

<https://doi.org/10.28925/2311-2425.2022.1895>  
UDC 811'111

## VACCINATION THROUGH THE PRISM OF MEDIA DISCOURSE

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*The research is devoted to the corpus analysis of the semantic prosody of collocations with VACCINATION in the broadsheet The Guardian. The corpora have been processed with the help of Sketch Engine and the collocations with VACCINATION have been analysed. The study mostly concentrates on the modifiers with VACCINATION as subject and object as most representative in media texts. The dictionary definition of VACCINATION interprets it as a word with neutral semantic prosody. The discourse analysis of the data obtained proves that collocations containing this collocate have mostly neutral or positive semantic colouring. The second phase of the research was a free associative experiment using the method of individual questioning of 355 testees aged from 16 to 22 years. The associative experiment enabled to single out words associated with HEALTH among technology, philology and medical students. We could observe a significant difference in the amount of the reaction VACCINATION in the group of medical students as they know the scientific approach and importance of vaccinations today, because they can prevent serious illness, medical expenses and disease outbreaks in the community.*

**Key words:** VACCINATION, media, association, corpus analysis, The Guardian.

### **Сіваєва О.С. ВАКЦИНАЦІЯ крізь призму медіа-дискурсу**

*Дана розвідка присвячена корпусному аналізу семантичної просодії словосполучень з VACCINATION в газеті The Guardian. Для корпусу статей The Guardian, потрібного для обробки даних, було використано програму Sketch Engine, і на основі корпусу було проаналізовано словосполучення з VACCINATION. Дослідження здебільшого зосереджено на модифікаторах з VACCINATION as subject and object як найуживаніша група словосполучень у медіа текстах. Згідно словникового визначення, VACCINATION має нейтральну семантичну просодію. Дискурс-аналіз отриманих даних доводить, що словосполучення з VACCINATION мають переважно нейтральне або позитивне семантичне забарвлення. На другому етапі дослідження було проведено вільний асоціативний експеримент, шляхом індивідуального опитування 355 респондентів у віці від 16 до 22 років. За*

результатами асоціативного експерименту було виокремлено слова-асоціації з *HEALTH* серед студентів-технологів, філологів та медиків. Простежується суттєва різниця в кількості асоціацій з *VACCINATION* серед студентів-медиків, оскільки вони знають науковий підхід та важливість щеплень сьогодні, адже вони можуть запобігти серйозним захворюванням, медичним витратам та спалахам захворювань у суспільстві.

**Ключові слова:** *VACCINATION*, ЗМІ, асоціація, корпусний аналіз, *The Guardian*.

## Introduction.

Since the beginning of 2020, people around the globe have experienced a kind of war waged by many countries against the rapidly-spreading infectious disease known as Covid-19, which has had an unprecedented impact on the whole world. Covid-19 has affected the use of language to a great extent and created a specialized discourse (Tan, 2020). The spread of Covid-19 has not only facilitated the resurgence of existing complex lexemes, but it has clearly produced a wide range of new formations in order to reflect societal changes brought about by the pandemic. Social media played a vital role in the adoption of new words and expressions. Thanks to social media, we are familiar with words such as *lockdown*, *epidemic*, *pandemic*, *superspreader*, *self-isolation*, *self-quarantine*, and word chunks (collocations) such as *social distancing*, *community spread*, *cordon sanitaire*, *droplet transmission*, *flattening the curve*, *tsunamis of COVID-19 cases*, *emerging disease*, *solitary confinement*, *animal-human interface*, *incubation period*, etc.

Therefore, the aim of the article is to analyze how the issue of vaccination is discursively reflected in *The Guardian* articles. The material of the research is the corpus of the media texts which has been processed with the help of Sketch Engine.

The methodology of the research contains corpus analysis, which allows to single out collocations with *VACCINATION* in the corpus; discourse analysis, which helps to interpret semantic prosody of collocations with *VACCINATION* in the media texts and to explain meanings of text passages containing collocations with *VACCINATION* as well as to compare the associative words obtained with the stimulus word *VACCINATION* as the content of images among technology, philology and medical students. The methodology includes a free associative experiment and comparative analysis.

### **Literature overview.**

Corpus linguistics is the study of linguistic phenomena based on large collections of texts read by machines; they are called corpora (McEnery, 2011, pp. 217–232). The methods used in corpus linguistics came into use in the 1960s whereas the term itself appeared in the 1980s (Stubbs, 2001, pp. 149–172). The focus of corpus linguistics is a group of methods or procedures aimed at studying languages. On the other hand, corpus linguistics is seen as an independent theory. Sandra Kübler and Heike Zinsmeister comment in their book “Corpus Linguistics and Linguistically Annotated Corpora” (Kübler, 2015, pp. 248–260) that “the answer to the question whether corpus linguistics is a theory or a tool is simply that it can be both. It depends on how corpus linguistics is applied.” Corpus linguistics has considerably developed due to the possibility to process languages with the help of computers. Thus data can be obtained quickly and easily, being the format good for the analysis. However, corpus linguistics is not to get the data, but to analyze them [Blum-Kulka, 2011 pp. 143–145]. The major schools of Corpus Linguistics are in Lancaster, Birmingham, Nottingham, and Arizona. Different approaches considered (McEnery, 2011; Baker, 2011), corpus linguistics is dealing with some set of machine-readable texts which is deemed an appropriate basis on which to study a specific set of research questions.

### **VACCINATION in the Media.**

At the beginning of the research the corpus was created with the help of Sketch Engine program. The corpus presents the data received from the newspaper articles taken from the broadsheet The Guardian. The focus of attention is the collocations with the lemma *VACCINATION* found in the newspaper mentioned. The data given by the Sketch Engine present various information, showing associations with *VACCINATION* in newspaper discourse.

The broadsheet The Guardian covers issues connected with the Covid-19 pandemic. The n-gram (see Figure 1) demonstrates collocations with *VACCINATION* in the corpus of text articles.

vaccination as noun 38x ...

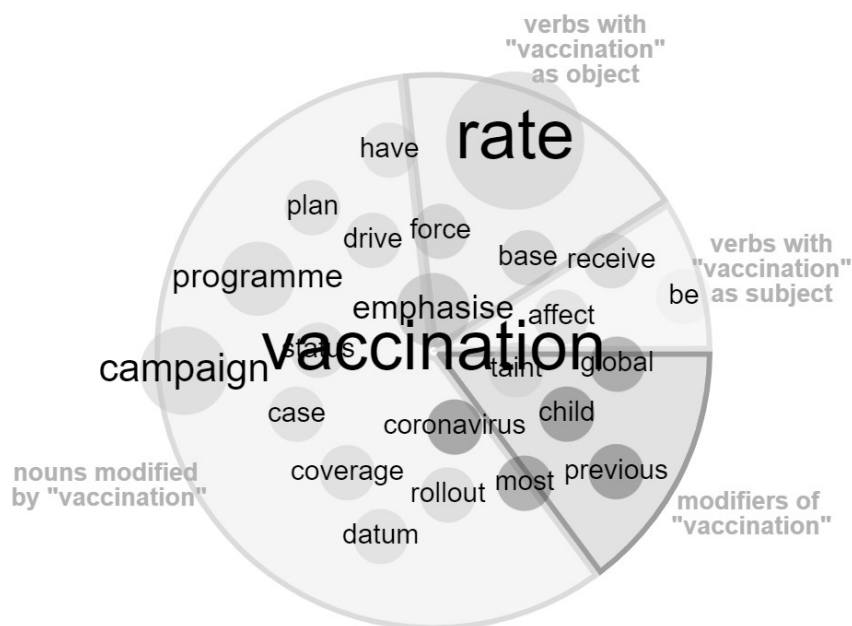


Figure 1. The n-gram of collocations with *VACCINATION* in The Guardian

The frequency use of modifiers of *VACCINATION* is 5, verb + *VACCINATION* as object is 5, and nouns modified by *VACCINATION* is 10, so the paper mostly concentrates on the pattern noun + *VACCINATION* as the most representative in the given corpus.

The word *VACCINATION* in general has a positive implication, as it is defined in the dictionary as:

- the process of giving a person or animal, usually by injection, a substance containing a harmless form of a disease, to prevent them from getting that disease,
- the scar left following inoculation with a vaccine.

Many of the most significant increases in word frequency this year have been in vaccine-related vocabulary. The word *VACCINATION* itself, already very common, more than doubled in frequency between September 2020 and September 2022 in our corpus; even more pronounced was the increase in usage of vaccinate and vaccination over the same period (a 34-fold increase and an 18-fold increase respectively), as the focus moved from the development of vaccines to the process of getting vaccinated.

English is a language rich with synonyms, so it comes as no surprise that there are numerous other words (notably colloquialisms) meaning ‘vaccination’,

‘vaccine’, and ‘vaccinate’, with variation depending on where you are in the English-speaking world.

In British English, one of the most common colloquialisms used to refer to vaccination is *jab*, both as a noun (as in “They were given the *jab*.”) and as a verb (as in “encouraging people to get *jabbed*”).

*Jab* is still predominantly a British term. Even within the UK, there is variation. While *jab* is in common usage throughout the UK, *jag*, with exactly the same meaning, is a long-established alternative frequently used in Scottish English, both as noun (as in “*Jags* will be available at the site between 11 am – 3 pm.”) and verb (as in “Health service staff are best placed to *jag* arms with Covid vaccines.”); *double-jagged* is also a common Scottish alternative to *double-jabbed* (e.g. “*Double-jagged* holidaymakers will no longer have to pay for PCR tests.”).

*Jab* and *jag* are both long-established words in English, commonly used in the UK to refer to any vaccination or injection. In any ‘normal year’ it wouldn’t be surprising to see an increase in use towards the end of the year as people begin to be offered flu vaccinations. But with this pandemic, the increase in usage is much more significant. We have also seen growing evidence of *jab* being used to mean ‘vaccine’ (rather than injection of a vaccine), for example when people refer to receiving ‘a dose of the *jab*’.

Collocations with the lemma *VACCINATION* can have negative, positive and neutral semantic prosody depending on the contextual meaning of the whole passage. The criterion to define the studied collocations with *VACCINATION* as positive, negative or neutral is totally based on the positiveness / negativeness of the idea presented in the passage taking into consideration the verbs that describe actions either connected or triggering other positive or negative consequences or results as well as other phrases in the passage that can be identified as positive or negative. Thus, for example, in the given passage “*A large slice of the savings will probably be made at the expense of efforts to support vaccination drives around the world.*” (The Guardian), the verb “*support*” together with the phrase “*vaccination drives*” create a positive picture of financing vaccination process all over the world, so the given collocation is marked as a positive one.

As for the modifiers of *VACCINATION*, they are either positive, or neutral (see Figure 2).

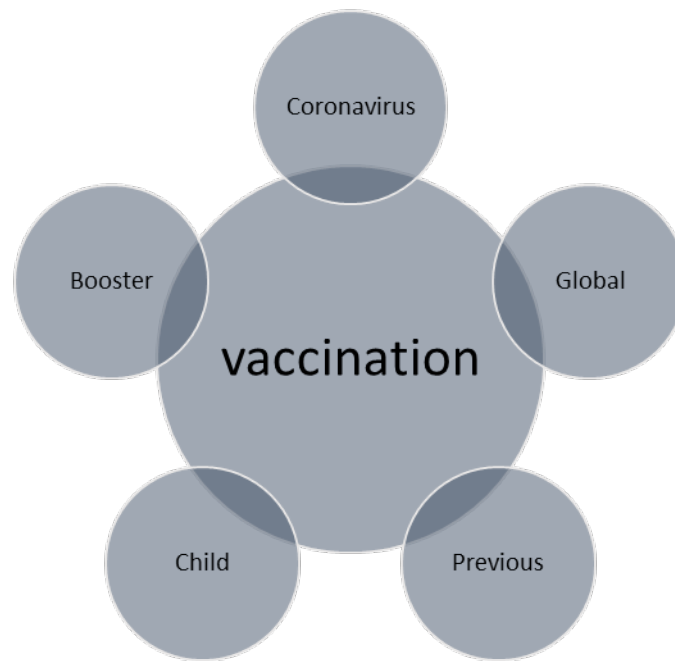


Figure 2. Modifiers of *VACCINATION*

The following nouns “rate”, “campaign”, “rollout”, “drive”, “programme”, “coverage”, “status”, “plan”, “case”, “datum” modified by *VACCINATION* express positive prosody in the context. These nouns together with the lemma *VACCINATION* create a metaphorical image of safety and sureness, when people are vaccinated, they can save themselves from the Covid-19 and return to normal life, e.g. “Nancy Pelosi, speaker of the House, called the latest proposal ‘shameful’, pointing out that low vaccination rates in parts of the world run the risk of new Covid variants arising. ‘We have said, we have pronounced, everyone knows: none of us is safe, unless all of us are safe,’ Pelosi said.”

So, vaccine is used all over the world, which is seen in the media discourse through the frequency use of the lemma *VACCINATION* which is presented in as a lifesaver for people during the pandemic emphasizing on its positive quality.

### **VACCINATION in the associative experiment.**

The second phase of the research was a free associative experiment using the method of individual questioning of 355 testees aged from 16 to 22 years. They were not limited in time or number of answers. As a result of their responses, we received reactions that comprise the associative fields of the stimulus word *HEALTH*. The associative experiment enabled to single out words associated with *HEALTH* among technology, philology and medical students, while comparative

analysis provides the picture of similar and different features of the associations with *HEALTH* (See Table 1).

Table 1 . Frequency of the Noun *VACCINATION* (as a modifier of *HEALTH*) in The Guardian and in the experiment

|                    | <b>The Guardian</b> | <b>Philology Students</b> | <b>Technology Students</b> | <b>Medical Students</b> |
|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Vaccination</b> | 20                  | 10                        | 39                         | 121                     |

The automatic character of associations, the weak ability of a person to control them, the combination of the associative process with a number of physiological reactions of a person explains the effectiveness of using numerous associative experiments in psycholinguistics (Arkhipova, 2011). Nowadays, free associative experiment is the most widely used technique of psycholinguistic analysis of word semantics. This method has a number of advantages, in particular, the speaker's reaction to stimulus words allows us to figure out semantic connections of words existing in the human psyche.

According to the experimental data obtained, the associative field of the word *VACCINATION* is presented as following (see Diagram 1):

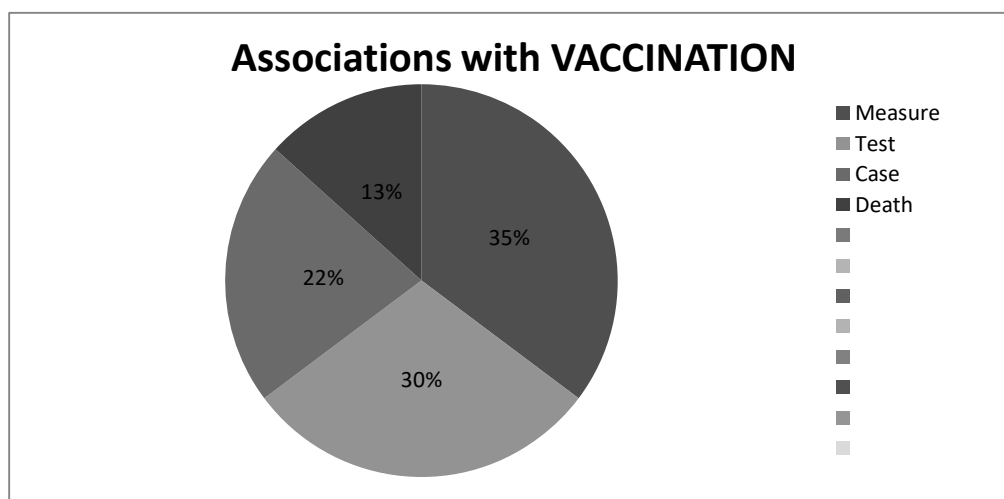


Diagram 1. Association with *VACCINATION* in The Guardian

## Conclusions.

The results of a free associative experiment show the dominance of the modifier *VACCINATION* as a positive reaction to the word-stimulus *HEALTH* among all the groups of students and in The Guardian texts as well. But we can observe a significant difference in the amount of the reaction *VACCINATION* in the group of medical students as they know the scientific approach and importance of vaccinations today, because they can prevent serious illness, medical expenses and disease outbreaks in the community.

Further research is going to be based on corpora of American broadsheets and tabloids presenting a contrastive study of results and also a comparative analysis with the results obtained in this research.

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Дата надходження статті до редакції: 29.09.2022.  
Прийнято до друку: 27.10.2022