

Analysis of 50 key words from the BEC: an explanation and example

Fifty key words from the BEC were selected and subjected to various forms of analysis. An example of one of the fifty words - *business* - is presented here. In the example, several different kinds of analysis are shown:

- a) *Keyness* - how key the key word is.
- b) *Semantic prosody* - what lexical/semantic sets the word typically collocates with - collocating groups are shown both to the left of the main word and to the right.
- c) *3-word clusters* - typical 3-word clusters the word is found in or near.
- d) *Macro-generic distribution* - the range of use of the word across the macro-genres of the BEC shown using the *Dispersion Plot* function of WordSmith.
- e) *Colligation* - how the word typically behaves grammatically, and what grammatical patterning/meaning correlations there are, using the COBUILD (1995) dictionary as reference.
- f) *Associates* - key words that co-occur with the main word in a number of texts to a statistically significant level.
- g) *Comments* - any comments to be made on the above analyses.

EXAMPLE WORD: 'BUSINESS'

a) Keyness

The lemma 'business' was the most significant key word in the BEC corpus.

N	Word	bec freq.	bec lst %	bnc freq.	bnc.lst %	Keyness	P
1	BUSINESS	2,837	0.28	542	0.03	3,557.8	0.000000

b) Semantic Prosody

Left: A total of 7 groups were identified. However, the positive and negative groups are small and are shown here to contrast positive and negative usage with the word.

semantic prosody	frequency/ 2,551& %	example
where business takes place (place)	56 - 2.19%	<i>Indian business</i> <i>UK business</i>
where business takes place (macro-level demarcation)	123 - 4.82%	<i>international</i> <i>world-wide business</i> <i>overseas business</i>
line of business	222 - 9.86%	<i>telecoms business</i> <i>hairdressing business</i> <i>contract hire business</i>
nature of business (characteristics)	124 - 4.86%	<i>core business</i> <i>family business</i> <i>daily business</i>
money/size of business	67 - 2.62%	<i>a high-yield business</i>

		<i>big business</i> <i>small business</i>
positive adjectives	50- 1.96%	<i>successful business</i> <i>sound business</i> <i>strong business</i>
negative adjectives	7 - 0.27%	<i>unviable business</i> <i>cut-throat business</i> <i>boring business</i>

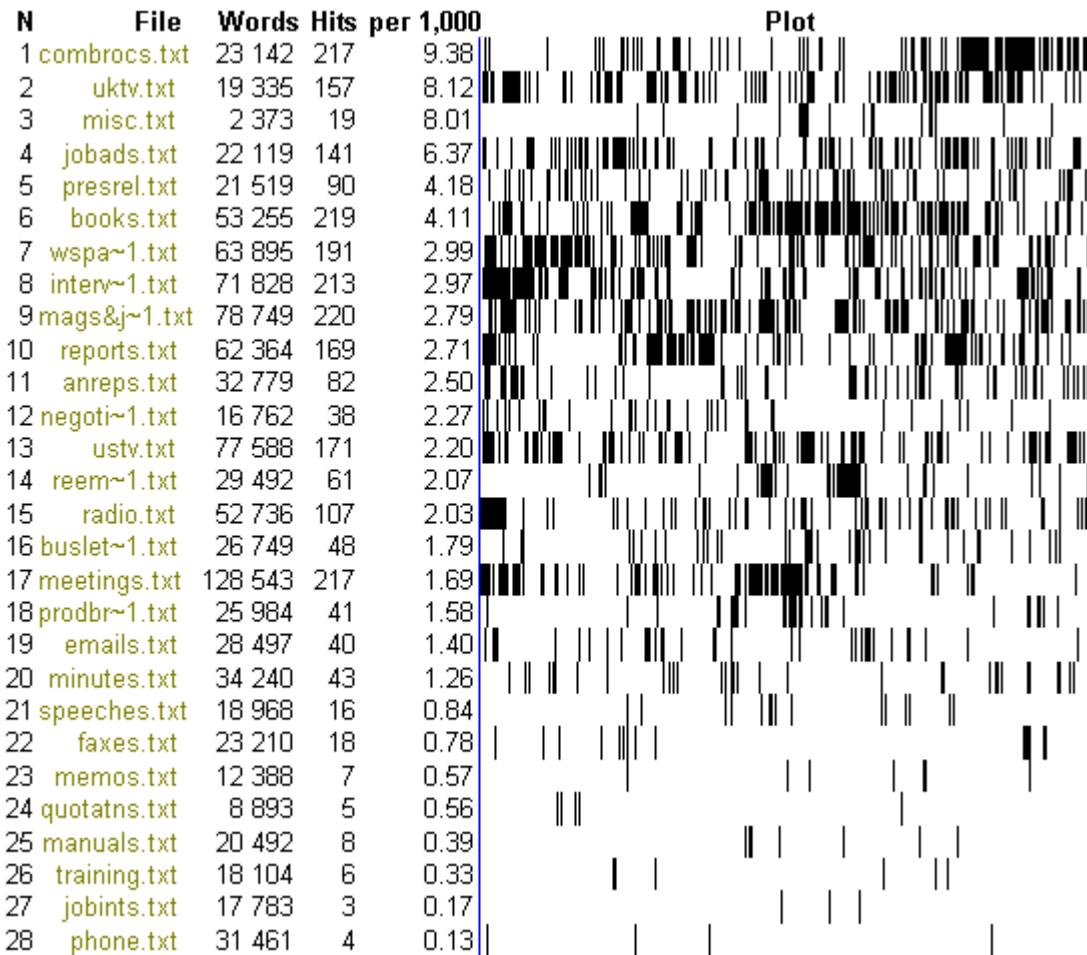
Right: Four groups identified.

semantic prosody	frequency/ 2,551& %	example
people and groups of people	145 - 5.68%	business <i>agents</i> business <i>analyst</i> business <i>controller</i>
business activities	135 - 5.29 %	business <i>administration</i> business <i>analysis</i> business <i>development</i>
institutions, organisations and companies	129 - 5.05%	business <i>conglomerates</i> business <i>school</i> the business <i>press</i>
macro-level demarcation	89 - 3.48%	business <i>area</i> business <i>sector</i> business <i>segment</i>

c) Three-word clusters

N	cluster	Freq.
1	of the business	85
2	in the business	63
3	to the business	31
4	the business and	29
5	the business is	29
6	the business English	24
7	for the business	20
8	business and the	19
9	in international business	18
10	the institute for	18
11	a business plan	17
12	for global business	17
13	institute for global	17
14	of business administration	17
15	the business of	16
16	the business plan	14

d) Macro-generic distribution



* Each file represents one macro-genre found in the BEC

This dispersion plot shows:

File: The rank frequency order of macro-genres where *business* appeared (thus, for example, *business* was most frequent in Company Brochures - Combrocs.txt, and second most frequent in UK television programmes - uktv.txt).

Words: The number of words in each macro-genre - one file for each macro-genre.

Hits per 1,000: How many hits of the word *business* per 1,000 words there were in each macro-genre/file

Plot: Each time the word *business* occurs in a macro-genre/file it is marked by a small black line, thus showing its distribution of occurrence over all the texts in each macro-genre. For example, in company brochures we see heavy usage at the right-hand side, indicating that *business* occurred in these texts very often, and less in others, creating an uneven distribution across the *company brochures* macro-genre.

e) Colligation

COBUILD Sense 1 (work relating to the buying and selling of goods)

1,351 instances 52.95% of sample

Patterns: Uncount noun

we put together a business plan

... greatly affected the way they did business

carried out in cooperation with our business partners

COBUILD Sense 2 (how many products/services a company is able to sell)

163 instances 6.38% of sample

Patterns: Uncount noun

business fell by a third

COBUILD Sense 3 (a company/firm)

523 instances 20.5% of sample

Patterns: Count noun

We go into a business and try and rescue it

You must think of the pros and cons of starting a business from scratch

COBUILD Sense 4 (what you do for your job and not for pleasure)

8 instances 0.31% of sample

Patterns: Uncount noun

Travel agencies have special departments dealing with business travel

a business dinner to end all business dinners

COBUILD Sense 5 (line of business)

436 instances 17.09% of sample

Patterns: Singular noun

telecoms business, hairdressing business, contract hire business, my line of business

COBUILD Sense 7 (important matters you have to deal with)

3 instances 0.11% of sample

Patterns: Uncount noun

conduct the following business, any other business?

COBUILD Sense 8 (my own business - no-one else's concern)

2 instances 0.07% of sample

Patterns: Uncount noun

Its not my business to manage a business

COBUILD Sense 9 (an event, situation or activity)

4 instances 0.15% of sample

Patterns: Singular noun

with the forty pound business

the business of lists

the business of making strategic choices

COBUILD Sense 10 (an unpleasant or costly task)

3 instances 0.11% of sample

Patterns: Singular noun

Ill health - a costly business

it's always been a dangerous business

COBUILD Sense 11 (big business/show business)

big business: 8 instances 0.31% of sample

show business: 1 instance 0.03% of sample

COBUILD Sense 12 (do business - companies/people that do business with each other)

‘Business’ in the PMC occurs 157 times (15.49%) of sample.

... *to show that we mean business.*

... *a climate for creativity in business.*

ii) possessive pronoun + business:

163 instances 6.38% of sample

In the PMC there were 68 instances 6.81% of sample

my own business, your business

iii) definite article *the* + business

485 instances 19.01% of sample

There are links between definite article usage and COBUILD senses 3 & 5:

The minimum target for the business to survive is £250 million (sense 3)

How did you come into the business then originally, the car business? (sense 5)

iv) indefinite article *a* + business

127 instances 4.97% of sample

There are links between indefinite article usage and COBUILD Sense 3:

The skills that are needed to start a business

Points iii) and iv) above are true except when ‘business’ is used as part of a noun group:

the business community, the business mix for 1993 was 65.5% personal

a business magazine

v) noun group + of + business (these refer to process/activity/people/place/amount related to business)

150 instances 5.88% of sample

principle place of business, major branch of business, close of business

vi) do + business

41 instances 1.6% of sample

This compares to 59 instances in the PMC - 5.81% of sample.

f) Associates

N	WORD	NO. OF FILES	AS %
1	BUSINESS	109	100.00
2	COMPANY	27	24.77
3	WE	21	19.27
4	CUSTOMER	19	17.43
5	MANAGEMENT	19	17.43
6	BUSINESSES	18	16.51