Submission for
New Ways in Vocabulary Teaching

Five Lextutor activities – various contributors, levels & learning points

1. Concordance Search
2. Rapid Reaction
3. Fill in the Gaps
4. Computer-Assisted Text Selection
5. Read it, Hear it, Look it up

Title: Concordance Search

Author name: Marlise Horst, Tom Cobb, Ioana Nicolae

Levels: Intermediate and beyond

Aims:
- To develop 'deep' knowledge of new words including aspects such as collocation, grammatical use, register and multiple senses
- To raise awareness of different aspects of word knowledge
- To familiarize students with computer tools for discovery learning

Class Time: 30 minutes

Preparation Time: 20 minutes

Resources: computers with internet access, a worksheet or projection with a set of questions for each of the words students will explore

Procedure

1. Select 3 or 4 words from a class reading or activity that you judge are important for students know in more depth. An example might be *contract,* which comes from Coxhead's (2000) *Academic Word List* (AWL), a list of words that are important for university-bound learners to know.

2. Start investigating the word by clicking on the 'Concordance' link at th*e Lextutor* website (www.lextutor.ca). Then select 'Corpus-based concordances: English'.

3. Type *contract* (or one of the words you have selected) into the keyword box. Change the default 'exact' option to the 'family' option.

4. The next step is to select a suitable corpus. For example, if the students are high intermediate university-bound learners, and the investigated word is *contract*, the University Word List corpus is a good choice. For less advanced learners and more basic words, the 1k or 2k Graded Readers corpus may be more suitable, while advanced learners can work with the much larger and more comprehensive BNC corpora.

5. Once a corpus has been selected, click on 'Get concordance'. In the example of *contract* and the University Word List corpus, 98 lines will appear (25 lines are shown below to illustrate.)

sorted 1 wds left of key   **Get** Eng_Eng ▼ **Dictionary**   Bottom summary info

Extract >> ☑ AllOllany10120130150   **Change >>** **Key** famly ▼ contract   **In** Univ. Word List (550k) ▼ **sorted** 1 wd ▼ ▼ left ▼ **+assoc**   **on** left ▼

98 hits   Click keyword for more context

001. □ g " to work? Twenty years ago, was there such a thing as a " <u>contract</u> worker " ? The working world isn't what it used to
002. □ m the growth and development of the small business sector. " <u>Contracts</u> of employment are agreements between employers and
003. □ nodded sagely and pulled out a "found property " form. THE " <u>contract</u> between the generations " that underlies most natio
004. □ hares were the most actively traded option. More than 2,000 <u>contracts</u> were completed. Standard Chartered, the banking gr
005. □ et was also the busiest option stock, claiming nearly 2,800 <u>contracts</u>. It was suggested Goldsmith interests already had
006. □ ad, following extensive option trading with more than 3,200 <u>contracts</u>, was at one time down 5.5p at 57p. The shares clos
007. □ to owners of McDonald's franchises. They will enter into a <u>contract</u> with the patent holder to handle the "product," the
008. □ awareness classes, or mandatory anything. They just work. A <u>contract</u> employee can charge double the cost of a regular em
009. □ he government might otherwise have raised." Clearly, when a <u>contract</u> is breached, it is wise to consider first any need
010. □ resident of the National League. Sbell has yet to discuss a <u>contract</u> with Davis, but said: I have no problem with that.
011. □ s six hundred foreign workers on standby ready to work on a <u>contract</u> basis. In knowledge industries, brainpower is the c
012. □ to the board, "when the government with full knowledge of a <u>contractor</u>'s quality-control procedure permits the contracto
013. □ y more than £7m over the next four years, an extension of a <u>contract</u> in which it paid £10.5m over five years. The debt g
014. □ Bonn to determine whether the proposed sale will go ahead. <u>Contract</u> discussions have been under way since early this ye
015. □ overseas – except for South Africa – during the winter. Any <u>contracted</u> player under the age of 22 will be eligible. Barc
016. □ players have apparently been contacted. All our players are <u>contracted</u>, and naturally we object to these unofficial appr
017. □ pect after Francis Fowler, a developer, and Season Builders <u>contractor</u> were fined a total of £14,000 at Horseferry Road
018. □ nt authority. Owners, franchisors, architects, and building <u>contractors</u> who participate in the design and construction o
019. □ advantages. These farms can operate year round and thus can <u>contract</u> with hotels, restaurants, and grocery stores to pro
020. □ ote that most minority- and female-owned firms who get city <u>contracts</u> play by the rules and continue to face discriminat
021. □ ents of the foreign entity's country and advise the cleared <u>contractor</u> of the potential threat, if any is known, to clas
022. □ e broke into the computer system of Grumman, the US defence <u>contractor</u>. The precocious meddler actually managed to gain
023. □ stories about his fatal illness (a rare bone marrow disease <u>contracted</u> during a trip to China), his abrupt departure fro
024. □ I am not mistaken," replied the reporter. "Herbert no doubt <u>contracted</u> the germ of this fever in the marshes of the isla
025. □ base this prediction on two forces. The first is economics. <u>Contract</u> employees have less management burden. They don't h

6. *Since students may be unsure of what to look for in this output, devise questions that show them where to look. This can take the form of a worksheet with questions for each of the words you have opted to work with.*

7. *Ideally, the questions focus first on simple, easy-to-see discoveries and then move to more challenging aspects. A good starting point is the different forms of the word – an aspect that is easy to assess by looking at the highlighted words in the center of the output page. Thus in the case of* contract, *additional forms such as* contracts, contracted, *and* contractor *can be found.*

8. *See the appendix just below for a sequence of questions that progress from simple to more complex tasks.*

Caveats and Options

1. A resource for selecting words that are important for learners of English to know can be found at the 'Famous frequency lists' link on the *Lextutor* site (click on the 'Frequency' link on the homepage).

2. Before students start investigating the selected words in the computer lab, verify that all of them actually occur in the corpus you have chosen, and that there are enough output lines for students to make useful generalizations. Important!

3. It is useful to demonstrate the tools by working on the first few words together. Students need to become familiar with the concordance format.

4. Students can click on the target word in a concordance line to see the complete sentence context. There is also a link to an online dictionary at the top of the output.

References and Further Reading

Cobb, T. (1999).Breadth and depth of vocabulary acquisition with hands-on concordancing. *Computer Assisted Language Learning 12*, 345 - 360.
Cobb, T. (1997). Is there any measurable learning from hands-on concordancing? *System 25* (3), 301-315.
Coxhead, A. (2000). A new academic word list. *TESOL Quarterly*, 34, 213-238.

Horst, M., Cobb, T., & Nicolae, I. (2005). Expanding academic vocabulary with an online collaborative word bank. *Language Learning and Technology, 9,* 90-110.

Appendix

Concordance Questions

1. What other forms of the word do you see in the concordance lines?
2. Which one occurs most often?
3. What do you notice about the grammar of the word? Is it a noun, verb, adjective or adverb?
4. Find one line that you can easily understand. Ignore any lines that are unclear. Is the meaning of the word in this line the same as the meaning used in class?
5. Find several more lines that you can easily understand. What does this word usually mean? Is there more than one meaning?
6. What kinds of topics use this word? Is it a scientific word? A business word? Something else?
7. Now scroll to the bottom of the output. What word is most often used to the immediate left of the word? (This is the left collocate.)
8. Return to the input page and change the setting under 'Controls' to "Sort by one to the right". What word is most often used to the immediate right (the right collocate)?
9. Write a sentence about xxx (specify a topic) using the word and its most often used right collocate.
10. Did anything about your investigation of this word surprise you? Explain.

Title: Rapid Reaction

Author names: Marlise Horst, Tom Cobb

Levels: Any level.

Aims: To develop students' ability to make rapid form-meaning connections

Class Time: 20 minutes

Preparation Time: 20-30 minutes initially. Much less once you are familiar with the software.

Resources: a list of 20-30 recently studied words, computers with internet access

Procedure:

1. You will need a set of about 20 words that differ on a basic semantic feature such as living vs. non-living, pleasant vs. unpleasant, edible vs. non-edible, verb vs. noun, etc. The set should be more or less evenly divided. Thus if the choice is edible vs. non-edible, there should be about 10 edible and 10 non-edible items.

2. Go the *Lextutor* site (http://www.lextutor.ca) and look for the 'RT Builder' link. Once on the RT page, select the '(In)Animacy' demo to see a model of the reaction time game you will build for your students (shown in Figure 1). Try it and click to see your reaction time (RT) results. The goal is to be both accurate (verify that all answers are OK) and fast (note the mean RT and try to improve on it in the next round).

Figure 1 Reaction time builder with sample animate and inanimate words

3. Now return to the RT page and build your own activity by rewriting the question in the question box to fit your 20 words. For example, if you are using an edible vs. non-edible distinction, the question will read, "Is it something you can eat?" The instructions will also need to be adjusted to fit: "if it is something you can eat, type 1 for yes" and 'if it is something you cannot eat, type 3 for no."

4. The next step is to enter the 10 'yes' and 10 'no' words into appropriate boxes. Then when you click 'Build it', a new RT game using your question, instructions and vocabulary should appear. Be sure to try out the activity before you click on the 'Save as' option.

5. By clicking on the 'Save as' option, you save the activity at a link that you can share with students. You may also wish to create and save a small demo version.

6. In the computer lab, show students how the game works using your demo or the '(In)Animacy' demo available at *Lextutor*.

7. Students work in pairs or small groups at computers. After each student has had a chance to practice, they can take turns working on increasing their accuracy and lowering their times. Each student will need several tries.

8. Once all students have had a chance to improve, a winner can be declared.

Caveats and Options

1. Prepare several of the RT games for use in the same session, each with a different semantic distinction. Some of the vocabulary used in one game can be used again in a different way in another.

2. Students can be shown how use the tools at the *Lextutor* site to make their own RT games to share with classmates.

References and Further Reading

Cobb, T., & Horst, M. (2011). Does *Word Coach* coach words? *CALICO Journal, 28*(3), 639-661.

Title: Fill in the Gaps

Author names: Tom Cobb

Levels: Intermediate and up.

Aims: To meet recently learned words in several new contexts in a game environment

Class Time: 20 minutes

Preparation Time: 20-30 minutes initially. Much less once you are familiar with the software.

Resources: a list of 20-30 recently studied words, computers with internet access.

Procedure:

1. You will need a set of about 20 words that have been recently introduced but are not yet well known. That is, students need to a) reinforce their current knowledge of the words, and b) expand it to include new shades of meaning, contextualized uses and collocates.

2. Go the *Lextutor* site (www.lextutor.ca) and look for the 'ID-words' link. Once on the ID page, look at how the demos work and at the corpora available. Press "Submit" with some of the options available to familiarize yourself with the activity.

3. The basic task is to look at the gapped concordance lines and come up with a word that fits all of the contexts (Figure 1). The answer is hidden in the letter string above the gapped lines. Use the computer mouse to highlight the answer. When you answer correctly, the answer appears in the gaps (Figure 2).

4. When you are ready to build the activity for students, the Game Builder will take the words you provide and create a game asking students to match words hidden in random jumbles of letters to gapped lines. The lines come from the corpus you designate (either graded or academic – depending on their level).

    Fig. 1: The Question (based on an Academic Word List word)

Fig. 2: The Answer

5. There are some user options like a new randomized set of gapped concordance lines for any words that are "stuck". Also, a switch makes it possible to either move to the next word immediately, or allow a moment of contemplation once the concordance is filled in. The extra time gives students time to notice interesting collocations like "recover his composure," "recover the losses," and "recover his senses" in the example in Figure 2.

6. The game offers cumulative scoring which makes it suitable to playing competitively.

7. The game can be saved to the *Lextutor* website under the name the teacher has chosen. It can then be used in a lab, on a classroom computer, or at home. Learners can be shown how to build and save their own personalized versions of the game.

8. In a lab, one idea is for students to work in pairs or small groups at computers. After each student has had a chance to practice, they can take turns working on increasing their accuracy. This has the advantage that as they work to obtain better scores, they will encounter the words in more new contexts.

9. Once all students have had a chance to improve, a winner can be declared.

Caveats and Options

1. Select a corpus that it suited to the students' proficiency level. They need to be able to understand most if not all of the concordance lines. The graded corpus offers comprehensible contexts suitable for less advanced learners.

2. Once you built the game, try it out in advance of making it available to students. Since the corpora the game draws on are fairly small, it cannot be guaranteed that there will be multiple gapped lines for every word. The game will run with just a few examples but less than four is probably not ideal. If there are too few lines, try choosing other words or other forms of the target words (e.g. *recovers* instead of *recover*) or selecting a more advanced corpus.

3. As students continue to play, they may bypass examining the gapped lines and just look for familiar forms in the letter strings. To focus their attention on the information in the concordance lines, make a worksheet with questions or tasks such as the following:
   • What do you notice about the grammar of the word? Is it a noun, verb, adjective or adverb?
   • What is the main meaning of the word in the gapped lines? Does it have other meanings? Explain using examples?
   • Write a sentence using the word and its most frequent collocate.

4. An advantage of this game is that while playing, learners are acquiring skills that will be useful in other tasks involving computer concordancing.

References and Further Reading

Cobb, T. (1999). Breadth and depth of vocabulary acquisition with hands-on concordancing. *Computer Assisted Language Learning, 12*, p. 345 - 360.

Parise, P. (Online). Student Reactions to Concordance Data: Reflections on A CALL Based Task Using I-D Word Identification. Available at

http://tesolpeter.wordpress.com/student-reactions-to-concordance-dataa-task-using-i-d-word-identification/

Title: Computer-Assisted Text Selection

Author names: Tom Cobb

Levels: All.

Aims: To find texts at learners' vocabulary level

Class Time: Variable

Preparation Time: 20 minutes familiarization, 30 minutes of testing, 5 minutes for text evaluation (not including time needed to locate texts)

Resources: Computer with internet access, a selection of texts in digital format.

Procedure:

1. Learners take the *Vocabulary Size Test* (Beglar & Nation, 2007), which determines their rough vocabulary size by 1000-word family bands by frequency. The test can be found on the *Lextutor* site at the following address: http://www.lextutor.ca/tests/levels/recognition/1_14k/. It can be administered on paper or online. Learners will be found to be competent at the first thousand most frequent words of English, for example, but weak at the second thousand and thereafter. See Figure 1 for an example of results indicating that the test-taker knows 90% of the words at the first thousand most frequent level.

2. After scoring the test and analysing the results, the teacher gathers a collection of candidate reading materials for these learners in digital format. The next step is to open the *Lextutor* program *Vocabprofile* (an adaptation of Heatley & Nation, 1994, available at http:///.lextutor.ca/vp/bnc) and to paste the first text into input box. When the submit button is clicked, the program will analyze the vocabulary components of the text using the same 1000-word frequency levels as the test (see Figure 2 for an example). Proceed in the same way for each of the other texts.

3. Each text can thus be matched for lexical compatibility with learners' average scores. For instance, if learners know nearly all of the words at the first 1000 level but only half of the second 1000 level, then texts made up entirely first 1000 items will be too easy for them, while texts with a sizable proportion of third to fifth-thousand level items will be too difficult. Texts with 85% first-thousand items and about 10% second thousand level items should be about right.

4. Research shows that for comfortable, extensive reading, about 95-98% of vocabulary items should be familiar, while for intensive reading 90-95% should be familiar. Little is accomplished when learners read texts with fewer than 90% of items familiar (the remaining 10% amounts to one unfamiliar word in ten or about one unfamiliar word per line).

Figure 1: The Vocabulary Size Test, First 1000 level, showing score

Figure 2: Corresponding 1000-level text analysis, clearly showing text is unsuitable for test-taker in Fig. 1 (27% of items could be difficult for this learner)

There are strict time limits on the detention of persons without charge. An arrested person may not be detained without charge for more than 24 hours, unless a serious arrestable offence has been committed. If a serious arrestable offence has been committed a superintendent can extend the period to 36 hours to secure or preserve evidence by continued questioning. When a serious arrestable offence has been committed and the suspect needs to be held in custody beyond the 36 hour period, the police must bring the suspect before a magistrate to extend the time limit to a maximum of 60 hours.

5. Gradually a bank of texts can be built up at different levels. A set of example texts with smoothly differentiated profiles can be seen on Lextutor at this URL: http://www.lextutor.ca/vp/bnc/samples.html .

Caveats and Options

1. Lexis is not the only thing that determines the readability of a text (although it is probably the most important factor). Also important are topic interest and familiarity, sentence length, presence or lack of illustrations, and writing style.

2. Proper nouns will be classified as "difficult words" by *Vocabprofile*, while in fact learners have no trouble with them. The program offers a check-option to reclassify proper nouns as first-thousand (i.e., familiar) items.

3. Teachers may want not just to *find* texts that match the learners but also or instead *create* or *modify* existing texts to make them fit their learners' level(s). *Vocabprofile* offers an Edit-To-A-Profile facility.

References and Further Reading

Beglar, D., & Nation, P. 2007. A vocabulary size test. *The Language Teacher, 31* (1), 9-13.

Cobb, T. (2007). Computing the vocabulary demands of L2 reading. *Language Learning & Technology, 11*(3), 38-63.

Schmitt, N., Jiang, X., & Grabe, W. (2010). The percentage of words known in a text and reading comprehension. *Modern Language Journal. 95*(1), 26-43.

Nation, I. S. P. , & Heatley, A. (1994). Vocabulary Profile and Range: Programs for the Analysis of Vocabulary in Texts. [software].

Title: Read it, Hear it, Look it up

Author names: Tom Cobb

Levels: Intermediate and up.

Aims: To develop skills for reading texts outside the comfort zone

Class Time: 40 minutes

Preparation Time: 20 minutes initially. Five minutes thereafter -- once you are familiar with the software (not including time needed to select an appropriate text).

Resources: Computers with internet access, one for up to three learners. Lab or home.

Procedure:

1. Find a text of 500-1000 words that your learners want or need to comprehend but that goes a bit beyond their comfort level (use the previous 'New Way' on Computer-Assisted Text Selection to find such a text).

2. Go to the *Lextutor* site (www.lextutor.ca) and look for the 'Hypertext' link, choosing Hypertext v.2. To become familiar with activity, play with the demo texts provided on the input page, clicking them into the box and clicking "Build" to create Hypertext pages.

3. The Hypertext format offers readers two support options: They can click on any word to hear it pronounced, and they can obtain a clear, ad-free definition (in an education-friendly version kindly provided by Wordreference.com). The definition appears in an independent space on the screen as shown in Figure 1.

4. Once you feel familiar with the tools, type or paste the text the learners will work with into the box and give it a short, memorable name. Next choose a suitable dictionary from the menu, either the *Wordreference* monolingual option or one of its 12 bilingual dictionaries. Then click "Build."

5. When the page appears, check its format and functionality before clicking on "Save on Lextutor as …" (+ the name that was given in Step 4). This produces the URL that learners will use to access the page.

6. Students work alone or in pairs to read the text, listening to and looking up words as needed. Look-ups are recorded in a space at the top of the text and in a cumulative file that the teacher can access.

7. A number of follow-ups are possible, including sending the looked-up words to one of *Lextutor's* other learning activities such as *Fill in the Gaps* (New Way No. x, above).

Fig 1 : Ready-to-save Hypertext screen for VOA's "Quincey Jones " with Wordereference entry for *record* in English-German bilingual dictionary.
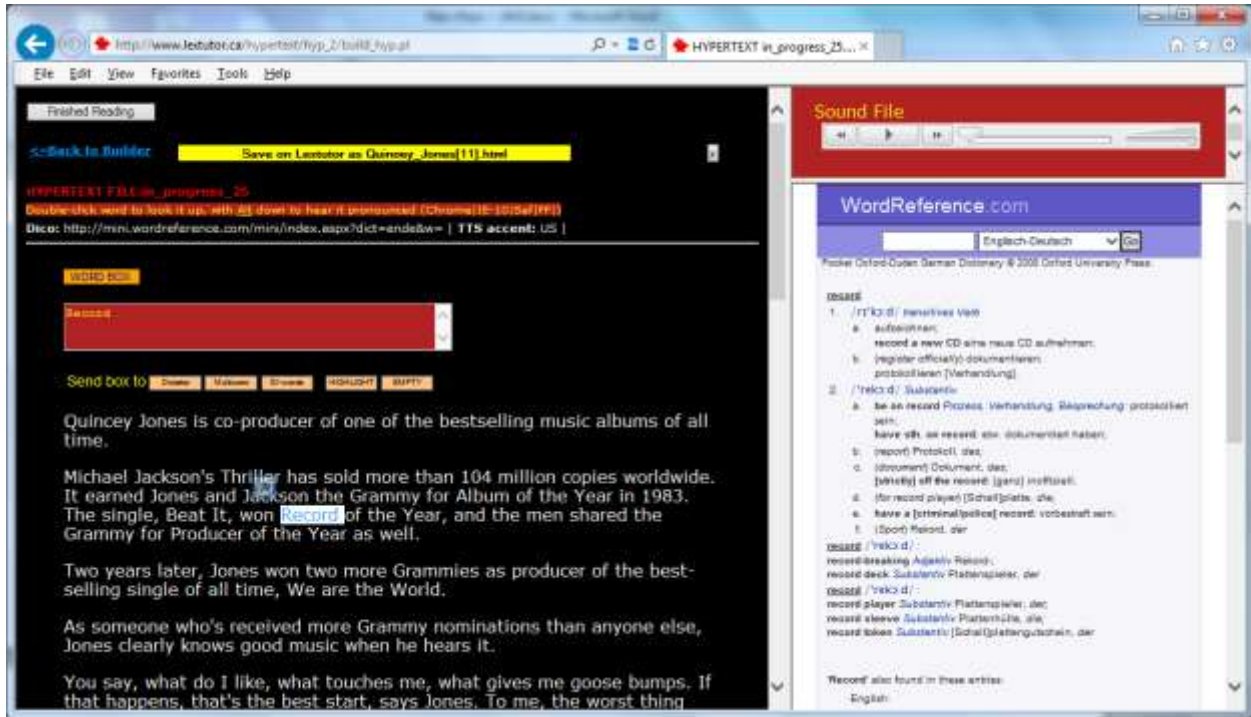
Caveats and Options

1. A "Finished Reading" button appears on the students' text. Clicking on it reveals a list of the words selected for look-up and listening. This could be used by learners to keep a record of their new words, or by the teacher to determine how students are using this resource. No look-ups could indicate the text is not challenging enough. Too many look-ups could indicate the text is too difficult or that the learners need help in determining which words are important to look up. One response to too many look-ups is to impose a time limit for the reading.

2. If the text has an equivalent sound file, such as those provided by Voice of America (http://www.voanews.com/), this can be included to create a read-while-listening version of Hypertext. Note that for the text shown in Figure 1, there is an accompanying sound file.

3. Comprehension can be tested by putting the same text or a summary of it into the *Clozebuilder* (available at the *Lextutor* site). This software produces a cloze passage of the text in a format suitable for printing or as an online version (with a "Save" feature leading to an URL as described above).

4. The online dictionary makes look-ups efficient. This avoids the usual problem of paper dictionaries, which is that the look-ups take readers away from the text for a long time – so long that they may disengage with the message of the text. Similarly, the listing function of the "Finished Reading" feature should reduce the time away from the text for learners who want to copy their new words down. They can simply collect them at the end.

5. Use of Hypertext can help learners build vocabulary and develop strategies for intensive reading. It is also good preparation for navigating other types of interactive documents that now often include click-on definitions, and other resources (pdf's, smart phones, etc).

References and Further Reading

Cobb, T. (2006). Internet and literacy in the developing world: Delivering the teacher with the text. *Educational Technology Research & Development,* 54(6), 627-645.

Cobb, T., Greaves, C., & Horst, M. (2001). Can the rate of lexical acquisition from reading be increased? An experiment in reading French with a suite of on-line resources. In P. Raymond & C. Cornaire, *Regards sur la didactique des langues secondes.* Montréal: Éditions logique.