

Original Paper

A Corpora-based Analysis of I was used to, I got used to, and I became used to

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Abstract

The goal of this paper is to provide an in-depth analysis of the frequency of I was used to, I got used to, and I became used to in the Corpus of Contemporary American English and the British National Corpus. The COCA clearly shows that I was used to may be the most preferable one for Americans, followed by I got used to, and I became used to, in that order. When it comes to the genre frequency of the COCA, it is interesting to note that in the fiction genre, I was used to may be the most commonly used one. The BNC clearly indicates, on the other hand, that I was used to may be the most preferred by British people, followed by I got used to, and I became used to. With respect to the genre frequency of the BNC, it is interesting to note that in the fiction genre, I was used to may be the most widely used. When it comes to the frequency of was used to and nouns, the expression was used to measure is the most preferable one for Americans, followed by was used to people, was used to rate, was used to power, was used to fuel, was used to group, and was used to film. With respect to the frequency of was used to and gerunds, the expression was used to being is the most preferable one for Americans, followed by was used to seeing, was used to having, was used to getting, was used to doing, was used to doing, was used to working, was used to hearing, and was used to going, in that order. Additionally, the COCA shows that got used to life and got used to things are the most preferred ones in America, followed by got used to people, and got used to weapons (got used to walking, got used to violence, got used to name calling), in that order. The COCA also indicates that got used to being is the most preferable one for Americans, followed by got used to seeing, got used to having, got used to hearing, got used to wearing, got used to living, and got used to using (got used to doing). The COCA further shows that became used to seeing is the most preferred by Americans and followed by became used to writing (became used to tying, became used to talking).

Keywords

corpus, COCA, BNC, *was used to*, *got used to*, *became used to*

1. Introduction

The ultimate goal of this paper is to provide an analysis of the use and frequency of *I was used to*, *I got used to*, and *I became used to* in the Corpus of Contemporary American English and the British National Corpus. In this paper, we delve into the frequency of three types in two corpora. The reason why we delve into the frequency of *I was used to*, *I got used to*, *I became used to* in two corpora is that these three types are synonymously used, but these three types are different in their use and preference. As pointed out by Murphy (2016, 2019), *I am used to (doing) something* means that it is not strange or new for me. These three types carry this meaning, but they are different in their use and preference. In this paper, we aim to consider which one is the most preferred by Americans and British people. We also consider the genre frequency of *I was used to*, *I got used to*, and *I became used to* in the COCA and BNC. Additionally, we examine the frequency of three types and nouns in the COCA. Also, we aim to consider the frequency of three types and gerunds in the COCA. Finally, by using the software NetMiner, we try to visualize the collocation of three types in the COCA. The organization of this paper is as follows. In section 2.1, we argue that *I was used to* may be the most preferable one for Americans, followed by *I got used to*, and *I became used to*, in that order. With respect to the genre frequency of the COCA, it is worthwhile noting that in the fiction genre, *I was used to* may be the most commonly used one. This in turn imply that American writers like using *I was used to* in their novels. In section 2.2, we contend that *I was used to* may be the most preferred by British people, followed by *I got used to*, and *I became used to*, in that order. When it comes to the genre frequency of the BNC, it is interesting to note that the type *I was used to* may be the most widely used one in the fiction genre. This in turn suggests that *I was used to* may be the most preferred one in American and British novels. In section 3, we maintain that the expression *was used to measure* is the most preferable one for Americans, followed by *was used to people*, *was used to rate*, *was used to power*, *was used to fuel*, *was used to group*, and *was used to film*, in that order. We also maintain that the expression *was used to being* is the most preferable one for Americans, followed by *was used to seeing*, *was used to having*, *was used to getting*, *was used to doing*, *was used to doing*, *was used to working*, *was used to hearing*, and *was used to going*, in that order. Additionally, we argue that the expressions *got used to life* and *got used to things* are the most preferred ones in America, followed by *got used to people*, and *got used to weapons* (*got used to walking*, *got used to violence*, *got used to name calling*), in that order. We further argue that the expression *got used to being* is the most preferable one for Americans, followed by *got used to seeing*, *got used to having*, *got used to hearing*, *got used to wearing*, *got used to living*, and *got used to using* (*got used to doing*), in that order. Finally, we contend that the expression *became used to seeing* is the most preferred by Americans and followed by *became used to writing* (*became used to tying*, *became used to talking*), in that order.

2. A Frequency Analysis of *I was used to*, *I got used to*, and *I became used to*

2.1 The Genre Frequency of *I was used to*, *I got used to*, and *I became used to* in the COCA

The main goal of this section is to provide a genre analysis of *I was used to*, *I got used to*, and *I became used to* in the COCA (1990-2010). Table 1 indicates the use and frequency of *I was used to*, *I got used to*, and *I became used to* in eight genres.

Table 1. Genre Frequency of *I was used to*, *I got used to*, and *I became used to* in the COCA

Type	All	BLOG	WEB	TV/M	SPOK	FIC	MAG	NEWS	ACAD
I was used to	528	58	48	26	51	215	67	44	19
I got used to	257	43	35	41	25	59	32	19	3
I became used to	7	1	1	1	0	3	1	0	0

An important question is “Which type was the most preferred by Americans?” That *I was used to* shows the highest frequency among three types indicates that it was the most preferred by Americans. The overall frequency of the type *I was used to* is 528 tokens and it has the highest proportion. On the other hand, the type *I got used to* ranks second in the COCA and the type *I became used to* ranks third. Thus, it seems reasonable to hypothesize that the type *I was used to* is the most preferable one for Americans, followed by *I got used to*, and *I became used to*, in that order.

In which genre is the type *I was used to* the most frequently used? Table 1 clearly shows that in the fiction genre of eight genres, *I was used to* may be the most widely used one. This may imply that American writers like using *I was used to* in their novels. It is important to note that the type *I got used to* and *I became used to* may be the most widely used ones in the fiction genre. From this, it is clear that *I was used to*, *I got used to*, and *I became used to* may be the most preferable ones for American writers. It is worth noting that the type *I was used to* is the second most preferred one in the magazine genre. More specifically, the frequency of the type *I was used to* is 67 tokens. The frequency of *I was used to* may be low as compared to the fiction genre, but its frequency is high as compared to the other genres. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that American journalists like using *I was used to* in their magazines. It is interesting to note that the type *I was used to* is the third most preferred one in the blog genre. The blog is an online journal where bloggers write something about their hobbies and experiences. That *I was used to* ranks third in the blog genre may suggest that American bloggers are keen on using *I was used to*. It is worth pointing out that *I got used to* ranks second in the blog genre. This in turn suggests that as in the case of *I was used to*, bloggers also prefer using *I got used to*. It is interesting to note that the type *I got used to* is the third most preferred one in the TV/movie genre. This may imply that celebs are keen on using *I got used to* in everyday conversation.

It is important to note that in the blog, web, TV/movie, and magazine genres, the type *I became used to* ranks second. It must be noted, however, that the frequency of *I became used to* may be low (1 token).

This in turn indicates that the type *I became used to* is rarely used in these genres. Thus, it can be inferred from this that Americans do not prefer this type in these genres. Additionally, it is significant to note that in the case of the spoken, newspaper, and academic genres, the type *I became used to* shows no frequency. This in turn implies that Americans avoid this type in these genres.

It is worthwhile noting that *I was used to* ranks fourth in the spoken genre. Note that the frequency of *I was used to* may be not high (51 tokens), as compared to the other genres. The frequency of *I was used to* is not high as compared to the fiction genre, but *I was used to* is the most frequently used one in the spoken genre, followed by *I got used to*, and *I became used to*, in that order. It is worth pointing out that *I was used to* ranks fifth in the web genre. Most importantly, *I was used to* is the most widely used one in the web genre, followed by *I got used to*, and *I became used to*, in that order.

2.2 The Genre frequency of *I was used to*, *I got used to*, and *I became used to* in the BNC

In what follows, we aim to examine the genre frequency of *I was used to*, *I got used to*, *I became used to* in the BNC (1980s-1993). We compare the results from the COCA and those from the BNC in order to observe national variation. Table 2 indicates the use and genre frequency of *I was used to*, *I got used to*, and *I became used to* in the BNC:

Table 2. Genre Frequency of *I was used to*, *I got used to*, and *I became used to* in the BNC

Type	SPOKEN	FICTION	MAGAZINE	NEWSPAPER	NON-ACAD	ACADEMIC	MISC	ALL
I was used to	4	12	2	3	3	2	7	33
I got used to	3	3	2	0	3	0	1	12
I became used to	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

An important question that naturally arises is “Which type is the most frequently used one in the UK?” Table 2 clearly indicates that *I was used to* may be the most widely used one in the UK. The type *I got used to* ranks second, whereas the type *I became used to* ranks third. Thus, it is reasonable to hypothesize that *I was used to* may be the most preferred by British people, followed by *I got used to*, and *I became used to*, in that order. It is interesting to note that *I became used to* shows no frequency in seven genres. This in turn suggests that just as in the case of Americans, British people avoid the type *I became used to*.

When it comes to *I became used to*, it is worth pointing out that it may be the most undesired type among three types. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that Americans and British people avoid the type *I became used to*. An important question that naturally arises is “In which genre is the type *I was used to* the most commonly used one?” Table 2 clearly indicates that the type *I was used to* may be the most

widely used one in the fiction genre since it obtains the highest frequency and the highest proportion. This in turn indicates that the type *I was used to* may be the most preferred by British writers in the fiction genre. Just as in the case of the BNC, the COCA shows that the type *I was used to* may be the most preferred by American writers in the fiction genre. Americans and British people show the same pattern with respect to the use of the type *I was used to*. Simply put, American and British writers prefer using *I was used to* to using the types *I got used to* and *I became used to*.

An immediate question is “In which genre is the type *I got used to* the most commonly used one?” Table 2 clearly shows that *I got used to* may be the most frequently used one in the spoken, fiction, non-academic genres. This in turn suggests that the type *I got used to* may be the most preferred by British people and British writers. When it comes to the spoken genre of the BNC, *I got used to* shows the highest frequency along with the fiction and non-academic genres. From this, it is clear that British people prefer using the type *I got used to* in daily conversation. Additionally, this indicates that British writers often tend to use the type *I got used to* in their fictions. Note, however, that the type *I was used to* may be preferred over *I got used to* by British people. In addition, the type *I was used to* may be preferred over *I got used to* by Americans. That is, Americans and British people show the same pattern with respect to the use of *I was used to* and *I got used to* in the spoken and fiction genres.

It is interesting to note that the type *I got used to* ranks fourth in the magazine genre. The frequency of *I got used to* is not high (2 tokens), but it may be preferred by British journalists. It must be emphasized that *I got used to* and *I was used to* show the same frequency (2 tokens). This indicates that British journalists prefer using both *I was used to* and *I got used to* at the same time. Finally, the type *I became used to* shows no frequency in all genres, which in turn indicates that British people do not like using the type *I became used to*. The same applies to Americans. Just as in the case of the BNC, the COCA clearly indicates that Americans do not like using the type *I became used to*.

3. The Frequency of Nouns and Gerunds in the COCA

In what follows, we aim to examine the frequency of the collocation of *was used to* in the COCA. Table 3 indicates the collocation of *was used to* in the COCA:

Table 3. Frequency of *was used to* and Nouns in the COCA

Number	Collocation of <i>was used to</i>	Frequency
1	was used to measure	266
2	was used to people	14
3	was used to rate	10
4	was used to power	8
5	was used to fuel	7
6	was used to group	6

7	was used to film	5
8	was used to hearing	5
9	was used to pressure	5
10	was used to thinking	5
11	was used to funnel	4
12	was used to segment	4
13	was used to image	3
14	was used to culture	3
15	was used to structure	3

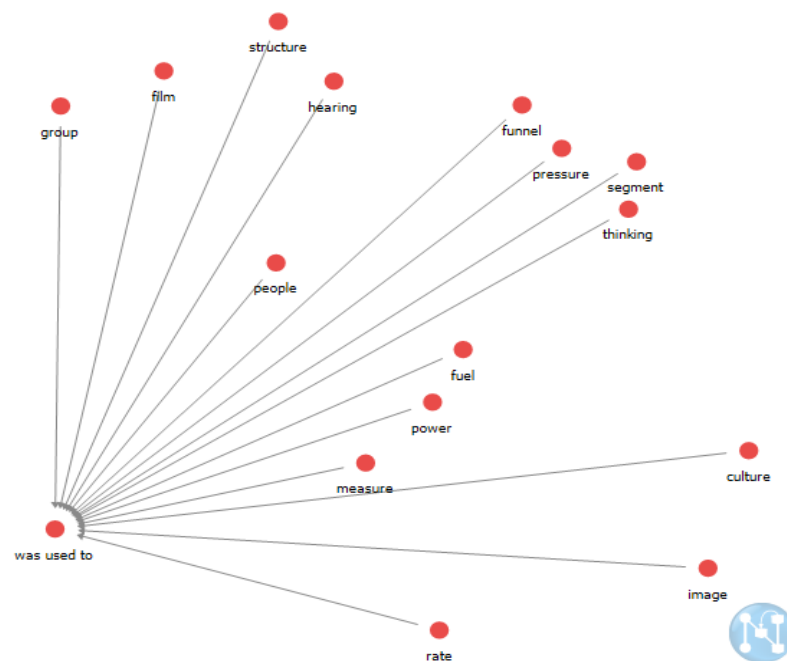


Figure 1 Visualizing the Collocation of *was used to* in the COCA

An important question is “Which noun is the most frequently used one along with *was used to*?” Table 3 clearly indicates that the expression *was used to measure* is the most widely used one in America. This in turn implies that the noun *measure* may be the most preferred by Americans along with *was used to*. As illustrated in Table 3, the expression *was used to measure* is the most preferable one for Americans, followed by *was used to people*, *was used to rate*, *was used to power*, *was used to fuel*, *was used to group*, and *was used to film*, in that order. It is worthwhile noting that the collocation *was used to people* is the second most preferred one in America. Interestingly, the collocation *was used to power* is the fourth most preferred one in America. This in turn implies that power might be not strange or new for Americans. As indicated in Figure 1, the shorter the line is, the higher the frequency of the collocation is. As alluded to in Figure 1, the line of the type *I was used to* and the noun *measure* is the shortest, which in turn indicates that the expression *I was used to measure* shows the highest frequency.

Now attention is paid to the frequency of the collocation of *was used to*. Table 4 shows the collocation of *was used to* in the COCA:

Table 4. The Frequency of *was used to* and Gerunds in the COCA

Number	Collocation of <i>was used to</i>	Frequency
1	was used to being	115
2	was used to seeing	52
3	was used to having	34
4	was used to getting	29
5	was used to doing	26
6	was used to working	22
7	was used to hearing	15
8	was used to going	14
9	was used to taking	12
10	was used to playing	11
11	was used to dealing	10
12	was used to living	9
13	was used to making	7
14	was used to running	7
15	was used to giving	6

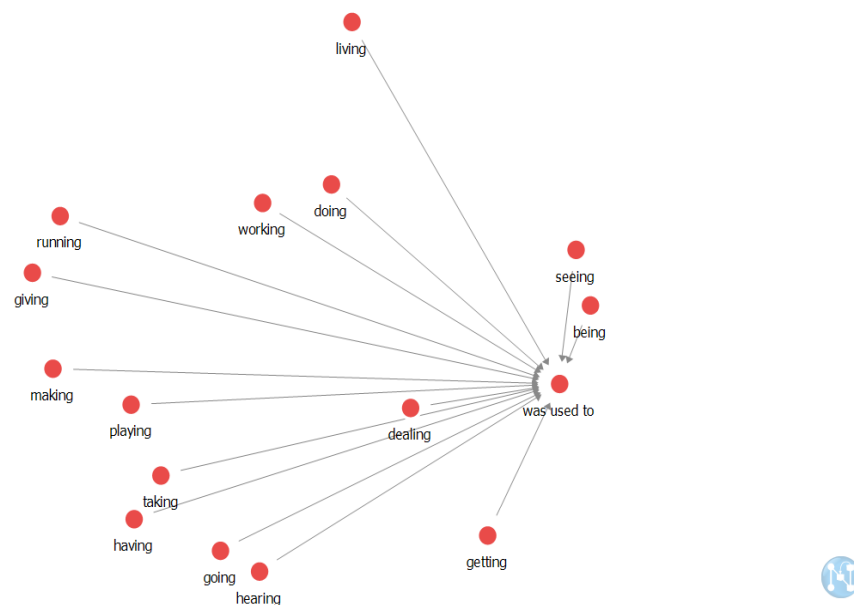


Figure 2. Visualizing the Collocation of *was used to* in the COCA

An important question is “Which gerund is the most commonly used one along with *was used to* in America?” Table 4 clearly indicates that the gerund *being* is the most widely used collocation along with *was used to* in America. This in turn suggests that the expression *was used to being* is the most preferred by Americans. As alluded to in Table 4, *was used to being* is the most preferable one for Americans, followed by *was used to seeing*, *was used to having*, *was used to getting*, *was used to doing*, *was used to doing*, *was used to working*, *was used to hearing*, and *was used to going*, in that order. It is interesting to note that *was used to seeing* is the second most preferred one in America. The everyday expressions *was used to doing* and *was used to working* rank fifth and sixth, respectively. Again, the everyday expression *was used to playing* ranks tenth in America. As alluded to in Figure 2, the line of the type *I was used to* and the gerund *being* is the shortest, which in turn implies that *I was used to being* shows the highest frequency. We thus conclude that the gerund *being* is the most frequently used one along with *was used to* in America.

In what follows, we aim to examine the collocation of *got used to*. Table 5 indicates the frequency of the collocation of *got used to* in the COCA:

Table 5. Frequency of *got used to* and Nouns in the COCA

Number	Collocation of <i>got used to</i> and nouns	Frequency
1	got used to life	3
2	got used to things	3
3	got used to people	2
4	got used to weapons	1
5	got used to walking	1
6	got used to violence	1
7	got used to name-calling	1
8	got used to mom	1
9	got used to them	1
10	got used to strangers	1
11	got used to rip	1
12	got used to reading	1
13	got used to labor	1
14	got used to kids	1

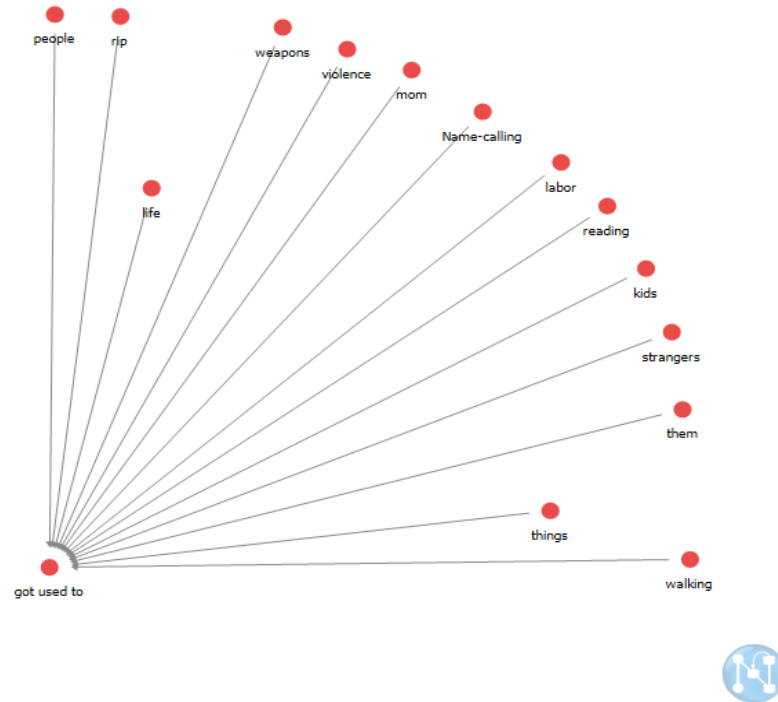


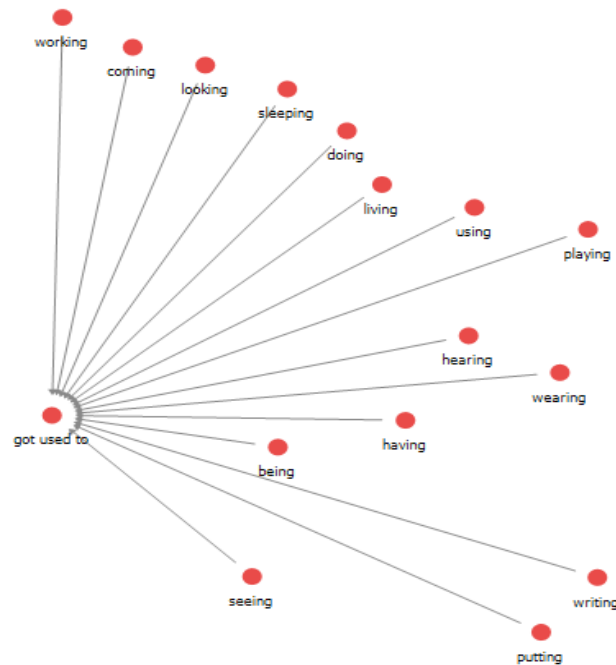
Figure 3. Visualizing the Collocation of *got used to* in the COCA

An important question is “Which noun is the most frequently used one along with *got used to* in America?” Table 5 clearly shows that the nouns *life* and *things* are the most commonly used ones along with *got used to* in America. This in turn suggests that *got used to life* and *got used to things* are the most preferable ones for Americans. As illustrated in Table 5, *got used to life* and *got used to things* are the most preferred ones in America, followed by *got used to people*, and *got used to weapons* (*got used to walking*, *got used to violence*, *got used to name calling*), in that order. That *got used to life* and *got used to things* rank first suggests that Americans are very much interested in life and things. Additionally, that the expression *got used to people* ranks third in turn indicates that that they are used to people is obviously a matter of great interest. It is interesting to note that *got used to name-calling* ranks fourth in the COCA. As illustrated in Figure 3, the line of the type *I was used to* and the nouns *life* and *things* is the shortest, which in turn indicates that *I was used to life/things* show(s) the highest frequency. We thus conclude that the nouns *life* and *things* are the most preferable ones along with *got used to* in America.

Now attention is paid to the collocation of *got used to* in the COCA:

Table 6. Frequency of *got used to* and Gerunds in the COCA

Number	Collocation of <i>got used to</i>	Frequency
1	got used to being	28
2	got used to seeing	27
3	got used to having	19
4	got used to hearing	8
5	got used to wearing	7
6	got used to living	6
7	got used to using	5
8	got used to doing	5
9	got used to looking	4
10	got used to coming	4
11	got used to sleeping	4
12	got used to playing	3
13	got used to putting	3
14	got used to working	3
15	got used to writing	2

**Figure 4. Visualizing the Collocation of *got used to* in the COCA**

An immediate question is “Which gerund is the most preferred by Americans along with *got used to*?” Table 6 clearly shows that the gerund *being* is the most frequently used one in America. Thus, this in turn implies that *got used to being* is the most preferred by Americans. As indicated in Table 6, *got used to being* is the most preferable one for Americans, followed by *got used to seeing*, *got used to having*, *got used to hearing*, *got used to wearing*, *got used to living*, and *got used to using* (*got used to doing*), in that order. Noteworthy is that *got used to seeing* is the second most preferred one in America. The everyday expression *got used to sleeping* ranks eleventh and again the everyday idiom *got used to working* ranks fourteenth in the COCA. Just as in the case of the collocation of *was used to*, *got used to* shows almost the same pattern with respect to the use of gerunds. That is to say, *got used to being* and *was used to being* are the most widely used ones in America, *got used to seeing* and *was used to seeing* are the second most preferred ones, and *got used to having* and *was used to having* are the third most preferred ones. We thus conclude that *got used to being* and *was used to being* are the most preferred by Americans.

In what follows, we aim to examine the frequency of *became used to* and nouns in the COCA. Table 7 indicates the collocation of *became used to* in the COCA:

Table 7. Frequency of *became used to* and Nouns in the COCA

Number	Collocation of <i>became used to</i> and nouns	Frequency
1	became used to republicans	1
2	became used to people	1
3	became used to killing	1

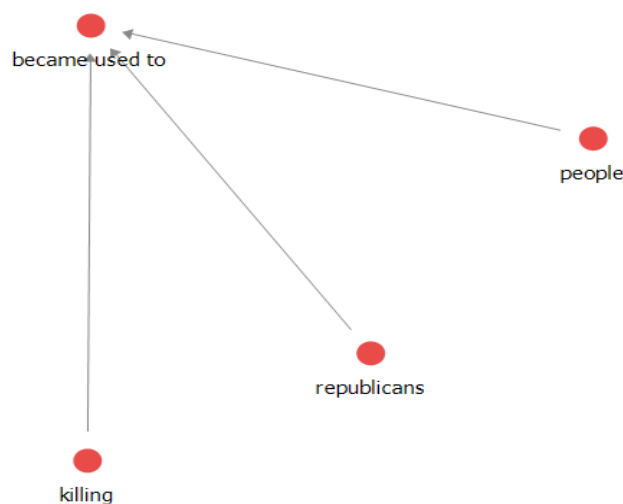


Figure 5. Visualizing the Collocation of *became used to* in the COCA

As illustrated in Table 7, *became used to* and three nouns are inseparably connected, as it were. The collocations *became used to republicans*, *became used to people*, and *became used to killing* show the low frequency in the COCA. This in turn indicates that Americans do not like using the type *became used to* in daily conversation, thus resulting in the low frequency. Interestingly, *was used to people* and *got used to people* rank second and third in the COCA, respectively. We take this as indicating that Americans are very much interested in people and pursue relationships.

Now attention is paid to the collocation of *became used to* in the COCA:

Table 8. Frequency of *became used to* and Gerunds in the COCA

Number	Collocation of <i>became used to</i> and gerunds	Frequency
1	<i>became used to seeing</i>	3
2	<i>became used to writing</i>	1
3	<i>became used to trying</i>	1
4	<i>became used to talking</i>	1
5	<i>became used to paying</i>	1
6	<i>became used to looking</i>	1
7	<i>became used to downloading</i>	1

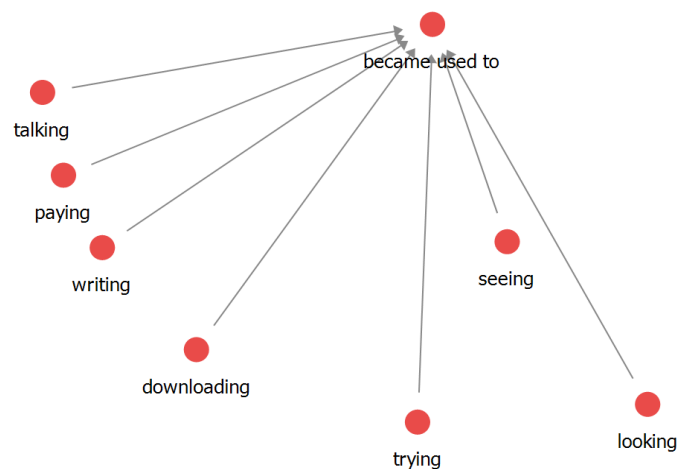


Figure 6. Visualizing the Collocation of *became used to* in the COCA

An important question that naturally arises is “Which gerund is the most preferred by Americans?” Table 8 clearly shows that *became used to seeing* is the most commonly used one in America. This in turn implies that *became used to seeing* may be the most preferable one for Americans. As alluded to in Table 8, *became used to seeing* is the most preferred by Americans and followed by *became used to*

writing (became used to tying, became used to talking), in that order. It should be emphasized, however, that the frequency of the collocation of *became used to* may be not high, as compared to that of gerunds along with *was used to* and *got used to*. Again, this in turn implies that Americans do not like using *became used to*. We thus conclude that the gerund *seeing* is the most preferred one along with *became used to*.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, we have provided a detailed analysis of the frequency of *I was used to*, *I got used to*, and *I became used to* in the COCA and BNC. In section 2.1, we have argued that *I was used to* may be the most preferred by Americans, followed by *I got used to*, and *I became used to*, in that order. With respect to the genre frequency of the COCA, it is worth noting that in the fiction genre of eight genres, *I was used to* may be the most widely used one. This may imply that American writers like using *I was used to* in their novels. In section 2.2, we have further argued that *I was used to* may be the most preferred by British people, followed by *I got used to*, and *I became used to*, in that order. When it comes to the genre frequency of the BNC, it is noteworthy that the type *I was used to* may be the most widely used one in the fiction genre. This in turn suggests that *I was used to* may be the most preferred one in American and British novels. In section 3, we have contended that the expression *was used to measure* is the most preferable one for Americans, followed by *was used to people*, *was used to rate*, *was used to power*, *was used to fuel*, *was used to group*, and *was used to film*, in that order. We have also maintained that *was used to being* is the most preferable one for Americans, followed by *was used to seeing*, *was used to having*, *was used to getting*, *was used to doing*, *was used to doing*, *was used to working*, *was used to hearing*, and *was used to going*, in that order. Additionally, we have argued that *got used to life* and *got used to things* are the most preferred ones in America, followed by *got used to people*, and *got used to weapons (got used to walking, got used to violence, got used to name calling)*, in that order. We have also argued that the expression *got used to being* is the most preferable one for Americans, followed by *got used to seeing*, *got used to having*, *got used to hearing*, *got used to wearing*, *got used to living*, and *got used to using (got used to doing)*, in that order. We have further argued that the expression *became used to seeing* is the most preferred by Americans and followed by *became used to writing (became used to tying, became used to talking)*, in that order.

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