results showed that the two synonyms, e.g. ‘*persist*’ and ‘*persevere*’ are not dominant in casual English, because of their reduced frequency in informal styles or situations such as spoken language, fiction, and TV and movie subtitles.

### **2.2.3 Collocation**

Lewis (1997, p. 8) described collocation as “the readily observable phenomenon by means of certain words co-occur in natural text with greater than random frequency”. Similarly, “collocations of a given word are statements of the habitual or customary places of that word” (Firth 1957, p.181). A collocation is illustrated as “the way in which some words are often used together, or a particular combination of words used in this way”, based on Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (online version). Benson et al. (1986) categorized collocation into two main types, e.g. grammatical collocations and lexical collocations. Additionally, several elements of grammatical collocations were provided by Benson et al. (1986). They are a verb, a noun, and an

adjective plus a particle like preposition. Whereas lexical collocations consist of adjective + noun, noun + verb, verb + noun, adverb + verb, and verb + adverb. A collocational association, according to McCarthy (1990, p. 12), is “a marriage contract between words and some words are more strongly married to each other than others”. Native speakers, for example, prefer to express ‘*bitterly disappointed*’ rather than \**sourly disappointed*. Synonyms may often appear with different collocations. According to Palmer (1997), some synonymous words have collocational restrictions. It can be pointed out that they are supposed to appear with definite words. For example, while ‘*rancid*’ is found to co-occur with butter, ‘*sour*’ co-occurs with milk. Although ‘*rancid*’ and ‘*sour*’ are close in meaning, they co-occur with different noun collocates.

#### **2.2.4 Semantic Preference**

Flowerdew (2012, p. 323) stated that “semantic preference is the relation between an individual word and a set of semantic categories”. Furthermore, semantic preference is defined as a semantic context in which words are frequently utilized. It can be employed to classify lexical elements on the basis of their semantic similarity (McEnery and Hardie, 2012). There are two types of observations on the basic feature of semantic preference (Flowerdew, 2012). The first type of a domain’s semantic preference is generally linked to the syntactic surroundings in which it occurs, and word meaning is linked to certain grammatical structures. Partington (2004) discovered that the verb ‘*cause*’ has a semantic preference. The finding revealed that when ‘*cause*’ is preceding a single object, it is commonly relevant to a sickness, e.g. cancer and heart disease. In contrast, when two objects come after ‘*cause*’, the second object frequently represents an unsatisfied mood or emotion, as the noun inconvenience in *causes* them inconvenience. The second type of corpus is one which an exploration is on the basis of a crucial determinant of a lexical item’s semantic preference. Nelson (2006) also discovered that the semantic choice of the adjective ‘*global*’ differs depending on the corpus. *Global* is full of semantic themes, e.g. *global* products as well as *global* economics, indicated in a 1-million-word Business English Corpus (BEC). However, there are merely two semantic categories that ‘*global*’ is related to commonly identified in corpus, i.e. the British National Corpus (BNC). Both categories are associated with climate, like in *global* warming, and people, like in *global* viewers. This can be

summarized to show that semantic preference can assist to categorize the words into the same theme according to their meanings and semantic features.

## **2.3 Corpus**

### ***2.3.1 The Concept of Corpus***

According to Hunston (2006), “a corpus is an electronically stored collection of texts that is explored using specialized software” (p. 234). A corpus is employed to examine presuppositions of language and supply language usage qualifications. Furthermore, linguistic applications such as translation and language training are influenced by corpora (Hunston, 2006). Besides, corpora can also provide the language patterns which are difficult to identify by other means. Similarly, Sinclair (1996) defined the benefit of corpora quality as all data being collected through actual human communication, which is not the same as data gathered under artificial conditions.

### ***2.3.2 The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)***

The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) was invented by Mark Davies, Professor of Corpus Linguistics at Brigham Young University. COCA is the biggest corpus of American English widely utilized and contains over one billion words of American English which were collected from 1990 to 2019. It includes a wide range of materials from several genres, including academic text, magazines, newspapers, spoken language, and fiction. Moreover, COCA now contains three additional genres which are webpages, blogs, and TV and movie subtitles (Davies, 2020). Furthermore, COCA provides collocations and sentence examples, as well as frequency searches. Apart from this, COCA also offers a concordance line accompanied with a combination of authentic language texts supplied in a computer database. A concordance line represented in a corpus is in the form of multiple lines with the node or the search word known as KWIC or Key-Word-In-Context display that is in the middle of the lines, with words on both sides. KWIC is useful to analyze the uses of a keyword in various contexts. Nowadays, COCA is used extensively in linguistic research.

## 2.4 Relevant Research

A number of studies were conducted to explore synonyms applying corpus-based data from both the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) and the British National Corpus (BNC). Similarly, most researchers examined senses of meaning, formality, grammatical patterns, and collocations to discriminate synonyms. This study will primarily focus on corpus-based analysis of the three verbs *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive* based on their grammatical patterns, degree of formality, and collocations. As in this study, there have been some relevant research investigations focused on these terms.

In a recent study, Phoocharoensil (2020) investigated the similarities and differences in the distribution of three synonymous nouns *consequence*, *result*, and *outcome* in terms of their frequency across genres and collocational patterns. The data was retrieved from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). According to the findings, this set of synonyms appears most frequently in academic text, but they appear least frequently in spoken contexts, such as fiction and TV and movie subtitles. In the areas of collocation, the finding was determined by analyzing their frequency from COCA combined with the MI score  $\geq 3$ . The study discovered that *consequence* generally co-occurred with verbs and adjectives carrying negative senses. In the meantime, *result* frequently appears with research-oriented context. Furthermore, *outcome* collocates have the widest range of semantic features, although they are unrelated to specific contexts. This list of synonyms indicated that these three synonymous nouns cannot be totally swapped for one another in every situation. In addition, this study is beneficial for EFL teachers to apply the use of genres and collocational information to develop synonymous words study.

Petcharat and Phoocharoensil (2017) studied the set of synonymous adjectives *appropriate*, *proper*, and *suitable* focusing on their collocations, meanings, degree of formality, and grammatical patterns. The data were derived from Longman Advanced American Dictionary 3rd edition (2003), Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English 6th edition (2014), and Macmillan Collocation Dictionary (2010) including the COCA corpus. The results revealed that while these target synonyms have similar basic meanings, they differ in certain ways. *Appropriate* has the greatest level of formality, followed by *suitable* and *proper* subsequently. The three target synonyms, in particular,

share only one noun collocate, with *proper* having the most noun collocates. With regard to grammatical structures, *appropriate*, *suitable*, and *proper* do not share all the grammatical patterns. It was determined that these adjectives cannot be replaceable with one another in all contexts.

Phitayakorn (2016) conducted a corpus-based study to explore the similarities and differences of the verbs *advise*, *recommend*, and *suggest*, regarding their grammatical structures and collocation usage within British English. The British National Corpus (BNC) combined with the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 6th edition (2014) are the primary sources for data analysis. The 450 concordance lines found in one corpus were manually evaluated in an Excel worksheet. The findings revealed that *advise*, *recommend*, and *suggest* share some grammatical patterns but are different in others. In terms of collocation usage, though, the three synonymous verbs are nearly close in meaning, noun collocates among them are not identical. As a result of the distinctions in grammatical patterns and collocations, they should be considered as near-synonyms and should not be interchangeable with one another in every circumstance. In addition, this study showed that concordance lines provide supplementary information which is beneficial for L2 learners to investigate the possible patterns aside from what is found in the dictionary.

Pimjuntug (2015) studied three synonymous verbs, namely *respond*, *reply*, and *answer*, focusing on three areas including their grammatical patterns, collocations, and degree of formality, by comparing British English and American English. The dataset was retrieved from the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDOCE) including two corpora, e.g. the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) and the British National Corpus (BNC). It can be found from the findings that *respond*, *reply*, and *answer* are identical in meanings. They cannot, however, be replaced by one another in every situation. The three synonym verbs differ in some aspects. The three verbs share only one noun collocate, such as ‘question/questions’. In terms of degree of formality, the word *response* has the highest degree of formality, since *response* frequently occurs in academic text rather than *answer* and *reply*. In addition, the results discovered that in both formal and informal situations *response* can be applied. Furthermore, the results demonstrated that there is no substantial variation in the usage of these three synonymous verbs between American and British native speakers.

Nisani (2015) studied the meaning, grammatical pattern, noun collocation, and formality of *possible*, *probable*, and *likely*. The data were derived from the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (online version) and the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (online version), comparing to Corpus of Contemporary American English and 500 concordance lines to see how the three synonyms were similar and different. The study reported that three adjectives cannot substitute in every context. They differ in grammatical pattern, noun collocation, and aesthetic information, yet share the same core meaning. Moreover, the study discovered that corpus provides further linguistic data which is not available in dictionaries, e.g. grammatical pattern, collocation, and stylistic information, etc.

Aroonmanakun (2015) studied the similarities and differences of two synonyms *quick* and *fast* using COCA corpus, the 100 noun collocations were extracted from the two synonyms with MI scores  $\geq 3$ . The findings showed that noun collocates of the two target synonyms are not similar. For instance, *quick* commonly co-occurs alongside answer, breakfast, comment, reaction, reference, solution, tip, and visit in which their meanings are related to a performance or reaction done in a short period. *Fast*, on the other hand, is frequently relevant to nouns that describe the style of motion more than a short length of time, such as acceleration, attack, boat, car, ride, and tempo. While *quick* and *fast* can often be used interchangeably with the same noun, such as learner, the meaning of the word when associated with each word differs. It can be indicated that a *fast* learner refers to a learner who is skillful in learning in a short time, while a *quick* learner refers to a learner who is capable of learning something in an easy way. Aroonmanakun's study supported that collocational information derived from language corpora is more dependable than dictionaries.

According to Supachai's (2014) study, the three synonymous adjectives *deadly*, *lethal*, and *fatal* were examined regarding their grammatical patterns, formality, and collocations. The data was analyzed manually from 100 concordances from the British National Corpus (BNC) in the features of formality in contexts, collocations and grammatical structures. The results revealed that "adjective + noun" is the most common grammatical pattern, followed by "linking verb + adjective". In terms of formality, based on BNC, this set of adjectives *deadly*, *lethal*, and *fatal* can be employed in both formal as well as informal situations; nevertheless, *deadly* was more frequently



found in informal situations rather than *fatal* and *lethal*. Moreover, the data from both the BNC and Oxford Advanced Learner Dictionary (2010) showed adverbs, linking verbs, prepositions and nouns that are the major collocations of these adjectives. The findings demonstrated that the three adjective synonyms *deadly*, *lethal*, and *fatal* cannot substitute one another in all contexts.

Likewise, Ruenroeng (2014) investigated the grammatical patterns, degrees of formality, collocation, and frequency of *ruin*, *demolish*, and *destroy* in different genres. The data were drawn from 100 concordance lines of each verb from Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary online (2011) is the main reference for the data in connotation, example usage, and grammatical information. The results discovered that the definitions of the three synonym verbs are not exactly the same, although the three verbs are similar in meanings. However, in terms of grammatical patterns, *ruin*, *demolish*, and *destroy* share only some patterns. Moreover, noun collocates are mostly an object noun. Whereas both *ruin* and *destroy* are generally applied in informal contexts, *demolish* is commonly employed in formal circumstances. It was discovered from the study that *ruin*, *demolish*, and *destroy* cannot be interchangeable for one another in every situation because of their dissimilarity in formality, grammatical patterns, and collocations. Therefore, these synonyms *ruin*, *demolish*, and *destroy* are classified as near-synonyms.

Somrang (2013) investigated the similarities and contrasts among synonymous verbs *give*, *offer*, and *provide* with regard to their referential meanings, grammatical patterns, along with collocations. The data were drawn from the British National Corpus (BNC) combined with Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English 5th edition (LDOCE, 2009). The results revealed that these synonyms *give*, *provide*, and *offer* have similar meanings. Additionally, the meanings provided in the dictionary can be assisted by the information from the concordance lines. Regarding collocations, the data from the top ten frequency showed that abstract nouns commonly co-occur with *give*, *provide*, and *offer*. Furthermore, these verbs share the same noun collocates namely, *advice*, *opportunity*, and *support*. In conclusion, these three verbs cannot be replaceable in all circumstances since they are distinguished in referential meanings, grammatical patterns and collocations. As a result, they are defined as near-synonyms.

Cai (2012) explored the six near synonym adjectives of *great* namely *awesome*, *excellent*, *fabulous*, *fantastic*, *terrific*, and *wonderful* to investigate their frequencies and collocations. The data was drawn from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). The study discovered that *great* was more frequently used than the other six adjectives. In addition, based on their frequency across genres, *fabulous*, *fantastic*, *great*, *terrific*, and *wonderful* are commonly utilized in the spoken genre while *awesome* and *excellent* are often found in magazines. This indicates that these synonymous adjectives were used in informal context because they mostly occurred in spoken language. In the collocation aspects of these seven adjective synonyms, it is identified that *great* is more common and weaker than the others. The findings showed that this set of synonyms are different in most adverb and noun collocations and they overlap on noun collocates. As a result, these synonyms cannot be totally interchangeable in every context.

The results of the ten studies above show that strict synonyms are extremely rare and that most synonyms are near-synonyms. Furthermore, the research demonstrates that corpus-based studies are quite beneficial in determining actual English language usage using authentic data. Despite the fact that synonyms are close in meaning, they cannot substitute for one another in every context because synonyms have their own characteristics. Previous research has found that grammatical patterns, formality, and collocations are essential factors applied to distinguish synonyms, which is comparable to the aim of this study.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter contains 3 main parts: (1) target synonyms, (2) research instruments, and (3) research procedures used in the data collection and analysis.

#### 3.1 Target Synonyms

The target synonyms *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive* were selected for research because they are frequently found in English tests and are commonly used in everyday communication. These synonymous verbs are highlighted in the utilized dictionary with three red circles, indicating that they are the most common and significant 9,000 words to learn, based on the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (online version). As these target words share the same core meaning, they are worth learning and analyzing for their differences in usage. Furthermore, in my teaching experience students frequently ask me how to distinguish these three synonyms. Nevertheless, only my intuition provided answers to their questions, without dependable information to rely on. As a result, it is useful to explore this set of synonyms using a corpus-based approach in order to get reliable data based on authentic sources.

#### 3.2 Research Instruments

The main instruments in this study were the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (online version) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA).

##### 3.2.1 Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDOCE)

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (online version) was applied as a primary reference because it is a popular dictionary and freely accessible. It also provides meanings, an integrated thesaurus, collocations and important grammatical information on the selected synonymous verbs.

### 3.2.2 *The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)*

The major corpus employed in this research was the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). COCA was utilized to search for words or phrases using the exact word or phrase as well as part of speech of synonymous verbs. It was chosen for this study because it is widely utilized and accessible to English learners. The data derived from 200 concordance lines from COCA provide sentence structures to help observe grammatical patterns which are used in the real context. Apart from concordance lines, COCA provides for searching for the degree of formality of the words across genres which are academic texts, newspapers, magazines, webpages, blogs, spoken, fiction, and TV and movie subtitles. In the feature of collocations, the data were collected from the first 30 noun collocates with MI score  $\geq 3$  which generally co-occurred with the target words to identify the shared noun collocates of the three synonyms.

### 3.3 Research Procedures

This section illustrates the research procedures used for collecting and analyzing data based on the corpus-based study of these synonyms *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive*.

#### 3.3.1 *Data Collection*

The study's purpose is to present the data collection results for a corpus-based analysis of three synonyms *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive*. The corpus can be found at <https://www.englishcorpora.org/coca/>. The grammatical patterns of each verb were collected from 200 concordance lines from COCA and a total of 600 concordance lines were drawn from COCA and used for analyzing the target synonyms. As *gain* can be a noun, only verb form is selected in this study. In order to limit the only part of speech of the word *gain* to be verbs, a period was put between the target verb and an asterisk in square brackets, like *gain*.[v\*]. The three verbs were derived by selecting keywords in context (KWIC) search. Then, the 200 concordance lines of each verb were displayed on the screen to examine the structure of the three synonyms for grammatical patterns. In this study, the degree of formality between genres is identified by searching for the frequency of each verb represented in the chart throughout genres. Finally, COCA was

employed in retrieving the collocation of the three target words by choosing the collocates display with the first 30 noun collocates following the target verbs based on their frequency and MI score  $\geq 3$ .

### 3.3.2 Data Analysis

In order to provide the answer for the research question, grammatical patterns were determined by comparing the grammatical structures of the target synonyms from the 200 concordance lines of each word. The data was extracted from the COCA corpus and entered into an Excel worksheet. The frequency occurrences of each word were then manually sorted and examined for similarities and differences among the three synonymous verbs based on the same grammatical patterns. After that, the data revealed the degree of formality by comparing the distribution across all eight genres e.g. spoken, fiction, TV and movie subtitles, magazines, newspapers, academic texts, blogs, and webpages. The three verbs were then categorized as having formal or informal contexts of use. To explore noun collocates with the three target words, nouns represented on the basis of their frequency with strong collocation calculated alongside the Mutual Information (MI) value or score were collected to study the nouns commonly collocating with *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive*. The MI value was statistically calculated in order to determine whether the three verbs coexist by chance or have a strong relation in collocation. According to Schmitt (2010), the MI score is not the best technique of collocational extraction. In fact, though collocations might have highest MI value, they may significantly have lower numbers in frequency. Therefore, the collocational strength can be evaluated primarily on frequency of noun collocation alongside the MI score to avoid the search for noun collocations which rarely co-occur in spite of having a great MI score (Cheng, 2012; Gablasova et al., 2017). The top-30 occurrences of the noun collocates in the search presented in COCA were included, with the MI value of  $\geq 3$  that represents the significant value for collocational relations. The function words are not included, though they usually occur alongside the three verbs. After the noun collocates were extracted, the nouns which frequently co-occur with the target verbs were classified on the basis of the semantic features or their similar meaning into the same category to compare to see how *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive* are similar and different.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The preceding chapter described the methodology employed in this study. The data were derived from Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (online version) combined with the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). This chapter presents whether this set of synonyms namely *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive* are similar or different by comparing their grammatical patterns, degree of formality, and collocations.

#### 4.1 Grammatical Patterns

Phoocharoensil (2010) proposed a grammatical pattern used as the criteria to differentiate synonyms. Regarding the research question, this section will present and illustrate the similarities and differences among *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive* related to their grammatical patterns. The 200 hundred concordance lines from COCA were used as the study's major resources and each verb structure will be presented in the following examples.

##### 4.1.1 Obtain

1) *obtain* + something + preposition (of/for/from) + (doing) something

(1) shows that the looser regulations enabled Chinese companies to ***obtain a wide range of sophisticated technology***, some of which has

2) *obtain* + something

(2) make it legal you have to go to the courthouse and ***obtain a license first***.

What a line! They will not issue

3) *obtain* (vi.)

(3) casual perfection that most men would have paid a fortune to ***obtain***, just long enough to brush his collar in the back with

4) *obtain* + something + preposition (for/from) + somebody

(4) White who, the story was, had been unable to ***obtain a divorce from his very Catholic wife***. Marge worked as a

5) *obtain* + something + to + verb infinitive

(5) 400 places where on/off switches are installed for people who ***obtain permission to get*** them. Air bags are getting better

6) *obtain* + something + adj. clause (that/which)

(6) it is a behavior to tell yourself which you will ***obtain the system that*** you simply want, and also you will not

7) *obtain* + preposition (in/from/by/for/of) + something

(7) method used to calculate the number of calories people actually ***obtain from food***, known as “metabolizable energy”, was developed

8) *obtain* + conjunction

(8) WHO 200). # Structural measures are the easiest to ***obtain and*** most commonly used in studies of quality in developing

9) *obtain* + something + adv. clause

(9) which allow me to scout out angles to the horizon and ***obtain a high point so that*** a tourist would not interfere with

10) *obtain* + preposition (from/with) + somebody

(10) cons for the DSLR are worth the extra quality you can ***obtain with them***. # Let me start with Iceman, then get

11) *obtain* + adv. clause

(11) being what it is: an antelope. Further condition must ***obtain if*** it is to be desired by a given lion: this

12) *obtain* + something + (omission of that) subject + verb

(12) an imposition, Mr. Chuff? If with your help we ***obtain the data we need*** we may not need the simulacrum to

13) *obtain* + somebody

(13) It is an Indian custom to use kinship network to ***obtain workers***, while mestizos hire labors. # The huaricha is a

The table below is supplied to describe the grammatical patterns that can be identified from the investigation as presented in the table in order to make obvious the grammatical structures of *obtain*.

**Table 4.1***Possible Grammatical Patterns of Obtain from COCA*

Pattern N0.	Possible Patterns ( <i>Obtain</i> )	COCA	
		Frequency	Percentage
1	<i>obtain</i> + something + preposition (of/for/from) + (doing) something	73	36.50
2	<i>obtain</i> + something	66	33.00
3	<i>obtain</i> (vi.)	15	7.50
4	<i>obtain</i> + something + preposition (for/from) + somebody	12	6.00
5	<i>obtain</i> + something + to + verb infinitive	9	4.50
6	<i>obtain</i> + something + adj. clause (that/which)	6	3.00
7	<i>obtain</i> + preposition (in/from/by/for/of) + something	5	2.50
8	<i>obtain</i> + conjunction	5	2.50
9	<i>obtain</i> + something + adv. clause	2	1.00
10	<i>obtain</i> + preposition (from/with) + somebody	2	1.00
11	<i>obtain</i> + adv. clause	2	1.00
12	<i>obtain</i> + something + (omission of that) subject + verb	2	1.00
13	<i>obtain</i> + somebody	1	0.50
<b>Total</b>		<b>200</b>	<b>100.00</b>

The result from Table 4.1 shows that there are 13 patterns presented in the 200 hundred concordance lines ranking from the most frequent patterns to the least pattern occurring with the target word. The structure *obtain* + something + preposition (of/for/from) + (doing) something is commonly found with the most frequency which is counted 73 times. The second highest frequent structure is *obtain* + something (66 times). The most usually found with 5-15 are *obtain* (vi.) (15 times), *obtain* + something + preposition (for/from) + somebody (12 times), *obtain* + something + to + verb infinitive (9 times), *obtain* + something + adj. clause (that/which) (6 times), *obtain* + preposition (in/from/by/for/of) + something (5 times), and *obtain* + conjunction (5 times) respectively. In addition, the four structures rarely found to co-occur with *obtain* are *obtain* + something + adv. clause, *obtain* + preposition (from/with) + somebody, *obtain* + adv. clause, and *obtain* + something + (omission of that) subject + verb. These structures only exist twice each. Finally, the data reveals that the least frequent structure is *obtain* + somebody, which is only found once.



#### 4.1.2 Gain

1) *gain* + something + preposition (for/of/from) + (doing) something

(1) effort to combat the drug trade, Sendero believes it can ***gain additional support based for its proposed*** New Democracy in Peru

2) *gain* + something

(2) head my second wife holds knowledge to which I cannot ***gain access***, and that is her power over me. Druids love

3) *gain* + preposition (in/from/by/for/of) + something

(3) These are active ongoing clinical trial so the experience you ***gain from your involvement*** count as actual work experience

4) *gain* + something + preposition (for/from) + somebody

(4) Be looking to retain enough face to enable his spin-doctor to ***gain a draw for him***. Given that large Clinton heart which suffers

5) *gain* + something + to + verb infinitive

(5) that you are capable of having, but simply did not ***gain the instruction to unleash***. # Why is speaking important?

6) *gain* (vi.)

(6) less room for improvement and giving Group I more room to ***gain***. Finally, since all three groups attained close posttest means,

7) *gain* + somebody + something

(7) This new breed of pint-size portable continues to ***gain me a home*** and bread. Now that I think of it.

8) *gain* + conjunction

(8) the royal mint in distance Istanbul. Yusuf schemed hard to ***gain and*** keep a few. # When he went to fetch his

9) *gain* + something + (omission of that) subject + verb

(9) bank account, I.D. thieves can access these phones to ***gain everything they need*** for their illegal activities, as reported

10) *gain* + something + adv. clause

(10) they give up so much, they start – they ***gain a lot when*** they get to the pros, but they start

11) *gain* + something + adj. clause (that/which)

(11) was softer and more harmonious. # Over time you will ***gain a pretty good idea of which*** wines correspond with which foods.

12) *gain* + somebody

(12) forces that enabled a missionary theology to take root, ***gain an audience***, and locate itself in the institutional life

13) *gain* + adv. clause

(13) a valid point. The only one that's going to ***gain as*** we destroy ISIS right now is going to be either AI-

14) *gain* + something + verb

(14) My religion teacher that if you sin, the way to ***gain forgiveness is*** to get back with the person who as harmed by

15) *gain* + adv.

(15) This may cloud the judgment of some recruiters. To ***gain financially***, they may recruit minority participants who do not

16) *gain* + modal verb

(16) in the hopes that only the activists who have something to ***gain will be*** aware and take the time to make their votes count

In order to make it easier to be comprehensive in the grammatical patterns. The table below is provided to describe what can be found from the investigation of *gain*.

**Table 4.2**

*Possible Grammatical Patterns of Gain from COCA*

Pattern N0.	Possible Patterns ( <i>Gain</i> )	COCA	
		Frequency	Percentage
1	<i>gain</i> + something + preposition (for/of/from) + (doing) something	82	41.00
2	<i>gain</i> + something	62	31.00
3	<i>gain</i> + preposition (in/from/by/for/of) + something	13	6.50
4	<i>gain</i> + something + preposition (for/from) + somebody	10	5.00
5	<i>gain</i> + something + to + verb infinitive	7	3.50
6	<i>gain</i> (vi.)	6	3.00
7	<i>gain</i> + somebody + something	4	2.00
8	<i>gain</i> + conjunction	4	2.00
9	<i>gain</i> + something + (omission of that) subject + verb	3	1.50

10	<i>gain</i> + something + adv. clause	2	1.00
11	<i>gain</i> + something + adj. clause (that/which)	2	1.00
12	<i>gain</i> + somebody	1	0.50
13	<i>gain</i> + adv. clause	1	0.50
14	<i>gain</i> + something + verb	1	0.50
15	<i>gain</i> + adv.	1	0.50
16	<i>gain</i> + modal verb	1	0.50
<b>Total</b>		<b>200</b>	<b>100.00</b>

As Table 4.2 clearly illustrates, 16 patterns are discovered from the 200 hundred concordance lines. Obviously, the structure *gain* + something + preposition (for/of/from) + (doing) something, is the first highest frequency (82 times). The structure that comes with the second highest number of frequencies is *gain* + something (62 times) and the third highest frequency is *gain* + preposition (in/from/by/for/of) + something (13 times). The highest frequency that comes in the fourth rank is *gain* + something + preposition (for/from) + somebody (10 times) followed by *gain* + something + to + verb infinitive (7 times), and *gain* (vi.) with 6 lines respectively. The two structures which are *gain* + somebody + something and *gain* + conjunction are found to occur equally (4 times). The result reveals that *gain* + something + (omission of that) subject + verb was rarely found as it appears only 3 times. Moreover, the other 2 structures rarely found in corpus data with 2 concords are *gain* + something + adv. clause and *gain* + something + adj. clause (that/which). Finally, *gain* + somebody, *gain* + adv. clause, *gain* + something + verb, *gain* + adv., and *gain* + modal verb are the five structures found with the lowest frequency (just 1 time each).

#### 4.1.3 Receive

1) *receive* + something

(1) been drug-tested twice in my professional career, both times to ***receive a job***. And after that. I've never been drug tested-since

2) *receive* + something + preposition (for/of/from) + (doing) something

(2) your customers will get is good enough. If they can ***receive a free copy of an eBook***, then put a picture of

3) *receive* (vi.)

(3) and the new DTV sets will process and display whatever they *receive*, regardless of picture format and transfer rate. Broadcasters

4) *receive* + something + preposition (of/from) + somebody

(4) areas to learn that a child has a sponsor. They *receive a regularly generated list of children* who have new sponsors.

5) *receive* + preposition (in/from/by/for/of) + something

(5) in Atlanta and Dallas as markers for what the Rockets might *receive for the naming rights* to a new arena, # In February

6) *receive* + something + adv. clause

(6) in its own right may be considered later. Charon may *receive consideration because* Pluto and Charon are comparable in size

7) *receive* + something + to + verb infinitive

(7) tell: A test of a law that requires colleges that *receive federal funding to allow* military recruiters on campus.

8) *receive* + conjunction

(8) headaches and anxiety, missed the attention that blondes *receive and* had to stay home and wear hats most of the time

9) *receive* + something + conjunction

(9) If you have pre-registered for an event, you will not *receive a confirmation email but* be updated as soon as registration

10) *receive* + something + adjective clause (that/which)

(10) images: the procession of students in cap and gown to *receive the diploma that* symbolizes their rite of passage. # In the

11) *receive* + preposition (for/from) + somebody

(11) their attitudes and their perceptions of the reactions they *receive from others* about their behaviors. 3 Early age at first

12) *receive* + adv.

(12) Jew of today. Eventually the 2 Houses will unite and *receive forever* their inheritance, and nowhere are the children of

13) *receive* + verb

(13) on health care than we do, and the quality they *receive is* probably close to ours. It's impossible to agree on

14) *receive* + noun clause

(14) # (Don't forget the rapture.) Obama will *receive what* he deserves in due time. He is too stupid.

15) *receive* + somebody

(15), and from there depart. 5 And whoever will not *receive you*, when you go out that city, shake off

In order to make the grammatical structures more understandable, the table below provides a description of the grammatical patterns of *receive* that were found during the investigation.

**Table 4.3**

*Possible Grammatical Patterns of Receive from COCA*

Pattern N0.	Possible Patterns ( <i>Receive</i> )	COCA	
		Frequency	Percentage
1	<i>receive</i> + something	84	42.00
2	<i>receive</i> + something + preposition (for/of/from) + (doing) something	43	21.50
3	<i>receive</i> (vi.)	16	8.00
4	<i>receive</i> + something + preposition (of/from) + somebody	16	8.00
5	<i>receive</i> + preposition (in/from/by/for/of) + something	8	4.00
6	<i>receive</i> + something + adv. clause	7	3.50
7	<i>receive</i> + something + to + verb infinitive	5	2.50
8	<i>receive</i> + conjunction	5	2.50
9	<i>receive</i> + something + conjunction	4	2.00
10	<i>receive</i> + something + adjective clause (that/which)	3	1.50
11	<i>receive</i> + proposition + (for/from) + somebody	3	1.50
12	<i>receive</i> + adv.	3	1.50
13	<i>receive</i> + verb	1	0.50
14	<i>receive</i> + noun clause	1	0.50
15	<i>receive</i> + somebody	1	0.50
<b>Total</b>		<b>200</b>	<b>100.00</b>

The 200 hundred concordance lines in COCA show that there are 15 grammatical patterns occurring with *receive*, as indicated in Table 4.3. The most

frequent structure appearing is *receive* + something (84 times). The second highest common structure is *receive* + something + preposition (for/of/from) + (doing) something, of which its counted number is 43 concords followed by *receive* (vi.) and *receive* + something + preposition (of/from) + somebody (16 times of each). The frequently found structures which were found up to 5 times are *receive* + preposition (in/from/by/for/of) + something (8 times), *receive* + something + adv. clause (7 times), *receive* + something + to + verb infinitive (5 times), *receive* + conjunction (5 times) respectively. The next structure which was found with 4 concords is *receive* + something + conjunction. Moreover, there are three structures which frequently occur equally in corpus data with only 3 concords which are *receive* + something + adjective clause (that/which), *receive* + preposition (for/from) + somebody and *receive* + adv.. However, the three structures found the least are *receive* + verb, *receive* + noun clause, and *receive* + somebody (only 1 time of each).

After analyzing the grammatical structures of the three synonyms separately, the total structures of the three words *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive* were compared to identify whether the grammatical structures of the three synonyms are similar or different. The results are presented in the following table.

**Table 4.4**

*Shared Grammatical Patterns of Obtain, Gain, and Receive from COCA*

Synonyms	Shared Grammatical Patterns
<i>obtain</i> and <i>gain</i>	1) <i>obtain/gain</i> + something + preposition (for/of/from) + (doing) something
	2) <i>obtain/gain</i> + something
	3) <i>obtain</i> (vi.)/ <i>gain</i> (vi.)
	4) <i>obtain/gain</i> + something + preposition (for/from) + somebody
	5) <i>obtain/gain</i> + something + to + verb infinitive
	6) <i>obtain/gain</i> + something + adj. clause (that/which)
	7) <i>obtain/gain</i> + preposition (in/from/by/for/of) + something
	8) <i>obtain/gain</i> + conjunction
	9) <i>obtain/gain</i> + something + adv. clause
	10) <i>obtain/gain</i> + adv. clause
	11) <i>obtain/gain</i> + something (omission of that) + subject + verb
	12) <i>obtain/gain</i> + somebody
<i>obtain</i> and <i>receive</i>	1) <i>obtain/receive</i> + something + preposition (for/of/from) + (doing) something
	2) <i>obtain/receive</i> + something
	3) <i>obtain</i> (vi.)/ <i>receive</i> (vi.)

	4) <i>obtain/receive</i> + something + preposition (for/from) + somebody
	5) <i>obtain/receive</i> + something + to + verb infinitive
	6) <i>obtain/receive</i> + preposition (in/from/by/for/of) + something
	7) <i>obtain/receive</i> + conjunction
	8) <i>obtain/receive</i> + somebody
	9) <i>obtain/receive</i> + something + adj. clause (that/which)
	10) <i>obtain/receive</i> + preposition (from/with) + somebody
	11) <i>obtain/receive</i> + something + adv. clause
<i>gain and receive</i>	1) <i>gain/receive</i> + something + preposition (for/of/from) + (doing) something
	2) <i>gain/receive</i> + something
	3) <i>gain/receive</i> + preposition (in/from/by/for/of) + something
	4) <i>gain/receive</i> + something + preposition (for/from) + somebody
	5) <i>gain</i> (vi.)/ <i>receive</i> (vi.)
	6) <i>gain/receive</i> + something + to + verb infinitive
	7) <i>gain/receive</i> + conjunction
	8) <i>gain/receive</i> + something + adv. clause
	9) <i>gain/receive</i> + somebody
	10) <i>gain/receive</i> + something + adj. clause (that/which)
	11) <i>gain/receive</i> + adv.
<i>obtain, gain, and receive</i>	1) <i>obtain/gain/receive</i> + something + preposition (for/of/from) + (doing) something
	2) <i>obtain/gain/receive</i> + something
	3) <i>obtain</i> (vi.)/ <i>gain</i> (vi.)/ <i>receive</i> (vi.)
	4) <i>obtain/gain/receive</i> + something + preposition (for/from) + somebody
	5) <i>obtain/gain/receive</i> + something + to + verb infinitive
	6) <i>obtain/gain/receive</i> + something + adj. clause (that/which)
	7) <i>obtain/gain/receive</i> + preposition (in/from/by/for/of) + something
	8) <i>obtain/gain/receive</i> + conjunction
	9) <i>obtain/gain/receive</i> + something + adv. clause
	10) <i>obtain/gain/receive</i> + somebody

Table 4.4 presents that the target synonyms commonly share 10 grammatical features. The pair *obtain* and *gain* have the most common grammatical patterns (12 structures), followed by the pair *obtain* and *receive* and the pair *gain* and *receive* which are found equally with 11 structures. According to the findings of this study, *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive* differ slightly but not significantly because they share the most common patterns with 10 structures.

## 4.2 Degree of Formality

According to (Jackson & Amvela, 2000, p. 95), formality is one of the characteristics used to identify synonyms. While one word in a set of synonyms may be applied in a formal situation, the rest may be used in informal circumstances. This section will present and discuss the occurrence and frequency of the synonyms *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive* across genres in COCA to identify the degree of formality corresponding to the research question. The findings are reported in the following table.

**Table 4.5**

*Distribution of Obtain, Gain, and Receive across Eight Genres according to Frequency*

<i>Obtain</i>			<i>Gain</i>			<i>Receive</i>		
Genres	Frequency	Per Million	Genres	Frequency	Per Million	Genres	Frequency	Per Million
Academic Texts	7,498	62.59	Academic Texts	9,944	83.01	Webpages	13,401	107.85
Webpages	4,561	36.71	Webpages	8,395	67.56	Academic Texts	11,477	95.81
Blogs	2,909	22.62	Blogs	7,909	61.49	Blogs	9,932	77.22
Magazines	2,400	19.03	Magazines	7,364	58.40	Newspapers	9,361	76.89
Newspapers	2,164	17.78	Newspapers	6,004	49.32	Magazines	8,799	69.78
Spoken	736	5.83	Spoken	3,623	28.72	Spoken	3,543	28.09
Fiction	490	4.14	Fiction	1,961	16.57	Fiction	2,368	20.01
TV and Movie Subtitles	415	3.24	TV and Movie Subtitles	1,933	15.09	TV and Movie Subtitles	2,355	18.39
<b>Total</b>	<b>21,173</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>47,133</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>61,236</b>	

After normalizing the frequencies and distributions of the three verbs, Table 4.5 shows the results. A brief glance at this table reveals that the three verbs under consideration are essentially identical in their ranking of the eight genres, with only minor differences. The total frequency of *receive* (61,236 tokens) is the highest among the three synonym verbs, according to the data in Table 4.5. Furthermore, the frequency of *receive* is nearly three times that of *obtain* (21,173 tokens) and occurs with more frequency than *gain* (47,133 tokens) in COCA. Regarding formality, the occurrences of *receive* are frequently highest in webpages (13,401 tokens) followed by academic texts (11,477 tokens), blogs (9,932 tokens), newspapers (9,361 tokens), and magazines (8,799 tokens). While the highest frequency of *gain* is found in academic texts (9,944 tokens), followed by webpages (8,395 tokens), blogs (7,909 tokens), magazines (7,364 tokens), and newspapers (6,004 tokens) respectively. In a similar vein, *obtain* is most



frequently found in academic texts (7,498 tokens) followed by webpages (4,561 tokens), blogs (2,909 tokens), magazines (2,400 tokens), and newspapers (2,164 tokens). Additionally, when considering the top-5 genres in which the three verbs occur, the three synonyms frequently occur in written English since the target verbs are most generally utilized in academic texts, webpages, blogs, magazines and newspapers, which are written genres. However, *receive* is more formal than the other two as it has the highest frequency followed by *gain* and *obtain* subsequently.

The corpus data also clearly indicates that *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive* are not commonly used in colloquial English. It is interesting that the three target verbs appear in relatively fewer numbers of frequencies in colloquial English genres, which are spoken language, fiction, and TV and movie subtitles, i.e. informal contexts or styles, with the same ordering in the sixth, seventh and eighth-rank subsequently. It can be explicitly seen that their low occurrences in spoken English genres determine that *receive*, *gain*, and *obtain* have a high degree of formality.

### 4.3 Collocations

In this section, the three synonyms *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive* are verbs; therefore, they commonly co-occur with both nouns and adverbs. Nevertheless, the present research focused on only noun collocates with these synonyms. Although synonyms are similar in basic meaning, they may not have the same collocations, according to Palmer (1997). The noun collocates in this study were collected from the top-30 frequency lists shown in COCA and, consistent with (Cheng, 2012), have an MI score which is higher or equal to 3, which is the significance value for collocational relationship. This was done in order to answer the research question and see whether the three verbs are distinguished in terms of collocations. The findings are presented in the table below.

**Table 4.6***Noun Collocates of Obtain, Gain, and Receive from COCA*

Rank	<i>Obtain</i>			<i>Gain</i>			<i>Receive</i>		
	Noun Collocate	Frequency	MI-Score	Noun Collocate	Frequency	MI-Score	Noun Collocate	Frequency	MI-Score
1	information	2,963	4.27	weight	3,001	5.70	call	3,625	3.74
2	data	2,060	4.24	access	2,936	5.62	attention	3,527	3.84
3	result	1,826	3.87	control	1,823	3.80	letter	3,446	3.94
4	consent	816	6.67	experience	1,691	3.56	e-mail	3,029	4.29
5	sample	810	4.52	knowledge	1,575	4.49	treatment	3,013	3.97
6	document	795	4.64	insight	1,466	6.27	support	2,958	3.56
7	score	672	4.09	understanding	1,382	5.28	benefit	2,719	3.83
8	permission	548	5.39	momentum	1,228	7.12	message	2,411	3.42
9	degree	533	3.30	support	1,185	3.64	award	2,261	4.63
10	license	533	5.01	ground	1,135	3.50	training	2,221	3.68
11	copy	528	4.42	attention	1,063	3.49	degree	1,710	3.19
12	warrant	432	5.84	advantage	1,019	4.50	instruction	1,546	4.11
13	approval	428	4.94	traction	1,000	8.57	gift	1,459	3.53
14	permit	370	6.02	confidence	905	5.00	funding	1,422	4.36
15	participant	309	3.04	strength	801	4.18	payment	1,329	4.15
16	estimate	305	4.40	popularity	759	6.50	assistance	1,269	4.37
17	mean	299	3.14	skill	676	3.27	grant	1,136	5.01
18	loan	287	3.42	acceptance	657	5.95	feedback	1,007	4.73
19	difficulty	250	3.61	respect	585	3.85	aid	970	3.77
20	abortion	242	3.47	capital	574	3.64	complaint	968	4.01
21	visa	238	5.55	trust	566	4.42	request	866	3.47
22	employment	208	3.75	seat	523	3.00	compensation	812	4.94
23	funding	198	3.32	perspective	504	3.62	notice	792	4.34
24	measurement	187	4.08	independence	489	4.82	prize	783	3.97
25	certificate	166	4.56	reputation	470	4.56	offer	768	3.37
26	assistance	150	3.08	share	469	3.48	mail	755	3.81
27	patent	140	4.06	recognition	461	4.73	sentence	753	3.25
28	sequence	128	3.20	average	453	3.71	copy	733	3.15
29	questionnaire	124	4.22	entry	421	4.20	signal	710	3.31
30	formula	123	3.12	approval	375	4.39	approval	710	3.91

In terms of collocations, the three verbs *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive* co-occur with various sets of nouns. From Table 4.6, the first 30 frequent noun collocates of the target words were selected for the findings on the basis of frequency and MI scores  $\geq 3$ . Though a number of words were presented in COCA as noun collocates, function words were excluded from this analysis. For example, some nouns occurring in high frequency with *obtain*, e.g. *record*, *value*, and *evidence* are not reported in Table 4.6 as their MI value is less than 3, i.e. the significance level. In the meantime, the words such as *dow*

and *jones* are not relatively significant noun collocates with *gain*. After looking for their meaning from the concordance lines, as they are relevant to proper names, they were not included in the study, despite the fact that they are common and have MI values greater or equal to 3. As for *receive*, some nouns which commonly occur with high frequency, such as *service*, *information*, and *patient* were not presented in the table. The reason is that their MI value is less than 3. The function word which is an object pronoun like *us* was not included in the analysis as it does not represent a strong collocational relation since this pronoun, which is commonly employed with other words in various situations, is not specifically or mutually applied with *receive* in a statistically significant way.

It can be identified from Table 4.6 that nouns which commonly co-occur with the synonym verbs are slightly different compared to the first to fifth-ranked. The data from corpus data shows that *obtain* frequently collocates with nouns, e.g. *information*, *data*, *result*, *consent*, *sample*, and examples are shown in (1) and (2). *Gain* is generally followed by *weight*, *access*, *control*, *experience*, and *knowledge* as exemplified in (3) and (4). As for *receive*, its noun collocates are *call*, *attention*, *letter*, *e-mail*, and *treatment* as exemplified in (5) and (6).

(1) I could contact this source very easily if I need to ***obtain information***.

(2) and/or directors were contacted prior to the competitions to ***obtain data*** collection approval.

(3) let's start with this though. A lot of folks ***gain weight*** through the holidays. They say that Americans gain seven

(4) society frantically tried to devise strategies in order to ***gain control*** over the new culture of consumption. Trying to

(5) for white-tailed deer throughout the state. He has started to ***receive calls*** of concern from DNR wildlife offices in the state's

(6) Thus, many Palestinians are allowed to enter Israel to ***receive treatment*** from some of the finest medical facilities in the

With the aim of identifying whether *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive* are similar and different in terms of collocations, the top-30 noun collocates of each word are examined by categorizing them into the same semantic theme according to semantic features and

meaning to examine the similarities and differences of noun collocates. The findings are shown below.

#### 4.3.1 Obtain

**Table 4.7**

*Semantic Preference of Noun Collocates of Obtain from COCA*

Semantic Categories	Noun Collocates of <i>Obtain</i>
1. research	information, data, result, sample, document, score, participant, mean, estimate, questionnaire, formula, sequence, measurement
2. certification	consent, degree, permission, license, warrant, approval, permit, visa, employment, certificate, patent, copy
3. assistance	funding, assistance, loan
4. miscellaneous	difficulty, abortion

From Table 4.7, it was discovered that the number of noun collocates accompanying *obtain* were then classified primarily on their semantic feature or similarities in meaning into the same category. There are 4 main semantic themes that cover the noun collocates of *obtain*. The first semantic theme which has the highest number of noun collocates includes words referring to information related to *research* contexts are *information, data, result, sample, document, score, participant, mean, estimate, questionnaire, formula, sequence, and measurement*. The second set is restricted to *certification* including the words *consent, degree, permission, license, warrant, approval, permit, visa, employment, certificate, patent, and copy*. The third semantic category of noun collocates to *obtain* associated with the words referring to *assistance* or money support, e.g. *funding, assistance, and loan*. The last set of noun collocates accompanying *obtain* was categorized into *miscellaneous* namely *difficulty* and *abortion* because both *difficult* and *abortion* do not belong to the previous three themes. The following are some examples of noun collocates of *obtain* from COCA concordance lines.

(8) Those boundary points are then supplied to the MultAlloc package for optimum allocation, to ***obtain the sample size*** in each stratum

(9) Athletes' responses were summed and averaged to ***obtain a score*** for each of the three scales.

(10) And Florida requires restaurants to *obtain a permit* from their local government before allowing a dog in.

(11) The ministry said Brochez had lied about his HIV status in order to *obtain an employment* pass in the country.

(10) If victims do not have the requested funds, the scammers may ask them to *obtain a loan*.

#### 4.3.2 Gain

**Table 4.8**

*Semantic Preference of Noun Collocates of Gain from COCA*

Semantic Categories	Noun Collocates of <i>Gain</i>
1. certification	acceptance, reputation, entry, seat, popularity, trust, respect, recognition, approval
2. research	skill, average, access, control, experience
3. capacity	weight, strength, momentum, traction, ground
4. communication	attention, understanding, knowledge
5. opinion	confidence, insight, perspective
6. assistance	support, independence, advantage
7. reward	capital, share

There are 7 themes illustrated from the investigation of semantic feature of *gain*, as presented in Table 4.8. The largest set contains words bound up with noun collocates of *gain* and includes words referring to *certification* contexts which are *acceptance, reputation, entry, seat, popularity, trust, respect, recognition, and approval*. The second set is relevant to the *research* context including words *skill, average, access, control, and experience*. The third set of nouns collocates of *gain* includes words referring to *capacity* or volume, e.g. *weight, strength, momentum, traction, and ground*. However, there are 3 categories that have the equal number of noun collocates with three words related to *communication, opinion, and assistance*. Noun collocates accompanying *gain* associated with *communication* are *attention, understanding, and knowledge*. In the set of *opinions* are *confidence, insight, and perspective*. The next set of noun collocates of *gain* was categorized into an *assistance* theme namely *support, independence, and advantage*. The last group, which includes *capital* and *share*, is part of the *reward* theme. The following are some examples of noun collocations of *gain* derived from COCA concordance lines.

(11) so many more black women, who are often unable to *gain access* to dental care, have premature, low-birth-weight

(12) Internship is one of the great way to *gain an experience*, Remember graphic design salary

(13) present, children must of the possess a repertoire of social to *gain entry* into existing dyads and triads and to sustain

(14) He cool and quite often fog covered region only started to *gain recognition* after 1970, when wineries started naming the

(15) has grown disillusioned with the group, for failing to *gain support* from numerous rebel faction. But despite US efforts to

### 4.3.3 Receive

**Table 4.9**

*Semantic Preference of Noun Collocates of Receive from COCA*

Semantic Categories	Noun Collocates of Receive
1. assistance	treatment, support, benefit, assistance, funding, aid, grant, compensation, request, offer
2. communication	call, letter, e-mail, mail, message, instruction, attention, signal, notice
3. reward	award, gift, payment, prize
4. certification	degree, training, approval, copy
5. opinion	feedback, complaint, sentence

The collocating words in Table 4.9 were then categorized based on their semantic preference or semantic similarity. The noun collocates of *receive* are divided into five semantic categories. The majority of nouns that co-occur with *receive* are related to *assistance* or financial support, such as *treatment, support, benefit, assistance, funding, aid, grant, compensation, request, and offer*. The second set is restricted to the *communication* context of things used for people to communicate, including words, e.g. *call, letter, e-mail, mail, message, instruction, attention, signal, and notice*. The semantic category in the third set includes words associated with *reward*, e.g. *award, gift, payment, and prize*. The fourth set in the investigation of noun collocates of *receive* presented an additional semantic theme referring to the *certification*, e.g. *degree, training, approval, and copy*. The last theme is composed of words associated with expressing *opinion*, e.g. *feedback, complaint, and sentence*.

However, a closer examination of concordance lines reveals that these nouns collocate with *receive*. They are shown in the samples below.

(16) These results appear logical since the tutees in the experimental condition did not *receive instruction* from the researcher, while the tutees in the

(17) Rarely do issues of civil litigation *receive attention* in constitutional law casebooks, and

(18) no number shall hold a public office or public appointment for which we *receive compensation*, nor shall we hold office in a potential party

(19) Mullay was less sure that this also entitled them to *receive payment* under the terms of the

(20) During a follow-up meeting in the winter, Team Pain will present its design and *receive feedback*.

After analyzing the 30 noun collocates of each of the three synonyms separately based on their semantic themes, total noun collocations of these verbs *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive* were categorized and compared to clarify whether this set of synonyms share the same noun collocates. The results are demonstrated in the table below.

**Table 4.10**

*Shared Noun Collocates of Obtain, Gain, and Receive from COCA*

Target Words	Shared Noun Collocates
<i>obtain</i> and <i>receive</i>	degree, approval, copy, funding, assistance
<i>gain</i> and <i>receive</i>	support, approval
<i>obtain</i> and <i>gain</i>	approval
<i>obtain</i> , <i>gain</i> , and <i>receive</i>	approval

The corpus-based data from Table 4.10 certify this set of target synonyms as it is clearly presented in Table 4.10 that only a small number of noun collocations are similar on the basis of the semantic feature with which these synonyms are related, compared to the noun collocation total presented in Table 4.6. Interestingly, *approval* is only noun collocation shared by all three synonym verbs. The data demonstrate that *obtain* and *receive* share five common noun collocates, including *degree*, *approval*,

*copy, funding, and assistance* but *gain* and *receive* share only two, namely *support* and *approval*. However, *obtain* and *gain* share only one noun collocation, i.e. *approval*. The study indicates that *obtain* is more similar to *receive* than *gain* in terms of noun collocation.





## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter includes (1) a summary of the study, (2) a summary of the findings, (3) conclusions and discussion of the similarities and differences of the synonymous verbs *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive*, (4) limitations of the study, (5) recommendations for further research, and (6) pedagogical implications of the study.

#### 5.1 Summary of the Study

This section summarizes the similarities and differences of the three synonym verbs *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive* that distinguish them by the criteria of synonyms regarding grammatical patterns, degree of formality and collocations.

##### 5.1.1 Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to explore the similarities and differences of *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive* with a focus on their grammatical patterns, degree of formality, and collocations by using the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (online version) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) as the major tools of the study.

##### 5.1.2 Selected Synonyms

According to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (online version) the study's target words were three synonymous verbs *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive*, which were chosen from the frequency level as high frequency words used in spoken and written English. The main resources applied in this study were the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (online version) used for the referential meanings and grammatical patterns and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) providing 200 hundred concordance lines used to analyze the possible grammatical structures as well as provide sentence examples of the target verbs. The degree of formality was analyzed based on their frequency and distribution across genres. In

terms of collocations, the top-30 noun collocations of the target synonyms with MI score  $\geq 3$  from COCA were used to compare and contrast the three synonymous verbs.

## 5.2 Summary of the Findings

The findings of the study can be summarized that the set of synonyms is considered as near-synonyms. They are differentiated by criteria analyzed in this study, e.g. grammatical patterns, degree of formality, and collocations. With regard to grammatical patterns, the target synonyms mostly appear with similar patterns since *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive* share 10 common structures. However, they still have some different grammatical structures. Regarding degree of formality, the information derived from COCA confirms that these target synonyms are dominant in a high degree of formality since they are frequently used in written context rather than spoken context. Nevertheless, *receive* has the highest degree of formality followed by *gain* and *obtain*. With regard to collocations, the study identified that *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive* share a small number of noun collocations. It is interesting that only one noun collocation is shared among the three verbs. Despite the fact that *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive* share the same meanings, they cannot be replaceable in every context since they each have their own distinct attribute based on criteria used to differentiate synonyms.

## 5.3 Conclusions

The current study explored the similarities and differences among the target synonyms *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive* in three features, including grammatical patterns, degree of formality, and collocations, by collecting information from COCA corpus and applying the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (online version) for referential meanings and grammatical structures. The findings are as follows.

### 5.3.1 Grammatical Patterns

In terms of grammatical patterns, based on the data sources drawn from 200 hundred concordance lines, the study revealed that *gain* shows the highest number of grammatical structures, followed by *receive* and *obtain* respectively. The pair *obtain* and *gain* share the highest number of common grammatical patterns followed by the pair *obtain* and *receive* and the pair *gain* and *receive* which have equal shared

structures. Overall, the study identified that *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive* share 10 common structures as shown below.

- 1) *obtain/gain/receive* + something + preposition (for/of/from) + (doing) something
- 2) *obtain/gain/receive* + something
- 3) *obtain* (vi.)/*gain* (vi.)/*receive* (vi.)
- 4) *obtain/gain/receive* + something + preposition (for/from) + somebody
- 5) *obtain/gain/receive* + something + to + verb infinitive
- 6) *obtain/gain/receive* + something + adj. clause (that/which)
- 7) *obtain/gain/receive* + preposition (in/from/by/for/of) + something
- 8) *obtain/gain/receive* + conjunction
- 9) *obtain/gain/receive* + something + adv. clause
- 10) *obtain/gain/receive* + somebody

The findings indicated that *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive* are near-synonyms. Only a few differences were discovered, despite the fact that their grammatical patterns were generally the same. They cannot be replaceable in all linguistic circumstances since these synonyms do not share all of the similar syntactic patterns. The present study's finding supports Phoocharoensil's (2010) study that words in a set of synonyms cannot be interchanged in every context. Though *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive* have a similar basic meaning, they differ in grammatical structures. However, it is plausible that some grammatical patterns are non-existent in the 200 concordance lines in COCA used for investigation of the grammatical structures in the present study.

### 5.3.2 Degree of Formality

According to the degree of formality of the target synonyms *obtain*, *gain*, and *receive*, they are likely to be used in formal circumstances. The first five genres where they appear are in academic context, e.g. academic texts, webpages, blogs, magazines, and newspapers. However, *receive* mostly appears in the academic context as *receive* has the highest frequency followed by *gain*, while *obtain* is the lowest. It is interesting that all the synonyms appear less in colloquial English, e.g. spoken, fiction, and TV and movie subtitles in the same order respectively. This study corresponds to Kumnerdchard's (2013) study that the English language can range from formal to

informal. While formal English is mainly utilized in academic writing, informal English can be found in spoken language. Their low occurrences in spoken English genres confirm their high degree of formality.

### 5.3.3 Collocations

In terms of the collocations in which these synonyms are found, the focus of this study was solely on the target synonyms' noun collocates. The three synonyms share only one word collocate, i.e. *approval*. Additionally, COCA shows that *obtain* appears to be closer to *receive* rather than to *gain* since *obtain* shares more common noun collocates with *receive* than it does with *gain*. After categorizing the synonyms into the semantic preference, the findings indicated that *obtain* is mainly associated with research contexts, e.g. *information, data, result, sample, document, score, participant, mean, estimate, questionnaire, formula, sequence, and measurement*. While *gain* mostly co-occurs with the *certification* theme, e.g. *acceptance, reputation, entry, seat, popularity, trust, respect, recognition, and approval*. Moreover, the largest set of *receive* is nouns restricted to *assistance* namely *treatment, support, benefit, assistance, funding, aid, grant, compensation, request, and offer*. It can be drawn from the finding that *obtain, gain, and receive* tend to appear with dissimilar noun collocations. This study supports Palmer's (1997) study that some words have limited collocations and only co-occur with certain words.

### 5.4 Limitations of the Study

This study's restrictions are that the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) and the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (online version) were used as the only data sources. As both COCA and LDOCE represent American English, the findings of the study cannot be used to generalize to other Englishes, e.g. British English. In addition, the study focuses only on the base form of verbs of the target synonyms; therefore, the findings might be different if other verb forms are investigated. Furthermore, the number of concordance lines was limited to only 200 concordance lines for each target verb. Further patterns may be discovered if the number of concordance lines is extended. Moreover, the collocations of the target verbs

*obtain, gain, and receive* were derived from only the noun collocates, this may not help confirm the strength of the collocations of the target synonyms.

### **5.5 Recommendations for Further Research**

According to the findings and conclusions, further research should be conducted using other corpora, i.e. the British National Corpus (BNC), which represents British English to see the real language used more extensively. Additionally, apart from depending on only the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (online version), other dictionaries, e.g. Collins COBUILD Advanced Learner's English Dictionary, Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, and Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary should be used to explore meanings and grammatical structures of the synonyms in wider different manners. Alternatively, the number of concordance lines drawn from the corpus is recommended to be broadened to strengthen the validity of the data in order to identify other grammatical patterns beyond those found in the current study. Moreover, all word families of each verb should be taken into consideration, e.g. s, -es, -ed, and ing, to acquire in-depth information about the set of synonyms. Aside from noun collocates with synonyms, future research should look into adverb collocates with target verbs and increase the number of collocations to see how synonyms differ in broader dimensions.

### **5.6 Pedagogical Implications**

This study indicates that these synonyms are near-synonyms and they can be differentiated by some criteria, for example, grammatical patterns, degree of formality, and collocations. Both English language learners and English teachers can benefit from this research study. Corpora can supply learners with synonyms utilized in real-life situations, which dictionaries cannot. In addition, corpora are the instrument which helps English learners to comprehend how synonyms are applied distinctively. Moreover, the current research can be applied as a guideline for distinguishing other sets of synonyms which can help learners in improving their English skills. Teachers of English can use corpora to teach not only vocabulary but also grammatical structures. Teachers can give students corpus data, such as concordance lines and KWIC, so they

can look for collocations and grammatical patterns. Using corpora in the classroom can make educational activities more exciting and engaging for students.



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