University of Huddersfield Repository

Karpenko-Seccombe, Tatyana

Integrating Corpus analysis into everyday classroom practice

Original Citation

Karpenko-Seccombe, Tatyana (2015) Integrating Corpus analysis into everyday classroom practice. InForm, 15. pp. 18-20.

This version is available at http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/33166/

The University Repository is a digital collection of the research output of the University, available on Open Access. Copyright and Moral Rights for the items on this site are retained by the individual author and/or other copyright owners. Users may access full items free of charge; copies of full text items generally can be reproduced, displayed or performed and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided:

- The authors, title and full bibliographic details is credited in any copy;
- A hyperlink and/or URL is included for the original metadata page; and
- The content is not changed in any way.

For more information, including our policy and submission procedure, please contact the Repository Team at: E.mailbox@hud.ac.uk.

http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/

First steps to integrating Corpus analysis into everyday classroom practice

Abstract
Language teaching is an exciting area for applying corpus linguistics. This article gives a glimpse into practical applications of Concordancers in academic writing and provides examples of Concordance exercises that can be used in the classroom to introduce students to working with corpora.

Dr Tatyana Karpenko-Seccombe

t.karpenko-seccombe@hud.ac.uk (work); tatyana@gogol.f9.co.uk (home)

15 Garden Terrace, Hebden Bridge, West Yorks, UK HX78BL

University of Huddersfield

Senior Lecturer in English for Academic Purposes

First steps to integrating Corpus analysis into everyday classroom practice

The aim of the article is to highlight the importance of data-driven learning for developing student autonomy by empowering and motivating students to do linguistic mini-researches that lead, in turn, to the discovery of important linguistic phenomena. The article presents several ways in which Concordancers and corpora[1] can be used in everyday classroom practice within the context of developing student autonomy.

The classroom use of Concordancers is largely based on the principle of Data Driven Learning (Johns 1994) and discovery or serendipity learning (Bernardini 2000), one of the main tenets of which is the idea that students are more likely to retain and recall information which they discover for themselves as a result of collocational analysis supported by grammatical and frequency analyses.

In language teaching these same methods have also started to take hold. The concept of autonomous language learning was famously pioneered by Holec, who defines autonomy as 'the ability to take charge of one's own learning' (1981, p. 3). Krashen in 1981 started promoting autonomy in language acquisition and learner control by searching for, and discovering, new material and resources as well as choosing the time, place, intensity and pace of learning.

The uses of Concordancers may range from very simple tasks like checking the correct use of prepositions or place of connectors, to more sophisticated tasks, for example, exploring word collocations, making decisions about correct word usage, analysing and using information about word frequencies.

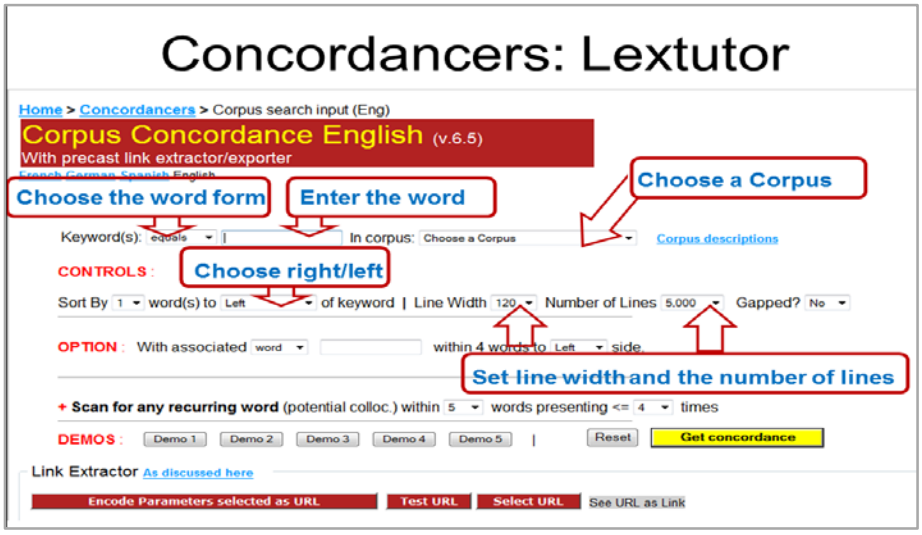
In this article I will describe some easy ways in which Concordancers can be introduced into the EAP classroom. These ways include checking prepositions and common phrases, getting help with some grammatical issues, for example singular and plural forms, finding examples of authentic collocations.

Corpora and Concordancers

Among a striking variety of Concordancers and corpora available now for teachers and learners, I find The Compleat Lexical Tutor http://lextutor.ca/conc/eng/, Sketch Engine open access https://the.sketchengine.co.uk/open/ and COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English, academic) http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/ particularly useful for the purposes of my students because they are user-friendly, open access, easy to teach and to learn, and free.

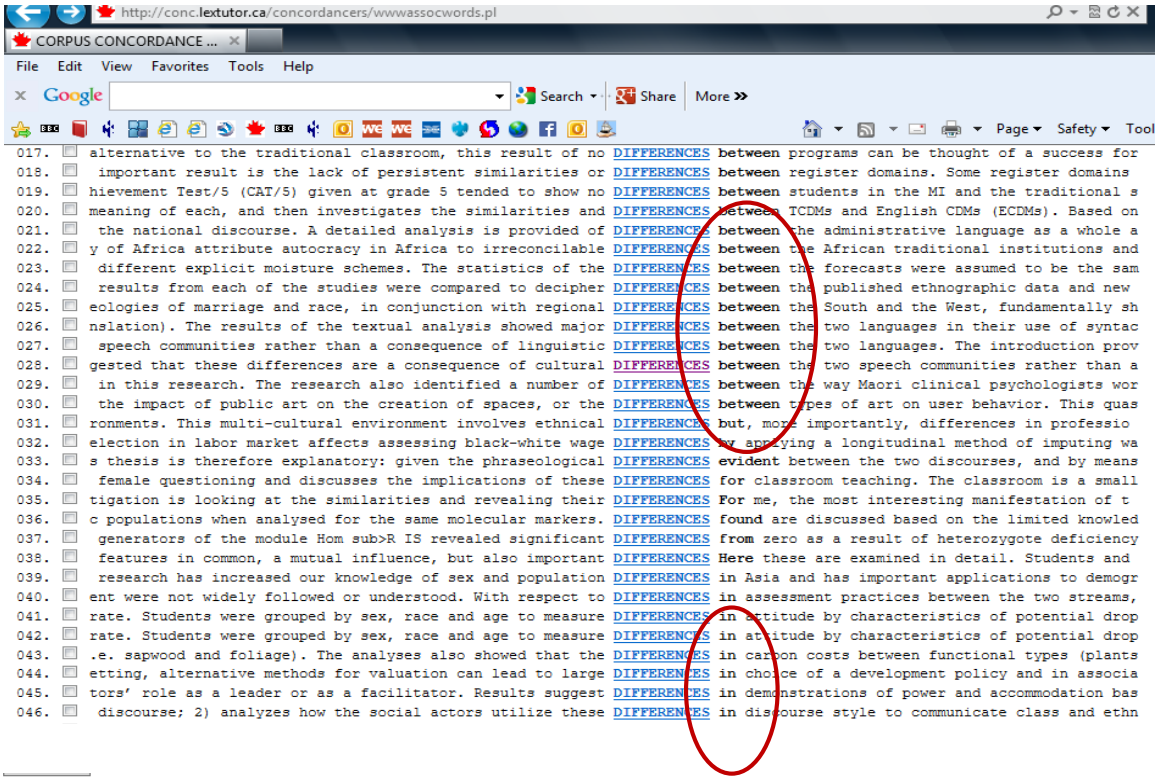
[1]Corpora – large sets of texts, e.g. British National Corpus which was created in the 1980/90s and comprises over 100 million words
Concordancer – a computer programme which allows users to browse corpora showing the key-word usage in multiple contexts

The essential first step is to introduce students to KWIC (key-word in context) search.



Sorting out simple language problems
Prepositions
Mistakes in the use of prepositions are a recurrent problem for students of English. Giving students a quick and effective reference tool usually helps in demonstrating the benefits of using this programme to help with writing. Students can be given an initial task:

> **Task:** what prepositions are used after ***difference - ?*** and ***different - ?***



This search usually leads students to the following conclusion:

Difference *noun*

- ***between*** (e.g. *differences **between** two communities*)
- ***in*** (e.g. d*ifferences **in** attitude)*

Different *adjective*

- ***From*** (e.g. *... language different **from** original query)*

It is useful to ask students to run checks on most commonly confused prepositions. Here is another example of a task:

Task: what preposition is used after

insight -?
draw -?
discuss -?
Try several corpora; use *equals* search and *sort to the right*
Record your findings

word	Preposition/s	Examples
insight (n)		
draw (v)		
discuss(v)		

Set phrases
Checking the correctness of commonly confused phrases is also a productive method of introducing students to working with Concordancers. Below is a task which I give students at the initial stages.

Task: choose the correct form of each phrase using Concordancer. Try *families* searches and *equals* options to search separate phrases in several corpora, e.g. Humanities and Medical:

a) *The structure of the first chapter is* ***as following / following / as follows / as follow***
b) ***As regard/ regards / as regarding / with regards /as regards/ with regard*** *to housing, employers' policies vary*
c) ***As far as the new rent is concerned/ As far as concerning new rent / Concerned new rent/ concerning new rent*** *options fall into four categories*

Make a note of your results:

Correct form	Example

Clarifying some grammatical issues
Plurals
Some common grammatical mistakes in student writing can be addressed by Concordancers searches. One of the common questions students ask is whether ***data*** is singular or plural. A quick search of Lextutor Concordancer shows approximately similar numbers in the Academic General Corpus and in BNC Humanities, however, the BNC Medical Corpus shows definite preference for plural usage. This can be a good way of introducing linguistic differences in academic writing in different subject areas. Differences in the usage of ***data*** were highlighted by Tim Jones in his Kibbitzers: “The choice of plural or singular ... also correlates with the **meaning** of the word. The (traditional) meaning "*evidence used in experimental procedures*" is most often plural, while the (more recent) meaning "*digital information stored or manipulated by a computer*" is most often singular.” (*http://lexically.net/TimJohns/Kibbitzer*). As a result, singular usage can be expected to be more common in computing texts.

Another common mistake is using the noun *literature* in plural. A search of singular and plural forms on Lextutor gives the following results. In the Academic General Corpus – there are 1239

hits (206 instances per million) for *literature* and 13 hits for *literatures* (2 per million). The BNC and COCA give similar results: the BNC has 49 instances of the plural as opposed to 5246 for the singular; COCA has 305 against 28,055 for the singular. I then draw students' attention to the usage of the plural form of *literature*, where it mostly means different kinds of literature, or literature of different peoples, but not sources in literature reviews.

Collocations

Collocations are one of the most persistent difficulties of L2 students because of the formulaic nature of the English language (see, for example, Wray 2002). Students can be given tasks to run specific searches for collocations sorting the results to the right or to the left of the key word.

For example, the search for prepositions used with *difference*, as described earlier, can also be used to learn about collocations. By sorting the results of the search to the left, students can find out what adjectives commonly collocate with ***difference:***

> **Adj + *difference*** *basic , big, clear, considerable, crucial, cumulative, essential, factual, fundamental, further, genuine, great, important*

A variety of material provided by such searches could result in follow-up tasks, in this case centred round using *adjective* + ***difference*** collocations in the students' own writing.

In the same vein, the search on the word *literature* can also reveal its collocations:

> **Adj + *literature*:** *Existing, extensive, previous, recent, relevant, contemporary, early, earlier, analytic, expert, limited* and even *unexpurgated*
> ***Literature* + verb**: *reveals, deals, emerges, shows, tells, recycles old material, has been accumulated, has been aimed, has been developed*
> **Word combinations**: *Body of literature, subset of literature, recent strand of literature, broad range of literature, contribution to the literature, theories available in the literature, common perception in the literature, has often been neglected in the literature, adapted from the literature, existing theoretical literature*

To sum up – this article has attempted to give teachers some initial suggestions for using Concordancers in the classroom. The possibilities offered by these programmes are much deeper and richer: they can offer substantial insights into grammar, vocabulary and academic writing style.

Bernardini, S. (2000). Systematising serendipity: proposals for concordaning large corpora with language learners. In: Burnard, Lou & McEnery, Tony (eds), 225-234.

Johns, T. (1994). From printout to handout. Grammar and vocabulary teaching in the context of data-driven learning. In: Odlin, Terence (ed), 293-313.

Johns, T. Kibbitzer http://lexically.net/TimJohns/Kibbitzer, accessed September 2015.

Wray, A (2002). Formulaic Language and the Lexicon. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.