Why *begin* when you can *commence* –
Aspects of near-synonymous verbs of
Germanic and Romance origin

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Abstract

This essay is a corpus study, the aim of which is to investigate the usage of two near-synonymous verb pairs that descend from Germanic and Romance languages. The four verbs begin, commence, hate, and detest were chosen for the study. The analysis is based on occurrences of the verbs in five subcorpora in the COBUILDDIRECT corpus; two subcorpora consist of British and American books and three subcorpora are composed of British and Australian newspapers. Occurrences were also collected from the novel Wuthering Heights (1847) by Emily Brontë. The primary aims of the essay are to investigate the frequency and occurrence of the verbs in different text types as well as in British and American books, to reveal if the verbs are synonymous and whether they occur with the same collocates. Furthermore, the novel Wuthering Heights gives a diachronic view of the usage of the verbs.

This analysis suggests that a usage of the verbs of Germanic origin is more frequent than the verbs of Romance origin. The Romance verbs are more common in novels and books, but also in the British newspaper The Times. Furthermore, the usage of commence and detest seems to be restricted to certain contexts which are connected to the field of the English language in which the verbs occurred at first. The Germanic verbs are clearly favoured in all kinds of texts investigated, even though Wuthering Heights has a high number of occurrences of commence.

On the topic of synonymy, begin and commence have been found to be further apart from each other than hate and detest. This is due to the fact that begin and commence are constructed grammatically different, as well as a restriction in contextual usage of commence. Despite this, commence is used more freely in American books than in British books. The synonymy of hate and detest is connected to the fact that detest expresses a stronger feeling than hate, which makes the two verbs near-synonymous but also gradable. The verbs in the two pairs also collocate with different words, which underlines that they are not real synonyms. These findings support the claim that one should not call the verb pairs synonyms but near-synonyms, and that one has to be careful when choosing a verb.

Key words: near-synonymy, collocations, verbs of Germanic and Romance origin
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1 Introduction

(1) He raised his missile to hurl it; I commenced a soothing speech, but I could not stay his hand (Brontë, 1847:108, my italics).

(2) The meeting began promisingly, but then things started to go wrong (Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, 2003:102).

The French and English languages have always had a close connection, at least historically. This essay will deal with verb pairs which are seen as synonyms, but which have a different history. One of the verbs has a Germanic root, the other one has its root in French. We often think that synonyms are supposed to mean the same thing; however, Yule argues that “synonyms are two or more forms with very closely related meanings, which are often, but not always, intersubstitutable in sentences” (1996:118), and “[i]t should be noted that the idea of ‘sameness of meaning’ used in discussing synonymy is not necessarily ‘total sameness’” (1996:118). This means that when writing a text, one has to be careful in choosing a verb; it might not carry the same meaning as the writer intended.

The verb pairs chosen for this study are begin/commence and hate/detest. They were chosen deliberately because the verbs begin and hate have their roots in Germanic languages, while the verbs commence and detest both have their roots in French.

Earlier studies in the specific area of this study have not been found, but studies on French loan-words in the English language have been carried out by several researchers. Görlach (1991) for instance has written much about French loan-words, and discusses how the loan-words have entered the English language. Also Serjeantson (1935) has carried out a study on loan-words in the English language. Furthermore, a study on French synonymy has been made by Kreutz (2003), based on the two synonymous verbs tenter and essayer.

My intention with this study is to define today’s usage of the verbs compared to earlier in history, and to see if the employment of verbs of French origin is stable or if it has declined. Furthermore, a comparative analysis will be brought out, based on a corpus study of the verb pairs. The analysis will be limited to the usage of these verbs in different sorts of texts, to their synonymy, frequency, and to a certain extent, their collocates. All four verbs investigated will be italicized throughout the essay, and the results of the corpus search will be presented in Section 6.
I have chosen this subject due to my previous studies in French, and because I find it very interesting to trace the influences which a Romance language such as French has had on English.

1.1 Background

Very early in the history of the English language, the French left their imprint on both the English land and on the English vocabulary. English is a Germanic language and has its roots in the Indo-European languages just as French has. Britain was a Roman province until AD 410; after that, the Anglo-Saxons, the Celts and the Jutes settled there; they brought their language with them which we today call Old English (Barber 1993:58-67).

In 1066, the famous Norman Conquest took place at Hastings, and it left deep marks on the English language: "For some centuries, English ceased to be the language of the governing classes […] and when English did once again become the language of the whole country it had changed a good deal under the influence of the conquerors" (Barber 1993:134). Many French words had been introduced into the English language, but the linguistic invasion did not come to an end just yet. Later, during the 15th and 16th centuries, many French words were introduced when French society and culture reached the peak of their influence in Europe; after that period, French as a language largely ceased to be a source of loan-words for the English language.

2 Aim and scope

The overall aim of this essay is to investigate the difference in usage of the synonymous verb pairs begin/commence and hate/detest. The analysis will be based on a data extracted from the COBUILD DIRECT corpus. Some text samples will also be taken from the novel Wuthering Heights (1847) by Emily Brontë. My hypothesis is that the two verbs of Germanic origin are more widely used than the ones of French origin, and that the two French verbs occur less often in newspapers than in books and non-fiction texts. The difference in usage will be presented on different levels; the guiding research questions are the following:

- Are the two verbs used to the same extent or is one verb treated favourably; i.e. does one verb occur more often than the other?
- How do the verbs differ concerning their use in different text types such as novels or newspapers; are the verbs used in the same context or does the framework vary?
Is any verb favoured in British English or American English novels (henceforth BrE and AmE)?

To what extent are the verbs synonymous? Can they really be used interchangeably?

Do the verbs in the two pairs occur with the same collocates?

The study does not intend to be an exhaustive account of all aspects of text usage, synonymy, and collocates; it will give an account of the most frequent patterns of usage. I have limited my research to the questions above. The contrast between British, American, and Australian newspapers will not be discussed. Furthermore, with this study I wish to bring to focus the much probable decline of French verb usage in English.

3 Material

The possibility to use a computerized corpus when doing a study gives the researcher great advantages since it is easy to access and gives clear answers rapidly. Also, the corpus “[…] enables investigators to make more objective and confident descriptions of usage than would be possible through introspection” (Crystal 1995:448). Consequently, the primary source used in this study is the COBUILDDIRECT corpus, from which the bulk of the material is taken. The corpus consists of several subcorpora, as shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subcorpora</th>
<th>Approximate size (Million words)</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NPR</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>National Public Radio broadcasts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Today</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>Today newspaper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Times</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>The Times newspaper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USbooks</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>books; fiction and non-fiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OZnews</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>AusE</td>
<td>Australian newspapers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>World Service broadcast live</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USephem</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>ephemera (adverts, leaflets, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UKmags</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>magazines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunnow</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>The Sun newspaper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UKspok</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>transcribed informal speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UKbooks</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>books; fiction and non-fiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukephem</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>ephemera (adverts, leaflets, etc.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Out of these subcorpora, *Times*, *USbooks*, *OZnews*, *Sunnow*, and *UKbooks* have been chosen for the investigation, and they consist of the text material mentioned above in Table 1. This means that only subcorpora consisting of newspapers and books were selected given the aim of this essay. Unfortunately, there are no subcorpora in the main corpus consisting of American newspapers. However, since the contrastive aspect of American and British newspaper language will not be discussed, this is not of great importance. Also, the books in the two subcorpora (i.e. *UKbooks* and *USbooks*) are contemporary; most of them are from the 1980s and onwards (Corney 2005). Henceforth, when referring to the newspapers, their proper names will be used, and the shortenings in Table 1 will be used when referring to the subcorpora. The names will be italicized throughout the essay.

For the section on collocations, only two subcorpora have been chosen: *UKbooks* and *USbooks*. This is due to the fact that these two subcorpora have generated the largest number of occurrences for the analysis.

Furthermore, the choice of a novel in the investigation was made so that an older text could be studied and compared to the corpus results as well. The novel *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë (1847) was chosen, since it is a work which is more than 150 years old. This novel provides a diachronic perspective, and it is a good counterweight to the contemporary texts in the corpus search. All examples from the corpus search will be followed by references to the subcorpora, while the text samples from Brontë’s novel will all be followed by references to the author.

### 4 Method

The corpus search was easy to carry out since the verbs can be entered in their infinitive form. By command, the computer program then automatically searches for all the forms of the verb. Thus, the occurrences of the verb *begin* were *begin*, *began*, *begun*, and *beginning*. The other verbs follow the exact same pattern. However, not all verbs occur in all verb forms.

The two verbs of Germanic origin, *begin* and *hate*, had in some subcorpora several thousands of lines which had to be analyzed. Therefore, to avoid skewed statistics, an equal amount of lines from each verb was analyzed, although different numbers of occurrences from the different subcorpora have been allowed since this does not affect the statistics. Unfortunately, the two verbs of Romance origin did not occur frequently in the subcorpora, and therefore the outcome is that the total number of lines concerning *commence* [173] and
When investigating the collocates of each verb, the study was carried out in a similar way as explained above. The corpus program on the computer already has a list of collocations, and one can choose how many collocates should be included in the list. In this study, the 75 most frequent collocates have been investigated.

Obviously, this method of investigating has its drawbacks. The verbs of Romance origin have been studied extensively, while only a handful of lines from the verb begin has been investigated. However, it is fair to say that all verb forms of begin and hate have been studied, and that a large amount of the occurrences (242 tokens in total) have been studied.

The novel Wuthering Heights was extensively studied and the whole work was read through, while all occurrences of the four verbs were noted down. These occurrences were later transferred into a table, including the whole phrase and its collocates. Also this method has its drawbacks since only a single novel was studied. It would have been much more fruitful for the study to have further material which could have provided diachronic insights. However, the novel will give us a good image of what the literary language looked like when the work was written.

The findings will be summarized in tables in the different sections and sub-sections. After having analyzed the corpus material, the samples have been compared in order to answer the questions posed in the aim and scope section. For example, the corpus results from books and newspapers have been compared with each other, as well as with British and with American books and with the occurrences in Wuthering Heights.

5 Definitions

In this section, the definitions of ‘synonymy’ and ‘collocation’ will be discussed. There will also be a presentation of the four verbs and their grammatical meanings and definitions, as well as the period and circumstance of their appearance in the English language.

5.1 Synonymy

The word synonym originates from Greek and means ‘same name’ (Crystal 1995:164). The definition of synonymy is often difficult to grasp, due to the sometimes vague explanations given by different linguists. The fact is that many researchers do not agree with the simple
explanation that “synonyms are two or more forms with very closely related meanings, which are often, but not always, intersubstitutable in sentences” (Yule 1996:118).

Whereas this definition would be useful for most beginners of linguistic studies, Crystal argues that the definition of synonymy depends much on the individual lexemes: “[i]t is usually possible to find some nuance which separates them, or a context in which one of the lexemes can appear but the other(s) cannot” (1995:164). The problem is then that it is downright difficult to stake out what a synonym is and what it is not; the question is whether there really are any ‘real’ synonyms? However, synonyms appear because there is a need for another word that expresses the same thing as the first word, or because two languages are in contact. The appearance of synonyms also concerns the difference between speech and writing. According to Saeed, “[t]he synonyms may portray positive or negative attitudes of the speaker […] formality is another factor: many of these words are, of course, slang terms used in colloquial context” (2003:65-66).

Furthermore, it seems as if many linguists argue that there are no real synonyms in a language, and most often the term ‘near-synonym’ is used. This term will be used throughout this essay as well, since the purpose of this investigation is to find differences in usage between the near-synonymous verb pairs.

5.2 Collocations
Some words occur together more often than others. The habitual co-occurrence of lexical items is called ‘collocation’ by linguists (Crystal 1995:460). This means in a more simple way that the target word, which is also called ‘node’, occurs with other words called ‘collocations’ (Stubbs 2001:29). An investigation of collocates can show which words occur more often together with one node. For example, ‘salt’ is often mentioned together with ‘pepper’, while ‘salt’ and ‘orange’ might not be very frequent.

However, when investigating near-synonyms, the occurrence of collocations is very important, since it can be the only thing actually distinguishing the two nodes from each other in terms of grammatical definition. In this essay, I will examine the verb pairs and their collocates, and the kinds of subjects they treat in order to perhaps find thesauri or word class differences between the collocates.

5.3 Historical and grammatical background of the four verbs
The four verbs which will be investigated all have different histories, but they are also defined
grammatically in different ways. For example, *begin* and *hate* originate from Germanic languages, while *commence* and *detest* originate from Romance languages.

### 5.3.1 Begin

*Begin* is a verb that can be both intransitive and transitive. It has its roots in West Germanic languages, and the Old English form of the verb was *beginnan* or *biginnan*. Its equivalent in Gothic was *duginnan*; however, the form *beginnan* was not very common in Old English. Instead, the form *onginnan* was used. From the beginning, the verb meant to ‘cut open’ or ‘open up’, but later the meaning changed to *begin* (*The Oxford English Dictionary* 1933:768, henceforth *the OED*).

The first textual evidence of the verb was found in a text by Ælfric in approximately 1000 AD: “Noe þa began to wircenne þæt land [Now he began to work the land]” (*The OED* 1933 I: 768, my translation and italics). From the beginning, the verb appeared without prepositions, but around the year 1325, different constructions emerged: “Bygyn at þe laste þat standez lowe […] [He who stands low, begin the duty]” (*The OED* 1933 I:768, my translation and italics). Furthermore, the prepositions ‘by’ and ‘from’ were used, but by the 16th century the verb was mainly constructed with ‘with’.

### 5.3.2 Commence

Like *begin*, *commence* is both a transitive and an intransitive verb. The verb came into the English language from the Normans who spoke Old French. The verb originated in Latin, but it was borrowed from French into English; the double ‘m’ spelling in *commence* does not occur in Latin and was changed when the spelling of ‘m’ was doubled in Modern French. Originally the verb was constructed as *cumencer à* in Norman French.

The definition of *commence* is: “[t]o begin, to enter upon; esp. in legal use, to commence an action, a suit, proceedings, etc.” (*The OED* 1933 III:672). However, one should carefully note what *the OED* says about *commence* as a synonym to *begin*:

The word is precisely equivalent to the native *begin* […] *begin* is preferred in ordinary use; *commence* has more formal associations with law and procedure, combat, divine service, and ceremonial, in which it continues earlier Anglo-French use (*The OED* 1933 III:672).
Commence appears for the first time in a text from 1314: “þat figt he wil comenci [He will commence that fight]” (The OED 1933 III:672, my translation and italics). At the beginning of the 16th century, after the reform of the French language, we see commence appear with the double ‘m’ spelling: “But I commence Afore clemence, For man myne accyon [But I commence before Clemence, for mine is the acorn]” (The OED 1933 III:672, my translation and italics).

5.3.3 Hate
Hate is derived directly from the Old English form hatian, which also had its equivalent in Gothic hatan. The verb is transitive, and its definition is “[t]o hold in very strong dislike, to detest: to bear malice to. The opposite of to love” (The OED 1933 V:116). Most likely, the verb has always had this unaltered meaning. It appears already in a text from 897 in the poem of Gregory’s Past: “Doð þæm wel þe eow ær hatedon [thy, he formerly hated to ask for the bath] (The OED 1933 V:116, my translation and italics). However, during the periods of linguistic change, the spelling of hate changed much; especially during the 14th – 16th centuries, the verb was spelled with double ‘t’.

5.3.4 Detest
The verb detest comes directly from the French verb détester, and is therefore a direct loan-word. Detest was introduced into the English language during the Renaissance, when French and Latin were the greatest sources of borrowings in English (Barber 1993:181).

Detest is a transitive verb, just as hate, but it can also be constructed with an infinitive or in a subordinate clause; however, according to the OED, this construction is very rare (1933 III:272). The meaning of detest is also defined as “to feel abhorrence of; to hate or dislike intensely; to abhor, abominate” (1933 III:272). The verb appears for the first time in 1553: “I finde in Erasmus my derlyng yt he detesteth and abhorreth the errours and heresies that Tyndall plainly teacheth [In Erasmus I find my darling. He detests to eat and abhors the errors and heresies that Tyndall plainly teaches]” (The OED 1933 III:272, my translation and italics). The following section contains the analysis of the primary material.

6 Analysis
In the present section and the following sub-sections, the different aspects of the analysis of the four verbs are presented. In Section 6.1 the issue of frequency is discussed, and Section
6.2 investigates the occurrence of the verbs in different text types. In 6.3 we will compare the two verb pairs to see to what extent the verbs are near-synonyms. Section 6.4 will follow up the question of synonymy by investigating the verb pairs and their collocates.

Table 2. Total number of investigated text samples in the subcorpora, \( n \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>UKbooks, ( n ) tokens</th>
<th>USbooks, ( n ) tokens</th>
<th>Wuthering Heights, ( n ) tokens</th>
<th>OZnews, ( n ) tokens</th>
<th>The Sun, ( n ) tokens</th>
<th>The Times, ( n ) tokens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Begin</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commence</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hate</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detest</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows the total amount of tokens studied for each verb in every subcorpus included in this investigation. To avoid skewed statistics, the same number of occurrences has been used within the verb pairs; however, the number can vary between the two pairs since *commence* is the more frequent of the two Romance verbs.

### 6.1 Frequency of the verbs

In this section, the issue of the verbs and their frequency will be discussed. Tables 3 and 4 will be investigated. Since the subcorpora are not only taken from different American and British novels and several non-fiction writings/prose, but also British and Australian newspapers, prose, poetry, newspaper articles form the basis of the analysis. This is also the point of departure for the comparison which will be carried out in the following sections. In Tables 3 and 4 in sub-section 6.1 we can see the results of the corpus search and the number of tokens found in each subcorpus regarding the four verbs.

Table 3. The occurrence of the 4 verbs in *UKbooks*, *USbooks*, and *Wuthering Heights*, total number of tokens, \( n \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>UKbooks, ( n ) tokens</th>
<th>USbooks, ( n ) tokens</th>
<th>Wuthering Heights, ( n ) tokens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Begin</td>
<td>3 338</td>
<td>5 001</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commence</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hate</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 presents the results of novels and non-fiction, as well as the occurrences of the verbs in the novel *Wuthering Heights* (1847). The novel will give us a diachronic contrast to the contemporary books in the subcorpora *UKbooks* and *USbooks*. A remarkably large number of tokens of *begin* have been found. We can easily notice that the two verbs of Germanic origin are numerous, while only a handful of occurrences of the Romance verbs have been found. *USbooks* has the largest number of occurrences of *begin*.

**Table 4. The occurrence of the 4 verbs in British and Australian newspapers, total number of tokens**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>OZnews, n tokens</th>
<th>Sunnow, n tokens</th>
<th>Times, n tokens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Begin</td>
<td>1 899</td>
<td>1 447</td>
<td>2 458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commence</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hate</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detest</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 shows the results of the newspaper subcorpus search, which includes the two British newspapers *The Sun* and *The Times* as well as different Australian newspapers collected in the *OZnews* subcorpus. Also here, there is a remarkable amount of occurrences of *begin*. *Hate* does not occur as often as in *UKbooks* and *USbooks* (see Table 3), except for *Sunnow*, but on the other hand the occurrences of *commence* in *Sunnow* are very few compared to the other two newspapers.

The investigation of the verbs and their frequencies will begin with the first verb pair *begin/commence*. Looking at Table 3 and the subcorpora *UKbooks* and *USbooks*, it is noticeable that *USbooks* has a much higher number of *begin* tokens than *UKbooks*. On the other hand, *commence* is more common in *UKbooks*. Also, when we investigate *Wuthering Heights*, we see that the number of occurrences of *commence* is high, compared to the length of text which is 300 pages. If we look at Table 4, we notice immediately the difference in the number of occurrences of *commence* between the different newspapers. One should bear in mind that *The Times* is a newspaper in which we find formal language, while the contents of *The Sun* can be sometimes regarded as gossip which indicates less formal language. This is also reflected in the number of occurrences, since both Romance verbs are indeed very rare in *Sunnow*, especially *commence*, when compared with the two other newspapers. In *OZnews,*
the contents are varied with both formal and informal texts, and therefore the result is somewhere in-between *Times* and *Sunnow*. This is explained by Leech & Svartvik as follows: “[i]n English there are many differences of vocabulary between formal and informal language. Much of the vocabulary of formal English is of French, Latin, or Greek origin. In contrast, informal language is characterized by vocabulary of Anglo-Saxon origin” (2002:33).

The verb pair *hate/detest* displays patterns similar to *begin/commence*. *Detest* occurs more often in the subcorpora in Table 3, especially in *USbooks*. Also, the verb occurs most often in *Times* when compared with the other two newspaper subcorpora. It is noticeable that *Sunnow* has many occurrences of *hate*, while *OZnews* and *Times* only have about half of the number of occurrences. *Wuthering Heights* has a large number of occurrences of *hate*, which is once again remarkable considering its length.

To sum up the comparison, the two Romance verbs have very few occurrences compared to their Germanic near-synonyms. Their frequency is very low when juxtaposed to the Germanic verbs. This is especially easy to notice in the three newspaper subcorpora when compared with the three subcorpora of books and novels. This shows that the two Germanic verbs are common in all subcorpora on the whole, while the Romance verbs obviously must appear in specific contexts. These contexts will be more widely discussed in sub-section 6.2, where the usage of each verb will be investigated in different text types.

### 6.2 The verbs in different text types

This sub-section will interpret the results presented in Tables 3 and 4, and discuss the question of how the verbs are used in different texts. Are any of them for example preferred in British or American books? Despite the few occurrences of the verbs of Romance origin (see Table 3 and 4), the study gives a clear indication of how the verbs are used. The three newspaper subcorpora included in the investigation were all written in BrE and AusE and their style differs slightly.

To start with, *begin* is a verb which seems to be used in many different contexts. If we look at the novel and book samples, *begin* is used overall to express that something has or is on its way of being started.

(3) It took him about three-quarters of an hour to really *begin* concentrating (*UKbooks*).

(4) A recall, which is usually voluntary, can *begin* when the firm discovers a problem with its product, or when FDA finds the problem (*USbooks*).
As we can see, sentence (4) is oriented to a special readership and uses a specialized vocabulary, a *jargon*, which indicates that the writer or speaker belongs to a special group of people sharing a certain type of language (Yule 1985:245). However, in newspaper language, *begin* is the standard verb for expressing the beginning of an action.

(5) The Assurance United Kingdom championship *began* in Preston yesterday (*Times*).

Even though sentence (5) can be argued to belong to a jargon, we must not forget that the task of newspapers is to describe different happenings in society, even though the arrangements can be oriented towards different specific areas, in this case economy. Also in the other newspapers, *begin* is used in different kinds of discussions.

(6) Colin Montgomerie *began* his final round yesterday (*Sunnow*).

The text sample in (6) refers to golf and sport jargon. Indeed, it shows that *begin* can be used in many different sorts of texts. However, when looking at the occurrence of *begin* in *Wuthering Heights*, we can see that it is still the predominant verb being used about two thirds more often than *commence* (see Table 3). Also, the discussion is neither informal nor formal; sometimes sentences of fictitious conversation occur, as in example (7).

(7) [...] I *begin* to be secure and tranquil; and, you, restless to know us at peace, appear resolved on exciting a quarrel – quarrel with Edgar if you please, Heathcliff [...] (Brontë 1847:112).

*Begin*, however, is used in many different contexts in the novel, such as in retelling what one of the characters is saying.

(8) 'You’re a damn liar,’ *began* Earnshaw; why have I made him angry, by taking your part then, a hundred times? (Brontë 1847:310).

In the *Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*, we find the explanation that *begin* expresses “to start to be, do etc.” (2003:102). What we cannot find is any indication of whether *begin* is used more often in a certain type of text. Therefore, the conclusion to be drawn is that *begin* can be used in many various text types and genres without any significant restrictions.
Whether *begin* is used favourably in BrE or AmE can be seen in Table 3 in subsection 6.1 where the figures show a much larger number of tokens in *USbooks* (5 001 tokens in *USbooks* and 3 338 tokens in *UKbooks*). This indicates that *begin* is very frequently used in AmE and that its use is probably general given the number of occurrences.

The second verb *commence*, which is the near-synonym of *begin*, has a slightly different way of taking its place in different text types. *Commence* appears most often in *UKbooks* and *USbooks* subcorpora but also in *Times* (see Table 3 and 4). It is only in *Sunnow* that the verb is used sparsely. The reason for this is obvious when looking at the context in which the verb appears. Most of the text samples are written in formal English or belong to a special jargon, such as legal, military, or technical texts.

(9) A British offensive in Flanders would immediately *commence*, with the aim of capturing the Channel ports (*UKbooks*).

In sentence (9) the jargon is of a military sort, but the text sample is also of a formal literary style, as *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* also writes: “*commence* FORMAL” (2003:240). As we can see in the three following text samples, the context is limited to one or several specific areas, such as legal matters (10), medicine or physiology (11), and religion (12).

(10) [...] solicitors will be instructed to *commence* possession proceedings (*UKbooks*).
(11) The complications have to resolve before continuing or *commencing* hormone replacement therapy (*OZnews*).
(12) The action *commences* with a debate among the College of Cardinals as they meet to elect a pope (*UKbooks*).

The usage of *commence* today could probably be related to how the verb was used when it entered the English language. Lass tells us that “[...]there was never any dominance of French outside the specialized spheres of government, the court, and the aristocracy[...]” (1987:55). We can then see the agreement with what *the OED* tells us on the matter: “[...]commence has more formal associations with law and procedure, combat, divine service, and ceremonial, in which it continues earlier Anglo-French use” (1933:672). This would mean that the verb has never moved out of its sphere and is still used in the same context as in the very beginning.

However, one important thing appears when the samples of *UKbooks* and *USbooks* are compared. In *UKbooks*, almost all occurrences appeared in the context of the specific
areas mentioned above. But when investigating the occurrences in *USbooks*, one finds that there is no specific context connected to the use of *commence*; it seems to be used in any kind of context as in (13). One can speculate if this has to do with a specific literary style, but then this would mean that American authors have a style very different from that of British authors.

(13) And then she jumps over the table and *commences* to choke me (*USbooks*).

Indeed, most of the occurrences do not concern any text dealing with legal, military or religious jargon. The comparison shows clearly that in American books and fiction, AmE uses *commence* in any sort of text, both fiction and non-fiction prose. This feature shows that *commence* is used differently in BrE compared with AmE. This will be discussed more extensively in sub-section 6.3, where synonymy is investigated.

There is a difference in usage also in the three newspapers. The difference is most noticeable in *Times*, where most occurrences are connected to legal news or court orders.

(14) The prosecution would not have been *commenced*, or, as the case might be written off [...] (*Times*).

In *Sunnnow*, several text samples have connections to sport, which means that the usage is not as restricted in this newspaper as *the OED* mentions.

(15) This will take place in July, when pre-season training *commences* for the European Cup Winners (*Sunnnow*).

As we can see from the examples (14) and (15) above, the usage of *commence* in books and newspapers differs slightly. Especially the text samples written in BrE follow the older rules of usage, while in the subcorpora *USbooks* and *Sunnnow* we find that the employment of *commence* is much more free.

On the other hand, we find a very interesting aspect in *Wuthering Heights*. The usage does not follow the rules of *the OED*, but we find *commence* in any context in the text.

(16) [...] but perceiving that the people of the house took her part, she *commenced* capering round the room [...] (Brontë 1847:192).
This shows that when the book was written, *commence* could be used freely in fiction texts, and the usage was not as restricted as in contemporary British books. Furthermore, we notice that *commence* is used almost half as often as *begin* in the novel (see Table 3). This is far more frequent than in the different book subcorpora, which shows that the usage has changed over time. *Commence* probably has become less popular in daily prose writing and in books. Naturally, this can be a result of the author’s style, but nonetheless it gives us a hint of the change over time.

The verb *hate* is a verb which is basically used in many contexts. This is easily discovered in the text samples, because there are no particular limits as with for example *commence*. However, *hate* is naturally often connected to subjects such as feelings and this is reflected in the text in which the verb appears, but also in the text type.

(17) ‘Don’t *hate* me because I’m beautiful,’ says the model (*USbooks*).
(18) Bodylove grows from body touch, for it’s hard to *hate* a body that you love to touch (*USbooks*).

Most of the occurrences of *hate* appear in *UKbooks* and *USbooks*, but also in *Wuthering Heights*. The number of occurrences is much lower in the newspapers; this is probably due to the fact that the topics in many fiction books often deal with relationships between humans, but also with feelings in general. This is a rough generalization, but a large number of newspapers try to be formal and therefore no strong outbursts of feelings are re-told or written down. The exception is *Sunnnow*, where the number of occurrences is almost as high as in the subcorpora with book texts.

(19) Coach Richardson claimed most Scottish fans *HATE* Rangers (*Sunnnow*).
(20) No, and it isn’t Simpson ‘cause he *hates* goalies (*Sunnnow*).

Sentences (19) and (20) show that the language in *Sunnnow* can be very informal, and this ought to be the explanation of the high number of occurrences. The usage is quite different in *Times*, where *hate* is mostly used in sentences that re-render speech.

(21) Her mouth began to tremble. ‘*I hate* golf. Always did,’ she said [...] (*Times*).

This shows the difference in the treatment of subjects and language use in the two newspapers mentioned above. In *OZnews*, the text samples lie somewhere in between *Times* and *Sunnnow*, presenting both sorts of examples shown above in sentences (19) to (21).
In contrast, *Wuthering Heights* is a novel in which one of the main themes is hate between the two families in the story. Therefore, the high number of occurrences of *hate* seems natural.

(22) ‘You little liar! I *hate* you now,’ she panted, and her face grew red with passion (Brontë 1847:236).

Most of the sentences containing *hate* in *Wuthering Heights* are of the type illustrated in (21), and therefore we have to connect the usage of *hate* to the subject of the novel. *Hate* seems to have been a verb generally used at the time when the novel was written for expressing dislike of something or someone.

When it comes to the verb *detest*, the analysis was complicated by the fact that there were few occurrences. However, the few text samples which were found point to a few important differences between *detest* and *hate*.

*Detest* occurs sparsely in *UKbooks* and *USbooks*, as seen in Table 3. It is interesting to see that *USbooks* has almost twice as many occurrences as *UKbooks*, which can point to a broader usage. In most of the text samples, *detest* occurs in indirect speech and when a character is expressing strong feelings for another character or thing.

(23) I suppose I did so for Marcus’s sake, and because I so *detested* Mary Morse and Thyrza Primp (*UKbooks*).
(24) No one moaned louder than Lydia, who *detested* what she considered ‘gofer’ jobs (*USbooks*).

When looking at the newspaper subcorpora, we see that *detest* occurs rarely. *Times* has the largest amount of tokens, while *Sunnow* has the lowest (see Table 4). This can indicate that *detest* is used in more formal discussions.

(25) Brown *detests* confrontation, not because he is scared of discussions but because he does not like to hear the truth (*Times*).
(26) Tony Blair *detests* and fears these Labour councils (*Sunnow*).

This sort of text samples are typical for all occurrences of *detest*. There is no special jargon, but the context in which the verb appears is definitely more refined and political discussions are not unusual, as seen in (26). The comparison between *hate* and *detest* shows that the latter is not used overall but only to give the text a more poetic or refined touch, and therefore the
result is a higher number of occurrences in UKbooks and USbooks than in the newspaper subcorpora.

The results from Wuthering Heights presented in Table 3, give us the diachronic point of view needed. They show that detest has always been used sparsely, and that the usage of the verb should not be exaggerated.

(27) [...] and now you believe the lies your father tells, though you know he detests you both (Brontë 1847:277).

The usage of hate and detest in Brontë’s novel, but also in UKbooks and USbooks, underlines the fact that hate is a universal verb used for expressing abhorrence of someone, both at the time of when the novel was written, as well as today. Hate can be used in all sorts of texts and jargons without any specific restriction. Detest, one the other hand, is a rare verb in all sorts of texts.

To sum up, we can see that according to the results, the verbs begin and hate are used universally and in all sorts of text types. These are Germanic verbs. The Romance verbs commence and detest are more refined and they only fit into special jargons and certain styles. The results clearly show that the investigated Germanic verbs are winning more and more ‘land’ and are becoming more and more popular in the active written vocabulary.

6.3 Synonymy of the verb pairs

The question whether the two verbs in each verb pair really are near-synonyms will be discussed in this section. In what way are the verbs synonyms and how do they differ? This issue will be discussed in sub-sections 6.3.1 and 6.3.2. In sub-section 6.3.3, a smaller comparison between the verbs and their collocates will be carried out.

6.3.1 Begin/Commence

Given the results in sub-sections 6.1 and 6.2, one can say that the two verb pairs are near-synonyms despite differences in their usage. However, if we look closer, we can see that begin and commence are perhaps not as similar as we would like to think.

To begin with, the verbs are used in the same types of sentences, which is illustrated in (28) and (29).
(28) 'My dear Miss Catherine,' I began, too vividly impressed by her recent kindness [...] (Brontë 1848:243).
(29) 'Oh Ellen! You have got them,' she commenced immediately, dropping on her knees [...] (Brontë 1847:224).

However, there is one major difference in the grammatical construction of the verbs which illustrates that the choice of a synonym is not always easy. In approximately 70 per cent of the occurrences, begin is followed by an infinitive (my perception). The construction begin + to be / another verb is general.

(30) He began to teach himself to read once; and, because I laughed, he burned his books [...] (Brontë 1847:308).

This fits well into the description of the verb’s usage pattern given in the OED: “intr [...] with dative inf. with to” (The OED 1933 I:768). This is the construction mainly used.

In the other cases, begin is utilized when following a quotation or a reference to what someone has already said, as in example (28). Furthermore, in Wuthering Heights this construction has 9 occurrences out of a total number of 71 (my perception).

However, in all subcorpora, but especially in those three concerning newspapers, three constructions emerge: begin followed by an infinitive, begin followed by the –ing participle, and begin followed by a noun phrase or another non-finite clause. The peculiar aspect here is the fact that more than half of the text samples are constructed with begin + the –ing participle.

(31) The pair chatted all night and began dating a week later (Sunnow).
(32) [...] from August 18 the Casino will begin accepting real money and credit cards [...] (OZnews).
(33) By the 16th century tea masters began using them in their gardens (Times).

On the matter of this construction, the OED says: “spec. to start speaking” (1933 I:768). It means that prior to 1933 it could not have been very common to use begin followed by a verb in –ing form. There are many samples of this construction, especially in Sunnow, which can point to more informal writing, but also to the topic. The usage in UKbooks and USbooks looks largely the same as in the newspapers. However, this construction is hardly present in Wuthering Heights and points strongly towards a grammatical change over time. In the novel, begin+ the infinitive is the most common, followed by begin+ non-finite clause. There are, however, only three occurrences of begin+ –ing form.
Commence is not formed in the same way as begin. The construction of commence is both intransitive and transitive. At first sight, they are more or less equally frequent in occurrence (my perception). The first intransitive construction is the intransitive: “[t]o make a start or beginning; to come into operation” (The OED 1933 III:672).

(34) They came back Sunday night before court commenced on Monday, in Haraldson County (USbooks).
(35) Fortunately Minnie settled quickly after the treatment commenced and she did not develop any eye problem (UKbooks).

When looking briefly at the constructions, one notices that about 40 per cent of the occurrences have this construction in UKbooks and USbooks. However, in Times, Sunnow, and OZnews the frequency of the construction is about 80 per cent. The form commence + to infinitive is much more rare, about 10 per cent.

(36) But she commence to climbin’ all over him, so they gets up and leaves (UKbooks).

However, the construction of commence + to do something does not seem to be approved by grammarians: “intr. with infin. To begin to do anything [...] This construction has been objected to by stylists, who prefer begin before to” (The OED 1933 III:672). This is probably the explanation to why there is only one occurrence of this construction in OZnews and none in Times or Sunnow. The more free usage is illuminated in sentence (36) where the style is typically colloquial. The form where commence is followed by an –ing form is especially present in Wuthering Heights.

(37) [...] and I, having no weapon to raise in self-defence, commenced grappling with Joseph [...] (Brontë 1847:24).

The transitive construction is less common, i.e. approximately 20 per cent of the occurrences. Most often, the verb is followed by a noun phrase.

(38) He landed on the Gold Coast last week to commence a two-week spring training camp [...] (OZnews).

When juxtaposing these results with Wuthering Heights to trace any changes over time, the result is that the constructions look the same as in the examples (34) and (35) from the
corpora search. It does not seem as if the usage of the verb has changed much; this could be a result of its restricted occurrence in colloquial and informal speech and writing.

What one witnesses when comparing the two verbs *begin* and *commence* can be explained as follows: the two verbs meaning the same thing, but their grammatical construction and contextual features make it difficult to actually say that the verbs are ‘real’ near-synonyms. One cannot use them completely interchangeably; hence one has to have a good knowledge of English to make the correct choice and sentence construction. This is also expressed to a certain extent by Saeed, who says that “[...] true or exact synonyms are very rare. [...] the words may belong to different *registers*, those styles of language, colloquial, formal, literary, etc. that belong to different situations” (2003:65). This is indeed right when discussing *begin* and *commence*, since *commence* is deeply rooted in aristocratic and governmental language.

### 6.3.2 Hate/Detest

*Hate* and *detest* are more difficult to separate than *begin/commence*. Both verbs are used in the same type of sentences. As an illustration consider (39) and (40) below:

(39) He *hates* you – they all *hate* you – that’s the truth! (Brontë 1847:75).
(40) ’God forbid that he should try!’ answered the black villain – I *detested* him just then (Brontë 1847: 110)

The grammatical construction is similar, i.e. both *hate* and *detest* are transitive verbs and are used together with a direct object. Most often, the object is a person, as can be seen in text samples (39) and (40). For *hate*, this fits well into the description provided by the dictionary: “[t]o hold very strong dislike, to detest: to bear malice to […] to dislike greatly” (*The OED* 1933 V:116). The verb is either followed by an object, an –*ing* form of another verb as in sentence (41), or by an infinitive, as in (42) (*The Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* 2003:575).

(41) She admits to being lonely and *hates* living alone (*Times*).
(42) But I’d *hate* to give up my career (*Sunnow*).

*Hate* can also be constructed in combination with a noun, such as *hate-Christ, hate-peace*, etc., but this usage is quite uncommon in the language use of today. When looking briefly at this, not more than approximately 5 per cent of the occurrences were constructed like this.
However, despite the fact that both hate and detest are transitive, detest has only one verb construction: detest+ -ing form. “I detest having to get up when it’s dark outside” (The Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary 2003:333, my italics). What is peculiar is that there are no occurrences at all in any of the subcorpora with this construction. Instead, the bulk of the text samples are constructed as detest+direct object.

(43) [...] Gerard saw a quiet and poised professional who detested hierarchy and never put on airs (USbooks).

In (43), the object ‘hierarchy’ is a noun. The frequency of the object construction shows that perhaps the usage of detest+ -ing form is slowly declining. Instead, detest is used as a pure transitive verb. Also, in Wuthering Heights, the verb is used in this same transitive way, which means that there is no specific change over time.

When looking at the amount of occurrences in British and American books, the difference between hate and detest is much smaller than when looking at begin and commence. Commence was more frequent in UKbooks than USbooks, but with hate and detest, the situation is the opposite. Detest has the double number of occurrences in USbooks. This is perhaps peculiar since BrE usually tends to use more Romance loan-words than AmE. However, this can be a question of literary style, and the tendencies would be easier to see in a larger study.

The synonymy of hate and detest is perhaps not lying in the grammatical construction. Instead, the results in this study show that the synonymy concerns the meaning and style of the two verbs. As shown above, hate means ‘to bear malice to, to detest’. This would mean that the verbs would be more or less interchangeable, but when looking at what detest means, one notices a slight difference in meaning: “to hate someone or something very much” (The Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary 2003:333, my italics). This is also illustrated in the OED: [t]o feel abhorrence of; to hate or dislike intensely; to abhor, abominate” (1933:272, my italics). The meanings of hate and detest are then the same from the point of departure, but detest is slightly stronger than hate. Because of this, detest cannot be used as often as hate. Instead, it is proper to use detest in very formal discussions as well as in specific literary styles, as one can notice in the text samples from UKbooks and from USbooks. As a matter of fact, at the time when detest entered the English language, it was mostly used in literature. As McLaughlin discusses: [t]he literature produced for the upper social and political classes was written in French, not in English” (1970:44). Indeed, this points to a very restricted usage of detest.
To sum up, *hate* is clearly the verb which one can use in many contexts as a verb expressing dislike. *Detest* has a much more refined meaning and one should perhaps question the interchangeability, since it depends on how great the expressed dislike is. Therefore, the language user must be familiar with the differences both in meaning and in construction. However, the verbs share a perhaps greater common ground than *begin/commence* and are therefore closer as near-synonyms, as seen in examples (39) to (43).

### 6.3.3 The verb pairs and their collocates

Out of the 75 collocations investigated with each verb, the 10 most frequent ones are presented in Tables 5 and 6 below. The collocations are taken from both the subcorpora *UKbooks* and *USbooks* and will show the similarities in the usage of the collocates of the two verb pairs, since this is an important issue for the question of synonymy. Since it is also very likely that all verbs collocate with personal pronouns, the infinitive particle, the definite article, auxiliary verbs, and conjunctions, these were excluded from the investigation. The only exceptions are the personal pronouns with *hate/detest*, because these verbs are transitive and are usually used together with pronouns. The exclusion of the specific words mentioned above was done in order to make the analysis more efficient since these lexemes or words were found among the 50 most frequent collocates together with all four verbs. In the tables, an (l) stands for left-hand; no marking means that it is a right-hand collate. An (r) together with an (l) means that the collocate occurs as both left-hand and right-hand.

| Table 5. The left- and right-hand collocates of begin and commence, n tokens |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| **Begin, n tokens** | **Commence, n tokens** |
| **UKbooks** | **USbooks** | **UKbooks** | **USbooks** |
| with | 90 | with | 140 | proceedings | 3 | with | 2 |
| your | 31 | this (l) (r) | 42 | advised (l) | 1 | attack | 1 |
| again | 16 | children (l) | 40 | battle | 1 | midnight | 1 |
| all | 16 | some | 32 | to aim | 1 | demonstration (l) | 1 |
| their | 15 | words (l) | 31 | major | 1 | this | 1 |
| to see | 14 | these | 27 | operations(l)(r) | 1 | quarter(l) | 1 |
| time (l) | 13 | to use | 15 | calls (l) | 1 | uniform | 1 |
| our | 12 | age (l) | 14 | immediately(l) | 1 | secret | 1 |
| to feel | 10 | letter | 14 | religious | 1 | ready | 1 |
As we can see in Table 5, the collocates of *begin* and *commence* differ greatly, also between the two subcorpora. It is typical for *begin* to have *with* as the most common right-hand collocation, since the fixed expression ‘to *begin* with’ is generally used in all sorts of English texts. Also, there are a few possessive pronouns occurring in the span as well, we can see that most of the words describe things that we have around us in our daily life. Furthermore, the collocates are mostly nouns or verbs.

Just as in sub-section 6.2, one sees that *commence* is connected only to certain subjects; also, the collocates are connected to the fields of the court, the army; in general many adverbs ending with –ly were found. Most of the collocates are nouns. However, *commence* can also occur together with *with*, just as *begin*, although it is not common. It is then clear that the distinguishing factor between *begin* and *commence* is the context; many of the collocates of *commence* belong to a specific lexical domain/register, while the collocates of *begin* are general.

### Table 6. The left-and right-hand collocates of *hate* and *detest*, n tokens

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<thead>
<tr>
<th><em>Hate, n tokens</em></th>
<th><em>Detest, n tokens</em></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>UKbooks</strong></td>
<td><strong>USbooks</strong></td>
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<td>you</td>
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The meaning of *hate* is connected mainly to feelings which we have toward other people. Therefore, many personal pronouns are found among the collocates, since persons usually are targets for our feelings. We also find the antonym *to love*. However, when examining *detest*,...
we find personal pronouns, but also several words for things or chores: words such as *material* and *housework* appeared. One collocate of *detest* is actually *hate*, which means that they appear together, but that they have a different meaning since one verb is not enough to express the feeling which was described. *To hate* is also a collocate of *hate*, but it might be possible that this collocate points to a noun combination, which is described in sub-section 6.3.2.

It seems that *hate* mainly points to persons, while *detest* is connected to things. Since we notice that *hate* has collocates which are general words, it is also arguable that *detest* has a more specific use. Therefore, the collocates of *detest* are also slightly different, even though the two verbs are constructed in the same way. This is probably also connected to the fact that the meaning of *detest* is stronger than that of *hate*, as well as that of literary style.

### 7 Conclusion

In this essay, the two verb pairs of the near-synonyms *begin/commence* and *hate/detest* have been investigated in order to map out the differences concerning frequency, text types, synonymy, and collocates. Through the analysis, I have been able to show some interesting and distinguishing features of the verbs. The analysis was founded on corpus based information from the COBUILD DIRECT corpus, as well as from the novel *Wuthering Heights* (1847) by Emily Brontë.

The greatest difference between the verbs is the frequency of the Romance verbs, since it is so small. Instead, the results show that one generally chooses a verb of Germanic origin today. *Begin* and *hate* are used much more often than *commence* and *detest*, and the two latter are common only in certain contexts or jargons. The two Romance verbs appear mostly in formal written texts, as well as in novels and books; they are very limited in newspapers. *Begin* is a widely used verb in all contexts and all sort of texts, while *hate* is also common but can only appear when discussing feelings due to the meaning of the verb. In general, one can say that *begin* is a verb which is favoured in American novels. Both Romance verbs occur seldom in the two book subcorpora.

Furthermore, the analysis has shown crucial features for the question of near-synonymy; it is possible to say that the verbs are not as synonymous as one could think. Despite the similar grammatical meaning of the verbs, they are used in different constructions. This means that even if both verbs in the pair can be transitive and intransitive, the constructions are different. The feature of dissimilar constructions is significant with
begin/commence, while the likeness of meaning is more significant with hate/detest, where detest is stronger than hate. Also, when discussing synonymy, the examination of collocates has shown that the Germanic verbs tend to collocate with words of more general meaning, while the Romance verbs collocate with a more specific vocabulary. This is probably due to their very first usage when they entered the English language.

The question of near-synonymy of the verb pairs is very difficult. I would like to claim that as synonyms, hate and detest are closer to each other than begin and commence. This is because begin is a verb which can take many forms, but its collocates are also further apart from those of commence. Hate and detest are more like each other, both when it comes to the grammatical construction as well as their collocates. Perhaps this is an issue in all languages; Kreutz (2003:312), who has investigated French verbs, discusses the French near-synonyms ‘tenter’ and ‘essayer’ [to try]: “Nous voyons donc que tenter et essayer, en dépit d’éventuels recoupements, nous renvoient fondamentalement à deux réalités conceptuelles distinctes” [We will see, however, that we return fundamentally to two conceptually distinguished realities despite possible congruence of tenter and essay, my translation]. This means that even if the verbs are very similar, there are always factors which separate them from each other and make them behave differently; it is similar to entering two different grammatical worlds. As we have seen in the analysis, the verbs are not always interchangeable even though they have a similar meaning. However, one has to be very careful when choosing a verb so that the meaning and usage will be in accordance with what the writer really wants to express.

The hypothesis presented in Section 2, which introduced the much probable wider use of the Germanic verbs, has been confirmed. However, a more profound investigation of spoken English of the two verb pairs would have been interesting to make, as well as examining other near-synonymous verb pairs. The goal is after all to find out if there are any real synonyms at all, and what these could look like.
References

Primary sources
The COBUILD DIRECT corpus Interactive Corpus Access Tool

Secondary sources