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Preface

Thanks to the rapid advancements in corpus linguistics and computer technology in the past two decades, corpus linguistics has gained increasing popularity among language researchers and teachers alike. More and more teachers and students are now using corpora in language learning and teaching. In fact, as nonnative-English-speaking TESOL professionals, we have both been using corpora extensively for learning as well as teaching purposes. We can attest with our firsthand experience that the use of corpora has helped us enormously both in enhancing our own command of English and in increasing our teaching effectiveness.

Of course, using corpora for language teaching requires a basic understanding of corpus linguistics and essential technical knowledge and skills of using corpora. Because of the increasing use of corpora in language teaching and the knowledge and skills required, we believe it is important that today’s language teachers learn how to use corpora to help their students learn more effectively. This belief led us to write this book, which aims to help ESL/EFL teachers who have little or no knowledge of corpus linguistics gain a solid understanding of what corpus linguistics is and how a corpus may be used to enhance language learning and teaching. In other words, this book does not require any prior knowledge of corpus linguistics. Furthermore, because of the large amount of information provided, including the variety of corpus query functions and techniques and teaching activities presented, this book is also useful for those teachers and students who already have some knowledge of corpus linguistics but would like to enhance their knowledge and skills in this area. It is our sincere hope that this book will provide both groups of readers with the knowledge and skills they need and, in turn, will enable them to use corpora successfully for their own learning and teaching purposes.
Approach of the Book

Designed for classroom teachers and their students, this book takes a hands-on approach. After a brief introduction to the basics of corpus linguistics, the book describes and explains, step by step, many useful corpus-based activities for learning and teaching various aspects of English, ranging from word meanings and collocations to lexico-grammatical usage variations across genres and registers (e.g., conversations, fiction, and academic writing) as well as speaking, writing, and other English skills. To help the reader grasp the corpus search procedures and techniques needed for doing successful corpus-based learning and teaching, the book provides ample examples that make use of these procedures and techniques. Some especially useful procedures and techniques are purposely repeated and reviewed in more than one chapter to help the reader become familiar with them. Furthermore, a “Think and Do” component is embedded throughout the book to help the reader understand and practice what is being introduced, especially the corpus-based learning and teaching activities. At the end of the book is a selection of helpful resources, which can also be found at www.tesol.org/Using-Corpora.

Contents and Organization

This book consists of eight chapters along with a glossary of key terms and an annotated list of well-known useful corpora, corpus tools, and corpus-based teaching materials. Chapter 1 provides an overview of corpus linguistics, including what a corpus is and what it can do, as well as a critical review of the most useful existing corpora for language learning and teaching purposes. Chapter 2 introduces the most useful tools and procedures for corpus queries and analysis as well as the most common ways to use these tools and procedures to obtain various types of useful information for language learning and teaching purposes. Chapter 3 discusses various types of corpus-based learning and teaching activities, including inductive and deductive activities as well as those for students to engage in corpus-based learning without the use of computers. Chapter 4 introduces various corpus-based activities for learning and teaching some common but challenging lexico-grammatical usage issues, such as collocations, prepositions, subject-verb agreement, and synonyms. Chapter 5 discusses how corpora may be used to teach academic writing, including academic vocabulary, lexico-grammatical patterns, and rhetoric as well as error correction. Chapter 6 explores the use of corpora to teach other English language skills and issues, such as speaking, reading, business English, idioms, language and social changes, and language variations. Chapter 7 explains how to build and use corpora to find and develop teaching materials, including various word lists. Chapter 8 concludes the book with a summary discussion of the progress made, challenges
faced, and successful practices learned so far in corpus-based language learning and teaching as well as the future of corpus-based language learning and teaching. The glossary enables the reader to better understand the key concepts in corpus linguistics and using corpora for language teaching. The annotated list provides additional useful information about various corpus resources and tools.

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