

## 新媒體時代下的英語習得與文化衝擊： CNN 新聞文章分析新冠病毒流行病

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### 摘要

Covid-19 是 21 世紀最危險的病毒，它已經在全球造成一億八千五佰萬人染疫，超過四百萬人死亡，其中亦包括美國 606,000 死亡案例，儘管全世界都在與該病毒奮戰中，但死亡人數仍在持續攀升。自義大利政府於 2020 年 3 月實行全國封鎖以來，全球約有一半人口處於隔離狀態，儘管最近開發了疫苗，但這場戰鬥尚未結束。有鑑於公共衛生危機的嚴重性，現在不僅是學習相關英語的適當時機，更是理解在此情況下文化衝擊的關鍵時機。這項研究的目的是指導學生習得與此流行病相關的真實語言，並深入理解影響疾病及其治療的文化因素。此研究使用多功能語料庫 AntConc 軟體，分析自 2020 年 2 月 1 日到 2021 年 3 月 10 日的 300 篇 CNN 新聞文章，不僅獲得了英語高頻單字和搭配詞組，更可同時幫助學習者理解此重大事件，其中也突顯了潛在文化衝擊的重要因素。這項研究顯示，在新媒體時代，語言學習和全球文化應融入課堂教學中，以期英語課程呈現真實、生動活潑的面貌。此外，藉 Covid-19 新聞語料的使用幫助學生了解此突發公共衛生事件對全球衝擊的嚴重性。

關鍵詞：新冠病毒，Covid-19 流行病，高頻詞，搭配詞，語言學習

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# English Acquisition and Cultural Shock in the New Media Era: An Analysis of CNN Coronavirus Pandemic News

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## Abstract

Covid-19 is the most dangerous virus in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It has already infected 185 million people and killed more than 4 million people worldwide, including 606,000 deaths in the USA. Despite worldwide effort to battle the virus, the number of deaths is still increasing. Since the government of Italy imposed a national lockdown in March 2020, about half of the world's population has been under quarantine. Despite recent developments of vaccines, the battle is far from over. Given the seriousness of this public health crisis, this is the proper time to learn not only the related English-language terms but also understand the cultural shock of this stressful situation. The purposes of the study are to guide students to learn the authentic language associated with the pandemic and to develop a better understanding of the cultural factors influencing the discussion of the disease and its treatment. The results of the study using a multi-purpose corpus analysis program, *AntConc*, to analyze 300 CNN news articles from February 1, 2020, to March 10, 2021, capture not only high-frequency English words and collocation patterns, which can help learners comprehend the major event, but also highlight the salient factors of the underlying cultural shock. This study suggests that in the new media era, language learning and global culture should be integrated into classroom instruction to make English curriculum authentic, lively, and vivid. Furthermore, information about Covid-19 language patterns use will help students understand the seriousness of this public health emergency.

**Keywords:** coronavirus, Covid-19, pandemic, high-frequency words, collocation patterns, language learning

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

With the rapid development of high-technology equipment, Internet infrastructure, and new media, the language education environment has been constantly changing. Most English teachers, from elementary schools to universities, are incorporating internet and digital media into their classes to make teaching and learning more attractive and authentic in order to arouse learners' motivation, interest, and even autonomous learning. Authentic materials have long been used in foreign language learning and teaching. Henry Sweet (1899) is considered one of the first advocates. Since then, many teaching methods (Audio-Lingual Method, Communicative Language Teaching, Task-based Language Teaching) and researchers (Breen, 1985; Beresova, 2014; Brown, 2007; Chaves, 1998; Chomsky, 2006; Ellis & Skehan, 2020; Gilmore, 2004; Harmer, 1991; Howatt, 1984; Mishan, 2005; Nation, 2009; Richards, 2006) have advocated this concept to guide learners to understand both the language and the contents related to the real world. One of the main points, which is often overlooked, is the content of the articles. Articles about the Covid-19 pandemic are a good choice due to the impact on people's daily lives.

Authentic teaching materials help students to acquire English through reading real-world media, and there is nothing more authentic these days than news articles about Covid-19, the most dangerous virus in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Despite worldwide effort to battle the virus, since last February, 2020 it has infected 185 million people and killed more than 4 million people worldwide, including 606,000 deaths in the USA and 736 fatalities in Taiwan. It has not only infected and killed people, which has irrevocably changed people's lifestyles, but it has also greatly influenced various industries and impacted the world economy. Therefore, it is an authentic topic that will arouse learners' awareness of the terrifying microorganisms in the world and help them learn about prevention. This can be accomplished through reading authentic news articles and learning associated high-frequency core content words and related collocation patterns.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Authentic materials are different from textbooks. Authentic media refers to items that have not been designed or adapted for use in English language classrooms, such as magazines, newspapers, and video clips, which report the real-world events for the public, not media designed for language learning. Many researchers (Adams, 1995; Beresova, 2014; and Mishan, 2005) advocated authentic materials because they can

enhance both language acquisition and cultural awareness, which should be integrated as one. In comparison, textbooks are created and edited expressly for students to learn selected curriculum content based on classroom learning and teaching (Gilmore, 2004).

English vocabulary learning has long been a basic and main factor in EFL/ESL language teaching and learning (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010; Krashen 2004; Nation, 2001; Nunan, 2015; Schmitt, 2010). Nation (2001) and Schmitt (2010) have emphasized for the importance of high-frequency core content words. Brown & Abeywickrama, (2010) suggested that words should not be learned in isolation because they have lexical semantic relations. Therefore, this paper focuses on analyzing high-frequency core content words and their collocation patterns. There are two types of formulaic collocation patterns (N. + N. and Adj. + N.) will be presented in this paper, because they are two of the most useful and important collocation patterns (Chomsky, 1993; Hoey, 2005; Nation, 2010). Many researchers have suggested that corpus analysis can enhance learning of systematic vocabulary and collocation patterns (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010; Hoey, 2004a; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2016; Nation, 2016; Nunan, 2015; Schmitt, 2010). With this overarching educational and technology environment in mind, issues such as high-frequency core content words and lexical patterns are even more important than before.

### **Three Research Questions**

The purposes of the study are to guide students to learn the authentic language associated with the pandemic and to develop a better understanding of the cultural factors behind the Covid-19 epidemic. The research project reported in this article started with three questions:

1. What are the 30 high-frequency core words in the 300 *CNN* news articles?
2. What are the lexical collocation patterns based on those high-frequency core words which capture the seriousness of the pandemic?
3. After finding the 30 high-frequency core words and related collocation patterns, can learners retrace and summarize the news stories and comprehend the salient factors of the underlying cultural shock and serious impacts of this public health emergency from the pandemic?

## **III. METHODOLOGY**

Corpora have been widely used in recent research to collect and analyze data

with high-speed and efficiency. Given the increasing frequency of corpus studies, analysis of small collections of written texts, especially data sets targeting a particular author, genre, or body of writing on a particular subject, it is increasingly acceptable to use small text files for research projects. Small data sets can be analyzed with free multi-purpose computer programs, such as *AntConc*, designed by Laurence (2004). In this study, *AntConc* was used to analyze 300 *CNN* news articles and explore the high-frequency core content words and constructed collocation patterns.

### Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection of *CNN* news articles focused on the time period from February 1, 2020, to March 10, 2021. Data analysis focused on the study of the 300 *CNN* articles, looking not only at high-frequency English core content words and related collocation patterns, which can help learners comprehend those major events, but also evaluating the salient factors which create the meaning and produce the cultural shock, thus heightening reader interest and learning motivation. Function words were removed because formulaic collocation patterns must be found in order to explore the underlying cultures factors, which were based on those core content words. In the end, only 30 high-frequency core content words were chosen for collocation analysis.

## IV. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Based on the first research question, there were 30 high-frequency core content words found, which were shown in Table 1. From the first ten core words, learners can know how important they are.

**Table 1. The first thirty high-frequency core content word**

Rank	Frequency	Key Word		Rank	Frequency	Key Word
1	401	<b>coronavirus</b>		14	100	<b>unemployment</b>
2	355	<b>pandemic</b>		15	98	<b>crisis</b>
3	237	<b>business</b>		16	95	<b>travel</b>
4	237	<b>million</b>		17	85	<b>global</b>
5	214	<b>president</b>		18	69	<b>government</b>
6	192	<b>world</b>		19	68	<b>public</b>
7	168	<b>economy</b>		20	66	<b>demand</b>
	*117	<b>economic</b>		21	64	<b>disease</b>
8	145	<b>virus</b>		22	56	<b>risk</b>
9	143	<b>country</b>		23	55	<b>recession</b>
	*82	<b>countries</b>		24	55	<b>stimulus</b>

Rank	Frequency	Key Word		Rank	Frequency	Key Word
10	141	<b>health</b>		25	54	<b>infections</b>
11	128	<b>jobs</b>		26	49	<b>positive</b>
12	110	<b>deaths</b>		27	48	<b>social</b>
13	104	<b>Americans</b>		28	48	<b>vaccine</b>
	*88	<b>America</b>		29	43	<b>lockdown</b>
	*79	<b>American</b>		30	43	<b>outbreak</b>

Through reading the 30 most important high-frequency core content words, learners can summarize the articles related to Covid-19. Moreover, students can use those words to form a mind map of Covid-19 epidemic. The most seriously infected country is the USA; therefore, *American* and *president* were identified as high-frequency words. Covid-19 killed millions all over the world. It greatly influenced global health, travel, jobs, and world economy because the unemployment rate has been increasing since the breakout of coronavirus.

To find out the answers of the second research question, some meaningful lexical collocation patterns were constructed based on those high-frequency core content words (Table 2, 3, 4), and screenshots of collocation patterns from the texts are attached (Figure 1.1., Figure 1.2., Figure 1.3., Figure 2.1., Figure 2.2., Figure 2.3., Figure 3.1., Figure 3.2., and Figure 3.3.).

**Table 2. The high-frequency core content words related to Covid-19: coronavirus, health, disease and related collocation patterns.**

	N. + N.	N. + N.	N. + N.
1	<b>Coronavirus pandemic</b>	<b>Health care</b>	<b>Disease control</b>
2	<b>Coronavirus cases</b>	<b>Health organizations</b>	<b>Disease expert</b>
3	<b>Coronavirus crisis</b>	<b>Health experts</b>	<b>Disease doctor</b>
4	<b>Coronavirus outbreak</b>	<b>Health crisis</b>	<b>Disease specialist</b>
5	<b>Coronavirus response</b>	<b>Health system</b>	<b>Disease epidemiologist</b>
6	<b>Coronavirus task</b>	<b>Health concerns</b>	<b>Disease official</b>
7	<b>Coronavirus infection</b>	<b>Health emergency</b>	<b>Disease research</b>
8	<b>Coronavirus restrictions</b>	<b>Health equity</b>	<b>Disease transmission</b>
9	<b>Coronavirus vaccine</b>	<b>Health guidelines</b>	<b>Disease spread</b>
10	<b>Coronavirus victims</b>	<b>Health restrictions</b>	<b>Disease outbreak</b>

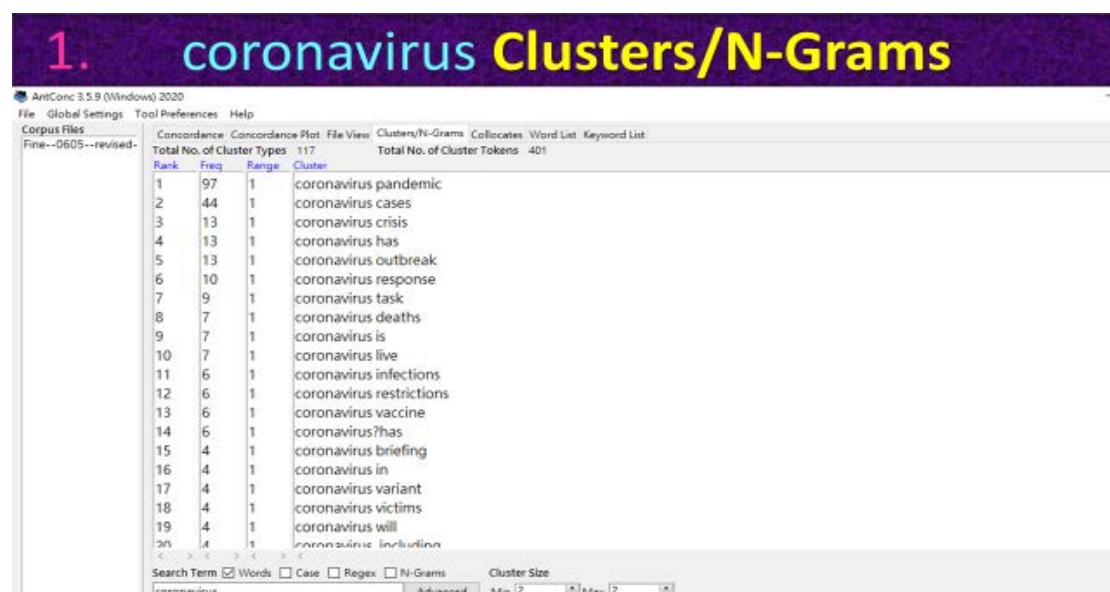


Figure 1.1. Screenshot of collocation patterns related to **coronavirus**.

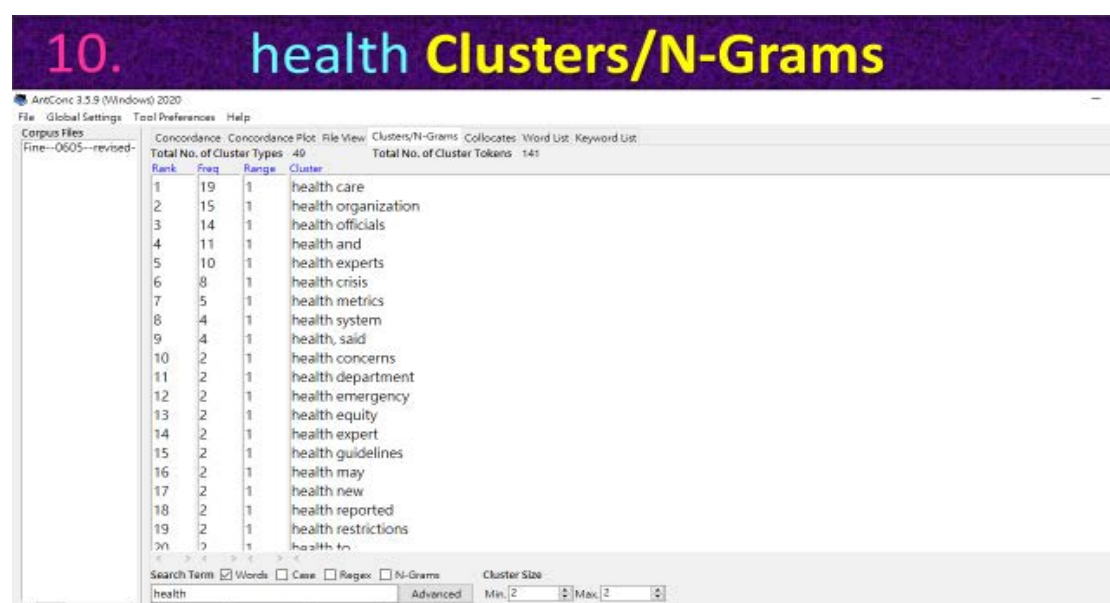


Figure 1.2. Screenshot of collocation patterns related to **health**.

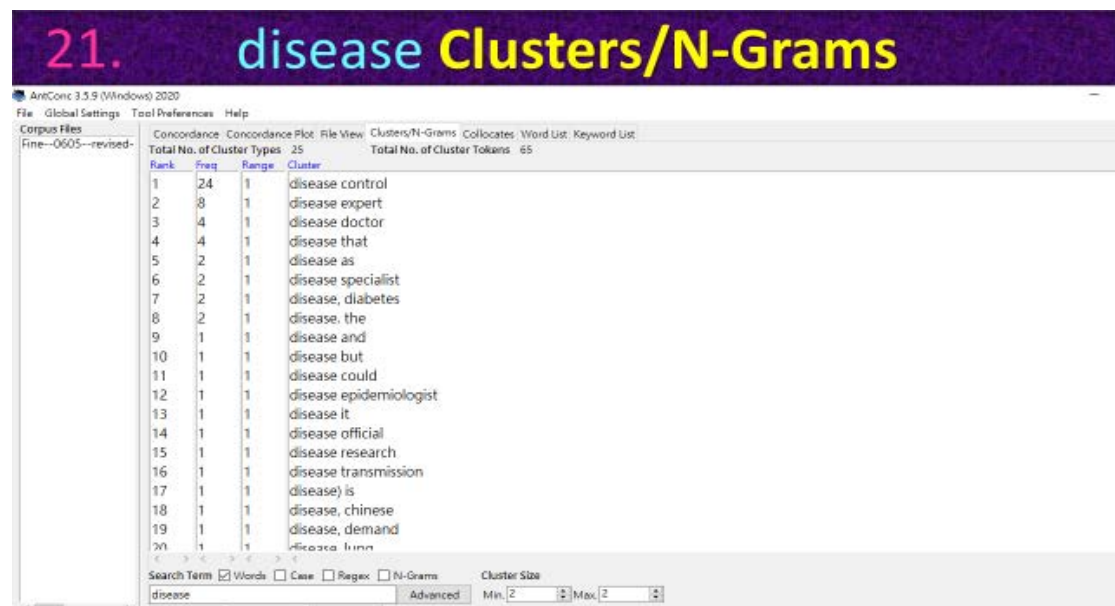


Figure 1.3. Screenshot of collocation patterns related to **disease**.

As seen in Table 2, formulaic collocation patterns display the full scope of the Coronavirus outbreak, and infections arouse health crisis, health concerns, health emergency and restrictions. Covid-19 also impacts on disease control, and makes disease experts and epidemiologists do some researches on disease transmission, spread and outbreak.

**Table 3. The high-frequency core content words related to life and culture: travel, public and social and related collocation patterns.**

	Adj. +N	Adj. +N	Adj. +N
1	travel restriction	public health	social distancing
2	travel bubbles	public transportation	social activities
3	travel corridor	public needs	social epidemiologist
4	travel arrangement	public transit	social gatherings
5	travel association	public broadcaster	social inequalities
6	travel bans	public calm	social protection
7	travel industry	public housing	social contact
8	travel strategies	public filing	social distance
9	travel agent	public opinion	social interaction
10	travel agency	public places	social justice



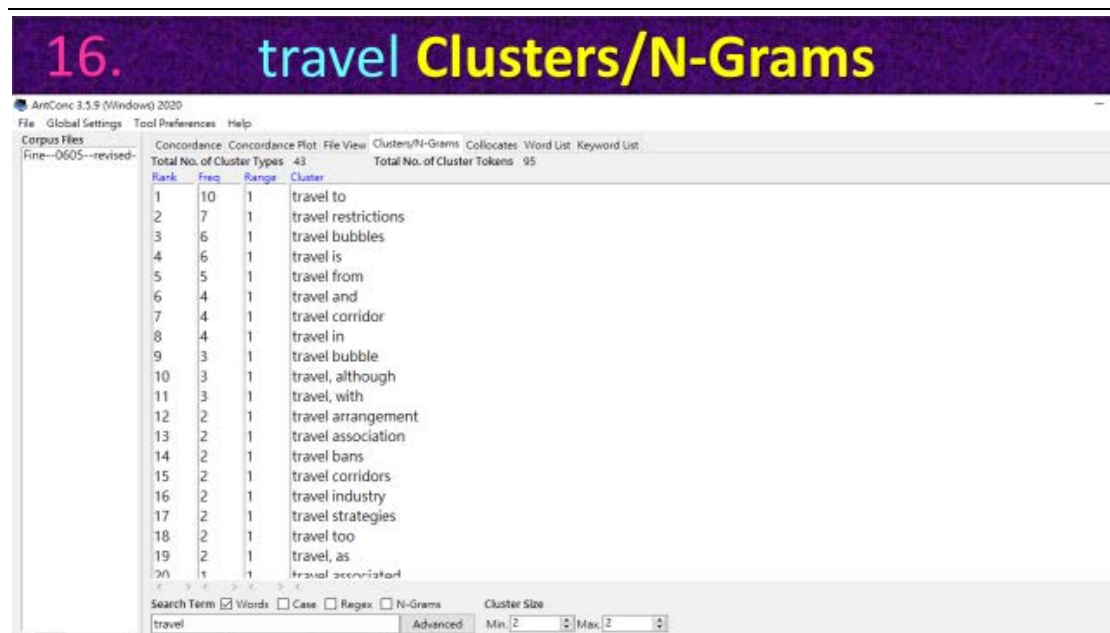


Figure 2.1. Screenshot of collocation patterns related to **travel**.

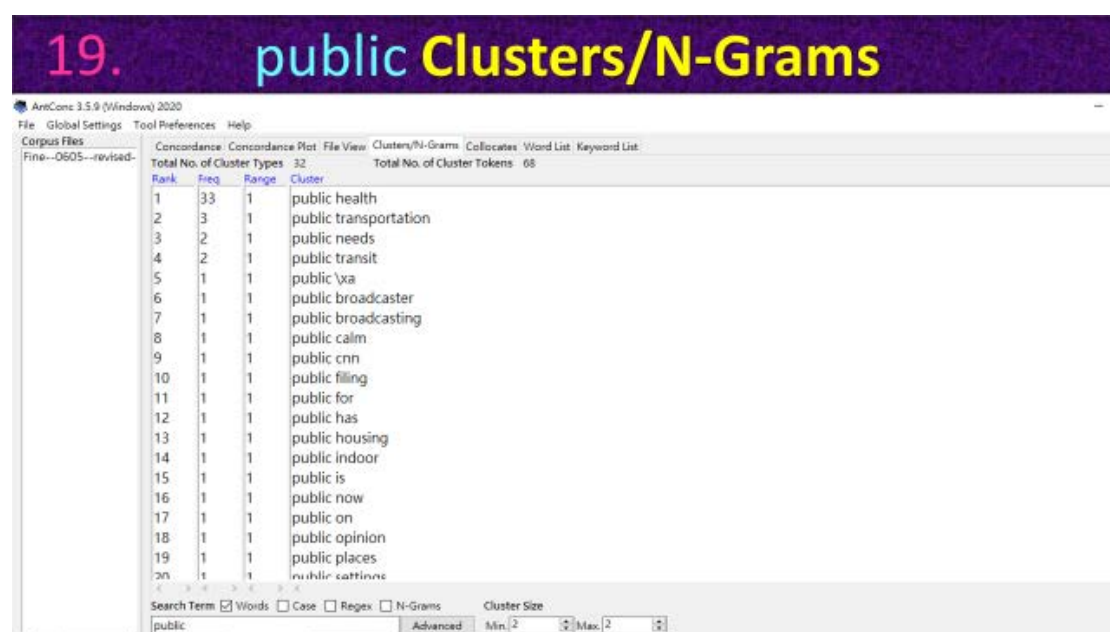


Figure 2.2. Screenshot of collocation patterns related to **public**.

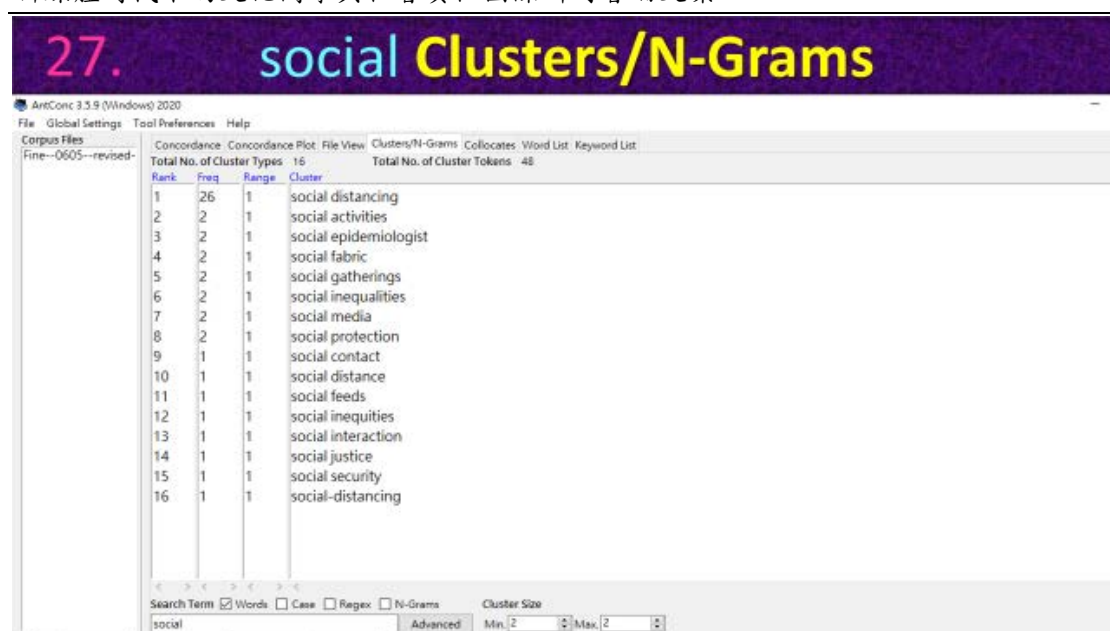


Figure 2.3. Screenshot of collocation patterns related to **social**.

Tables 3 and 4 showed the results of research question three. There were really some formulaic collocation patterns excerpted from the 300 news articles and based on the 30 high-frequency core content words, which can demonstrate not only the underlying cultural shock but also the serious impact of this public health emergency from the Covid-19 pandemic.

As seen in Table 3, those formulaic collocation patterns demonstrated how the Coronavirus influenced world people's lives, especially social distancing, social activities, social gathering, social contact, social interaction, public health, public transportation, and tourism, because of daily restrictions and travel bans, which made people try to form travel bubbles to solve travel and transportation problems.

**Table 4. The high-frequency core content words related to global economy: economic, unemployment, and stimulus and those related collocation patterns.**

	Adj. + N.	N. + N.	N. + N.
1	economic recovery	unemployment rate	stimulus package
2	economic activity	unemployment benefits	stimulus checks
3	economic crisis	unemployment claims	stimulus measures
4	economic stimulus	unemployment data	stimulus bill
5	economic toll	unemployment assistance	stimulus negotiation
6	economic analysis	unemployment crisis	stimulus deal
7	economic bailout	unemployment figures	stimulus funds
8	economic catastrophe	unemployment insurance	stimulus programs

9	<b>economic contraction</b>	<b>unemployment lines</b>	<b>stimulus factors</b>
10	<b>economic growth</b>	<b>unemployment number</b>	<b>stimulus investment</b>

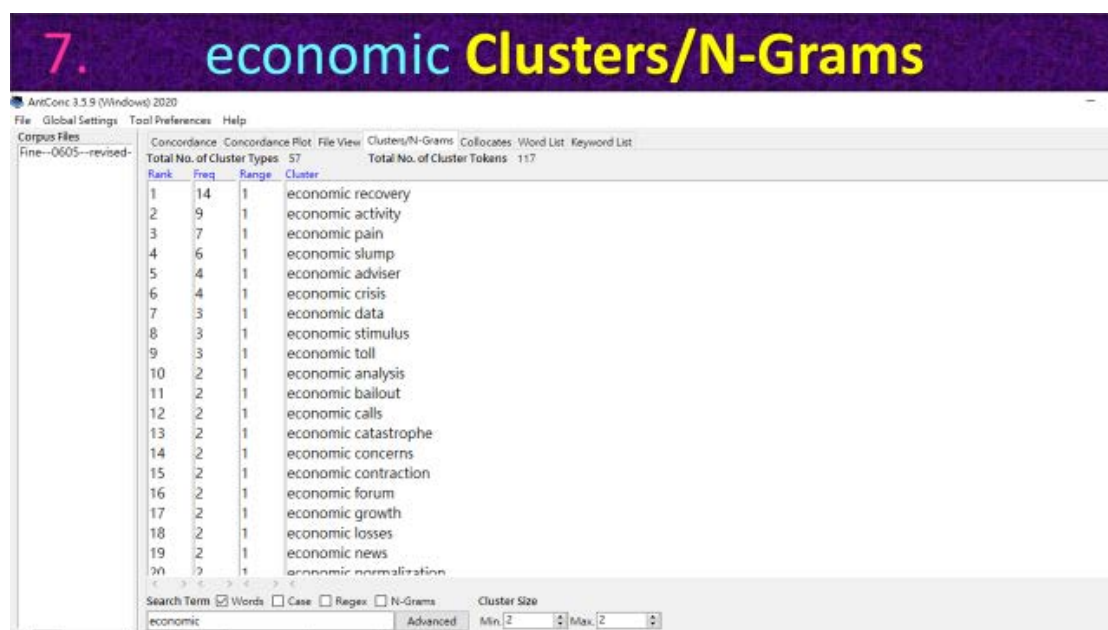


Figure 3.1. Screenshot of collocation patterns related to **economic**.

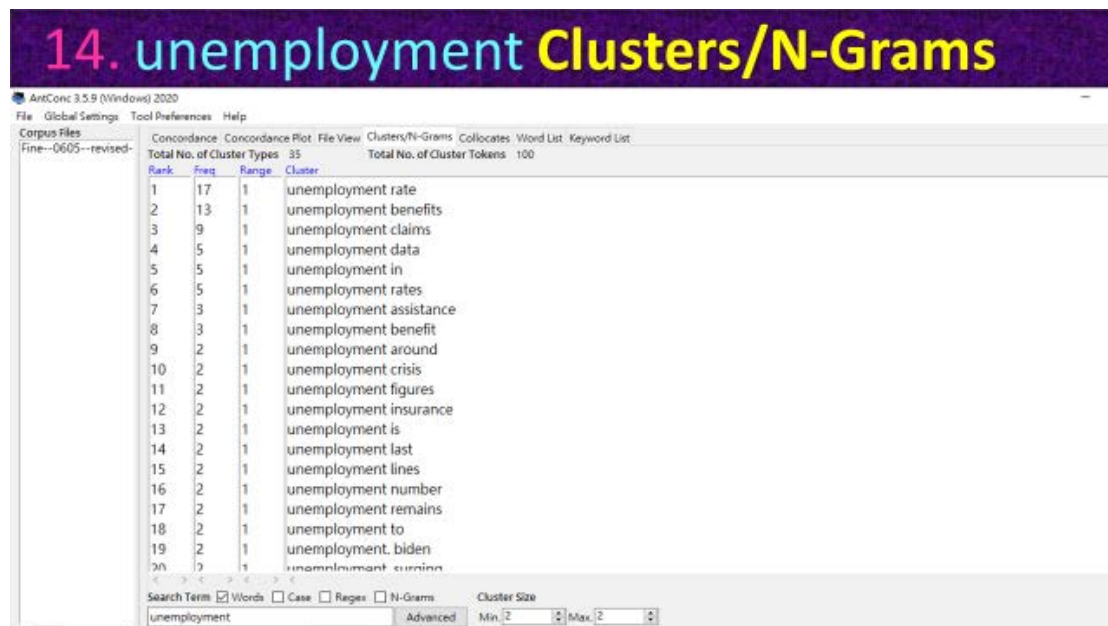


Figure 3.2. Screenshot of collocation patterns related to **unemployment**.

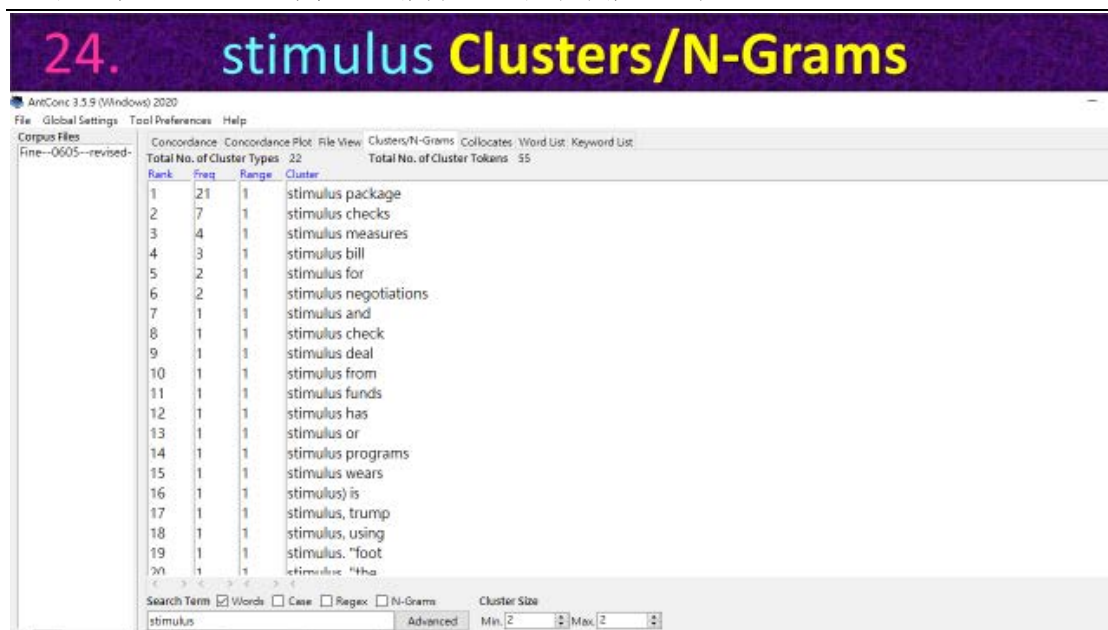


Figure 3.3. Screenshot of collocation patterns related to **stimulus**.

Table 4 showed that Covid-19 had a significant impact on the global economy, and directly influenced people's lives all around the world. Learners can understand the underlying meaning of the financial crisis through reading those collocation patterns. Because of economic crisis, economic catastrophe, economic contraction, people would meet unemployment crisis, and have high unemployment rate. Therefore, governments must take some stimulus measures, stimulus package, and stimulus programs to reduce the high unemployment rate caused by Covid-19 pandemic.

To arouse learners' autonomous learning of Covid-19 pandemic, there are some suggested English-corpora, for example, Yale Medicine experts provide a glossary of key COVID-19 terms: <https://www.yalemedicine.org/news/covid-19-glossary>, a corpora designed for the record of COVID-19 based on on-line news articles and magazines: <https://www.english-corpora.org/corona/>, and a leading corpora of learning Covid-19 for nurses : <https://www.nursingcenter.com/ncblog/september-2020/covid-19-lexicon>.

After analyzing the 30 high-frequency core content words and related collocation patterns, the author found that there are 12 words and some collocation patterns occurring in the three famous corpora. The 12 words are coronavirus, pandemic, virus, health, death, disease, infections, positive, social, vaccine, lockdown, outbreak, and the related collocation patterns are coronavirus pandemic, coronavirus infections, coronavirus vaccine, health experts, health concerns, disease control, disease spread, disease outbreak, social distancing, social protection and so on. That is, this study is

coherent with other global corpora of Covid-19.

## **V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The findings of this research study suggest that authentic news articles provide learners various high-frequency words and meaningful lexical collocation patterns. High-frequency words and lexical patterns can be used by teachers to create a word bank or collocation bank for learners' efficient study. Students can not only acquire English words and phrases but also understand the current events, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, and provide a window on various cultures around the world and they struggle to adapt to this public health emergency. Authentic media can link language learners with the real world so they can see the uses of language learning.

Clearly, high-frequency core content words are a central part of lexical collocation patterns. Through these collocation patterns, learners can identify the main ideas in news stories and grasp the salient factors. This process, starting from words and moving to patterns and then summarizing content is useful for understanding international public health issues and the economic impact on people's daily lives. Naturally, this process does not end at graduation. Language learning is a lifelong task so learners should be autonomous. English news articles will continue to be a method to get abreast of the unpredictable and fast-changing world. Helping language learners use high-frequency words and collocation patterns, which can be easily identified in all authentic media, prepares them for a lifetime of consuming and evaluating news.

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