

Developing a Level-Appropriate, Grammatically-Categorized Browsing System of EFL Example Sentences for Teachers and Students

Kiyomi CHUJO
College of Industrial Technology
Nihon University
Tokyo, Japan
chuuju.kiyomi@nihon-u.ac.jp

Kathryn OGHIGIAN
Center for English Language Education in Science and Engineering (CELESE)
Waseda University
Tokyo, Japan
k_oghigian@aoni.waseda.jp

Shiro AKASEGAWA
Lago Institute of Language
Shiga, Japan
lagoinst@gmail.com

Although corpus linguistics methodology has benefits (Gavioli & Aston, 2001), it has a long way to go before being widely accepted in the mainstream L2 classroom (Perez-Paredes & Alcaraz-Calero, 2009). Currently available corpora are not necessarily appropriate for secondary school EFL students or beginner level university students. Breyer (2009) reports that 61% of teachers in her study indicated they were unable to find a corpus for student use that was appropriate in topic or difficulty level. Although many teachers have relied on the BNC, Allan (2009) points out that this corpus presents unfamiliar topics that are “cut off from everyday life” and that the truncated concordance lines are difficult for students to manage. Gavioli & Aston (2001) have remarked on the need for teacher selected or pre-edited graded or ‘easy’ concordances. Breyer (2009) also reports that because it was quite hard to find suitable texts which would fit into specific grammatical exercises, more teachers would use DDL to teach grammar if these materials were more readily available. Braun (2007: 316) investigated “the methodical challenges” of corpus integration in the secondary education and she concluded “it is time for a move from data driven learning to needs-driven corpora, activities and methodologies.” Minn, Sano, Ino & Nakamura (2005) created a commercial website to provide sentences according to English sentence patterns appearing in secondary school textbooks, however these are BNC-based and the sentences are not appropriate for the targeted students.

To meet this need, our team is developing a simple, ready-to-use tool, the Lago Grammatical Pattern Profiler (LGP), as an application for the compilation and browsing of grammatically-categorized level-appropriate sentences with everyday language in the context of language education. First, a level-appropriate 30 million word corpus was compiled from ‘easy’ data such as (copyrighted) English textbooks used in Asian countries, English graded readers, American reading and language textbooks, and other Web-based children’s news programs. Second, the LGP compilation system extracted

example sentences for grammatical items based on Azar (2003) from this corpus. Using the example sentences for reference, grammatically-categorized (copyright-free) sentences tailored to EFL/L2 needs were created manually as a basis for the LGP browsing system.

The LGP is publically available. It has a simple user-friendly interface developed for teachers and students to view and download example sentences of particular targeted grammar structures. The grammatical structures included in the material are available in three levels: beginner, intermediate and advanced. Because the example sentences are based on graded texts approximately equivalent to US grades 1-3, basic vocabulary and sentence structures represented will allow students to focus on the particular grammatical pattern and not high-level vocabulary or complex patterns. Structures are those pertinent to EFL/L2 lessons. Given the lack of appropriate corpora for beginner level students, this system will fill a vacancy for appropriate level easy concordance for EFL/L2 populations.

References

- Allan, R. (2009). 'Can a graded reader corpus provide "authentic" input?' *ELT Journal* 63: 23-32.
- Azar, B. (2003). *Fundamentals of English Grammar, Third Edition*. NY: Pearson Education.
- Braun, S. (2007). 'Integrating corpus work into secondary education: from data-driven learning to needs-driven corpora.' *ReCALL* 19: 307-328.
- Breyer, Y. (2009). 'Learning and teaching with corpora: reflections by student teachers.' *Computer Assisted Language Learning* 22: 153-172.
- Gavioli, L. & Aston, G. (2001). 'Enriching reality: language corpora in language pedagogy.' *ELT Journal* 55: 238-246.
- Minn, D., Sano, H., Ino, M. & Nakamura, T. (2005). 'Using the BNC to create and develop educational materials and a website for learners of English.' *ICAME Journal* 29: 99-113.
- Perez-Paredes, P. & Alcaraz-Calero, M. (2009). 'Developing annotation solutions for online data driven learning.' *ReCALL* 21: 55-75.