

## Using Concordances in the Classroom: a hands-on workshop

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Here are some free online concordancers (you may also know of others).

These are from corpora of General English:

- [http://www.lex Tutor.ca/concordancers/concord\\_e.html](http://www.lex Tutor.ca/concordancers/concord_e.html)
- <http://www.just-the-word.com/>
- <http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/using/index.xml?ID=simple>  
/ <http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/index.xml>
- <http://www.someya-net.com/concordancer/index.html>

The following have Academic English:

- <http://corpus.byu.edu/bnc> (also general)
- <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/c/corpus/corpus?c=micase;page=simple>  
(US spoken academic)

These search the web:

- <http://webascorpus.org/searchwc.html>
- <http://www.netspeak.org/>
- <http://www.webcorp.org.uk/wcadvanced.html>

Now try them out. Work through the following, remembering to make a note of your findings. There is 'Noticing Key' to help you if you need it.

### Student Questions

- 1) How can I use **the purpose** in a sentence?

(Use the first of the above concordancers, Lextutor: [http://www.lex Tutor.ca/concordancers/concord\\_e.html](http://www.lex Tutor.ca/concordancers/concord_e.html))

Type **the purpose** (with a space) into the **keyword** box. Then select corpus 'All of the above (3m+)'. Choose '150' for line width and '100' for number of lines. Click 'get concordance'.

Make a note of the main patterns, remembering to look both before and after the 'node'. Include one or two useful examples. The default is **sort left**, i.e. the word immediately right of the node are in alphabetical order. But you can take a look at them sorted right, too, by changing 'left' to 'right' in the drop-down box.)

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- 2) What nouns are used with **economic**?

(Use Lextutor again. This time type **economic** into the **keyword** box. Sort right.)

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How does its usage differ from **financial**? (Look at the noun collocates and also the topics/context. To see the full context, click on the key word.)

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- 3) In written English, where does **probably** go in relation to the verb? (Use Lextutor. Select the '1K Graded corpus' (graded readers).)

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4) Is **especially** used at the beginning of a sentence in written academic English?

(go to <http://corpus.byu.edu/bnc>: type the target word in the search box; select **KWIC** ; tick 'show'; from the left-hand drop-down box (which is directly underneath) select 'academic' ; and click search.)

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5) Can I say **problematic consequences** or **During the last years,** ?

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6) When do we use **utter** as an adjective? (Look in lextutor, and sort one word to the right. Then try the byu-bnc: search for **utter.[JJ\*]** (utter as an adjective). Is the result the same if you look at **utter [NN\*]** (utter plus noun)? Then look at the most frequent collocates in Just The Word <http://193.133.140.102/justTheWord/> Enter **utter** and click on **combinations**. You can see concordance lines by clicking on a phrase of interest e.g. *complete and utter.* )

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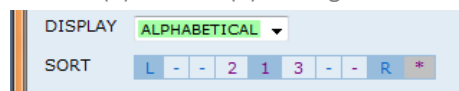
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7) What adjectives collocate with the noun **increase**? (In byu-bnc enter **[JJ\*] increase** (adj plus increase). Choose academic. Sort the results in alphabetical order, by (1) the node (2) first left (3) first right :

Do you notice any other patterns?

Then look at the most frequent collocates –first with **[JJ\*]**

**increase**. Then enter **increase.[NN\*]** in the search box. How do these compare with Just The Word?)



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8) Compare the usage of **attribute** in Technology/Engineering with its use in the Natural Sciences.

(You may have noticed the byu-bnc has a column showing discipline. You can limit your search further by choosing e.g. only written texts for the natural sciences. If you key in attribute\* you will also get attributes, attributed etc. )

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9. Now choose a word you believe is more common in one academic field than any other. Search for it to see if you are right.

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10. What verbs are used with **that** in academic English? (Select 'list' this time, not 'KWIC'. The code for verb is [vv\*] )

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Other lexical items you could try sometime:

- i. *bring about or provoke vs cause*
- ii. *significant vs important*
- iii. *personal vs individual*
- iv. *besides*
- v. *undergo vs experience*
- vi. \_\_\_\_\_
- vii. \_\_\_\_\_
- viii. \_\_\_\_\_



## Guided error correction practice

- 11) Try out the 'Corpus Grammar' link on the Lextutor homepage: <http://www.lex tutor.ca/>

## Preparing Classes

- 12) Look at **sort** in the 2K graded reader corpus. Identify 3-4 chunks which are useful to teach intermediate students.

(Use the first of the above concordancers: [http://www.lex tutor.ca/concordancers/concord\\_e.html](http://www.lex tutor.ca/concordancers/concord_e.html)

Type **sort** into the **keyword** box, then select corpus '**2K Graded Corpus**'. Then click **get concordance**.

When you finish, go back and this time select '**yes**' for '**gapped**'. How could you use this with students?)

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- 13) Take a look at the Lextutor **N-grams phrase extractor**: <http://lex tutor.ca/tuples/eng/>. Perhaps try it out with a full-length article you use with in-session students, to find useful subject-specific collocations; or paste in a few essays from a student in order to identify recurrent mistakes. How could you exploit this for/with your students? What are its limitations?

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## Exploring Other web tools

- 14) Try out **Netspeak**: <http://www.netspeak.org/> Type **it is ? to** in the box, and see what comes up.

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- 15) A look at Shakespeare (Use <http://www.opensourceshakespeare.org/search/search-keyword.php>)

a) Shakespeare invented many words. When, for example, did he first use **dislocate**?

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b) Shakespeare uses **lets** with 2 main meanings: one is the familiar 'allows'— but what is the other main meaning?

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