BOOK REVIEW: CORPORA, LANGUAGE, TEACHING, AND RESOURCES: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

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Natalie Kübler (ed.)
Corpora, Language, Teaching, and Resources: From Theory to Practice
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The volume entitled *Corpora, Language, Teaching, and Resources: From Theory to Practice* is a collection of 17 papers originally read at the 7th Teaching and Language Corpora Conference in Paris in 2006. The contributions authored by over 20 scholars from a number of European, as well as one American and one New Zealand Universities, are divided into four thematic chapters: **1. Bringing corpus use to effective practice**; **2. Learner corpora**; **3. Resources and tools: creation;** and **4. Resources: evaluation**. The volume opens with an introduction written by the editor of the volume, Natalie Kübler, a Professor at the University Paris Diderot and an enthusiastic researcher and promoter of corpus linguistics and corpus use in various areas of applied linguistics.

Part one: Bringing corpus use to effective practice brings together eight papers. Berhnard Kettemann and Georg Marko report on a small-scale study in which they delve into the potentials of using the data-driven learning in the teaching of Critical Discourse Analysis. This exploratory approach to learning and teaching is rooted in specific didactic principles and goals which take into account linguistic, cognitive and psychological aspects of language learning. Although the effects of

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the approach did not fully meet the researchers' expectations, which they attributed to problems with the evaluation methods, implementation of the approach and their own expectations, this study offers a good starting point for researchers and teachers who wish to further explore this approach.

Gill Philip's paper entitled *"... and I dropped my jaw with fear": The role of corpora in teaching phraseology"* is concerned with phraseological production in advanced learner writing. The study described set out to investigate the role corpus use may play in the quality of language learners' written production. Since participants were allowed to choose their reference tool, only few of them chose to use corpus. This may, at first sight, make the results of this study somewhat unreliable. However, probably the most inspiring finding of the study is that corpus use can be seen as one of the language learning strategies of the archetypal 'good language learner' who is motivated and willing to search the corpus to find a solution that corresponds to their needs. This opens new and exciting avenues of research.

In his paper entitled *"Bringing corpora to the masses"* Alex Boulton presents a course in corpus linguistics in which students were allowed to autonomously select tools, methods and corpora to produce research papers. In addition to expanding their knowledge of key concepts in corpus linguistics, students also learnt how to define a research question, how to choose the corpus, and how to locate, select and use appropriate tools. Boulton argues – and we concur – that the whole experience equips students with problem-solving skills and knowledge for diverse future tasks.

The contribution by Angela Chambers aims to show that corpus data can efficiently be applied in what is basically a communicatively oriented language learning approach with an occasional explicit focus on grammar. In particular, the study explores the extent to which corpus data (in this case verbal forms of the lemma JOUER in a corpus of journalistic discourse) may serve as a useful resource for language learners and teachers. What the results seem to imply is that concordance data may provide learners with a wider variety of examples of language thus creating, in Chambers's words, "a richer, multicontextual environment".

Maggie Charles examines the frequencies, grammatical patterns and rhetorical functions of adverbial connectors of contrast (however, yet, rather, instead and in contrast) in two corpora of theses in Politics and Materials Science. From the pedagogical point of view, the most important conclusion is that corpora provide students with sufficient context to enable them to study the patterns of adverbs in terms of their logical relationships, functions and purpose. The author suggests that, rather than focusing on the contrast itself, students should understand the rhetorical function of adverbs, i.e. their role in a larger textual pattern.

The paper that follows, *"Breaking the chains of rhetorics in academia: Corpus-based research as tool or transformation in discourse"*, turns to the application of corpus linguistics in the field of English for academic purposes. Its author, Josta van Rij-Heyligers, reports on her ongoing research that encompasses corpus linguistics, genre/critical discourse analysis and the study of academic writing. Although she recognises the limitations of the use of corpora as a didactic and transformative tool, she maintains that corpus data may have a significant bearing on EAP learners' awareness of the multiplicity of language, especially when tying it with genre analysis and critical discourse analysis.

Sylvana Krausse's contribution *"Semantic preference and semantic prosody in the specialist language class"* deals with the key terms featuring in the title of the paper from the perspective of domain-specific language, i.e. environmental engineering. The results of her study suggest that there are semantic preferences and semantic prosodies in this domain. The most important implication is that results of such corpora studies should be adequately incorporated into ESP materials and textbooks in order to provide learners with opportunities to fully grasp the complexity of meaning that goes beyond single words.

The final paper in Part one, *"Teaching and learning contrastive linguistics"*, written by Josef Schimed, is an illustrative account of how a simple corpus, in this case the EU Parliament Translation Corpus with texts in four languages, can be used for exploratory learning and teaching, lexicography and translation. But what the author wishes to bring to the forefront is the idea that multilingual corpora open up a wider range of possibilities for contrastive language analyses than bilingual corpora.

What is characteristic of the eight papers in this part is their reliance on strong pedagogical foundations. They all provide insight into approaches, tools and processes of learning and teaching that can be applied to a wide scope of language classrooms.

Part two: Learner corpora consists of two papers. The first one, *"Expert-like" elementary narratives: A genre- and corpus-based study of L2 writing development"*, contributed by Juan Pablo Jimenez-Caycedo and Meg Gebhard, is a study of one language learner's academic literacy development over the course of an academic year, in which both genre analysis and corpus analysis were used. The findings of this analysis were then compared to large-reference corpora, such as BNC. The authors concluded that the methodology they applied can indeed be useful in tracing and quantifying second language writing development.

Maria Belen Diez Bedmar and Antonio Vicente Casas Pedrosa, the authors of the second paper in Part two, set out to explore the use of prepositions by Spanish university students. The study of correct and incorrect uses of prepositions, based on a four-year longitudinal learner corpus, revealed four patterns of development in the use of prepositions as well as the key role of learners' first language. As for pedagogical implications, the authors point to the need of teaching prepositions explicitly with the focus on phrase level.

Part three: Resources and tools: creation proposes various models and methods of using corpora in creating resources in different domains. In the first paper in this part, Sara Castagnoli and her colleagues present the MeLLANGE corpus (Multilingual e-Learning and LANGuage Engineering), which is a multilingual annotated learner translator corpus. Specifically, they show examples of applying the corpus for didactic and research purposes.

In her paper *"How awareness of lexical combinatorion can improve second language learning: A model for analysing collocations in scientific discourse"*, Mojca Pecman presents a method for investigating phraseology in scientific discourse. This method led to the creation of phraseological corpus-based data which can be used as a resource for teaching and learning scientific language, or as a reference tool for non-native writers of scientific texts in English.

In the paper *"Recognizing proverbs: A method and its applications"*, Olympia Tsaknaki presents a method for automatic recognition of

proverbs. The testing of the method on a large newspaper corpus revealed that it can successfully locate examples of proverbs in a text which, to the author's mind, proves the method adaptable and applicable to a variety of fields, from language learning to translation to investigation of literary data.

Philippe Martin's contribution describes a software tool, WinPitch Corpus, which allows the instructor to introduce features of spoken language, including speakers' styles and details of pronunciation, not readily available from conventional teaching materials.

We return to the issue of using corpora in the development of writing in the paper by Olivier Kraif and Agnès Tutin. The authors introduce a parallel corpus of academic papers in English and French which has been annotated for 'semi-frozen expressions', such as collocations. Such a corpus functions as a complement to a dictionary, but is at the same time more flexible and more powerful as a writing aid.

The closing part of the volume, **Part four: Resources: evaluation**, features two papers which both deal with evaluation of corpora but in a different way and with a different focus. Isabella Chiari compares two written corpora and two spoken corpora of Italian as tools for teaching language variation to learners of Italian as a foreign language. In addition to highlighting the benefits of using corpora for these purposes, the author also points to a few obstacles that corpora users must be aware of, such as differences in the treatment of language variation, or size, design and tools that do not allow for statistically founded comparisons to be made.

In the final paper ("*The Learner's Dictionary and the Sciences: Mismatch or no match?*"), Geoffrey Williams raises the question of the extent to which learner's dictionaries, such as OALD, meet the needs of an ESP learner/user. Although the value of the dictionary is unquestionable, some adjustments based on corpora in specialized usage are called for in order to cater to the ESP user.

In sum, the contributions to this volume make an informative and inspiring read for researchers, teachers, learners, and translators. Although the volume is not suitable for novice users of corpora (for there are no definitions of key notions or detailed descriptions on how to use corpora) it fulfils its purpose, which is to promote the field of corpus linguistics and particularly its wide applicability in language learning

and teaching which goes beyond material and textbook design. Apart from a few typographical errors, the presentation of the book is excellent.

All papers are individually interesting, but the whole volume has a sense of coherence in that several common threads emerge. First of all, all contributions, with no exceptions, offer helpful pedagogical guidance as to how corpora can complement language learning and teaching. Next, they all share a passionate and firm conviction that corpora have multiple potential affordances in language learning and teaching. The contributors also note that corpus use is not without its shortcomings that may put off potential users: corpus investigations are time-consuming activities that require a specific set of skills as well as high motivation. But perhaps the strongest impact of this volume derives from the implication that recurs throughout the book: corpus use raises learner autonomy to a whole new level. Corpus use is not only seen as an invaluable learning tool, but also as an effective learning strategy.