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A comparative analysis of take part in and participate in in two corpora

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Abstract

The ultimate goal of this paper is to provide a comparative analysis of the types *take part in* and *participate in* in the COCA and BNC. It is worthwhile noting that the types *take part in* and *participate in* show the same property in the three genres of the COCA, but they show a different property in the five genres. When it comes to the Euclidean distance, it is worth mentioning that two types show deep similarities in the web genre of the COCA, whereas they show deep similarities in the fiction genre of the BNC. It is worth pointing out that *take part in* and *participate in* reveal the same pattern in the three genres of the BNC, but they reveal a different pattern in the four genres. The COCA clearly indicates that the expressions *take part in activities* and *take part in sports* are

the most preferable ones for Americans, followed by *take part in community (take part in research)*, *take part in discussions*, *take part in events (take part in talks)*, and *take part in government*, in descending order. The COCA clearly shows, on the other hand, that the expression *participate in sports* is the most preferred by Americans, followed by *participate in activities*, *participate in community*, *participate in politics*, *participate in class*, and *participate in discussions*, in that order. Finally, this paper argues that 22% of forty nine nouns are the collocations of both *take part in* and *participate in*. From this, it can be inferred that the types *take part in* and *participate in* are synonymously used, but they are slightly different from each other in their use.

Keywords: corpus, type, token, COCA, BNC, take part in, participate in

1. Introduction

As Murphy points out (2019, 2016), *take part in* something that is already going on and *join in* are synonymously used. *Take part in* and *participate in* are also interchangeably used. The main purpose of this paper is to provide a comparative analysis of the types *take part in* and *participate in* in the Corpus of Contemporary American English and the British National Corpus. To begin with, we aim to consider which type is the preferable one in America and the UK. We investigate the eight genres of the COCA and the seven genres of the BNC in order to observe similarities between the types *take part in* and *participate in*. Also, we aim to consider the collocations of the types *take part in* and *participate in* in the COCA and BNC. We observe which collocation is the preferable one for Americans. Additionally, we try to detect the subtle difference between the types *take part in* and *participate in* in terms of the software NetMiner. The organization of this paper is as follows. In section 2.1, we try to argue that the types *take part in* and *participate in* show the same property in the three genres of the COCA. We further argue that they show a different property in the five genres of the COCA. With respect to the Euclidean distance, it is interesting to point out that two types show deep similarities in the web genre, but they do not show them in the academic genre. In section 3.1, we try to show that *take part in* and *participate in* reveal the same pattern in the three genres of the BNC. We also show that they reveal a different pattern in the four genres of the BNC. When it comes to the Euclidean distance, the types *take part in* and *participate in* show deep similarities in the fiction genre, but they do not reveal them in the newspaper genre. In section 4, we maintain that *take part in activities* and *take part in sports* are the most preferable ones for Americans, followed by *take part in community (take part in research)*, *take part in discussions*, *take part in events (take part in talks)*, and *take part in government*, in descending order. We also contend that the expression *participate in sports* is the most preferred by Americans, followed by *participate in activities*, *participate in community*, *participate in politics*, *participate in class*, and *participate in discussions*, in that order. Finally, we try to argue that only eleven of forty nine nouns are the collocations of both *take part in* and *participate in*. This in turn suggests that the types *take part in* and *participate in* are interchangeably used, but they are somewhat different from each other in their use.

2. A Frequency Analysis of the types take part in and participate in in the COCA

2.1. The Genre Frequency of take part in and participate in in the COCA

In what follows, we aim to provide a genre analysis of the types *take part in* and *participate in* in the COCA. Table 1 shows the use and frequency of the types *take part in* and *participate in* in the COCA:

Table 1: Genre Frequency of take part in and participate in the COCA

Genre	All	BLOG	WEB	TV/M	SPOK	FIC	MAG	NEWS	ACAD
Take part in	3,548	515	558	133	427	168	452	635	660
Participate in	21,157	2,832	3,283	430	1,615	400	2,120	2,618	7,859

An important question that naturally arises is “Which type is the preferable one for Americans?” Table 1 clearly shows that the type *participate in* is preferred over the type *take part in* by Americans. More specifically, the overall frequency of *take part in* is 3,548 tokens, whereas that of *participate in* is 21,157 tokens. The frequency of *participate in* is almost six times higher than that of *take part in*. This in turn suggests that the type *participate in* is favored over the type *take part in* in the America.

It is worth pointing out that the type *take part in* is the most frequently used in the academic genre. More specifically, *take part in* has the highest frequency (660 tokens) and the highest proportion (18.6%) in the academic genre. Likewise, the type *participate in* is the most commonly used in the academic genre. This in turn indicates that the types *take part in* and *participate in* show the same pattern with respect to their ranking in the academic genre. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that two types show deep similarities with regard to their ranking in the academic genre. It should be noted, however, that the type *participate in* is preferred over the type *take part in* by Americans in the academic genre. This stems from the fact that the frequency of *participate in* is eleven times higher than that of *take part in*.

It is interesting to note that the type *take part in* is the second most preferred one in the newspaper genre, whereas the type *participate in* is the second most preferred one in the web genre. This in turn shows that two types reveal a different property with respect to their ranking in the newspaper and web genres. When it comes to the newspaper genre, the type *participate in* is preferable to the type *take part in*. With respect to the web genre, it is worth noting that the type *participate in* is favored over the type *take part in*.

It is worthwhile pointing out that the type *take part in* is the third most preferred one in the web genre, whereas the type *participate in* is the third most preferred one in the blog genre. That is to say, two types show a different characteristic with respect to their ranking in the web and blog genres. It must be pointed out that *participate in* is preferred over *take part in* by American bloggers. This comes from the fact that the frequency of *participate in* is five times higher than that of *take part in* in the blog genre.

It should be noted that the type *take part in* is the fourth most preferred one in the blog genre, whereas the type *participate*

in is the fourth most preferred one in the newspaper genre. Again, two types reveal a different property with respect to their ranking in the blog and newspaper genres. It should be pointed out that the type *participate in* is favored over the type *take part in* in the newspaper genre. This in turn indicates that American journalists prefer using *participate in* to using *take part in*. This stems from the fact that the frequency of *participate in* is four times higher than that of *take part in* in the newspaper genre.

It is significant to note that the types *take part in* and *participate in* are the fifth most preferred ones in the magazine genre. This indicates that two types show the same pattern in the magazine genre. This in turn shows that they are closely related to each other, hence very close similarities between them. It must be noted, however, that the type *participate in* is preferable to the type *take part in* in the magazine genre. More specifically, the frequency of *take part in* in the magazine genre is 452 tokens, whereas that of *participate in* is 2,120 tokens. The frequency of *participate in* is four times higher than that of *take part in*.

It is noteworthy that the types *take part in* and *participate in* are the sixth most preferred ones in the spoken genre. This indicates that two types show the same property with respect to their ranking in the spoken genre, hence very close similarities between them. It should be pointed out, however, that the frequency of *participate in* is three times higher than that of *take part in* in the spoken genre. This in turn implies that Americans prefer using *participate in* to using *take part in* in daily conversation.

It is interesting to note that the type *take part in* ranks seventh in the fiction genre, whereas the type *participate in* ranks seventh in the TV/movie genre. Interestingly, two types do not reveal the same pattern, thus implying that they do not show very close similarities. It is interesting to point out that the type *participate in* is favored over the type *take part in* in the fiction genre. The frequency of *participate in* is two times higher than that of *take part in* in the fiction genre. This may imply that American writers prefer using *participate in* to using *take part in* in their fictions. It is worth mentioning that the type *participate in* is preferable to the type *take part in* in the TV/movie genre. The frequency of *take part in* in the TV/movie genre is 133 tokens, whereas that of *participate in* is 430 tokens. This in turn suggests that American celebs prefer using *participate in* to using *take part in*.

It would be worthwhile mentioning that the type *take part in* has the lowest frequency (133 tokens) in the TV/movie genre, whereas the type *participate in* has the lowest frequency (400 tokens) in the fiction genre. Again, these types do not show the same pattern with respect to their ranking, thus implying that they do not reveal very close similarities. To sum up, two types show the same pattern in the academic and spoken genres and the magazine genre, whereas they show a different pattern in the blog, web, TV/movie, newspaper, and fiction genres. This in turn indicates that *take part in* and *participate in* are interchangeably used, but they are somewhat different from each other in their use.

Now attention is paid to the use of *take part in* and *participate in* in the eight genres of the COCA:

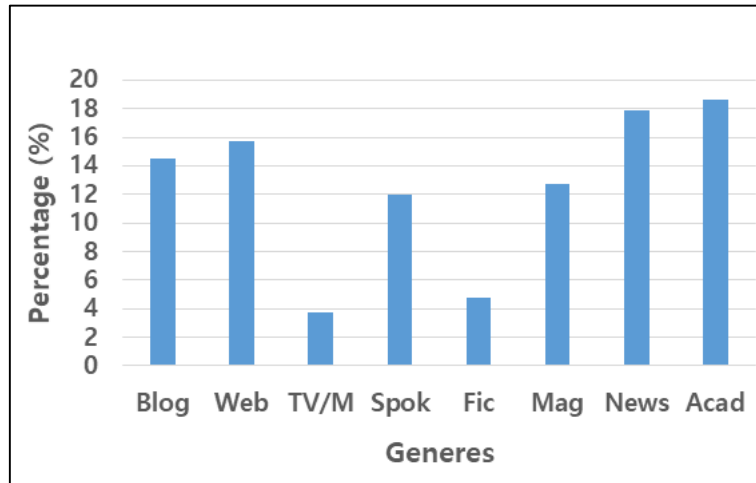


Fig 1: Percentage of the use of take part in in the COCA

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

influenced by the type *participate in*, followed by the web genre, the blog genre, the newspaper genre, the magazine genre, the spoken genre, the TV/movie genre, and the fiction genre, in that order.

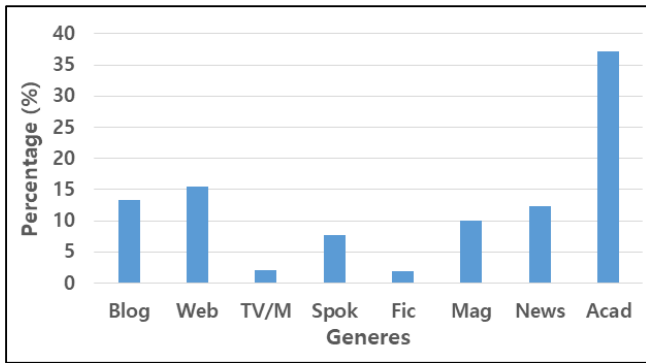


Fig 2: Percentage of the use of participate in in the COCA

It is worth pointing out that the academic genre is the most

2.2. The Euclidean distance

In this section, we consider how much two types are related to each other in terms of the Euclidean distance. Here the Euclidean distance provides the index about how much two types show similarities in the eight genres of the COCA. We adopt the following formula:

1. The Euclidean distance

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

Note that the more the figure of the Euclidean distance is low, the more two types show similarities.

Table 2: Euclidean distance between the types take part in and participate in in the COCA

Genre	Blog	Web	TV/M	Spok	Fic	Mag	News	Acad
Percentage of take part in	14.51	15.72	3.74	12.03	4.73	12.73	17.89	18.60
Percentage of participate in	13.38	15.51	2.03	7.63	1.89	10.02	12.37	37.14
Euclidean distance	1.13	0.21	1.71	4.4	2.84	2.71	5.52	18.54

More interestingly, *take part in* is the furthest type from *participate in* in the academic genre. On the other hand, *take part in* is the nearest type to *participate in* in the web genre. The figure of the Euclidean distance in the web genre is 0.21, which is the lowest. This in turn implies that these types show deep similarities. Interestingly, the figure of the Euclidean distance in the blog genre is 1.13, which is the second lowest. This in turn suggests that these two types reveal very close similarities. It is worth pointing out that the figure of the Euclidean distance in the newspaper genre is 5.52, which is the second highest. This indicates that two types do not show

very close similarities. We thus conclude that two types show deep similarities in the web genre, but they do not show them in the academic genre.

3. A Frequency Analysis of the types take part in and participate in in the BNC

3.1. The Genre Frequency of take part in and participate in in the BNC

In this section, we aim to provide a genre analysis of *take part in* and *participate in* in the BNC. Table 3 shows the frequency of two types in the BNC:

Table 3: Genre Frequency of take part in and participate in the BNC

Genre	All	Spoken	Fiction	Magazine	Newspaper	Non-Acad	Acad	Misc
Take part in	1,047	57	43	89	288	195	110	265
Participate in	1,141	27	17	32	49	369	324	323

An important question is “Which type is the preferable one for the British?” Table 3 clearly indicates that the frequency of *participate in* is higher than that of *take part in*. This in turn implies that *participate in* is preferred over *take part in* by the British. It is thus reasonable to hypothesize that Americans and the British prefer using the type *participate in* to using the type *take part in*.

Noteworthy is that the type *take part in* is the most frequently used in the newspaper genre, whereas the type *participate in* is the most widely used in the non-academic genre. This indicates that two types do not show the same pattern with respect to their ranking in the newspaper genre and the non-academic genre. It should be noted that *take part in* is preferable to *participate in* in the newspaper genre. The frequency of *take part in* is five times higher than that of *participate in* in the newspaper genre. This in turn indicates that British journalists prefer using *take part in* to using *participate in*. It is worth mentioning that the type *participate in* is preferred over the type *take part in* by the British in the non-academic genre. This comes from the fact that the frequency of *participate in* is higher than that of *take part in* in the non-academic genre.

It is worth pointing out that the type *take part in* is the second most preferred one in the misc genre, whereas the type *participate in* is the second most preferred one in the academic genre. Again, the type *take part in* does not show the same property as the type *participate in* with respect to their ranking. It is interesting to point out that the type *participate in* is favored over the type *take part in* in the misc genre. It is worth noting, on the other hand, that the type *participate in* is preferable to the type *take part in* in the academic genre. The frequency of *participate in* is almost three times higher than that of *take part in* in the academic genre.

It is worthwhile noting that *take part in* is the third most preferred one in the non-academic genre, whereas *participate in* is the third most preferred one in the misc genre. Again, the types *take part in* and *participate in* do not reveal the same pattern with respect to their ranking in the non-academic and misc genres. This in turn implies that two types do not show deep similarities.

It is interesting to note that *take part in* is the fourth most preferred one in the academic genre, whereas *participate in* is the fourth most preferred one in the newspaper genre. Again, the type *take part in* does not show the same pattern as the type *participate in* with respect to its ranking in the academic genre and the newspaper genre. This in turn suggests that two types do not reveal deep similarities. We take this as indicating that two types are interchangeably used, but they are slightly different from each other in their use.

It should be pointed out that the types *take part in* and *participate in* are the fifth most preferred ones in the magazine genre. Interestingly, two types show the same property with respect to their ranking in the magazine genre. This in turn implies that they show very close similarities in the magazine genre. It should be noted, however, that *take part in* is preferable to *participate in* in the magazine genre. The frequency of *take part in* is two times higher than that of *participate in*.

It is significant to note that the types *take part in* and *participate in* are the sixth most preferred ones in the spoken genre. Again, the types *take part in* and *participate in* show

the same characteristic with respect to their ranking in the spoken genre. This in turn shows that two types reveal deep similarities in the spoken genre. It should be pointed out, however, that *take part in* is favored over *participate in* in the spoken genre. This stems from the fact that the frequency of *take part in* is two times higher than that of *participate in*. It is thus reasonable to assume that the British prefer using *take part in* to using *participate in* in daily conversation.

It would be worthwhile mentioning that the types *take part in* and *participate in* are the seventh most preferred ones in the fiction genre. Again, these two types show the same pattern with respect to their ranking in the fiction genre. They show very close similarities with respect to their ranking in the fiction genre. It must be noted, however, that *take part in* is favored over *participate in* in the fiction genre. The frequency of *take part in* is two times higher than that of *participate in*. To sum up, *take part in* and *participate in* show the same pattern in the fiction and magazine genres and the spoken genre, whereas they show a different pattern in the non-academic, academic, and misc genres and the newspaper genre. This in turn implies that two types are interchangeably used, but they are slightly different from each other in their use.

Now attention is paid to the use of *take part in* and *participate in* in the seven genres of the BNC:

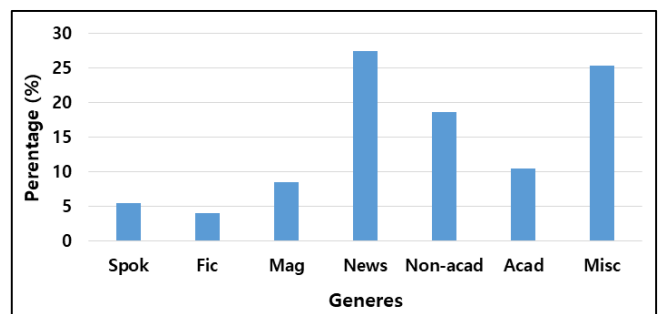


Fig 3: Percentage of the use of take part in in the BNC

It is interesting to point out that the newspaper genre is the most influenced by the type *take part in*, followed by the misc genre, the non-academic genre, the academic genre, the magazine genre, the spoken genre, and the fiction genre, in descending order.

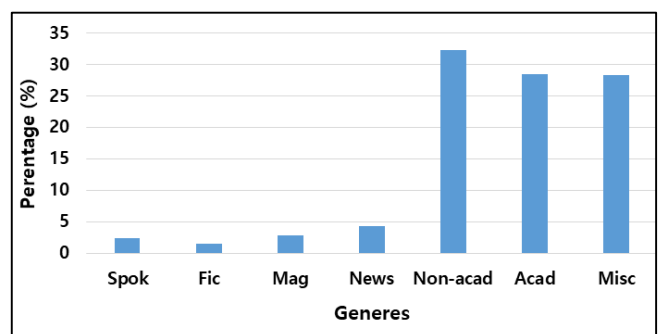


Fig 4: Percentage of the use of participate in in the BNC

It is interesting to note that the non-academic genre is the most influenced by the type *participate in*, followed by the academic genre, the misc genre, the newspaper genre, the magazine genre, the spoken genre, and the fiction genre, in that order.

3.2. The Euclidean distance

In this section, we observe the Euclidean distance between

the types *take part in* and *participate in*:

Table 4: Euclidean distance between the types *take part in* and *participate in* in the BNC

Genre	Spok	Fic	Mag	News	Non-acad	Acad	Misc
Percentage of <i>take part in</i>	5.44	4.1	8.5	27.5	18.62	10.5	25.31
Percentage of <i>participate in</i>	2.36	1.48	2.8	4.29	32.34	28.39	28.3
Euclidean distance	3.08	2.62	5.7	23.21	13.72	17.89	2.99

Note that the more the figure of the Euclidean distance is low, the more there are similarities between the types *take part in* and *participate in*. It is worth pointing out that *take part in* is the furthest type from *participate in* in the newspaper genre. On the other hand, *take part in* is the nearest type to *participate in* in the fiction genre. More interestingly, the Euclidean distance between *take part in* and *participate in* in the fiction genre is 2.62, which is the lowest. This in turn suggests that two types in the fiction genre show deep similarities. On the other hand, with respect to the misc genre, it is interesting to point out that the Euclidean distance between two types is 2.99, which is the second lowest. This in turn implies that two types reveal very close similarities in the misc genre. We thus conclude that the types *take part in* and *participate in* show deep similarities in the fiction genre, but they do not reveal them in the newspaper genre.

4. A Collocation Analysis of the types *take part in* and *participate in* in the COCA

In this section, we aim to consider the collocations of *take place* and *participate in* in the COCA. Table 5 shows the collocation of *take part in* in the top 30:

Table 5: Collocation of *take part in* in the COCA

Number	Collocation of <i>take part in</i>	Frequency
1	Take part in activities	12
2	Take part in sports	12
3	Take part in community	9
4	Take part in research	9
5	Take part in discussions	8
6	Take part in events	6
7	Take part in talks	6
8	Take part in government	5
9	Take part in negotiations	5
10	Take part in peace	5
11	Take part in programs	5
12	Take part in class	4
13	Take part in demonstrations	4
14	Take part in mediation	4
15	Take part in classes	3
16	Take part in competitions	3
17	Take part in democracy	3
18	Take part in conversations	3
19	Take part in combat	3
20	Take part in abortions	3
21	Take part in operations	3
22	Take part in politics	3
23	Take part in practice	3
24	Take part in surveys	3
25	Take part in things	3
26	Take part in trials	3
27	Take part in war	3
28	Take part in church	2
29	Take part in actions	2
30	Take part in archery	2

An important question is “Which collocation is the most preferred by Americans?” Table 5 clearly shows that the expressions *take part activities* and *take part in sports* are the most frequently used in America. This in turn suggests that these expressions are the most preferable ones for Americans. As alluded to in Table 5, *take part in activities* and *take part in sports* are the most preferred by Americans, followed by *take part in community (take part in research)*, *take part in discussions*, *take part in events (take part in talks)*, and *take part in government*, in descending order. It is interesting to point out that the everyday expression *take part in discussions* is the fifth most preferred one in America. It is also interesting to note that the expression *take part in programs* is the eighth most preferred one in America. More interestingly, the everyday expression *take part in class* ranks twelfth in the COCA.

Now let us turn our attention to the collocation of *participate in* in the COCA. Table 6 shows the collocation of *participate in* in the top 30:

Table 6: Collocation of *participate in* in the COCA

Number	Collocation of <i>participate in</i>	Frequency
1	Participate in sports	134
2	Participate in activities	117
3	Participate in community	71
4	Participate in politics	64
5	Participate in class	58
6	Participate in discussions	55
7	Participate in research	53
8	Participate in school	53
9	Participate in government	47
10	Participate in title	39
11	Participate in decisions	37
12	Participate in sport	36
13	Participate in society	35
14	Participate in music	34
15	Participate in group	32
16	Participate in programs	28
17	Participate in athletics	23
18	Participate in team	23
19	Participate in elections	22
20	Participate in decision	21
21	Participate in events	20
22	Participate in discussion	19
23	Participate in meetings	19
24	Participate in training	19
25	Participate in classroom	18
26	Participate in practice	16
27	Participate in state	16
28	Participate in college	15
29	Participate in debates	15
30	Participate in life	15

An immediate question is “Which collocation is the most preferred by Americans?” Table 6 clearly shows that the

expression *participate in sports* is the most frequently used. This in turn implies that *participate in sports* is the most preferable one for Americans. As illustrated in Table 6, the expression *participate in sports* is the most preferred by Americans, followed by *participate in activities*, *participate in community*, *participate in politics*, *participate in class*, and *participate in discussions*, in that order. It is interesting to point out that the expressions *participate in sports*, *participate in activities*, and *take part in sports* are the most commonly used in America. On the other hand, the expressions *participate in community* and *take part in community* are the third most preferred ones in America. More interestingly, the expression *participate in research* is the seventh most preferred one in America, whereas the expression *take part in research* is the third most preferred one. It is worth pointing out that *participate in government* is the ninth most preferred one in America, whereas *take part in government* is the eighth most preferred one. Now let us turn to the visualization of the collocations of *take part in* and *participate in*:

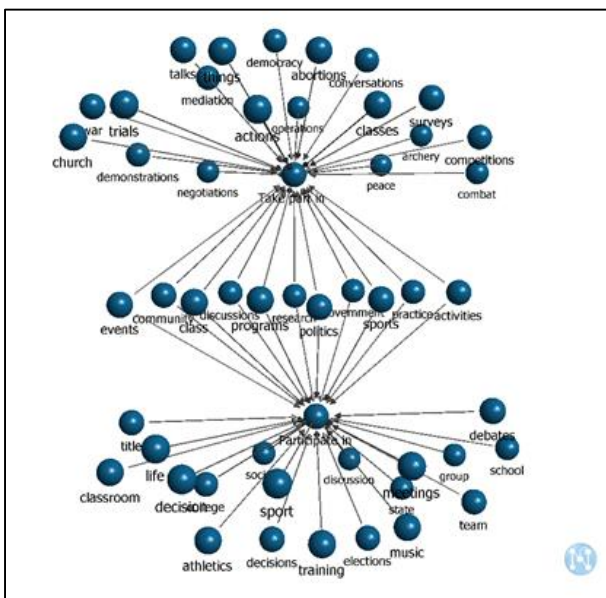


Fig 5: Visualization of the collocations of *take part in* and *participate in*

As exemplified in Figure 5, particular nouns are linked to *take part in* and *participate in*, respectively. More specifically, thirty nouns are linked to *take part in* and thirty nouns are linked to *participate in*. More interestingly, eleven of forty nine nouns are linked to both *take part in* and *participate in*. This in turn suggests that only 22% of the total nouns are linked to both *take part in* and *participate in*. More specifically, the nouns *events*, *community*, *discussions*, *programs*, *research*, *politics*, *government*, *sports*, *practice*, *class*, and *activities* are linked to both *take part in* and *participate in*. From all of this, it can be inferred that the types *take part in* and *participate in* are interchangeably used, but they are slightly different from each other in their use.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, we have provided a comparative analysis of the types *take part in* and *participate in* in the COCA and BNC. In section 2.1, we have argued that the types *take part in* and *participate in* show the same pattern in the academic and spoken genres and the magazine genre. We have further

argued that they show a different pattern in the blog, web, TV/movie, newspaper, and fiction genres. We have maintained that in the COCA, two types show deep similarities in the web genre, but they do not show them in the academic genre. In section 3.1, we have shown that *take part in* and *participate in* reveal the same pattern in the fiction and magazine genres and the spoken genre. We have also shown that they reveal a different pattern in the non-academic, academic, and misc genres and the newspaper genre. In section 3.2, we have contended that the types *take part in* and *participate in* show deep similarities in the fiction genre, but they do not reveal them in the newspaper genre. In section 4, we have shown that *take part in activities* and *take part in sports* are the most preferred by Americans, followed by *take part in community* (*take part in research*), *take part in discussions*, *take part in events* (*take part in talks*), and *take part in government*, in descending order. We have also shown that the expression *participate in sports* is the most preferred by Americans, followed by *participate in activities*, *participate in community*, *participate in politics*, *participate in class*, and *participate in discussions*, in that order. Finally, we have argued that only 22% of forty nine nouns are the collocations of both *take part in* and *participate in*. This in turn implies that the types *take part in* and *participate in* are interchangeably used, but they are slightly different from each other in their use.

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