

Analysing a Newspaper Article: A Lexical and Grammatical Perspective

Abstract

The present paper is about analysing a newspaper article titled “Ukraine Criseis: UK to send tents and winter clothing” which was published in November 2015 on the BBC website. The language of the article was investigated in terms of lexis and grammar, namely four parameters were applied: Word Analysis, Ideational Representation Analysis, Interpersonal Representation Analysis (which includes attitude, graduation and engagement) and Textual Representation Analysis (which includes Thematic structure and cohesion). Although the article seems to be short, it carried a lot of language and interactions with the reader among which some were expressed by the use of punctuation marks.

Keywords: Lexis, Grammar, Word Analysis, Ideational Representation, Interpersonal Representation, Textual Representation

Introduction:

The analysis below is about a newspaper article published in 2015 as current news by the BBC. The text is genuine, authenticated and designed to cope with the most recent use of the language at that

34 time. The writer of the article has applied some linguistic features that employed grammar and lexis
35 in order to deliver the communicative message both accurately and successfully. The following
36 sections are the analysis of the text under four headings: *Word Analysis, Ideational Representation*
37 *Analysis, Interpersonal Representation Analysis* and *Textual Representation Analysis*.

38 **1 Word Analysis:**

39 The word '*crisis*' is a key word in my text. This word is attractive to me because I have learned it from
40 the media on the 3rd year of my BA (2006). I have used **Sketch Engine**, a great corpus system, to
41 trace this word and reveal some of its characteristics. The word analysis is done in the *British*
42 *National Corpus (BNC)*.

43 Crisis is classified as a noun which is usually singular with 91.3% according to the *Word Sketch* search
44 (see **Figure 1** in the Appendices). When refining by sorting by frequency, the search shows that it
45 occurs 6,412 within the BNC. Most of this number (4,008) colligates with **modifiers**, for example,
46 with '*economic*' 313 times, '*Gulf*' 312 times and '*political*' 142 times. Moreover, it is used a lot as an
47 object to the verb "*face*" 46 times, '*resolve*' 54 times and '*cause*' 46 times while it is the subject of
48 '*arise*', '*come*' and '*occur*'. The same figure shows that '*crisis*' is used with *and/or* followed by '*war*'
49 as the most frequent usage.

50 Surprisingly, when looking at the **Concordance** lines there is no existence of the **colligation** '*Ukraine*
51 *crisis*' (see **Figure 2**). Instead, I have looked up '*economic crisis*'. There are 321 occasions where they
52 **colligate**, when sorted to the right and to the left (see **Figure 3**). When we look at the collocations of
53 '*economic crisis*' and sort it by frequency, we can see that the most frequent meaningful
54 accompanying this noun phrase is '*political*' (see **Figure 4**).

55 **Oxford advanced learner's dictionary** defines this word as (*a time of great danger, difficulty or*
56 *confusion when problems must be solved or important decisions must be made*). Unlike the corpus,
57 the dictionary entry indicates that *crisis* can be uncountable and gives the plural form as well as
58 pronunciation in both British and American English. The dictionary and the corpus agree on the
59 occurrence of the collocations '*political/financial crisis*' and '*economic crisis*'.

60 If we look carefully at these findings, we can see that '*Ukraine crisis*' have never occurred in the BNC.
61 However, this article was published by the BBC few days ago. This means that it takes some time for
62 the BNC to be updated and researchers of contemporary linguistics matters need to wait. Another
63 interesting thing is that the findings show that '*crisis*' is a synonym for '*war*' and this is how it is used
64 in the text since the text involves army, troops and fighting. In addition, it shows that Britain, as the
65 rest of the Western world, use the word in order not to give an importance to the war.

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68 **2 Ideational Representation Analysis:**

69 Ideational representation is concerned with three elements: a participant, a process and a
70 circumstance. Participants are the people, animals, things or places in the text. Processes are actions
71 that participants do or affected by. Circumstances tell us more about the action e.g. its frequency,
72 location, manner, etc. Below is an extract from the text (103 words) which will be analysed in details
73 highlighting the subcategories of those elements.

Extract 1

1. *He said the UK government was "committed to supporting Ukraine's sovereignty".*
2. *"Our proposed gift of non-lethal equipment is designed to prevent further Ukrainian fatalities and casualties and to help improve resilience on the ground," Mr Fallon said.*
3. *The UK has already supplied Ukraine with £850,000 worth of equipment including first aid kits, sleeping bags and night-vision goggles as part of its pledge to provide assistance.*
4. *British military personnel have also been training members of the Ukrainian army.*
5. *The gift has been outlined in a departmental minute.*
6. *If no MP objects within 14 sitting days, delivery will be carried out in the coming weeks.*

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75 In the first sentence, we have two participant; *He* and *the UK was "committed to support Ukraine's*
76 *sovereignty"*, along with one process (said). This process is called **Verbal process** (Illocutionary
77 Force) and the first participant is identified as **Sayer** while the second participant is **Said** in general,
78 or **Reported** in particular. Now let's stop at the **reported** participant, calling it 1A, and analyse it.
79 Evidently, (was) is a **Relational process**, in specific an **attributive relational process** and (the UK
80 government) is a participant known as **Carrier** of the attribute (a term used for the participant
81 described) whereas *committed to supporting Ukraine's sovereignty* is the **attribute**. Another way to
82 look at 1A is by having *was committed* as a process. In this sense, the process will shift from
83 **Relational** to **Mental** since no doing action is involved. Thus *The UK government* is a **Senser**
84 (inanimate participant because it is used metaphorically to mean those who work for the
85 government and make the national decisions), and *to supporting Ukraine's sovereignty* is a
86 **Phenomenon realized as a clause**.

87 The second sentence represents a similar pattern with the Verbal process said but this time the
88 Sayer is Mr Fallon and the said is what we have between the quotation marks and therefore this
89 participant is called **Quoted**. The latter participant can also be analysed since it has its own process
90 'is designed' which is classified as a **Material process** and 'our proposed gift of non-lethal
91 equipment' is its **goal**. The **actor** of this process is omitted because the sentence is in the passive
92 voice. The rest of the sentence is a **role Circumstance** telling us which role the gift was designed for.

93 The next sentence has an actor (The UK), a Material process (has already supplied) and a goal
94 (Ukraine). The rest of the sentence is recognised as a Circumstance. We can also break the latter as
95 follows: **Extent Circumstance** (with £850,000 worth), **Matter Circumstance** (of equipment),
96 **Accompaniment Circumstance** (including first aid kits, sleeping bags and night-vision goggles), **Role**
97 **Circumstance** (as part of its pledge) and (to provide assistance).

98 In sentence four, the nominal group *British military personnel* is known as actor to the Material
99 process (have been training) and the goal here is also a nominal group *members of the Ukrainian*
100 *army*.

101 Sentence five resembles sentence 1A in terms of passive voice and absence of the doer. So *the gift* is
102 a goal to the Material process *has been outlined*. The final clause *in a departmental minute* is a
103 **Manner Circumstance**.

104 In the last sentence, there is a Material process (objects) and an actor (no MP). However, there is no
105 goal here because (no MP objects) is an **intransitive clause** where no object is required. There is also
106 a Manner Circumstance (within 14 sitting days). The second process of this sentence is Material as
107 well (will be carried out), (delivery) is its goal and (in the coming weeks) is a Manner Circumstance
108 while the actor is absent because of passivation.

109 **3 Interpersonal Representation Analysis:**

110 This analysis is engaged with the attitude of people related to the text, whether it is a reader, a
111 writer or someone in the text. In this respect, I will analyse another extract (101 words) showing the
112 different trends of attitude involved within the 5 sentences.

Extract 2

1. *In a written parliamentary statement he said there had been a reduction in violence since August's ceasefire.*
2. *But he said the absence of a "political settlement" to the crisis meant troops had to "remain deployed forward".*
3. *He said the UK government was "committed to supporting Ukraine's sovereignty".*
4. *"Our proposed gift of non-lethal equipment is designed to prevent further Ukrainian fatalities and casualties and to help improve resilience on the ground," Mr Fallon said.*
5. *The UK has already supplied Ukraine with £850,000 worth of equipment including first aid kits, sleeping bags and night-vision goggles as part of its pledge to provide assistance.*

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114 There are three dimensions of evaluating inter-personality within a text: power, contact and
115 emotion. The text under treatment is a newspaper article which means it is written for public and
116 writers here normally have no direct contact with their readers. The writer did not involve himself
117 nor the reader in this text, subsequently his/her role was to 'report'. There are three grammatical
118 moods: **imperative**, **interrogative** and **declarative**. The moods usually determine the speech
119 function e.g. imperative is used for giving commands. This determination, however, is not an
120 absolute one because different functions can occur in different moods. Since the writer excluded
121 the readers, no interrogative mood is used in this text. But it was definitely possible to ask two types
122 of questions that do not need a reply. Firstly, **expository questions** – these are questions where the
123 writer engage the reader with a thinking process before giving them the answer. The second one is
124 **rhetorical questions** – where the answer is known by everyone. All the sentences of Extract 2 are in
125 the **declarative mood** and their purpose is to give information except sentence 2 which had a
126 command (*had to remain deployed*), so it is considered as a sentence in the **imperative mood**. "*Had to*"
127 in such contexts is called **Modal construction** referring to a specific power and relationship.
128 Another thing that may affect involvement of participants is the passive voice. A good example for
129 this is sentence 4 where we have no clue who designed the equipment although we can infer that
130 it's the people in charge and maybe that's why the writer didn't mention them.

131 **3.1 Attitude:**

132 Attitude's focus is emotional; it looks at the linguistic choices that demonstrate feelings and
133 judgements of both participants and process. As previously mentioned, this text is about reporting
134 facts as they are so most of it comes with no feelings and/or judgements. In Extract 2, we have only
135 two sentences that express attitude: 2 and 3. In sentence 2, the speaker is judging that absence by
136 demanding deployment of troops. This is known as **Appreciation** for it is about evaluating objects
137 whereas in sentence 3 he is saying that supporting Ukraine's sovereignty is a duty to the UK
138 government. As I pointed earlier, government means the people who works for it, therefore this
139 attitude is called **Judgement**. A third type of attitude, which is not in this extract, is **Affect**
140 (evaluation of emotions).

141 **3.2 Graduation:**

142 Graduation is the linguistic options used to scale an action or evaluate someone/something. In
143 sentence 1, '*reduction*' is a **Force engagement**. Another example of this is *£850,000* of sentence 5
144 which shows us a value of an amount.

145 **3.3 Engagement:**

146 In this text, the writer did not take a position on what s/he was reporting. This makes the whole of
147 Extract 2 what we call (**Monogloss**); where the writer wants the reader to agree or disagree with the
148 content. Moreover, neither **tentative** nor **definite** assertions are used here, therefore it is named
149 **bare assertion**.

150 **4 Textual Representation Analysis:**

151 In this section, I will discuss organisation of a third extract (114 words) and how its sentences are
152 connected and related to each other. The first component is known as Thematic Structure and the
153 second is Cohesion.

154 **4.1 Thematic Structure:**

155 The **theme** is a meaningful unit that comes at the beginning and the **rheme** is what follows it. The
156 theme can be one of three: **topical** 'normally the subject of a sentence', **textual** 'conjunctions and
157 textual adjuncts' or **interpersonal** 'names, titles, adjuncts of certainty, adjuncts of personal
158 comments and a finite before the subject in declarative moods'.

Extract 3

Ukraine crisis: UK to send tents and winter clothing

1. Tents and winter clothing will be sent to the Ukrainian army as it continues to resist Russian-backed separatists, the defence secretary has said.

2. Michael Fallon said 170 large tents and 600 sets of clothing worth £971,000 including transport costs will be sent.

3. In a written parliamentary statement he said there had been a reduction in violence since August's ceasefire.

4. But he said the absence of a "political settlement" to the crisis meant troops had to "remain deployed forward".

'Improve resilience'

5. Mr Fallon said about 8,000 people had been killed in the fighting between the Ukrainian armed forces and separatists receiving "direct military support" from Russia.

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160 The theme of the title is an interpersonal one *Ukraine crisis*. It is really well-hidden because no verb
161 is used after it. Also the use of the colon is unreal since crisis never talk. We can infer that it is the
162 rheme of the actual theme 'UK' but the writer put it at the beginning in purpose and it is not only the
163 theme of the title but it is the main theme of the whole topic. This way what comes after *Ukraine*
164 *crisis* is the rheme and within that very rheme there is another interpersonal theme 'UK' and the rest
165 is the rheme of the second theme.

166 Sentence 1 has the **unmarked topical theme** *Tents and winter clothing* and the rest is its rheme.
167 There are also 2 other themes within this rheme: an **unmarked topical theme** *it* and an
168 **interpersonal theme** *the defence secretary*. As it should be established by now, the rheme of each is
169 what follows it to the end of the sentence.

170 Sentence 2 begins with an interpersonal theme *Michael Fallon* and its rheme carries 2 unmarked
171 topical themes: *170 large tents and 600 sets of clothing worth £971,000*, and *transport costs*.

172 The first **marked topical theme**, realised by a **circumstantial adjunct**, comes in the third sentence *In*
173 *a written parliamentary statement*. There is an interpersonal theme 'he' enclosed in the rheme as
174 well as the unmarked topical theme 'there'.

175 *But* is the **textual theme** of sentence 4. There are also 3 other themes within the rheme of this
176 sentence: an interpersonal theme *he*, the embedded clause acting as a subject the absence of a
177 "political settlement" as a marked topical theme and an unmarked topical theme *troops*.

178 Finally, sentence 5 includes an unmarked topical theme *Mr Fallon* and its rheme includes 2 themes:
179 the adjunct of certainty *about* as an interpersonal theme, and *8,000 people* as a marked topical
180 theme.

181 In terms of thematic progression, sentence 1 and 5 have **linear themes** while sentences 2, 3 and 4
182 have **constant** ones.

183 **4.2 Cohesion:**

184 Cohesion is how lexis and grammar relate in the text. This includes **Reference, Ellipsis, Substitution,**
185 **conjunction** and **lexical cohesion**. (Halliday and Hasan; 1970)

186 Extract 3 has 2 **pronominal references**: *it* in sentence 1 referring to the Ukrainian army and *he* in
187 sentences 3 and 4 referring to Mr Fallon. There is also the **comparative reference** *as* in sentence 1.
188 The two reference types mentioned are **Anaphoric** "referring backwards". In sentence 5, we can
189 find the only one **Cataphoric reference**, using the empty noun '*about*' to refer to 8,000 people.

190 Ellipsis appears once in the extract in the subtitle *Improve Resilience* instead of saying: 'We designed
191 equipment to help improve resilience'.

192 The writer has used 3 cohesive conjunctions: an **adversative** *But*, a **causal** *meant* and a **temporal** *as*.
193 He has also **repeated** *said* 4 times, *tents and clothing* 3 times and *will be sent* twice.

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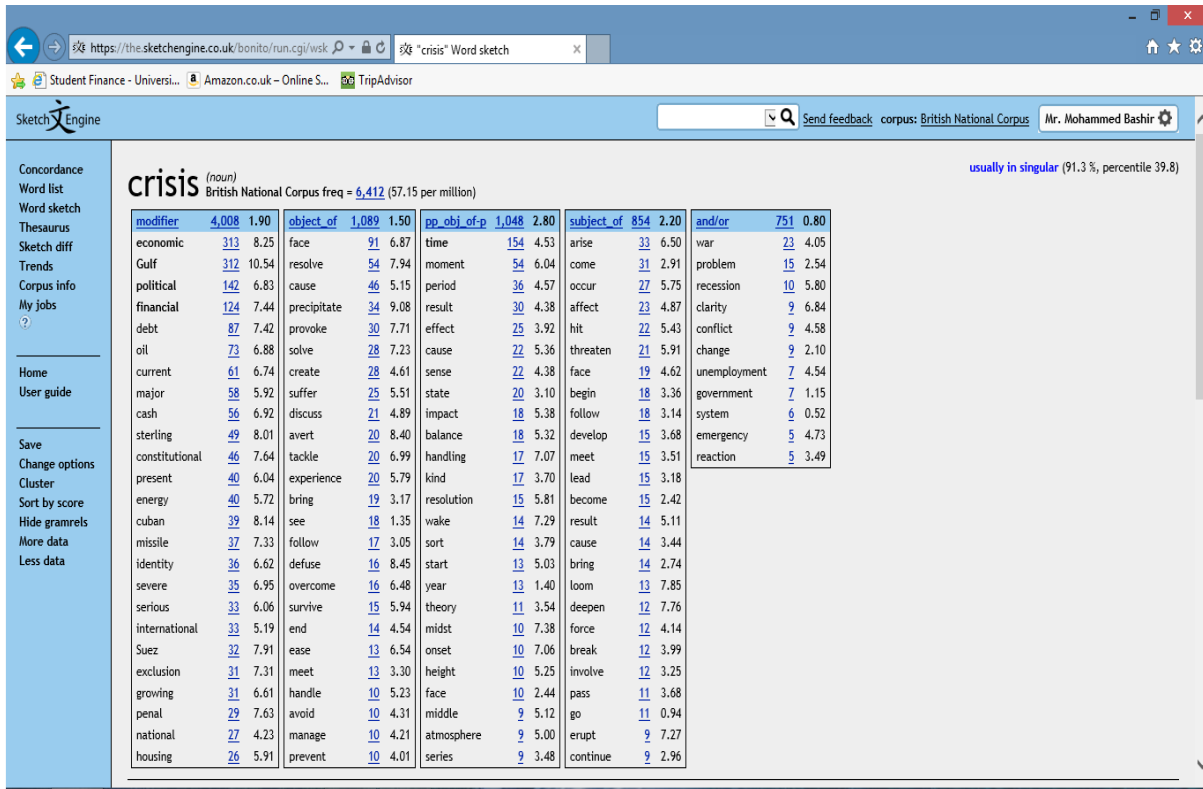
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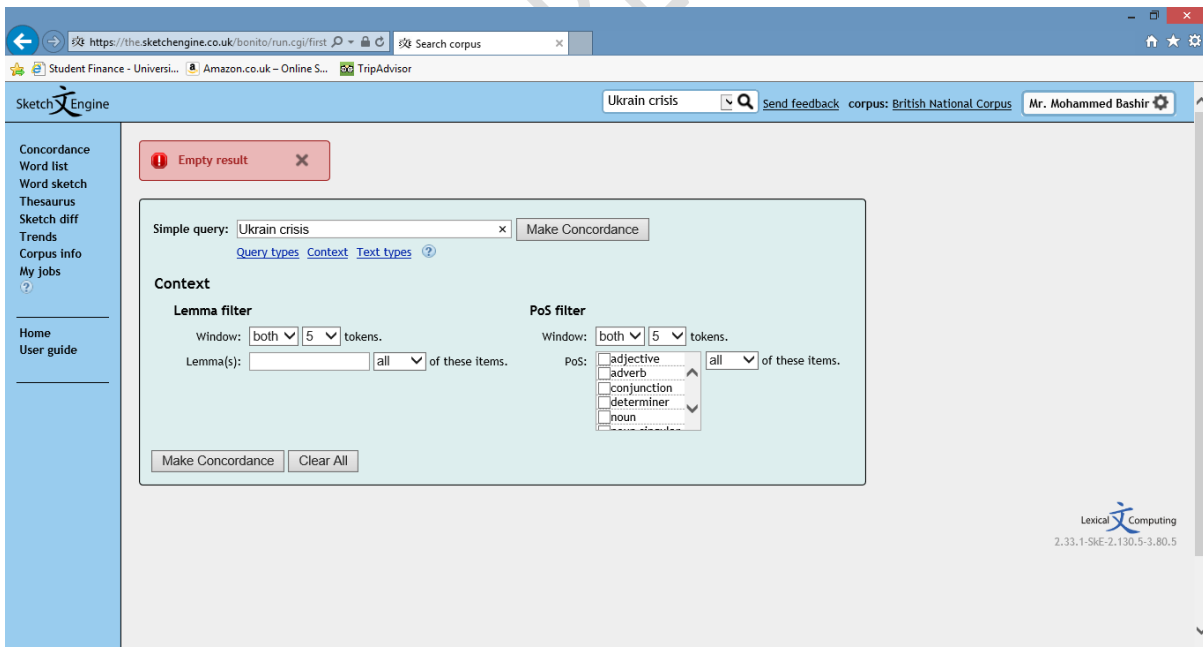
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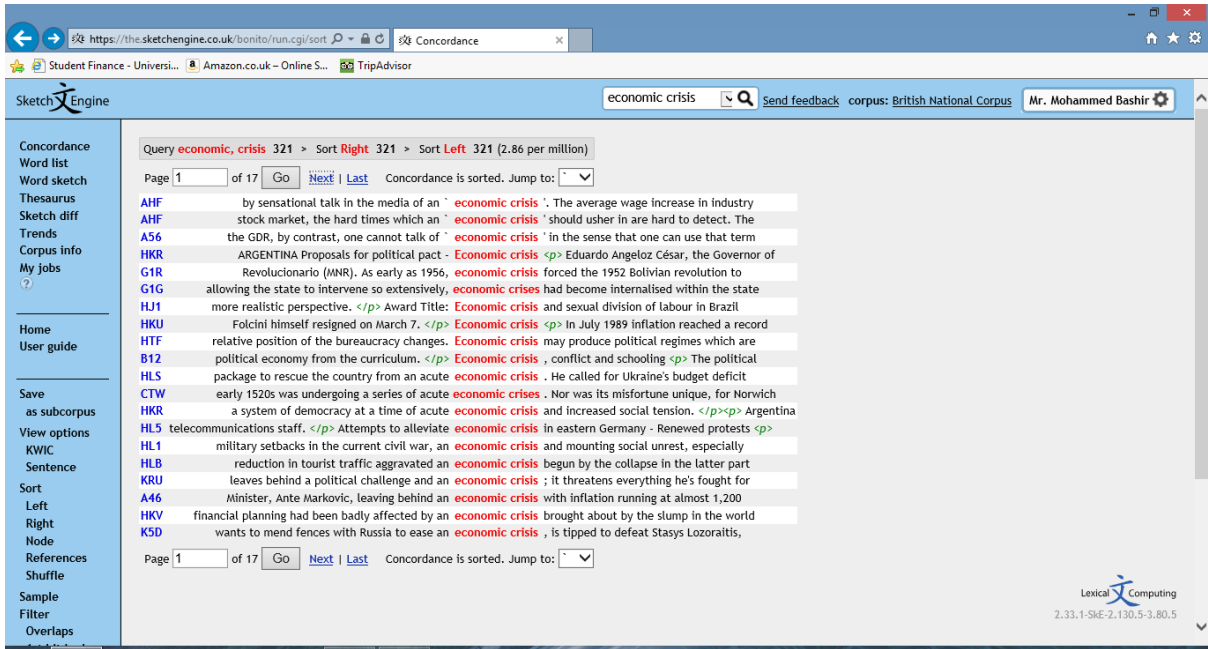
247 Appendix 1 – Sketch Engine search results for the word ‘Crisis’.



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249 Figure 1, Word Sketch for ‘Crisis’.

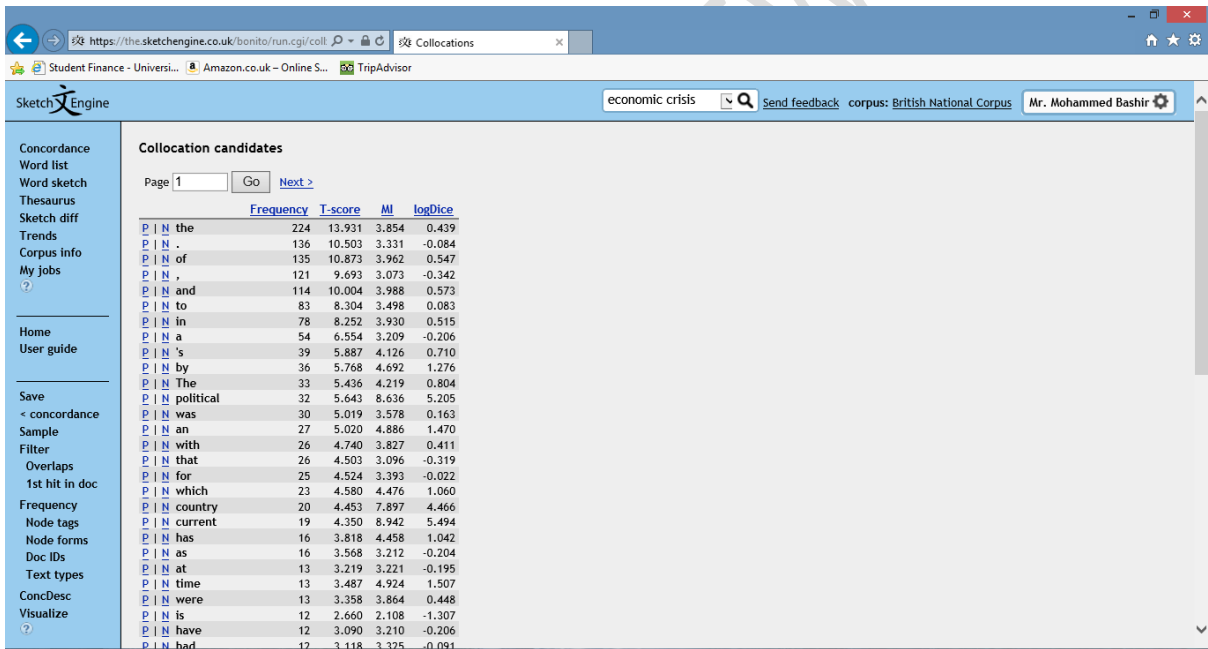


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251 Figure 2, Concordance for ‘Ukraine Crisis’.



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253 Figure 3, Concordance for 'economic Crisis' sorted to the right and to the left.



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255 Figure 4, Collocations for 'economic Crisis'.

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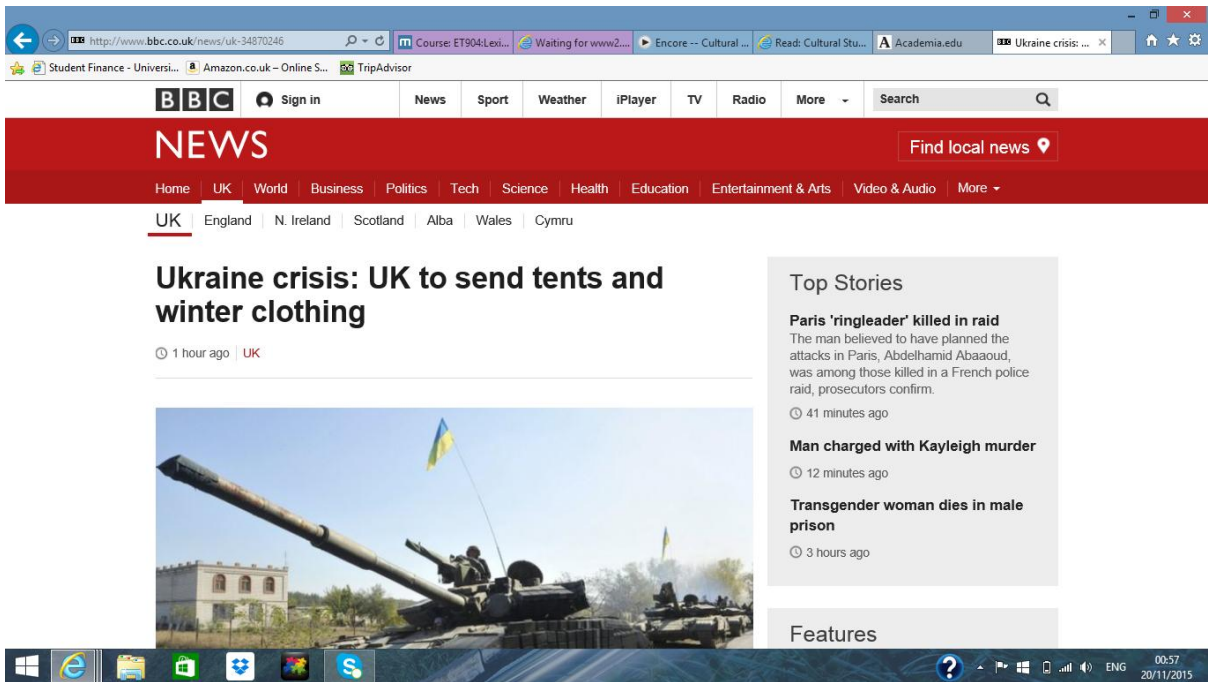
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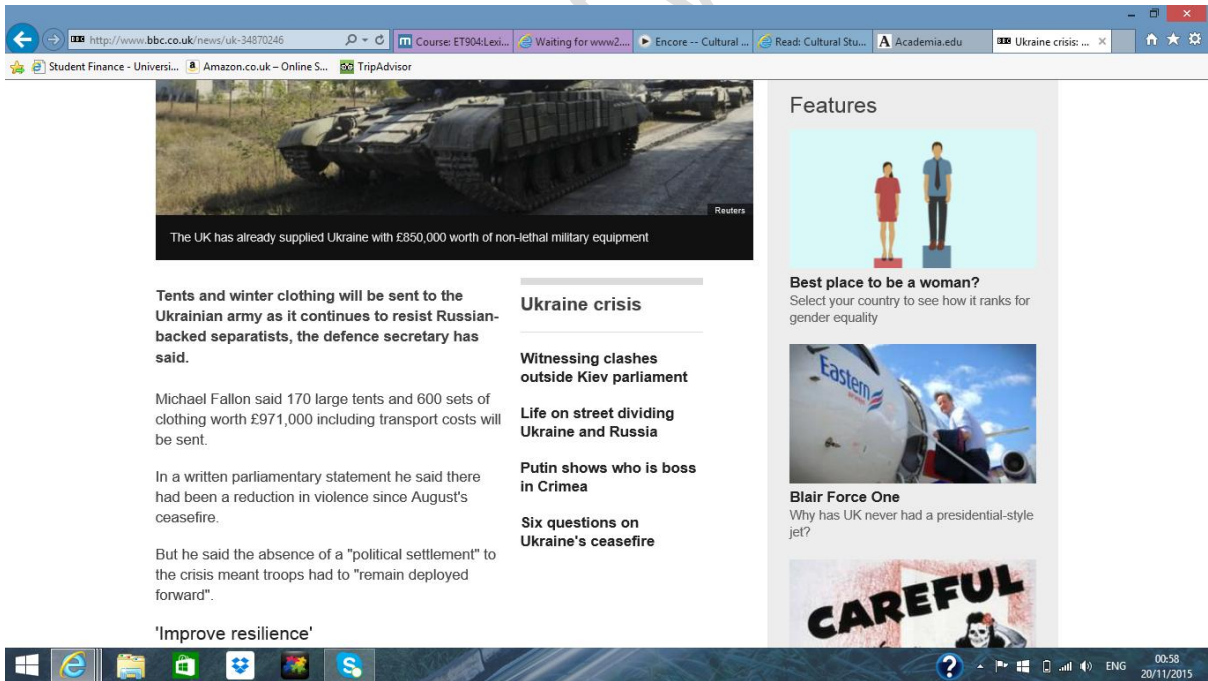
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266 Figure 1, The text 'Ukraine crisis: UK to send tents and winter clothing', retrieved from the BBC
267 website <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-34870246>



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269 Figure 2, The text 'Ukraine crisis: UK to send tents and winter clothing', retrieved from the BBC
270 website <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-34870246>

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying a BBC news article. The address bar shows the URL <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-34870246>. The article title is "'Improve resilience'". The main text discusses the impact of the Ukraine crisis, mentioning that 8,000 people have been killed and that the UK government is committed to supporting Ukraine's sovereignty. It also mentions that the UK has supplied Ukraine with £850,000 worth of equipment and that British military personnel have been training members of the Ukrainian army. A 'Share this story' section is visible with icons for email, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. On the right side, there is a sidebar with three related articles: 'Global resistance' (What life was like before antibiotics), 'Heir apparent?' (Is Neymar now the world's best football player?), and 'Feeling lucky' (What one family thinks about coming to the UK). The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows the date as 20/11/2015 and the time as 09:58.

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272 *Figure 3, The text 'Ukraine crisis: UK to send tents and winter clothing', retrieved from the BBC*
273 *website <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-34870246>*

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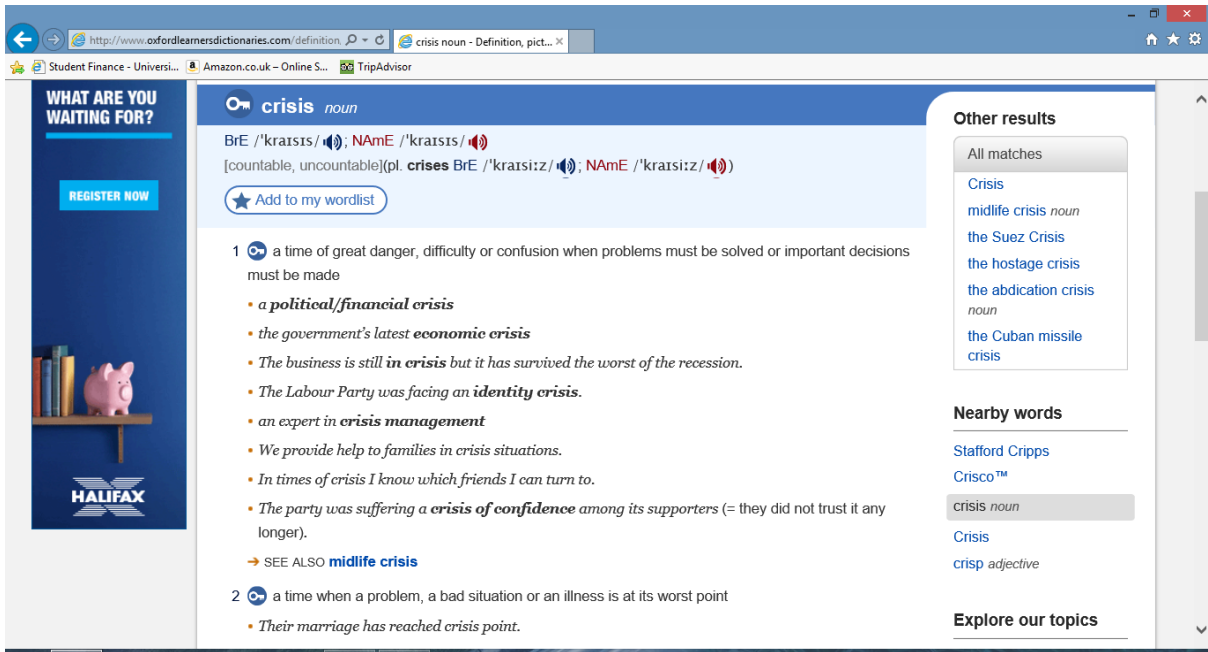
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294 Figure 1, Oxford Learner's Dictionary, online search for 'Crisis'

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313 **Appendix 4 – Tables of Processes and Participants**

Actor	Process	Goal
	is designed	our proposed gift of non-lethal equipment
The UK	has already supplied	Ukraine
British military personel	have been training	

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UNDER PEER REVIEW IN IJAR