5th World Conference on Educational Sciences - WCES 2013

The Use of Concordancing programs in ELT

Fatih Yavuz *

Balikesir University, Necatibey Education Faculty. Soma cad. Dinkçiler Mah,10100 Balıkesir, Turkey

Abstract

Concordance programs have been used in literary and mostly religious text analysis for decades. They aim to count and define the frequency and function of a word or word groups in a given text. The aim is to give an inductive understanding of the word/structure and its use in authentic texts. Concordancers are now in computer software for the quick and reliable use for the studies.As many lexis come first advocators still exist in language teaching discipline, it is inevitable to use concordancing programs in English language Teaching. Computers are used in language teaching very frequently but they do not take much place in the teaching of lexis with regard to concordancing dimension.This study first details the use of concordancing programs in general and gives techniques that can be applied in ELT and illustrates some sample uses after describing the literature view of the use of concordance programs in ELT.

Keywords: Use of Concordance,Corpora,Lexical approach, , computer software in ELT, Computer Assisted Language Learning

1. Introduction

Language learning today is far from traditional methods. Both teachers and students prefer the way that can make learners use technology and learn a language. This trend in Language education gave birth to Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). The lexical approach in language teaching mostly depends on teaching words and collocations. Concordancing is a way of lexical analysis of words and their combinations. With the use of concordancers, many studies about important books have been carried out for years Biblical and Quran studies in fact, have been the basis of concordances. Religious studies have always tried to count how many times a certain word is repeated in the holy book and what can be inferred from that finding. The similar application can be seen in language studies. The analysis to define the number of use of a word helps the teachers in two ways:

1. To decide the frequency of that word. How much a word is frequent gives sight to a teacher in which order that word should be presented while teaching a language.
2. To see and show the learners how that word is used in the given context. This helps learners to induce the natural order or existence of that word or collocations.

* Corresponding name: Assist. Prof.Dr. Fatih Yavuz. Tel.: +090-266-2412761-252
  E-mail address: yavuzf@balikesir.edu.tr

Many English teachers today are in trouble with the correct methodology how to teach words and their collocations. The traditional lexicon teaching is the repetition of a word as much as it is memorized. Teaching is not in context; words are taught isolated.

This study, attempts to explain what concordancers are in ELT and gives sample computer concordancing software. It first reviews the literature then gives the sample uses of concordancing programs for English teachers.

2. Concordancing programs in ELT; a brief account

Peachey (2005) defines concordancer as a piece of software, either installed on a computer or accessed through a website, which can be used to search, access and analyse language from a corpus. The software tells us the relations between words and their correct use in authentic texts. Dyck (1999) mentions three ways language teachers can respond to questions concerning grammar and word meaning; the prescriptive way in which the direct explanation is given either by a grammarian or referring to a dictionary. This way is seen short lasting and non communicative. The second way is prescriptive in which the explanation is based on intuition and training. The third is also prescriptive which is called as concordancing which is a part of corpus linguistics.

Flowerdew (1996) defines concordancing as a means of accessing a corpus of text to show how any given word or phrase in the text is used contexts it is seen. Healey (2009) also makes a similar definition of concardancers; according to her a concordance is a program that helps the user to see how a specified word is used by displaying that word within several different sentences. As seen above definitions concordancers serve a very important purpose; they give the user the opportunity to see how and where in a given context a word is used.

2.1. What are the advantages of using a concordance program?

The main advantages of using concordancer are in three categories: a.Authenticity: teachers and materials designers can better describe the language to be acquired, and decide what learners should learn. b.“Transparency”: Corpora can consist of materials produced by learners, so that teachers can know the students' weaknesses. c Learner Autonomy: Students can use the corpora to learn themselves. (Aston, Bernardini & Stewart, 1996)

Also Krieger (2003) asserts that Corpus linguistics provides a more objective view of language than that of introspection, intuition and anecdotes. With the proper analytical tools, an investigator can discover not only the patterns of language use, but the extent to which they are used, and the contextual factors that influence variability. For learners who mainly depend on learning from concrete rather than intuition or inference, using concordance software in language teaching is more effective and long-lasting.

Another advantage of concordancing is that it aims to bridge the gap between learners' current language ability and expected ability (Sun, 2007). This is done by giving the authentic texts to students and while analyzing them they will focus on the structures or words which the teacher directs them.

Moran and Diniz (2005) see this advantage by considering the fact that the concordancers show so many examples in the context of the same word, language students are likely to deduce the meaning and patterns of the word. Davies (2012) states that the other advantage of concordances is parallel concordancing from two different languages; the parallel concordancer finds the equivalent sentences in the translated text. This is a big opportunity for analysers as they can see a particular word or phrase used in two different languages.

3. The common concordance programs

Concordance programs are very common. They can be accessed either through online web pages or available as computer software programs.

Some of the online ones are

1. Strong's concordance with Hebrew and Greek Lexicon which can be accessed at http://www.eliyah.com/lexicon.html
2. Corpus Concordance English at http://www.lextutor.ca/concordancers/concord_e.html
3. British National Corpus at http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/index.xml
4. Online Concordance to Wallace Stevens' Poetry; just for the poems of Wallace Stevens at http://wallacestevens.com/concordance/WSdb.cgi
5. The corpus for all Shakespeare Works is at http://sydney.edu.au/engineering/it/~matty/Shakespeare/test.html

The software programs are mostly commercial but there are also free concordancing software programs. The advantage of a software program installed in the computer is that; it doesn't need to have internet access and you can analyze any text you want rather than ready corpus which does not allow the user to insert texts outside the corpus. *Concordance* is one the commercial programs which can be accessed at http://www.concordancesoftware.co.uk/ it is 30 day free trial and is one of the most powerful and flexible concordance programs. Another one is *Multiconcord* which helps learners in parallel concordancing on texts from two different languages. It can be accessed at http://artsweb.bham.ac.uk/pking/multiconc/l_text.htm. KWIC *Concordance for Windows Ver.5* is a free concordance software which can be downloaded at http://www.chs.nihon-u.ac.jp/eng_dpt/tukamoto/kwic_e.html The other free concordance program is *Antconc* . It can be downloaded from http://www.antlab.sci.waseda.ac.jp/software.html.

4. How can a teacher use concordance programs in classroom; practical classroom procedures

This part of the paper tries to give sample uses of concordancing in language classroom.

a. The teacher tries to take the attention of learners to the usage of a word/phrase. To do this he concords a text and selects that word to be focused on as in the example. The teacher trying to teach definite article 'the' concords it from the story *Little Red Riding Hood* as in the figure below. He may ask the learners analyze the text and give the rules for the use of the definite article 'the'.

b. Guess the hidden word: This activity provokes learners' cognitive skills to guess or to induce the rule how or when a word should be used in a sentence.

Table 1. Sample Concur dancing

Her mother was excessively fond	???????????	her and grandmother…
Take her a cake, this little pot	???????????	butter. Little red riding hood…
but he dared not, because	???????????	some woodcutters….
carry her a cake and a little pot	???????????	butter sent you….

The learners are asked to guess the word first and after a while teacher gives the original form and asks the students to give the rule for the use of that word or phrase.

Teacher may want students to focus on two different grammar structures and asks the learners to give the rule for the different uses. Sample Activity: Look at the uses of 'was' and 'were' and match the rule with the correct word.

Table 2. Sample concordancing for 'was' and 'were'

…..latitude of 42 deg. I	was	then on a visit to my parents…
…, and yet, I think, the emotion	was	too intellectual in its character….
while vivid touches of coloring	were	beginning to flush the eastern…
The women themselves	were	looking about uneasily for their husbands.

5. Conclusion

Concordancing programs are great contribution to language teachers not only for integrating technology to their courses but also for motivating learners to focus on the course. With the help of concordancing programs learners would also have the variety of activities to focus on and computers will remove any kind of ambiguity that may exist in the classroom. For material use, concordancing programs never expire or become old fashioned. All in all, all teachers should be able to use concordancing programs to make their teaching better, more enjoyable and long-lasting.

References

Flowerdew, J. (1996). Concordancing in Language Learning, in Martha Pennington (ed.) *The Power of CALL* (Athelstan), pp. 87-102.

Deborah, H. (2009). Spring 2009 Oregon-Iraq GOES Tandem ELT Training: Retrieved from http://aei.uoregon.edu/de/iraqelt/index.html

Krieger, D. (2003) Corpus Linguistics: What It Is and How It Can Be Applied to Teaching The Internet TESL Journal, Vol. IX, No. 3, March 2003. Retrieved October, 25, 2012 from http://iteslj.org/Articles/Krieger-Corpus.html

Yu-Chih S. (2007). Computer Assisted Language Learning, 20(4), 323–343

Lamy M-N. & Klarskov Mortensen H. J. (2012) Using concordance programs in the Modern Foreign Languages classroom. Module 2.4 in Davies G. (ed.) *Information and Communications Technology for Language Teachers (ICT4LT)*, Slough, Thames Valley University [Online]. Retrieved October, 20, 2012 from http://www.ict4lt.org/en/en_mod2-htm