

Becoming Corpus Literate: the EFL Practitioners' story

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Outline

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- ★ *Themes from EFL Practitioner's reflective journals*
- ★ *Feedback from post-training interviews*
- ★ *The Epilogue*

1. The Prologue

The context and design of the study

Context of the study

Corpus linguists have reported the benefits in integrating corpora into the language learning classroom (Johns, 1991; O’Keeffe et al., 2007), however recent studies show corpus uptake by practitioners continues to be slow (Poole, 2020; Charles, 2020). To encourage uptake, Frankenberg-Garcia (2012) advocates short activities with corpora that can fit into prepared lessons.

With little research in corpus training of in-service practitioners, the present study provides a training framework for corpus literacy and incorporating corpora into the English as a Foreign Language classroom.

Recruitment for the study

84 language schools were contacted by email with the scoping questionnaires. Distributed over social media (Twitter and Facebook) by a large English Language Teaching organisation.

- 71 respondents completed the scoping questionnaire
- 25 provided contact information for training sessions
- 10 teachers were contacted to complete consent forms
- 5 teachers completed the training sessions

Design of the study

5 weeks of training sessions

- ◆ One session each week,
- ◆ Approx. 45 minutes of live demonstration, 45 minutes for activity building with the trainer if desired.
- ◆ Conducted over Zoom, Spring 2021

Trainees were introduced to corpus tools from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA).

Training framework

Based on TESOL paradigms: Needs Analysis, Exploratory Practice, Teacher Reflection

- Trainees conducted a learner needs analysis to design corpus activities
- Trainer demonstrated how to use a corpus tool live and how to build an optional ready-made corpus activity based on a learner need
- Trainees reflected on teaching activities with corpora in class
- Trainees report their use of corpora after 3 months, 1 year

Notable limitations

Data from the scoping questionnaire was collected during Summer 2020. The closure of language schools due to Covid19 restrictions resulted in the scoping questionnaire being distributed over social media platforms. This may likely imply a possible over-reporting of corpus awareness in the present study.

2. Results of the scoping questionnaire

Responses from the majority of respondents mirrored those reported by the 5 participants in the study

Teacher's Responses to the Questionnaire

Online sources?

All 5 participants reported using Google, YouTube, websites with practice activities and online dictionaries in class.

Familiar with term 'corpus'?

2 participants reported some previous exposure to corpora.

Designed corpus materials?

Only 1 teacher reported having training to design materials with a corpus.

Initial exposure?

1 teacher reported previous exposure from a professional course.

Most questionnaire respondents (45%) reported being 'self-taught'.

Confidence level with corpora?

1 participant reported 'average' in their level of confidence in designing materials with corpora.

Interest in more 'technology'?

All 5 participants reported interest in learning more technology for their classroom.

3. Themes from Practitioner's Reflective journals



Reflective themes and comments

Designing materials with corpora

- 'limitless' word/collocations to plan activities
- Planning activities didn't take as long as traditional methods
- No need to create example sentences

Teaching with corpora

- Using data from popular TV/Movies motivated students in the lesson
- 'Overwhelming' at first, easier each week
- Data can create new/deeper discussions

Developing corpus literacy

- More possibilities to revise/recycle activities
- Teachers used new tools & different features without being shown
- Preferences for corpus tools established

Developing corpus literacy:

“I loved searching for clusters...The comparative...The Word [tool] when you just see the analysis of the word, that’s also very helpful. I found it really useful when you can see the sentence, but also I can see where it comes from, yes, that too definitely.”

“Ah, it [learning how to use corpora] has affected, of course, my teaching and now I’ve got more ideas for even other classes... Actually, I have already introduced it to them [and] assign them some vocabulary exercises, using the clusters, and come up with new ideas, synonyms, etc.”¹³

Developing corpus literacy (cont):

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“I don't feel like I'm super comfortable with all of the tools that are available, but a little bit more than at the beginning...I think there's a lot more to learn about different ways of finding the same information.”

“Maybe sometimes I was a bit discouraged by the fact that sometimes you do not get what you want, so you have to try out different tools...That was probably what I did most often, try to find the best combination of tools, yeah.”

4. Feedback from post-training interviews

Wrapping up their experiences

Feedback interview themes

Designing classroom materials with a corpus

- Teacher's first impression of COCA
- What corpora brings to language teaching

Teaching with corpora

- More ideas for activities
- Authenticity of language taught

Future use: direct/indirect activities

- Desire for more 'student-friendly' websites to use corpora in class
- More practice building activities with a corpus

Designing materials with corpora:

“I thought it would be more difficult, more technical...I think the training opens a world in front of me and that’s very satisfying. [It] makes me happy because I have another really useful tool to further explore language.”

“I was impressed because I was not familiar with the full application it gives and [I have] very positive feelings about it.”

“At first, when I saw COCA, I thought that it was quite complex... And I felt, can I do it or not? But with [the trainer’s] help, I realised that it’s not so difficult to use.” 17

Teaching with corpora:

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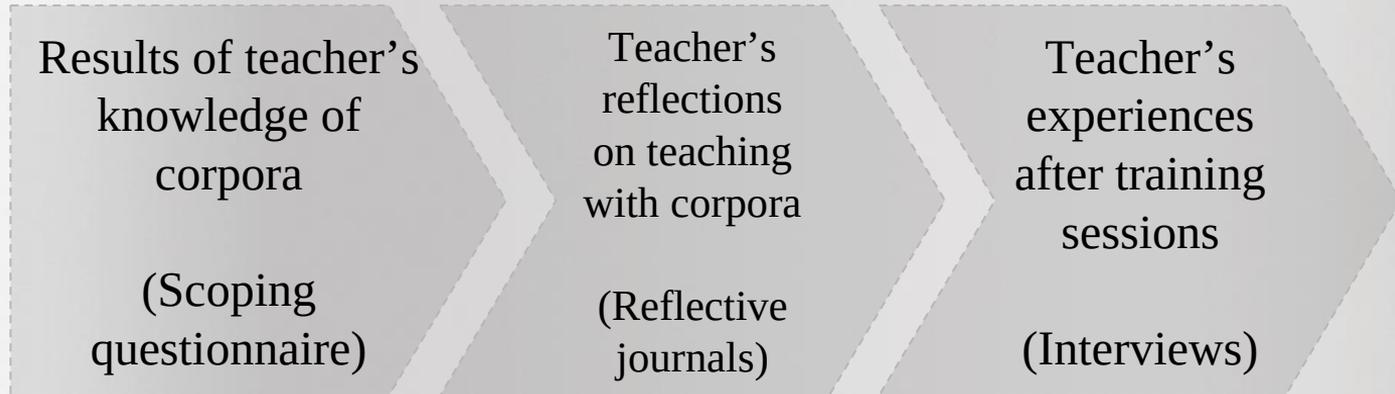
“It brought the teaching closer to reality.”

“I look at exercises from a different angle. I know [corpora] is there and I can find things to present to students.”

“It gave me more confidence, the way to use the language.”

“[I feel] more secure. that I actually provide and teach language that’s real, and I find that makes the lesson richer.”

The corpus literacy journey has been told from...



5. The Epilogue

Where to next with corpora?

Findings of the study

Positive feelings towards corpora

- ◆ Authenticity in class
- ◆ Feel corpora can lead to supporting more lessons
- ◆ More confident teaching with corpora

How it differs from previous trainings

- ◆ Less time preparing activities when compared with traditional methods

Teachers want:

- ◆ More 'student-friendly' resources for direct applications of corpora in class (Poole, 2020)
- ◆ More training with corpora (Farr, 2008; Leńko-Szymańska, 2015)
- ◆ More exposure to other corpora for language teaching

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Want to join my training sessions?

Complete the questionnaire
here:

- ◆ https://tcdecon.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_ernsDFn3AVcUyOi



THANKS!

Any questions?

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