USING CORPUSIN ENHANCINGREPORTING VERB PATTERNS IN TEACHING/ LEARNING PROCESS

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Abstract

Knowing which patterns are associated with different reporting verbs is one of the biggest single grammar challenges facing learners. Using electronic language corpus is a good way of teaching all those other reporting verbs apart from 'say' and 'tell' which have a variety of structures (verb + obj + that, verb + ing, etc) e.g. promise, advise, deny, etc. Giving the students a long list of verbs with structures is only confusing and also very boring. With the help of a corpus, students acquire knowledge and skills in the language they are studying. Corpus linguistics can thus be seen as a learning model where students take responsibility for their own learning. The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) currently comprises more than 450 million words of text and is equally divided among spoken, fiction, popular magazines, newspapers, and academic texts. COCA offers a setting of problem-based learning where the students' discoveries and interaction with a corpus give them a learning curve very much triggered by their own activity and motivation. Further, by being exposed to authentic data, students are given a more nuanced encounter with language than traditional grammars are able and are given the opportunity to evaluate data and draw their own conclusions. From a pedagogical point of view it is quite evident that the integration of corpora in language teaching/learning is beneficial to students.

Key words: reporting verb patterns, teaching/learning, corpus, COCA

Introduction

For EFL/ESL learners, reporting verbs represent a complex and confusing group of verbs for reporting spoken statements and questions that is often non-definitive. Its 'never-ending' feature and numerous following structures makes this group one of the most challenging and difficult to enhance. Facing this fact, teachers are obliged to ease the learning and discover innovative teaching solutions. Nowadays, corpus approach has proven as an excellent linguistic tool that enables innovations for teachers and students discovering a whole new world of authentic patterns of language in its contemporary usage. Corpus approach is a representation of approaching to the natural language and derivation of a set of abstract rules. Thus, corpus paves a path from data to theory, from an example to definition, from practice to theory. We annotate, abstract and analyze certain linguistic structures. We tend to apply a scheme to the text using structural markup and a part of speech tagging as well as mapping of grammatical terms. We examine, probe and evaluate statistical data.

The first part of this research represents a coherence between corpus approach and learning process in classroom as well as a unique possibility of corpus assistance in overcoming grammatical structures for EFL learners. Our foreground task is to determine and prove the usefulness of using corpus approach in order to solve the problems that EFL learners face.

Grammar, as it is well-known, often represents the most challenging task for non-native speakers of English encounter. The following part deals with new ideas of incorporating corpus resources in learning and teaching grammar in EFL classrooms. In the last part of the paper, the research is taken on the COCA corpus intended to represent a method of integrating corpus models of certain reporting verbs in spoken and written English.

Corpus Approach Assistance in Educational Process

Computer-aided language learning has proven to be one of the most effective tools in education process. Due to technology and computers, classes nowadays should be a part of modern-equipped technological facility. Teaching, especially in primary and secondary public schools, is one of the areas where technology still tends to have a greater impact. Thus, corpus linguistics as one of the technology-based tools is found to be very useful in teaching and learning process. The core burden is being carried by the EFL teachers who often find integrating corpus-based activities a challenging task. Among many reasons why coprus-based teaching should be used in classrooms is the fact that coprus is a kind of evidence

that offers which language processes are most likely to be used and encountered by native speakers using real-life examples rather than those made up by the teacher. It also:

- Helps teachers to improve teaching activities
- Makes textbooks authentic
- Makes 'real English' available
- Helps students to learn lexical patterns, collocations, semantics from natural discourse
- Helps student to develop their own research skills etc.

It is important to aknowledge that Dazdarevic et al (2015:7) mention how Payne (2008) sees the traditional pedagogical approach to teaching grammar through a process:

1. the teacher presents information to the student,
2. the learner practices with this information,
3. the learner produces new content.

In contrast, in a corpus based approach, the learner
1. observes a grammatical phenomenon of the language,
2. hypothesizes as to how this grammatical phenomenon works, and then
3. experiments to see if their hypothesis is correct

One of the best known uses of corpora in the language classroom is certainly concordancing. According to Dazdarevic et al (2015:7), aconcordancer works much the same wayas an internet search engine. It is a kind of a program that searches a whole corpus for a wanted and selected word or phrase. The program then presents every instance of that word or phrase occurring in the corpus in the format of key-word-in-context (KWIC) in the center of the screen surrounded by 4 or 5 words that came before and after the searched word.

The following work aims to show the use of concordancing in the classroom as a teaching technique which students can effectively use through their research in language patterns.

Learning Real Grammar

Both teaching and learning are complex processes that have been and will be changed and improved as the human intellect and capability are progressing. There is no a perfect and best approach, method or technique to teaching that would satisfy every criteria of ideal methodic in classrooms. But there are different and various solutions for using certain approaches to teaching and learning grammar,

vocabulary and for improving listening and speaking skills. In the first place, teacher should be familiar with those approaches and their theoretical (dis)advantages and then be capable to adapt and apply his knowledge according to particular situation. When it comes to teaching grammar, we have many methods used, examined and tested from early periods till today. Traditional and structural grammar instructions had given the main basis for what we today call modern teaching of grammar. There are also audio-lingual, direct and functional approaches that influenced educational process at the time, as well as universal grammar by Chomsky. Along with cognitive, humanistic and discourse-based approaches, corpus-based is considered to be one of the leaders in contemporary educational thought and practice.

Corpus-based grammar teaching seems to become essential tool in representing grammar structures of natural language use and different language variations in contextual communication. Corpus-based learning grammar has been popular amongst teachers since the very publication of the Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English (Biber et al 1999). As it was said in the introduction of the Biber's et al work, the LGSWE adopts a corpus-based approach, which means that grammatical descriptions are based on the patterns of structure and use found in a large collection of spoken and written texts, stored electronically, and searchable by computers. It complements previous grammatical descriptions by investigating the linguistics patterns actually used by speakers and writers in the late twentieth century.

Why do grammar teachers need corpus-based studies? That was one of the questions that Biber and Conrad asked in their research work related to the corpus. First of all, they mentioned the authenticity of the information represented in textbook students are using during their studies. Unfortunately, they claim that 'no special source of information for textbook writers exists. Author's intuition, anecdotal evidence and tradition about what should be in a grammar book play major roles in determining the content of textbook.'
The answer is easy. Teachers don't have to fabricate examples anymore when teaching grammar. Instead, corpus-based studies offers a diversity of natural interpretation for studying language patterns and structures. These interpretations can be in spoken and transcribed or written form. Also, there is a possibility for different registers to describe a certain grammatical usage in human interpretation. According to Biber and Conrad, three types of description are especially important for teaching grammar:
1. frequency information
2. register comparisons
3. associations between grammatical structures and words (lexico-grammar)

This works intends to deal with the last type of description and represent it through corpus-based study. Association between grammatical structure and words is a research about frequency of certain grammatical structure with the words used with it and its occurrence in a given structure. We used corpora to illustrate what grammatical structure can be used with verb + gerund, verb + infinitive and verb + that clause instructions. These constructions can build a very long lists of verbs that torture teachers as well as their students. The following part aims to represent a traditional approach to certain verbs constructions – the usage of reporting verbs promise, advise and deny, and then employ corpora in discovering these grammatical constructions.

Traditional approach to reporting verbs promise, advise and deny

One of the initial problems with reporting verbs is that students often tend to overthink when and how to use them as they are baffled with extensive/scarce lists and rules that traditional grammars offer. Grammar textbooks usually provide either too simple or too complex explanations without example sentences for all reporting verbs. In other words, there is usually a very long list of reporting verbs and only few examples. It has been a major task for the purposes of this paper to find grammar textbooks which analyze reporting verbs one by one, as they are usually grouped according to the structures they are followed by.

Murphy (2004:106) provides the following explanation:

After enjoy, mind and suggest, we use –ing (not to …).

Some more verbs that are followed by –ing:

stop	postpone	admit	avoid	imagine
finish	consider	deny	risk	fancy

- Suddenly everybody stopped talking.
- He tried to avoid answering my question.
- I'll do the shopping when I've finished cleaning.

It is obvious that such explanation is vague and confusing. First of all, students cannot find verb deny in the contents page of the book and even if they come across it in the abovementioned summary, they would not find any example sentences for it leaving them puzzled. Another problem is that EFL students learn these lists of verbs by heart and often confuse them with other lists for some other rules. The best way to do it is to provide each verb separately with many examples and possible exceptions.

Eastwood (1999:143) analyzes the verb promise in the following way:

He promised to go, his promise to go

Some nouns can come before a to-infinitive. Compare these sentences.

Verb+ to-infinitive: Mark promised to go shopping.

                                    But then he arranged to play golf.

Noun+ to-infinitive: Mark forgot about his promise to go shopping.

                                    Sarah found out about his arrangement to play golf.

Here are some nouns we can use: agreement, arrangement, decision, demand, desire, failure, offer, plan, promise, refusal, tendency, threat.

At first glance, it seems that the explanation is sufficient. However, there is no reason to mix verb+ to-infinitive and noun+ to-infinitive structures and exemplify their usage in sentences that can be easily swapped. Having in mind this short summary, students do not know which challenge to take; is it more important to learn verbs or nouns we use to create infinitive structures?

In the same book, Eastwood (1999:155) also explains how verb advise works.
advise, allow, encourage and recommend
We can use these verbs with an –ing form or with an object + a to-infinitive.

+ing-form   +object + to-infinitive

They allow fishing here.   They allow people to fish here.

I wouldn't recommend walking home alone.   I wouldn't recommend you to walk home alone.

We encounter the same problem in this explanation as it was the case with the verb deny; there are no example sentences even though the verb is listed. In addition, students have to make their own sentences and thus make possible mistakes. Therefore, the rule is not precise but vague and leaves space for errors and misinterpretation.

Integrating a corpora model for teaching reporting verbs promise, advise and deny. If the teacher wants integrating a corpus-based study to be successful in his classroom, according to McEnery and Xiao (2012:12), they must first of all be equipped with a sound knowledge of the corpus-based approach. The first assignment for language learners is to open a corpus, in this case COCA (The Corpus of Contemporary American English), and explore the reporting verbs promise, advise and deny patterns. The 'research question' for a corpus-designed activity could be defined as 'What are the possible grammatical patterns with the reporting verbs promise, advise and deny?'As language is used differently in different registers, all registers are relevant in this study.

As we already mentioned in our previous work related to the corpus approach to the gerund and infinitive analysis (Dazdarevic et al, 2015), the student will be put in

front of a concordance program on a computer and challenged to make a research on his own. If needed, the teacher will be there to make an assistance in this corpus research.

The main aim of this research is to make the student capable and able to search for given tasks, to analyze it and construct his own conclusions about the particular language use.

Using a concordance program, attention is being focused on the close interaction between the student and the text in front of him, rather than on the input from the teacher. In this situation the learner is a detective who is able to explore and discover rules and meanings within their own cognitive framework. It promotes learners awareness of the strategies and skills used in learning. It stimulates the learners cognition and promotes their construction process/language awareness (Wolf, 1995, see more in Montazar 1999:15).

During the analyzing verb promise when used in reported speech, the COCA corpus offered us plenty of examples of using it in speech. The Table 1. stands for a representation of verb pattern that is used with the verb promise. The first one is a structure verb + Infinitive (promise + Vinf), as it was searched for in a query in COCA. This table also represents a verb pattern verb + ConjSub (promise + ConjSub). The main difference is between their occurrence in COCA, where the first pattern is occurred 3406 times and the second one is occurred 1023 times. It illustrates the usage of these verb patterns among native speakers of English Language. It could be the first student's observation and conclusion

Table 1. Representation and frequency of promise + Vinf., and promise + ConjSub., in COCA

Table 1.also shows a distribution of these patterns in different sections. The first pattern

Verb pattern	Example	Frequency	Section
promise + Vinf.	Figure 1.	3406	Newspaper
promise + ConjSub.	Figure 2.	1023	Fiction

is distributed most in newspaper section, and the least in academic. The second pattern is distributed in fiction section most but also in academic the least. We can conclude that the pattern with infinitive is more typical for spoken section and the pattern with –that clause is more typical for written section.
As for deeper analyzing, COCA serves as an inexhaustible resource of examples in context. The following figure (No.1) represents the first verb pattern, promise +

Vinf., in KWIC (keyword in context) where the pattern promise + Vinf. is sorted and aligned with the word in context before and after it.

Figure 1. Distribution and KWIC of promise + Vinf., in COCA

Figure 2. also shows an example of concordancing, keyword in context for the second verb pattern promise + ConjSub. Observing these numerous examples of patterns usage, students will be able to conclude and formulate grammar rules as professional grammars and even more.

Figure 2. Distribution and KWIC of promise + ConjSub., in COCA

Unlike the verb structure for promise in reported speech which has only two patterns offered in COCA, the verb advise largely differs in its verb combinations and thus it is more difficult for students to enhance and comprehend. Even though the table 2. shows a number of possibilities that string along with the verb advise, frequency number determines the native speaker's usage. The verb patterns advise + Vbase and advise + Vmodal are only once used in corpus with the given examples

in the table, while the pattern advise + Vdo occurs only 4 times.

Table 2. Sections distribution, examples and frequency of advise verb patterns in COCA

These examples may appear and be defined as exceptions in using verb advise. The most frequent verb patterns of advise are at the same time the most known ones among teachers and students. The table 2. presents a noticeable facts about the frequency of the pattern advise + Ving and advise + ConjSub.

Verb pattern	Example	Frequency	Section
advise+ Vbase	advise go	1	Spoken
advise + Vmodal	advise would	1	Spoken
	advise should	1	Academic
advise +Ving		311	Figure 3.
advise + Vdo		4	Magazine
advise + ConjSub	advise that…	120	Figure 4.

The verb pattern advise + Ving is occurred 311 times in COCA while the pattern advise + ConjSub is occurred only 120 times. The conclusion is that native speakers of English are using the verb structure with infinitive rather than -that clause.

Considering different sections and sub-sections in COCA corpus, there's also a difference between verb pattern usages. The figure 3. shows how verb pattern advise + Ving is distributed in all sections and mostly appear in magazine section for 94 times while there is only 7 tokens in spoken section.
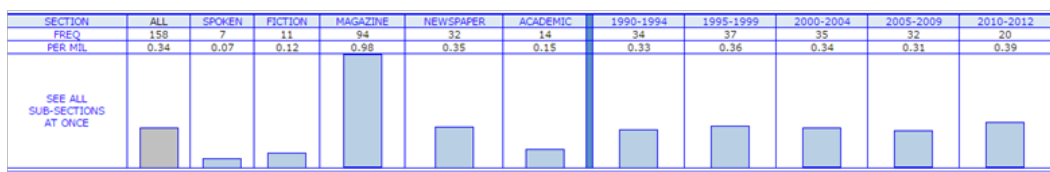

SECTION	ALL	SPOKEN	FICTION	MAGAZINE	NEWSPAPER	ACADEMIC	1990-1994	1995-1999	2000-2004	2005-2009	2010-2012
FREQ	158	7	11	94	32	14	34	37	35	32	20
PER MIL	0.34	0.07	0.12	0.98	0.35	0.15	0.33	0.36	0.34	0.31	0.39

Figure 3. Frequency and distribution of advise + Ving. in different sections

Figure 4. shows that the verb pattern advise + ConjSub.is highly distributed in magazine sections with 50 tokens also with an increase in spoken section of 24 times.

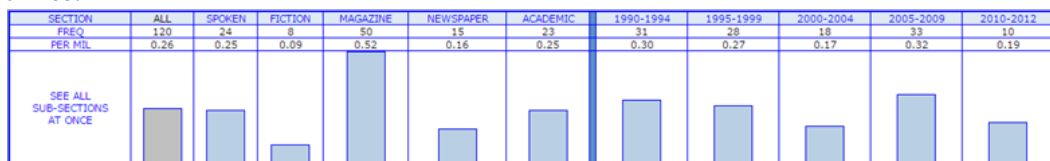| SECTION	ALL	SPOKEN	FICTION	MAGAZINE	NEWSPAPER	ACADEMIC	1990-1994	1995-1999	2000-2004	2005-2009	2010-2012
FREQ	120	24	8	50	15	23	31	28	18	33	10
PER MIL	0.26	0.25	0.09	0.52	0.16	0.25	0.30	0.27	0.17	0.32	0.19

Table 3. displays one verb structure more in its authentic, grammatical and natural surroundings. The verb deny, as one of the verbs used in indirect speaking structure, is found to coordinate with its 'after' base verb, infinitive, gerund and –that clause collocates.

Table 3. Sections distribution, examples and frequency of deny verb patterns in COCA

Verb pattern	Example	Frequency	Section
deny + Vbase		8	
deny + Vinf	Deny permit	1	Newspaper
deny + Ving		156	
deny + ConjSub		1204	Academic

Learning through corpora is really a comprehensive and conceivable way of learning grammar structures. It would be enough for student to carefully observe the numbers and facts in front of him to easily make definitions and conclusions. Mutual characteristic of two examined verbs beyond and verb deny is having a two largest group of collocates that can be combined with. Similar as with verbs promise and advise, the verb deny also has its examples that could be called exceptions. Those are in verb pattern deny + Vbase which has a small level of frequency, only 8 times, and deny + Vinf which has only one occurrence in newspaper section.

The largest groups are verb pattern deny + Ving which is occurred 156 times, and deny + ConjSub which is highly frequent, 1204 times. This significant difference in frequency might become one of the possible instructions how to use language as a native speaker.

Another important statistic fact is related to the sections and its distribution. Figure 5.shows a chart with the verb deny + Vinf. in different sections, and Figure 6.shows verb pattern deny + ConjSub. in the same sections.
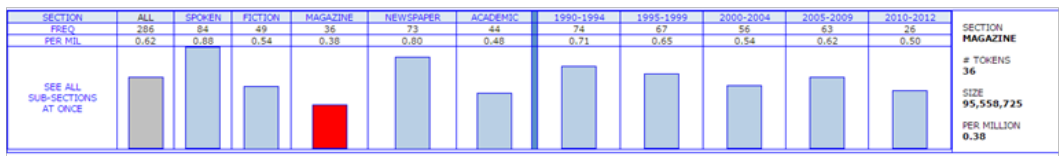

Figure 5. Frequency and distribution of deny + Vinf. in different sections

SECTION	ALL	SPOKEN	FICTION	MAGAZINE	NEWSPAPER	ACADEMIC	1990-1994	1995-1999	2000-2004	2005-2009	2010-2012
FREQ	1680	437	208	294	319	422	508	425	321	295	131
PER MIL	3.62	4.57	2.30	3.08	3.48	4.63	4.88	4.11	3.12	2.89	2.52

SEE ALL SUB-SECTIONS AT ONCE

Figure 6. Frequency and distribution of deny + ConjSub. in different sections

It seems that native speakers in academic section often use verb pattern deny + ConjSub, while the other pattern is rarely used in the same section. The only similarity is that the both are used in spoken section, not so used in fiction, and fairly used in newspaper.

After this search activity, teacher should prepare concordance lines and traditional fill-in-the-blank and gap-fill activities and exercises for students to examine and engage in defining grammar structures.

Conslusion

With the rise of corpus-based analysis, we are beginning to see empirical descriptions of language use, identifying the patterns that are actually frequent (or not) and documenting the differential reliance on specific forms and words in different registers (Biber and Conrad, 1998:145).

Both teachers and students become detectives and explores where the teacher bears the main challenge when using corpus-based approach. He is an assistant and a guide, both pedagogically and equally balanced. He tends to make no mistake and follows his intuition. Sometimes, as a researcher turns to be correct and sometimes not. However, he always tends to improve his theoretical knowledge through practice and activity innovating and advancing the student's level. Corpus-based approach seems to become one of the best tools in teaching grammar, vocabulary and language generally.

Learners can deduce their own rules just by scrutinising a concordance of any problematic grammatical item. The teacher doesn't have to teach a rule but rather guide students to think more effectively and perhaps to formulate what learners have come to conclude (Montazar, 1999: 4).

This paper also tends to contribute education with asignificant task; the aim of modern materials and technological tools in building a complete and systematic data-based approaches, methods and techniques to the verbs and verb pattern when using a reported speech instruction and learning.

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