Improving Word Choice in Academic Writing

– Tools You Need

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Today's workshop …

is co-organised by

- the Community of Practice (CoP) in *Enhancing Students' English Abilities*
- the UGC-funded project *Professional Development in English Across the Curriculum*
- EDC

CoP & UGC projects

- **Aim**: To enhance students' English performances in their assignments through English across the Curriculum
- **Website**: http://www.polyu.edu.hk/CoP/English/
- **Dual purpose**:
  - Professional development for **staff**
    - (workshops, task design, assessment criteria)
  - Language help for **students**
    - (supplements related to subject assessments)

Vocabulary in language learning (1)

- Students

> "Words are the bricks a building is made up of. Without bricks, where will the building be?" (Gan, Humphreys & Hamp-Lyons, 2004, p. 234)

Vocabulary in language learning (2)

- Language specialists
  - "Language learning is largely lexical learning" (Gass & Selinker, 2008, p. 173)
  - Effective writing is "all about good word choice and proper ordering of those words" (Quinn & Filak, 2005)

Knowing a word = using the word?

- Knowing a word: recognising the form of a word and retrieving its meaning

- Using a word: using it appropriately in language production

Corpora

- What is a corpus?

  e.g. 1. *Dream of the Red Chamber*
  2. *South China Morning Post*

- Native speaker corpora

- Learner corpora

Native speaker corpora

- BNC
- Brown

e.g. Where are *thus* and *however* normally used in a sentence? (http://lextutor.ca/conc/eng/)

Thus

File Edit View History Bookmarks Tools Help
CORPUS CONCORDANCE ...
lextutor.ca/cgi-bin/conc/wwwassocwords.pl?lingo=English&unframed=true&
Search
Home> Concordancers> English Input [«Back]
(Back keeps original settings)
Extract-Link to this data >>
here
Concordance for equals THUS in Corpus BNC_Written.txt sorted 1 wd right of key
Dictionary
Eng_Eng
Extract >>
>>
equals
thus
in
BNCwritten (1m)
sort
1 wd
right
+assoc
All|Ø|any10|20|30|50
on
left
Hear it
in
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ossible for the original process. Intuitively, there is THUS a close relationship between th
es at least a further hour to be added to the overlap, THUS a minimum of2-2½ hours in total
linguistic, racial and religious backgrounds. Film is, THUS a potent medium for fostering c
ll my drawings and quite often reuse them years later. THUS a recent work, The Penitent (Ro
n turn leads to reduced demands for rural services and THUS a reduced demand for rural empl
er Cawston flung himself amongst flying feet. City are THUS able to check the Premier table
ays. It is also more dense than a normal lining and is THUS able to cut out more light. AFT
transmission states for a single-input field, and can THUS act as an optical memory device
ement for bistability, which occurs for &formula;, and THUS actually benefits from a long t
e most able and motivated (Rieger, 1972; Hannan, 1969) THUS adding weight to the theory of
dency may be more marked in one party than another, and THUS affect proportionality. On the
t business, and to levy a withholding tax accordingly, THUS allowing the business to prospe
C and G. The most general form of an ALT construct is THUS ALT(G). Notation If P is some o
ored any repercussions throughout industry as a whole. THUS an individual merger might be s
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However

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Search
Home> Concordancers> English Input [«Back]
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Extract-Link to this data >>
here
Concordance for equals HOWEVER in Corpus BNC_Written.txt sorted 1 wd right of key
Dictionary
Eng_Eng
Extract >>
>>
equals
however
in
BNCwritten (1m)
sort
1 wd
right
+assoc
All|Ø|any10|20|30|50
on
left
Hear it
in
Eng-US
us wave of Data Discman publishing. There is, HOWEVER a clear momentum growing. The Sony pla
tions can undertake the large surveys needed. HOWEVER a good number of geographers have conc
high fees for his services. In recent years, HOWEVER a less simplified and more generous ir
ts very basis this bizarre limitation. It is, HOWEVER a limitation essential to the working
tch their theoretical impact. In the interim, HOWEVER a number of schemes have been devised
netrate mussel or barnacle shells. There was, HOWEVER a positive correlation between mussel
although the margin of improvement was slim. HOWEVER a rail runnel scheme similar to that a
with all other forms of fire defence systems, HOWEVER a sprinkler system has limitations. Ov
n the event of the deceased failing the test. HOWEVER a successful outcome was apparently vi
o fuel a wave of spending in the high street. HOWEVER a weak housing market and further incr
tainous areas (Cribier, 1973). Less is known HOWEVER about the impact of second homes on th
eling unwell for much of the time. This year, HOWEVER after a winter riding moto- cross and
or reasons explained elsewhere in the report. HOWEVER after much thought and discussion we s
oncerts on April 30 and May 28 will go ahead. HOWEVER after that the future is uncertain. Mr
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2 Microsof...
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EN
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Learner corpora I

- International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE)
- Corpus of Chinese Learners of English

e.g. *I love Hong Kong. It is because Hong Kong is my home.

e.g. *As for Smith (2015), it suggests that Hong Kong undertake immediate education reforms.

Learner corpora II

- Word frequency:
  http://www.lextutor.ca/vp/eng/

- Academic word list:
  http://www.uefap.com/vocab/select/awl.htm

Collocation (1)

Synonyms	Animals	People
kill	✓	✓
murder		✓
slaughter	✓	✓
assassinate		✓

Collocation (2)

* Take a test, take a walk, but *not* make a walk

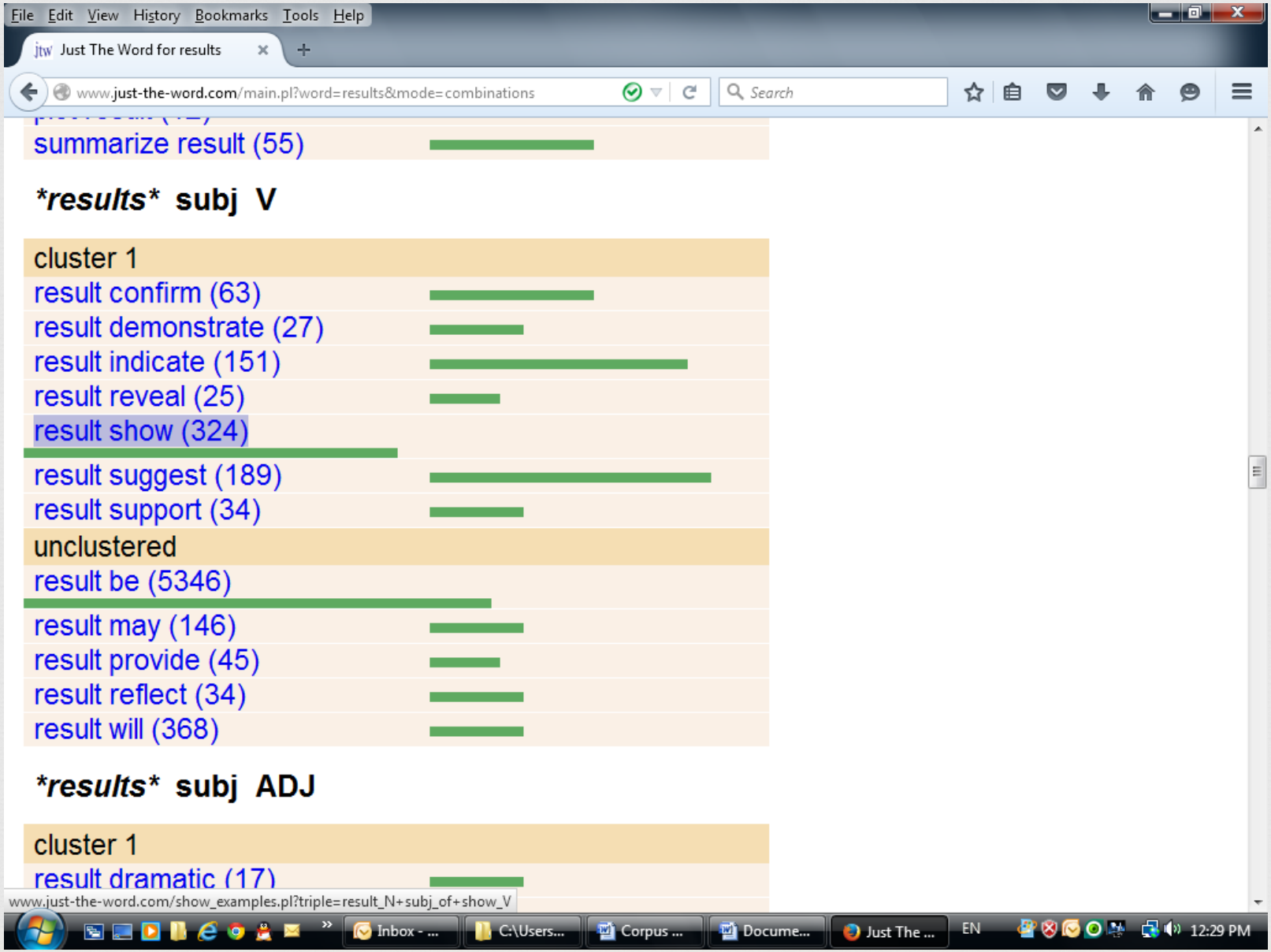
* conduct/hold a meeting, but *not* make a meeting

* Sit a test/examination, but not sit a meeting

Collocation (3)

- Try to find out the following on *Just The Word*
  - verbs often used after *finding(s)/results*
  - adjectives often used to describe *findings/results*
  - verbs often used before *research/analysis*
  - adjective often used to describe *data*
  - words often used to describe *difficult* and *different*

Results (1)


File Edit View History Bookmarks Tools Help
Just The Word for results
www.just-the-word.com/main.pl?word=results&mode=combinations
Search
summarize result (55)
results subj V
cluster 1
result confirm (63)
result demonstrate (27)
result indicate (151)
result reveal (25)
result show (324)
result suggest (189)
result support (34)
unclustered
result be (5346)
result may (146)
result provide (45)
result reflect (34)
result will (368)
results subj ADJ
cluster 1
result dramatic (17)
www.just-the-word.com/show_examples.pl?triple=result_N+subj_of+show_V
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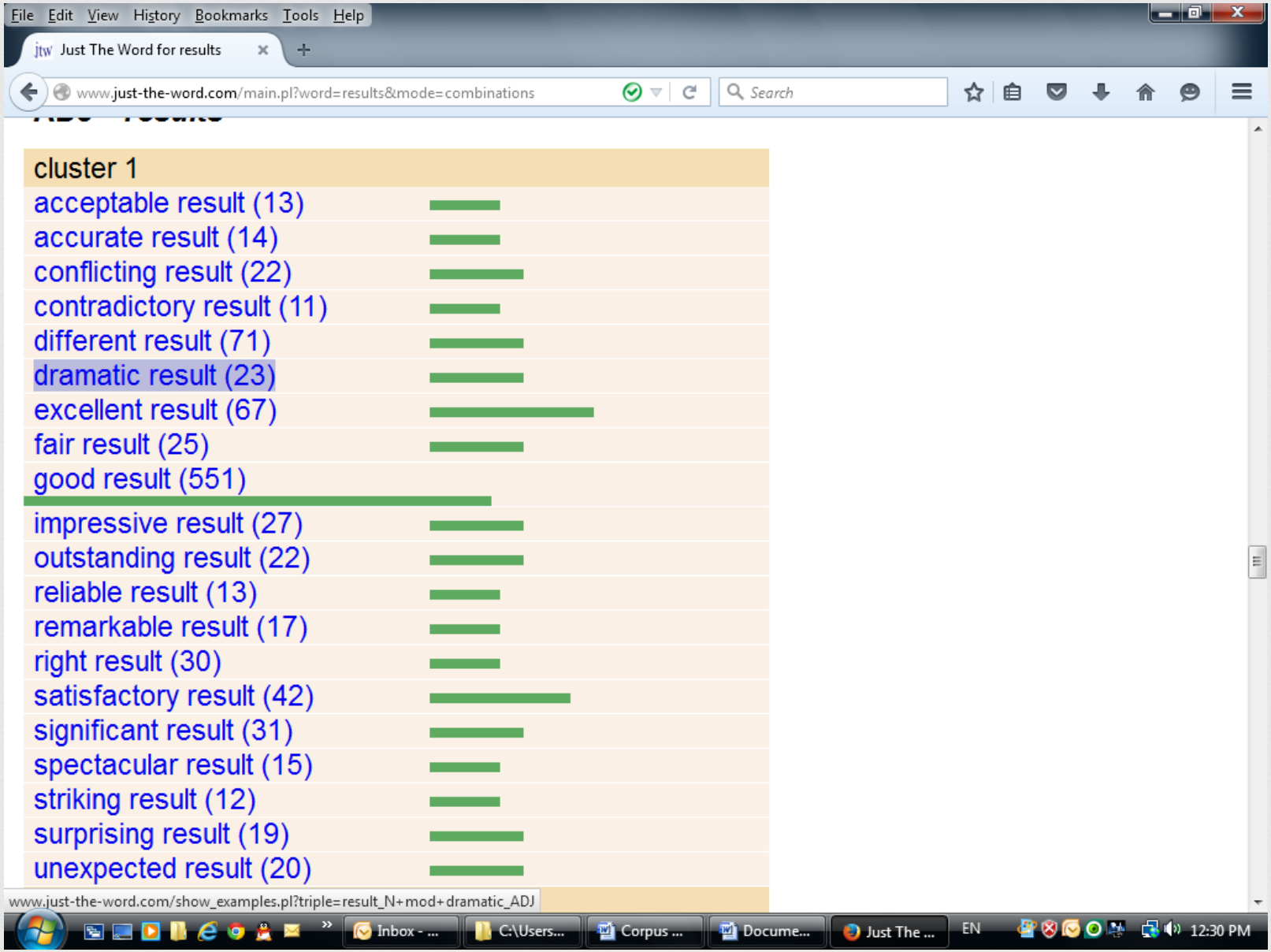
Results (2)


File Edit View History Bookmarks Tools Help
Just The Word for results
www.just-the-word.com/main.pl?word=results&mode=combinations
Search
cluster 1
acceptable result (13)
accurate result (14)
conflicting result (22)
contradictory result (11)
different result (71)
dramatic result (23)
excellent result (67)
fair result (25)
good result (551)
impressive result (27)
outstanding result (22)
reliable result (13)
remarkable result (17)
right result (30)
satisfactory result (42)
significant result (31)
spectacular result (15)
striking result (12)
surprising result (19)
unexpected result (20)
www.just-the-word.com/show_examples.pl?triple=result_N+mod+dramatic_ADJ
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Research

File Edit View History Bookmarks Tools Help
Just The Word for research
www.just-the-word.com/main.pl?word=research&mode=combinations
Search
carry out research (155)
conduct research (132)
direct research (20)
encourage research (24)
focus research (14)
fund research (43)
help with research (12)
promote research (22)
raise for research (17)
stimulate research (12)
support research (56)
support by research (11)
cluster 2
commission research (29)
concern research (34)
engage in research (45)
invest in research (14)
involve in research (38)
undertake research (122)
cluster 3
be research (20)
continue research (24)
research N , e.g. research project
N N *research* , e.g. Mass communication research
research N N , e.g. research development cost
PREP *research* , e.g. for research
N PREP *research* , e.g. result of research
ADJ PREP *research* , e.g. available for research
N and *research* , e.g. education and research
research and N , e.g. research and development
article *research* , e.g. .research
phrase (nn) nn is the frequency of usage
Good Word Combinations
Bad Word Combinations
www.just-the-word.com/show_examples.pl?triple=research_N+obj_of+fund_V
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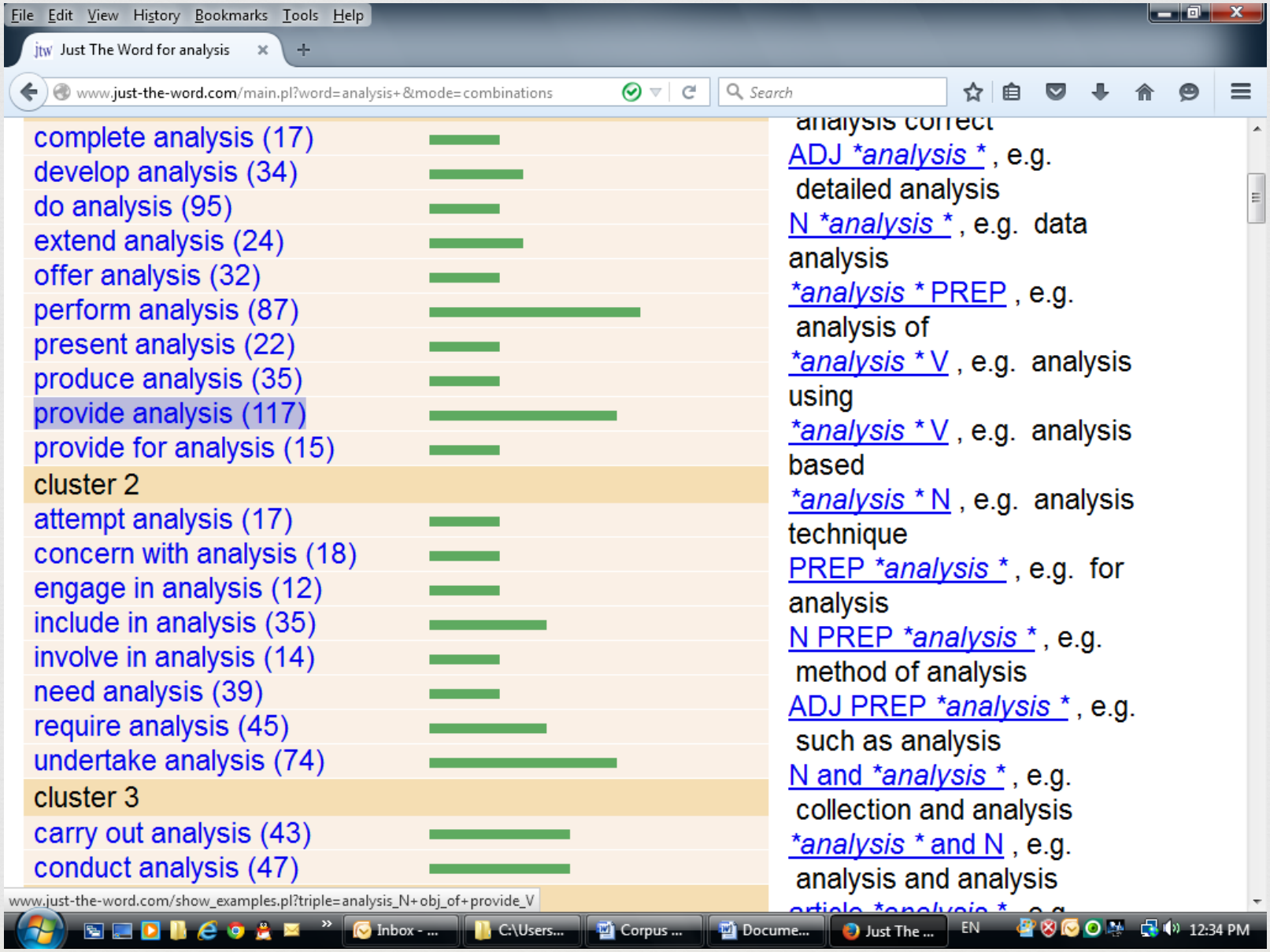
Analysis


File Edit View History Bookmarks Tools Help
Just The Word for analysis
www.just-the-word.com/main.pl?word=analysis+&mode=combinations
Search
complete analysis (17)
develop analysis (34)
do analysis (95)
extend analysis (24)
offer analysis (32)
perform analysis (87)
present analysis (22)
produce analysis (35)
provide analysis (117)
provide for analysis (15)
cluster 2
attempt analysis (17)
concern with analysis (18)
engage in analysis (12)
include in analysis (35)
involve in analysis (14)
need analysis (39)
require analysis (45)
undertake analysis (74)
cluster 3
carry out analysis (43)
conduct analysis (47)
www.just-the-word.com/show_examples.pl?triple=analysis_N+obj_of+provide_V
analysis correct
ADJ *analysis * , e.g. detailed analysis
N *analysis * , e.g. data analysis
*analysis * PREP , e.g. analysis of
*analysis * V , e.g. analysis using
*analysis * V , e.g. analysis based
*analysis * N , e.g. analysis technique
PREP *analysis * , e.g. for analysis
N PREP *analysis * , e.g. method of analysis
ADJ PREP *analysis * , e.g. such as analysis
N and *analysis * , e.g. collection and analysis
*analysis * and N , e.g. analysis and analysis
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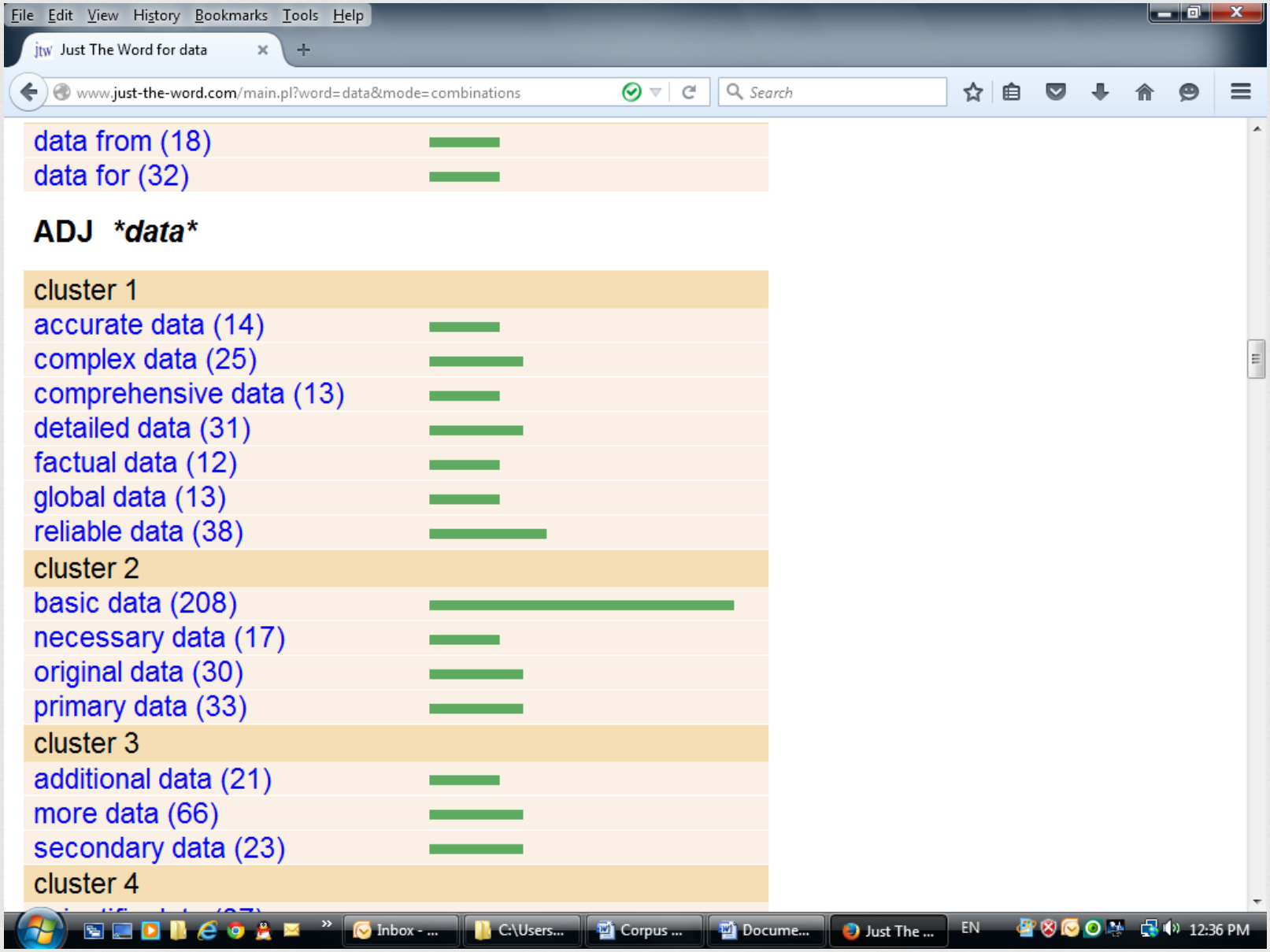
Data


File Edit View History Bookmarks Tools Help
Just The Word for data
www.just-the-word.com/main.pl?word=data&mode=combinations
Search
data from (18)
data for (32)
ADJ *data*
cluster 1
accurate data (14)
complex data (25)
comprehensive data (13)
detailed data (31)
factual data (12)
global data (13)
reliable data (38)
cluster 2
basic data (208)
necessary data (17)
original data (30)
primary data (33)
cluster 3
additional data (21)
more data (66)
secondary data (23)
cluster 4
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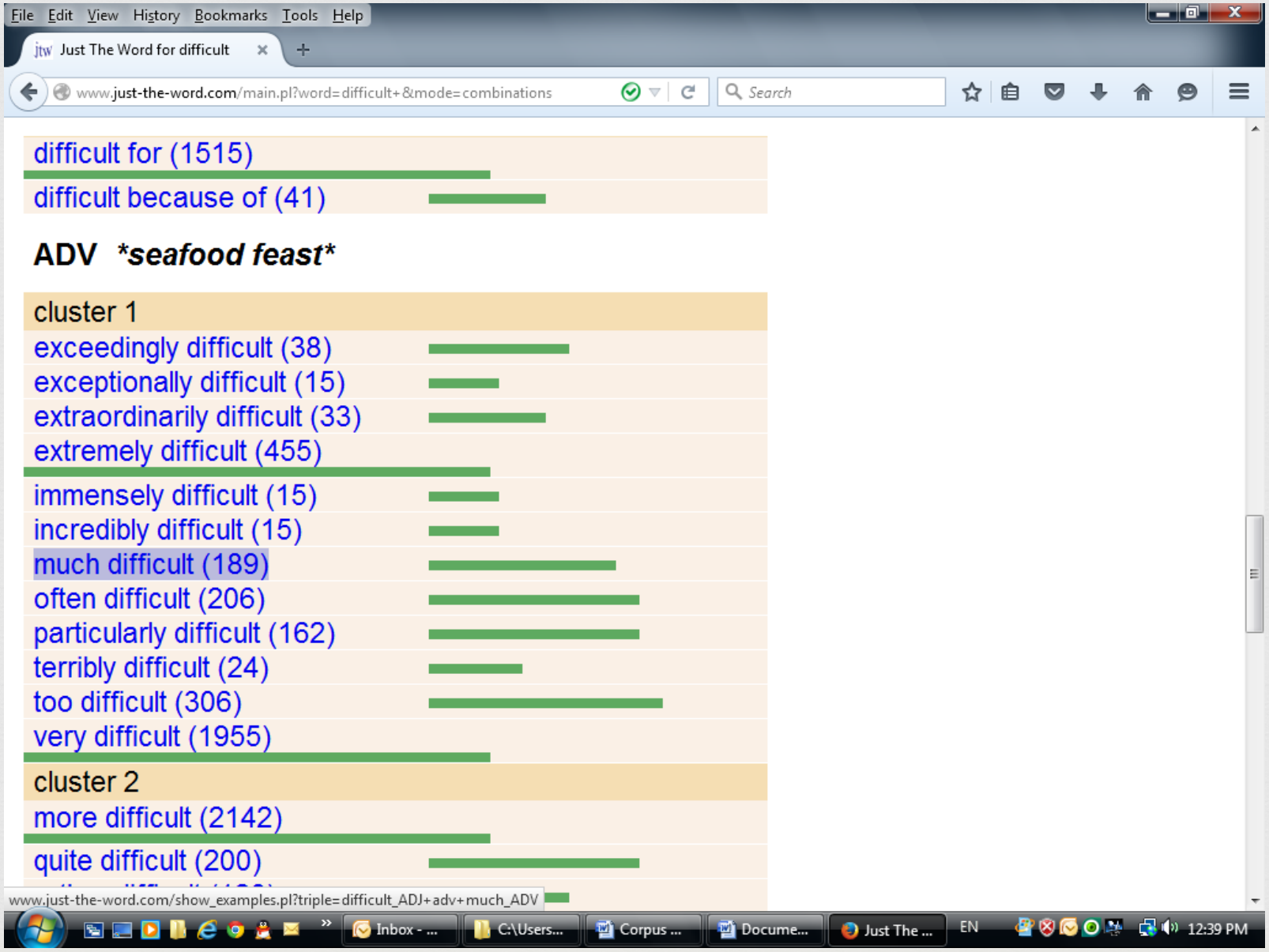
Difficult


File Edit View History Bookmarks Tools Help
Just The Word for difficult
www.just-the-word.com/main.pl?word=difficult+&mode=combinations
Search
difficult for (1515)
difficult because of (41)
ADV *seafood feast*
cluster 1
exceedingly difficult (38)
exceptionally difficult (15)
extraordinarily difficult (33)
extremely difficult (455)
immensely difficult (15)
incredibly difficult (15)
much difficult (189)
often difficult (206)
particularly difficult (162)
terribly difficult (24)
too difficult (306)
very difficult (1955)
cluster 2
more difficult (2142)
quite difficult (200)
www.just-the-word.com/show_examples.pl?triple=difficult_ADJ+adv+much_ADV
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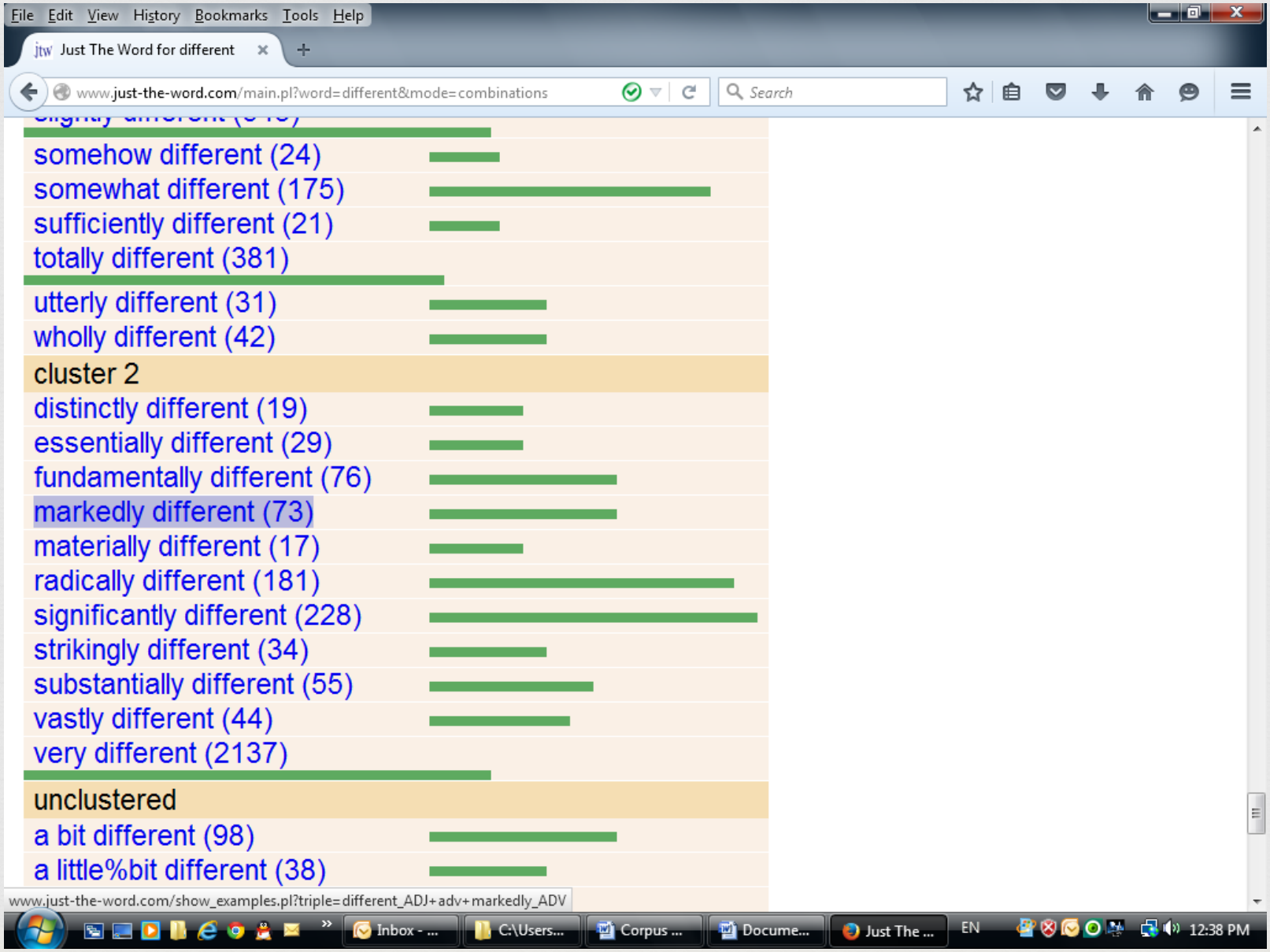
Different


File Edit View History Bookmarks Tools Help
Just The Word for different
www.just-the-word.com/main.pl?word=different&mode=combinations
Search
somehow different (24)
somewhat different (175)
sufficiently different (21)
totally different (381)
utterly different (31)
wholly different (42)
cluster 2
distinctly different (19)
essentially different (29)
fundamentally different (76)
markedly different (73)
materially different (17)
radically different (181)
significantly different (228)
strikingly different (34)
substantially different (55)
vastly different (44)
very different (2137)
unclustered
a bit different (98)
a little%bit different (38)
www.just-the-word.com/show_examples.pl?triple=different_ADJ+adv+markedly_ADV
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Colligation

Colligation: the grammatical associations a word may have.

Use *Lextutor* to find out the correct use of the following two words

- *Discuss/discuss about* an issue
- *Lack/lack of* natural resources

Discuss

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jtw
Home> Concordancers> English Input [«Back]
(Back keeps original settings)
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here
Concordance for equals DISCUSS in Corpus BNC_Written.txt sorted 1 wd right of key
Dictionary
Eng_Eng
Extract >>
>>
equals
discuss
in
BNCwritten (1m)
sort
1 wd
right
+assoc
All|Ø|any10|20|30|50
on
left
Hear it
in
Eng-US
4
v within un-, sub- or supernatural forces. DISCUSS (ROS is suitably startled -- Acidly.) Not
ENT DISCIPLINES WITHIN THE COMPANY MEET TO DISCUSS A WIDE RANGE OF ISSUES Guinness Brewing W
ether heads of state for the first time to DISCUSS an important social issue. Mr Grant adds:
cs, he said. The implication was clear: to DISCUSS Article 6 would be an irresponsible aberr
ent areas need time set aside for staff to DISCUSS general issues such as work organisation,
nians to the negotiating table in Cairo to DISCUSS holding elections in the West Bank and Ga
first grown-up person who assumed I could DISCUSS ideas. He had been a railway worker and w
nks with publishers strong in this area to DISCUSS joint venturing or licensing arrangements
for a move to an EC type approach which we DISCUSS later. Since the 1980 Competition Act it
ductors of each group would meet daily and DISCUSS minor adjustments to the programmes. Care
nity should become stronger, the issues we DISCUSS more diversified and our common endeavour
d friends from abroad privately and not to DISCUSS politics. He asked Admiral Scowcroft to t
cher forms of semantics, and in particular DISCUSS possible applications of the algebraic la
oncern but Republic Ministers continued to DISCUSS ratification of Sunningdale with the Nort
javascript:popper('show_context.pl?item=discuss&start=2257505&this_corp=BNC_Written.txt&gaps=no_gaps&sort_type=right&search_type=equals&unframed=true&lingo=English')
Inbox - Micr...
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Lack

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Concordance for equals LACK in Corpus BNC_Written.txt sorted 1 wd right of key
Dictionary
Eng_Eng
Extract >>
>>
equals
lack
in
BNCwritten (1m)
sort
1 wd
right
+assoc
All|Ø|any10|20|30|50
on
left
Hear it
in
Eng-US
God he may be a protector! -- that the king doth LACK a playfellow?" The queen-dowager's vc
into battle. Women of course, were considered to LACK courage as well as intelligence, howe
one, She is not fighting back Find de love dat yu LACK Dat's me sista yu beating upstairs. I
about crafts and hunting techniques. Nor did they LACK ethical principles -- contrary to muc
ty work in the humanities. There is still a great LACK in every language, of good textbooks
land use, and some historical artifacts, but will LACK modern industry and major transport f
f economist, lashed out at the Government for a " LACK of a coherent framework for monetary
-up in the leadership. Foreign diplomats said the LACK of a further reshuffle after a meetir
the great omissions at this year's Oscars was the LACK of a nomination for Kevin Kline's daz
low level of service provision, when added to the LACK of a sufficient employment alternativ
erman text. The hostile political climate and the LACK of academic employment in Austria for
hortage in the area. AREA B's main problem is the LACK of access it accords. This means that
, leisure and community facilities because of the LACK of access. The area would also be uns
r problem according to Lewis (1983, 149) is " the LACK of an adequate conceptual framework"
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and subject headings, particularly through keyword ACCESS **seems** to have encouraged an inherent need for subjec
site at Sangatte, some 400m from the coast. A huge ACCESS **shaft** 55m in diameter and 70m deep has been dug and p
ver supply and only personnel with keys can acquire ACCESS **Some** rack structures have been fully protected by sp
ions and discussions of relegating stock to closed ACCESS **stores**, the value of open access has continued to be
re and community facilities because of the lack of ACCESS **The** area would also be unsuitable for a business par
but also tend to use a broad search formulation to ACCESS **the** bibliographic tool, i.e., broader than their expr
nt-ends to DIALOG. The same system will be used to ACCESS **the** catalogue of our local library and to search ERIC
ed that users had other expectations from " public ACCESS **The** demand for subject access may have come as a sh
roblem assigned to him, the Problem Solver should: ACCESS **the** IPF Problem Control Facility problem report which
In adopting a broad search formulation strategy to ACCESS **the** library catalogue, the searcher not only attempts
problem using the IPF Problem Control Facility to ACCESS **the** problem report, and if relevant, also refer to th
ler file". Each member of the Computer Group should ACCESS **their** "reader file" regularly to determine if a probl
against hardware constraints, as much due to disk ACCESS **times** as to CPU speed. It was decided to produce futu
of population as shown in Table 6.4, or surveys of ACCESS **to** a car as shown in Table 6.5. At its most basic lev
ocomputers rather than the conventional multi-user ACCESS **to** a mainframe or large mini. They suggested that a p
ports he has created the Problem Administrator has ACCESS **to** all problem reports (using the System Administrato
inistrator's password), and the Problem Solver has ACCESS **to** all problem reports but may only list reports assi
ng realised. Guinness Brewing Worldwide has gained ACCESS **to** an important blond beer market, and a powerful por
th this kind of automatic system is restriction of ACCESS **to** anyone other than maintenance and inventory contro
library which provided me with my only uncensored ACCESS **to** books. When I was fifteen or sixteen I found a con
nked on each side by useful lobbies that give easy ACCESS **to** both lifts and the back stairs, the day nursery is

Connotation (1)

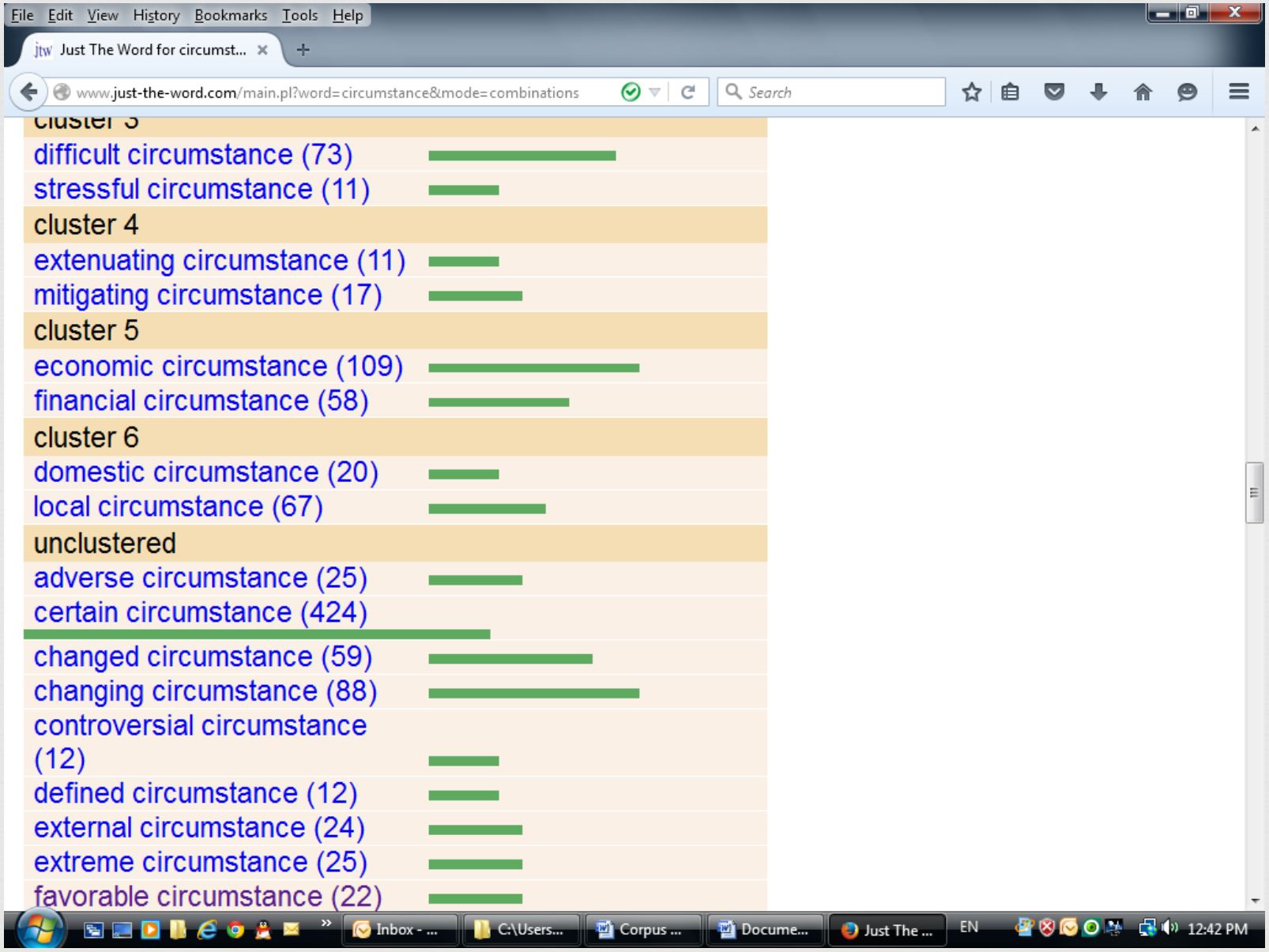
a. Popular
b. Aggressive

a. Circumstance

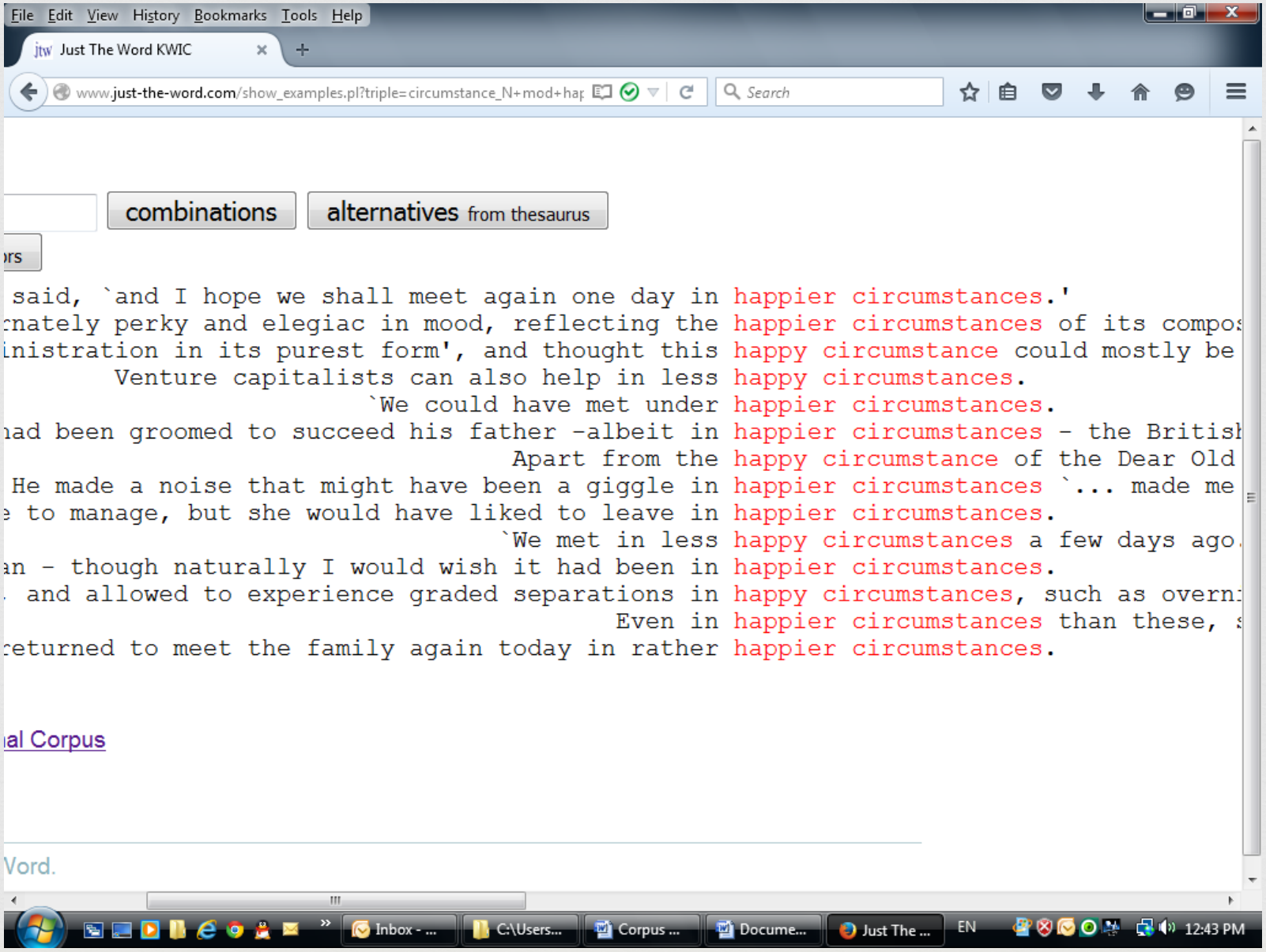
Connotation (2)

You must inform the lecturer as early as possible if there are circumstances causing you to be absent from an assessment.

Circumstance (1)



Circumstance (2)



Connotation (3)

" for" or "to"?

a. My love for/to you
b. My empathy for/to the poor

1. *My love* for *you will never die.*

2. *I can't stop my love* ***for*** *you.*

3. *What has He done* ***for*** *you lately?*

Semantic prosody

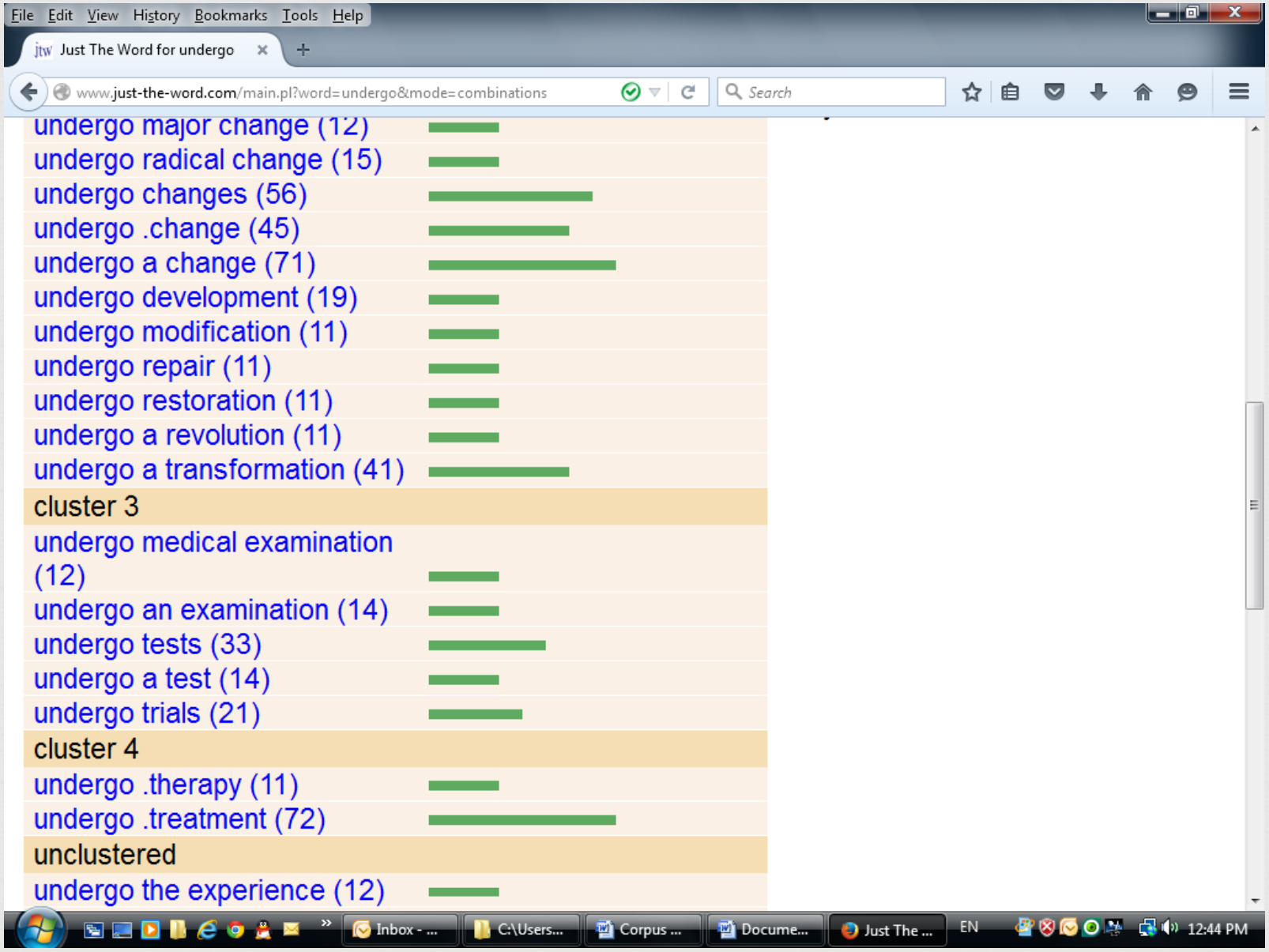
a. Undergo

b. Cause

c. Commit

d. Impose

Undergo


File Edit View History Bookmarks Tools Help
Just The Word for undergo
www.just-the-word.com/main.pl?word=undergo&mode=combinations
Search
undergo major change (12)
undergo radical change (15)
undergo changes (56)
undergo .change (45)
undergo a change (71)
undergo development (19)
undergo modification (11)
undergo repair (11)
undergo restoration (11)
undergo a revolution (11)
undergo a transformation (41)
cluster 3
undergo medical examination (12)
undergo an examination (14)
undergo tests (33)
undergo a test (14)
undergo trials (21)
cluster 4
undergo .therapy (11)
undergo .treatment (72)
unclustered
undergo the experience (12)
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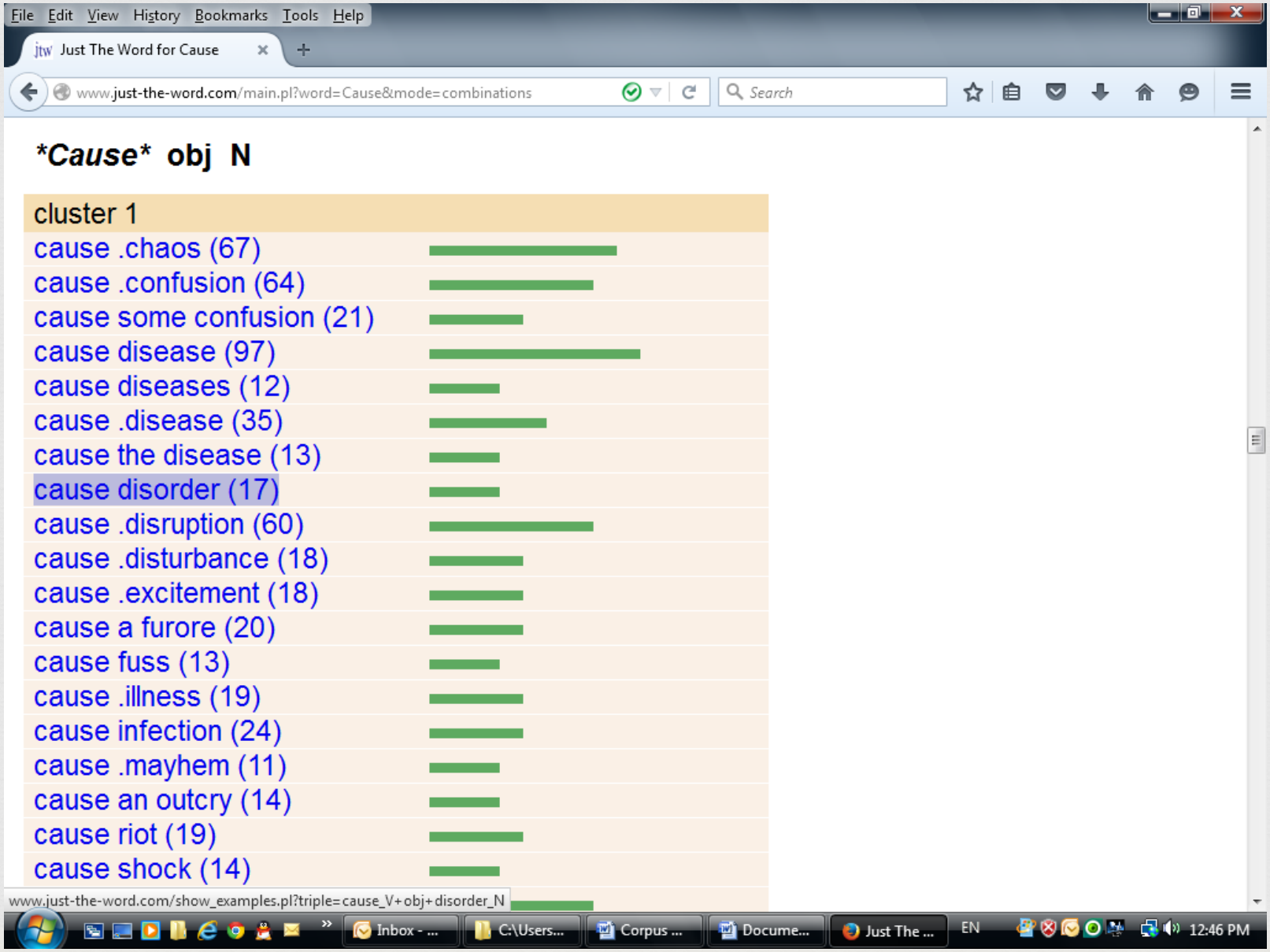
Cause


File Edit View History Bookmarks Tools Help
Just The Word for Cause
www.just-the-word.com/main.pl?word=Cause&mode=combinations
Search
Cause obj N
cluster 1
cause .chaos (67)
cause .confusion (64)
cause some confusion (21)
cause disease (97)
cause diseases (12)
cause .disease (35)
cause the disease (13)
cause disorder (17)
cause .disruption (60)
cause .disturbance (18)
cause .excitement (18)
cause a furore (20)
cause fuss (13)
cause .illness (19)
cause infection (24)
cause .mayhem (11)
cause an outcry (14)
cause riot (19)
cause shock (14)
www.just-the-word.com/show_examples.pl?triple=cause_V+obj+disorder_N
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Corpus ...
Docume...
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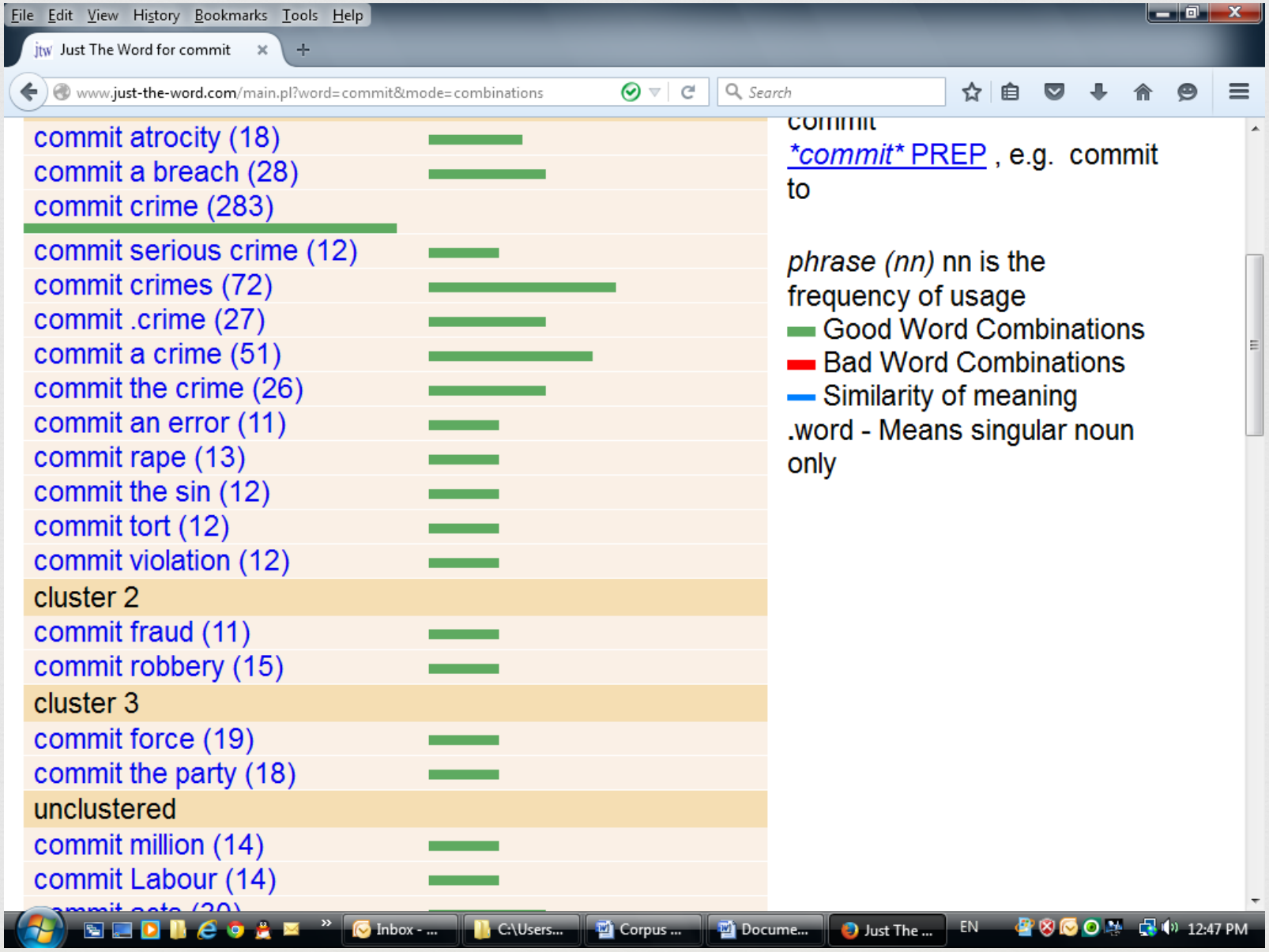
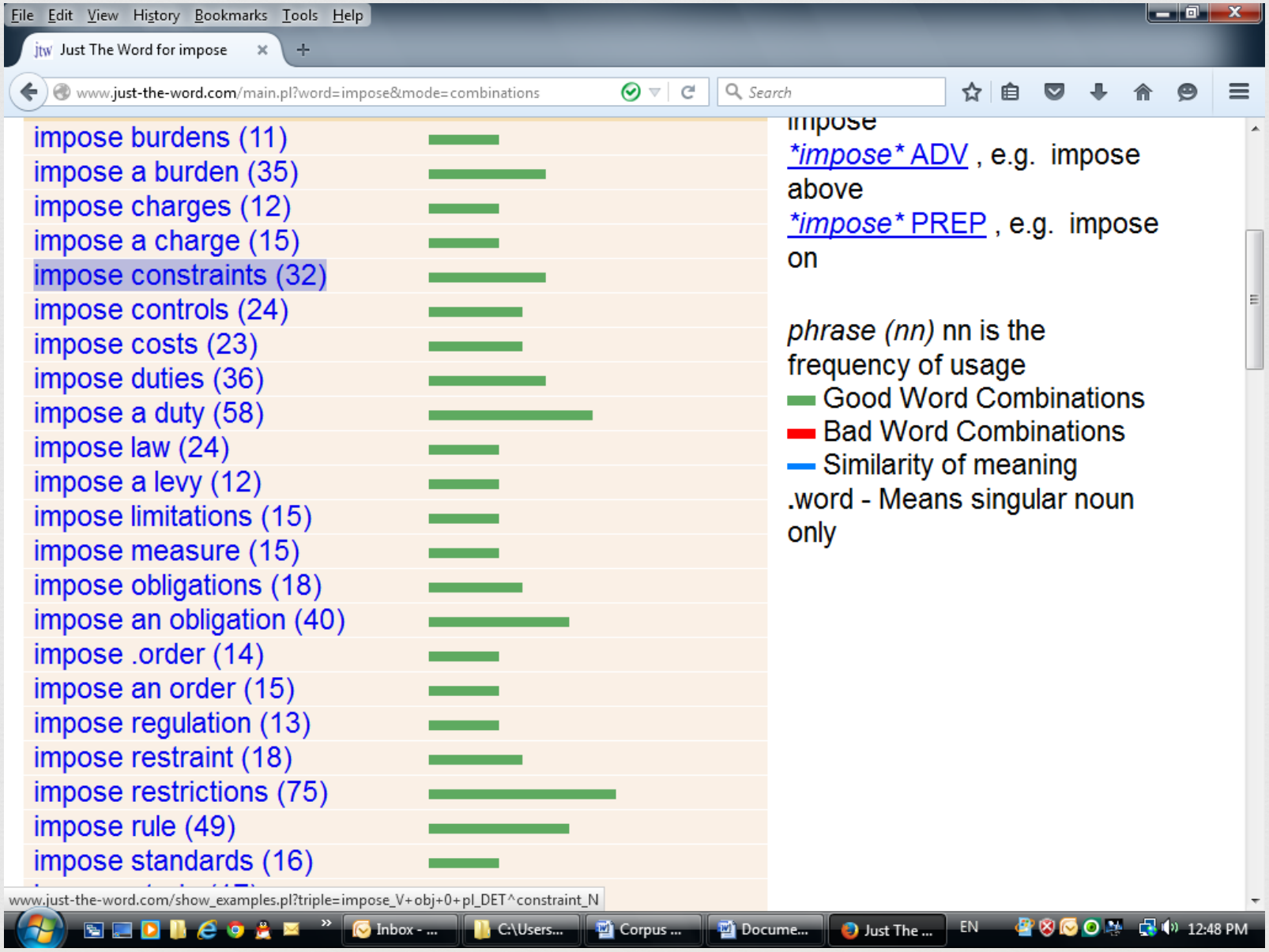
Commit


File Edit View History Bookmarks Tools Help
Just The Word for commit
www.just-the-word.com/main.pl?word=commit&mode=combinations
Search
commit atrocity (18)
commit a breach (28)
commit crime (283)
commit serious crime (12)
commit crimes (72)
commit .crime (27)
commit a crime (51)
commit the crime (26)
commit an error (11)
commit rape (13)
commit the sin (12)
commit tort (12)
commit violation (12)
cluster 2
commit fraud (11)
commit robbery (15)
cluster 3
commit force (19)
commit the party (18)
unclustered
commit million (14)
commit Labour (14)
commit PREP , e.g. commit to
phrase (nn) nn is the frequency of usage
Good Word Combinations
Bad Word Combinations
Similarity of meaning
.word - Means singular noun only
Inbox - ...
C:\Users...
Corpus ...
Docume...
Just The ...
EN
12:47 PM

Impose


File Edit View History Bookmarks Tools Help
Just The Word for impose
www.just-the-word.com/main.pl?word=impose&mode=combinations
Search
impose burdens (11)
impose a burden (35)
impose charges (12)
impose a charge (15)
impose constraints (32)
impose controls (24)
impose costs (23)
impose duties (36)
impose a duty (58)
impose law (24)
impose a levy (12)
impose limitations (15)
impose measure (15)
impose obligations (18)
impose an obligation (40)
impose .order (14)
impose an order (15)
impose regulation (13)
impose restraint (18)
impose restrictions (75)
impose rule (49)
impose standards (16)
impose ADV , e.g. impose above
impose PREP , e.g. impose on
phrase (nn) nn is the frequency of usage
Good Word Combinations
Bad Word Combinations
Similarity of meaning
.word - Means singular noun only
www.just-the-word.com/show_examples.pl?triple=impose_V+obj+0+pl_DET^constraint_N
Inbox - ...
C:\Users...
Corpus ...
Docume...
Just The ...
EN
12:48 PM

Academic Phrasebank

University of Manchester

1. **Stating the purpose of research**

An objective of this study was to investigate …
This thesis will examine the way in which the …
This study set out to investigate the usefulness of …
This dissertation aims to unravel some of the mysteries surrounding …
This dissertation seeks to explain the development of …
This study seeks to obtain data which will help to address these research gaps.

The main aim of this study is to investigate the differences between X and Y.
One purpose of this study was to assess the extent to which these factors were …

2. **Highlighting a knowledge gap in the field of study**

Very little is known about X in …
It is still not known whether …
The nature of X remains unclear.
What is not yet clear is the impact of X on …
The response of X to Y is not fully understood.
Causal factors leading to X remain speculative.
To date, there has been no reliable evidence that …
Little is known about X and it is not clear what factors …
Much uncertainty still exists about the relationship between …

Conclusion

Corpus-based tools can effectively assist learners with their writing of academic texts.

- Lextutor

http://lextutor.ca/conc/eng/

- Just the Word

http://www.just-the-word.com/

- Academic Phrasebank:

http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/

CoP & UGC projects
in enhancing Students' English Abilities through English across the Curriculum

- Other workshop topics?
- Join us!
- Contact:
  - Dr Julia Chen (ELC), 2766 7524 julia.chen@polyu.edu.hk
  - Ms Grace Lim (ELC), 2766 7499 grace.lim@polyu.edu.hk
  - Ms Leona Li (EDC), 2766 4432 leona.c.li@polyu.edu.hk

Join us!

Thank
You