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Classroom Games from Corpora

Using Corpora to Teach Vocabulary

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Methods and activities for more effective teaching with less preparation

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Introduction

Corpora? Corpora, as the name suggests, are bodies of sampled language that are stored in a computer database. The samples are taken from authentic sources of language, either written or spoken. The written sources are typically publications such as magazines and newspapers while spoken sources are often television and radio broadcasts and even recorded telephone calls. The purpose of compiling this database is so that the language can be analyzed to look for word patterns, check linguistic rules, check hypothesis about language use and to compile statistics of use, for example frequency of certain words or word patterns.

Corpus Tools To perform these analyses, corpus tools are used. These are computer programs that will search the language database according to certain criteria. The two most common types of corpora tools are concordance searches and collocation searches. A concordance is a series of lines from various sampled sources all containing the searched word. The screenshots below from the Lextutor Concordancer shows the search screen and the resulting concordance. Below that is a collocation list from the BYU collocation search.

Online Corpora There are many corpus websites online and many of them can be accessed for free. The two that are featured in this collection of games are the

Lextutor Concordancer
http://www.lexutor.ca/concordancers/concord_e.html

and Corpus.BYU.Edu (Brigham Young University)
<http://corpus.byu.edu/>



Lextutor search for concordance for “offer”

Classroom Games from Corpora

Home > Concordancers > English input [<Back (keep settings)] Colloc summary

Concordance for equals OFFER sorted by keyword Dictionary [Eng_Fren] [Go]

extract [All | none | any 10 | 20] Click keyword for more context Corpus [All of above (3+m)] New Sort: [1] word(s) [Key only] of keyword [Change]

001. being reduced, as the peripheral areas manage to OFFER sites that are as competitive as those of th
 002. arly recognised the advantages which such systems OFFER. They have done so in the first place becaus
 003. e very limited facilities which such premises can OFFER and the initiation of a co-ordinated attack
 004. ided and relied upon in these circumstances would OFFER adequate assistance. Electronic aids, perhaps
 005. ws of ALT The ALT constructor allows a process to OFFER a choice of possible communication options t
 006. ation WQXR. The brief notes introducing each work OFFER salient historical or technical points, and
 007. e program's variables. (iii) An occam process can OFFER its environment a choice of communications:
 008. those represented by X) that the environment can OFFER which one process can deadlock on but not th
 009. re in some sense complementary. Each has a lot to OFFER to the other. Nevertheless, there are a numb
 010. f Georgia's congressmen specifically asked him to OFFER the resolution. The resolution, which Barber
 011. to start work, having received an acceptable job OFFER and would be starting work shortly; polytech
 012. further 8 per cent had received an acceptable job OFFER and would be commencing work shortly after t
 013. rses. While most students not in receipt of a job OFFER were making applications and attending inter
 014. to start work, having received an acceptable job OFFER. Nineteen per cent were looking for employe
 015. roach. Online catalogue systems at present do not OFFER any opportunity for a contextual or open app
 016. mited value. Alphabetical listings of LCSH do not OFFER an overview of related subjects and looking
 017. ssel clumps; in New England, fucoids and crevices OFFER the necessary shade. At Woods Hole in Massac
 018. it is conceivable that aggregation behaviour may OFFER protection from those birds. The aggregated
 019. ble for overwintering are identical to those that OFFER the best conditions for hatching success. Wi
 020. heltered shores and, except where fucoid seaweeds OFFER shelter (Menge, 1976), desiccation may be si
 021. l not attempt this analysis here but instead will OFFER an intuitive (and practical) argument for wh

Concordance for "offer"

Google byu corpus Search

Corpus of Contemporary American English (COC...)

CORPUS OF CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN ENGLISH LACKMAN_K +
 425 MILLION WORDS, 1990-2011 COMPARE RESULTS: COCA COHA TIME BNC history | lists | profile | logout

DISPLAY: LIST CHART KWIC COMPARE

SEARCH STRING: day

COLLOCATES: [j*] 1 0

POS LIST: adj.ALL

SECTIONS: SHOW

1 IGNORE 2 IGNORE

SORTING AND LIMITS: SORTING FREQUENCY MINIMUM FREQUENCY 10

CLICK TO SEE OPTIONS

SEE CONTEXT: CLICK ON WORD OR SELECT WORDS + [CONTEXT] [HELP...]

		CONTEXT	TOT
1	<input type="checkbox"/>	OTHER	4933
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	GOOD	1658
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	SINGLE	1624
4	<input type="checkbox"/>	FOLLOWING	1178
5	<input type="checkbox"/>	LONG	1039
6	<input type="checkbox"/>	FULL	819
7	<input type="checkbox"/>	BAD	743
8	<input type="checkbox"/>	BIG	726

OTHER USERS (COCA | ALL): QUERIES [24h] (9102 | 14547) RESEARCHERS (1326 | 1780) PUBLICATIONS (117 | 161)

Personal information

Category: Staff (not faculty/grad student) Update

Institution: Ken Lackman & Associates Update

Country: CANADA Update

Short profile (edit): I am a freelance ESL teacher, teacher trainer and coursebook writer. I've been using online corpora since it first appeared. I use it mostly to prepare classroom activities and occasionally to check word usage following a question from a student. I've also presented workshops for other teachers on using corpora.

Status: Your publications 1

Collocations (adjectives) with "day" from BYU corpus search

Guess the Key Word from the Collocates

This game is similar to the one above except this time the students are given a list of frequent collocations of a key word and they have to guess what that key word is. This game is strategically challenging for students as they are only allowed one guess which they can make at any point during the teacher's reading of the ten collocates. The sooner they guess, the more points they get but if they guess wrong, they lose the chance of getting any points.

This is a good activity to get students focused on the type of collocations that go with certain words. Those words can be from the course materials or they can be from one of the lists in the appendices of this handout. You can decide if you want to make it easier for students by writing a list of key words on the board. You can also use this activity to review vocabulary recently taught, in which case, you might want to have students rely on their memories rather than give them a list of possible key words.

The screenshot shows the COCA interface with the search string 'campaign'. The results table lists collocates with their total frequency:

Rank	Collocate	TOT
1	ELECTION	678
2	AD	534
3	AIR	367
4	ADVERTISING	355
5	BOMBING	322
6	RE-ELECTION	317
7	SENATE	217
8	MARKETING	203

The interface also shows a 'KEYWORD IN CONTEXT DISPLAY' section with a table of example sentences:

Rank	Year	Source	Context
1	2010	MAG USAToday	political process. For instance, in the last four days of the 2008 elec
2	2010	NEWS NYT	the United States after the 2003 invasion. # Although rivals disparag
3	2010	NEWS NYT	's Labour Party has begun to reconstruct itself from the wreckage of
4	2010	NEWS NYT	# One thing all three men appeared to have accepted was that the t
5	2010	NEWS NYT	." The polls had us third for a significant part of the election camp
6	2010	NEWS SFC	, 50, didn't in Massachusetts. # Sprinting through a five-week-long s

Materials Required

- Teacher's sheet(s) of top ten lists
- Strips of paper
- Markers (board and paper)

Preparation

Follow exactly the same steps as in the Collocations Guessing Game except for copying the sheets and cutting them into cards (step 16). You will only need one copy of the top ten lists for yourself. Note that in the example above, noun.-PROP is used to eliminate proper nouns from the list.

- Procedure**
1. Put students in teams of 2 to 4. Give each team a strip of paper and a marker.
 2. If you are providing a list of key words, write them on the board. Provide a few extra key words that you do not have collocations for to make it more challenging for students to guess when most of the key words have already been dealt with.
 3. Explain to the teams that you will be reading a list of collocations for ONE certain key word. Let them know the source of the key words (board, review, academic word list, etc.). Explain that you will be reading the list from the 10th most frequent collocation to the most frequent and you'll be saying the numbers. At any point they can write their guess on a strip of paper together with the number of the collocate clue. For example, using the list shown in the corpora above, students who guessed "campaign" when they heard advertising, would write down "4 Campaign", which could get them four points. If they end up being correct, they will get that number of points. If they are incorrect, they will get nothing. Tell them they must hold up their guess for all to see as soon as they've written it but you will not let them know if it is correct until the end of the round.
 4. Choose one of the collocation lists. Start at the bottom, read the number 10 and the collocation. Read the rest at a slow and steady pace making sure students have enough time to write down and hold up their guesses.
 5. After you've read all of the collocations, ask students what they think the key word is. Confirm what it was and ask students to hold up their guesses again. For every correct guess, award them the number of points based on the number on their strip. Write points for each team on the board or have them keep track of their own points.
 6. Hand out another strip to each group and play another round. At the end total the points to declare a winner.

Guess the Missing Word

This game provides students with sections of concordance sheets where the key word has been removed. They are required to examine the other words near the missing key word to try to guess what the missing word is. The activity is really useful for getting students to notice how words work together in collocations and expressions. It is also useful for helping students learn common collocations and expressions based on certain key words. The key words should be words that are likely to be featured in numerous lexical chunks, i.e., 'people' is going to be featured in a lot more chunks than 'inhabitants'. The key words can be taken from course materials or the word lists in the appendices. For lower level students, you might want to list the possible key words on the board and include a few distracters to make it more challenging.