

BOOK REVIEW

Using CORPORA in the Language Learning Classroom: Corpus Linguistics for Teachers

Gena R. Bennett

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The interest in using corpora and corpus-based materials in language teaching and research continues to grow. Over the past few years, research by second language teaching specialists has emphasized the importance of using corpora and corpus-based materials in the second language learning classroom. This is true not only for research articles (Conrad 1999, Cortes 2007), but also for academic conferences such as those organized by the American Association of Corpus Linguistics (AACL). In *Using CORPORA in the Language Learning Classroom: Corpus Linguistics for Teachers*, Bennett aims to make the ideas of corpus linguistics accessible to second language teachers, graduate students specializing in applied linguistics, and teacher-trainers working with language instructors. The volume is divided into three main parts and eight chapters, and also includes two appendices and a conceptual index.

To understand and apply corpus linguistics in language teaching, it is essential to comprehend what corpus linguistics is and what it is not. Part 1 “An introduction to corpus linguistics” gives a brief overview of corpus linguistics. “Principles of corpus linguistics” (Chapter 1) sets the scene for the remaining of the book by reviewing the characteristics of the Corpus Approach. Also in this section the reader can find specialized terms (e.g. *frequency list*, *normed count*), target features (e.g. *collocation* and *lexical bundles* in phraseology) and online sources related to the corpus approach,

as well as details about different types of corpora and concordancing programs. Bennett concludes this first chapter with a most useful framework for creating corpus-designed activities which involves seven steps (Bennett 2010: 18-20): ‘Ask a research question’, ‘Determine the register on which your students are focused’, ‘Select a corpus appropriate for the register’, ‘Utilize a concordancing program for quantitative analysis’, ‘Engage in qualitative analysis’, ‘Create exercises for students’, and ‘Engage students in a whole-language activity’. The author goes on to suggest possible ways to modify these activities by language level in order to make them more accessible to students.

Parts 2 and 3 of the book are devoted to the applications of corpus linguistics to language teaching. In Part 2 “Corpora in language teaching”, Bennett focuses on corpus-based teaching materials (Chapter 2) and corpus-cited texts (Chapter 3). In chapter 2 “Corpus-influenced materials”, Bennett presents a list of published English language teaching materials that can be used in various levels. In addition, for teachers wishing to integrate such materials in their teaching, this section provides a checklist to analyze corpus-based teaching materials. Chapter 3 “Corpus-cited texts” focuses on grammar and vocabulary sources that present the readers with large corpus findings. This section primarily focuses on three main sources, namely (1) *the Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (Biber et al. 1999), (2) *the Cambridge Grammar of English* (Carter and McCarthy 2006) and (3) *the Oxford Collocations Dictionary* (Lea 2002). In light of the discussions around these most-cited corpus sources, Bennett provides readers with suggestions to appropriately use and integrate these sources in their language classrooms.

As its title suggests, Part 3 “Corpus-designed activities” offers a set of corpus-designed activities which can be used in the classroom to teach a variety of language skills. For instance, in Chapter 4 Bennett exemplifies how to teach English articles using the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA); Chapter 5 is devoted to the teaching of signal words in academic speaking with the help of the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE), and Chapter 6 focuses on academic vocabulary using the Academic Word List (AWL). In addition to these activities, which can be designed using publicly available corpora, some activities integrating learner corpora are also illustrated in Chapter 7. In the concluding chapter, Bennett summarizes the

main ideas presented throughout the book, and offers a table with details of corpus-based textbooks and tools that can be used across the English language teaching curriculum. The book ends with a series of appendices that provide additional material, such as lists of corpora and concordancing tools, and class materials (on articles, signal words, academic vocabulary, and comma errors).

All in all, *Using CORPORA in the Language Learning Classroom* can be of great interest to English teachers who wish to integrate corpus-based materials in their classroom. Given the lack of available literatures on the practical applications of corpus linguistics into English language teaching, Bennett's work fills a gap in the area of language teaching and corpus-based material development. However, the book falls short in one area: although it covers a wide range of publicly available corpora, there are a number of surprising omissions, especially in terms of learner corpora such as the Corpus of English Essays Written by Asian University Students (CEEAAUS), the International Corpus of Crosslinguistic Interlanguage (ICCI), and the ESF (European Science Foundation Second Language) Database. In addition, those readers solely interested in the use of specialized corpora for English for Specific Purposes use may find this book less useful than those who teach general English, since the volume focuses exclusively on the applications of corpus linguistics in the general English classroom. To this end, there are other important and recent corpora which should have been added to the list of corpora the book includes. For instance, corpora such as the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE) might be useful for readers interested in English for Specific Purposes.

Still, the volume might be especially suitable for MA TESOL programs as well as in-service teacher training programs. Specifically, the book might serve as an essential reading for graduate classes on corpus linguistics and material development. In comparison with other books on applications of corpus linguistics to English language teaching, *Using CORPORA in the Language Learning Classroom: Corpus Linguistics for Teachers* offers more practical examples and references to the relevant literature. Given that very few studies provide such detailed description of the teaching applications of corpus linguistics in this way, Bennett's work serves as a reference book not only for teachers of English but also for anyone interested in exploring what corpus linguistics can offer for English teaching.

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