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Article

Pedagogical Implications of Corpus-based Approaches to ELT in Pakistan

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Abstract

The advent of corpora has opened new vistas for language study and restructured linguists' and academicians' approaches to lexicography and English language teaching (ELT). After 1980s, the use of online language corpora and computer tools garnered tremendous attention of English language teachers and academicians. Keeping in view the modern trends and needs of learners, this research focused on the practical implications of online corpora for ELT and its utility in the Pakistani context. Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE) is used as a reference corpus for this research. MICASE is a collection of nearly 1.8 million words of transcribed speech (almost two hundred hours of recording). The transcribed data of MICASE includes wide range of speech events like seminars, lectures, advisory meetings and lab sessions. The study identified the utility of lexical items at syntactic level and its usage in various contexts. Furthermore, the layers of meanings and uses of lexicons through in-depth study of right and left collocates were explored in the reference corpus. The results showed that lexicons can be used as noun, verb and adjective depending upon the context of the study and right and left collocates play a significant role in understanding the meanings of lexical items in various contexts. Thus, this strategy can be fruitful for English language learners and academic discourse community who are interested in understanding the versatile uses of lexical items and their contextual meaning.

Keywords: collocate, context, corpus, ELT, MICASE

Introduction

There are numerous free online corpora and corpus tools available to be used for language teaching at various levels (Aijmer, 2009). Tim Jones was the pioneer in bringing corpora to ELT and proposed the idea of Data Driven Language Learning (DLL). In DLL students' are vigorously involved in language detectives where they can explore various linguistic patterns through concordance line (Baker, 2012). The scope of corpus in teaching academic writing, creative writing, English language speaking and understanding the contextual use of English language is worthwhile (Adolphs, 2008). Research based corpora can be useful to language teachers in course design as corpus linguistics research offers exploration and informs the end users regarding frequently used lexical items. These items are manipulated in various contexts to demonstrate appropriate uses of phrasal verbs and idioms, synonyms and antonyms and meanings of borrowed (from other languages) words. Moreover, through this approach, language in its material form, such as syntax is also taught and conceptualized.

The current study is an effort to facilitate English language teachers and students of Pakistan in comprehending and applying corpus-based language teaching pedagogy in classrooms. This study brings into light the multiple uses of online available corpus such as Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE). MICASE provides a wide range of variables, including gender, age, academic position/role, native/non-native speaker, speech event, academic discipline and interactivity rating. This study is delimited to the general use of lexicons without considering variable-specificity in order to have holistic portrayal of academic spoken English used in Michigan.

English has become the language of transnational communication and users around the globe are adapting and adopting it to meet their needs (Wessendorf, 2015). ELT has emerged as a marvel phenomenon substantiated by considerable research in the areas of language learning involving many theories and approaches towards grammar instructions and teaching of language. Recently, numerous practitioners and researchers (Baker, 2012; Aijmer, 2009; Romer, 2010) treasure what corpus linguistics have to offer to language pedagogy. Published research papers, monographs and books distinctly demonstrate the growing popularity of pedagogical corpora use and the need of research in this area (Campoy, Cubillo, Belles-Fortuno, & Gea-Valor, 2010). ELT has evolved as a field incorporating

many new techniques and methodologies to effectively deal with the intricacies of language teaching. These techniques rely heavily on technological developments and aids that help learners. Corpus is one of these recent developments which not only helps in different corpus analyses, but is also viewed as an important tool in ELT (Romer, 2010). It becomes more vital when this pedagogy is applied in non-native context of ELT such as Pakistan.

Literature Review

English Language Teaching in Pakistan

Communicative language teaching and Grammar Translation Method are the most popular and much practiced methods in ELT in Pakistan (Durrani, 2016). Pakistan being a third world country, lags far behind in technology and new pedagogical approaches and therefore traditional grammar approach is generally followed for ELT at elementary and basic levels (Anwar, 2016). At tertiary level, traditional pedagogical approaches are followed which leave little room for improved understanding of language through ELT. Thus, the general condition of ELT in Pakistan at several levels is deplorable and desperately lacks the integration of modern technology. In Pakistan, grammar translation method is frequently used with Direct Method and Audio Lingual Method for ELT at secondary level (Khurshid, Gillani, Jabbar, & Noureen, 2014).

Broadly speaking, these traditional methods have many disadvantages. Firstly, one of the most cardinal features of traditional teaching is that it is teacher centred, making the teacher an active participant, while rendering pupils passive and disinterested spectators who are watching the goddess of knowledge delivering the lecture. Secondly, traditional teaching of ELT predominantly focuses on grammar. Thirdly, the major drawback of this methodology is that it involves a lot of memorizing and monotonous learning. It is generally acknowledged that anything which lacks the gripping power, does not achieve its goal. Fourthly, it paid attention only to the writing skills of the learners, while turning a deaf ear to the shouts of the other three skills, that is, reading, speaking and listening, which badly needed to be taken care of. Fifthly, these methods did not give the power to use the words in different context. Therefore, its usage was limited to one particular context with no creativity aspect. As Liu (2011) states that these traditional tutelage of ELT " not only makes grammar learning passive and uninteresting,

but also undermines students' ability to develop a clear understanding of context-appropriate use of grammar" (p. 353). Therefore, it is necessary to bridge the gap between traditional and modern methods of teaching English language. In order to revolutionize traditional language teaching methods, teachers in Pakistan need to bring forth new methods for language teaching and learning. This study proffers multiple uses of online corpora in ELT which is the need of the hour for Pakistani English language learners and instructors.

Development of Corpora and ELT

The development of spoken corpora like MICASE and search tools to represent specific type of data has enabled the researchers to analyse the relationship among lexico-grammar, functions of utterance and discourse context. This idea paves the way to understand the relevance between the multifaceted functions of corpus (as discussed in this study) and ELT.

To achieve the communicative goal, contextual use of language has been proven effective in English as a foreign and/or second language milieu. While learning second language, it is expected from the learners to produce grammatically correct patterns and to produce them in a particular context. Appropriation was never pondered upon and this was a serious shortcoming of the traditional methods. Furthermore, traditional methods are less effective because it does not view language as a whole and takes it in chunks and bits. Liu and Jiang (2009) believe that "traditional grammar focuses on grammatical forms while paying little attention to their discourse contexts, thus failing to address adequately when and why a grammatical form is used in a given context" (p. 62). Therefore, lexico-grammatical approach and corpus based approaches can enable students to learn language in a better and more effective manner. A research conducted on Chinese and American students proved that when using lexico-grammatical and corpus based approach, students get an increased critical understanding of grammar, which makes learning more interesting and effective as it promotes discovery learning and students learn the importance of context in lexico-grammatical choices (Liu & Jiang, 2009). Therefore, introducing modern methods in teaching English language has become necessary in the present time.

Corpus use subsidized language learning and teaching in a number of ways (Aston, 2000; Partington, 1998). It may help in-depth study of native-speaker corpora

and authentic language description, which may further compute in compilation of dictionaries and pedagogical grammar (Hunston & Francis, 1998 as cited in Sun & Wang, 2003). Furthermore, corpus can be effective in two ways; firstly, learner language corpora provides insights into various features of learners speech while native-speaker corpora provides minute details of language used in foreign context. Hence, both learners' language and native speaker corpora contribute to language learning and teaching (Aston, Bernardini, & Stewart, 2004). It is clear from the above discussion that the discovery of multimillion word corpus has opened new vistas in language description, lexicography and ELT, especially through multiple uses of single word in various contexts.

Corpus based ELT is beneficial in a number of ways. It can be useful in exploring time related idiomatic expressions with different contextual meanings (Shehzad, 2005). Another use of corpora is the display of contextual use of language, for example, phrasal verbs, idioms and diverse lexical items that are used by native speakers in different situations (Liu & Jiang, 2009). This poses a challenge to people in second or foreign language contexts like in Pakistan. Corpus based studies can also help a great deal in attaining this native like proficiency. A research carried out on British National Corpus (BNC) shows how corpus can be used for attaining this level of contextual knowledge and language efficiency (Gardner & Devies, 2007). Materials available for language teaching exhibit very few examples of the usage of language, but corpus provides them unlimited use of language for different purposes (Kessler, 2016). It helps students to study various aspects of language and facilitates them with the best material for learning. With the direct use of corpora, one can not only enhance linguistic skills of speaking and listening, but reading and writing as well. In many instances, language use accessed from online corpora is able to clarify, refine and even correct the use of language that other resources provide (Partington, 1998). Hence, keeping in view the current scenario of ELT in Pakistan and the international methods used, it is recommended to bring reforms in ELT in the country that can be initiated by introducing corpus-based ELT.

Online Corpus

One of the challenges, the instructors face to elaborate contextual study of language has been lack of pragmatic authenticity of resource material. Therefore, designing and developing of authentic material is a major goal of pragmatic inquiry through ELT (Bardovi-Harlig & Mossman, 2016). Online spoken and written

corpora have resolved the problem of non-availability of authentic material. The use of corpora for language teaching is advocated by material developers and corpus experts (Rippen, 2010 as cited in Bardovi-Harlig & Mossman, 2016). Grammatical features and categories are tagged in many corpora while untagged corpora may also be utilized to teach grammatical categories. Untagged corpus can also be provided to the learners to explore various features of language under the supervision of instructors.

Many online corpora including British National Corpus, American National Corpus, MICUSP, Nottingham Health Communication Corpus (NHCC), Nottingham International Corpus of Learner English, and Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English are freely available to the users. Specialized corpora (collection of text from particular field) are more beneficial than general corpora as the former is produced by narrowly defined speakers in certain setting and are not generally accessible for the users, if it is designed by researchers for their own study. One of the welcome exceptions of freely accessible corpus is MICASE that can easily be browsed through online interface. Another reason of selection of this corpus is its relevance to academic discourse.

The aim of the study is to explore the pedagogical implications of corpus-based approaches to ELT and how corpus-based approaches facilitate English language learners in Pakistani context. To achieve the aim of this study, following research questions are addressed in the section of results and discussion.

1. How do corpus-based approaches enhance learning in the context of English language teaching?
2. How do online corpora facilitate the understanding of meaning in a specific context?

Methodology

Corpus Linguistics is branch of linguistics that describes methodology for data analysis. For this research, we used corpus-based approaches to English language teaching. The results were extracted from online corpus and the researchers themselves explained how these results can be used for English language teaching. MICASE comprises 1.5 million words of transcribed speech. The transcribed

speech contains the data from academic settings like seminars, classroom sessions, lab discussions and service encounters. For the selection of corpus, mode, utility, context and speakers are very important and in this regard, MICASE can be used in academic group work for an EAP programs (Bardovi-Harlig & Mossman, 2016). It is easily available online corpus which demands less time and limited training.

Furthermore, MICASE has both browse and search functions that allow the users to search the words from the corpus and results show the head word in the middle. Users can select specific speaker attributes containing academic role, native speaker language, gender and first language to explore from the corpus and transcript attributes containing event type and interactivity rating. To explore occurrences, the users write the words in search bar and in response will be able to get the total number of transcripts along with frequencies and other statistical information while complete text may also be viewed. Furthermore, the users may select various variables to get the required results. Keeping in view the usefulness of MICASE, it is used as a reference corpus for this study.

The current study uses the concepts of concordance and collocation. The former provides the broader context of a search word, that is, node word and the latter gives the narrowed down context of the search word. Concordance provide the overall uses of the lexical items (node words) whereas, collocation determines the textual behaviour of the node word. Through concordance the lexical items are explored with specific reference to their dynamic nature of meaning making and collocation specifies the co-occurrence of various lexical items with the node words. For example, in Figure 1, test stands in the middle of concordance line, it is node word while the words occur at the right side are called right collocate and the words occur at the left side are called left collocate. Moreover, browse option also provides total number of matches (frequency) and transcripts (number of transcribed documents).
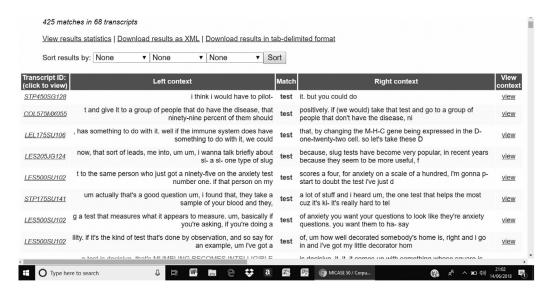
Figure1. Appearance of node words in MICASE

Findings and Discussion

Corpus based language teaching is one of the emerging trends in ELT. There are a number of ways in which it can be incorporated in the educational setup. Corpus can be used as a helpful tool in learning various dimensions of language like grammatical constructions, frequencies, contextual use of language and terminologies (Campoy, Cubillo, Belles-Fortuno, & Gea-Valor, 2010).

Syntactic Awareness

ELT can be challenging in foreign or second language contexts because one word can be used as a noun, verb and sometimes as an adjective as well. It can confuse the students how and where to use those words properly and how their meanings change with each usage. For example, the study of MICASE reveals that the word *test* (see Appendix A) can be used as noun (e.g. *TOEFL test, lower tailed test, statistical test, I have to take a test*), verb (e.g. *You can test, They test a lot of stuff*) and modifier/adjective (e.g. *test tube*). For instance, Figure 2 shows that in first occurrence the word *test* is used as a noun, in the second occurrence it is used as a verb and in the third occurrence it is used as a modifier. Thus, corpus-based ELT can be helpful in determining multiple syntactic functions of single lexical item.

SEM545MG083	yeah she must not cuz i put, i put my student's	Test	in her box too and i don't know if she has it or not i haven't checked her box. but um, yeah	view
LEL500JU034	her approaches, that have been taken to this is, can you make a novel prediction? can you go out and	Test	it, find evidence now so again what separates from just an as so story is, can you s- tell your stor	view
LAB200JU018	test tube do you have any	Test	tubes (left here?) uh, i th	view

Figure 2. The syntactic functions of *test* in MICASE

Contextualization

Contextualization is the study of the context of the lexeme in order to understand its multidimensional usage (Bhatia, 2004). It strengthens the comprehension, usage and understanding of lexical items. Dictating the dictionary meaning or superficial meaning of the lexeme is not sufficient for the learners as it does not provide them enough knowledge to incorporate it in their daily use. However, if the learners are taught to search a word in MICASE and then look for the words that co-occur with it frequently and the context in which it is employed, then this may lead to more proficient learning. For example, the learners look for the words 'authority (see Appendix A) and then make a list of the various ways in which it is used. As indicated in Figure 3, authority is used in various contexts in MICASE, that is, as a mental category like *the idea of authority*, a sense of power like *power and authority*, *actual authority*, a higher authority like *authority over people* and so on. The large amount of data can also provide the users with endless possibilities and viewpoints to see each item in context, thus promoting the contextual view of language which is usually ignored in traditional grammar.

| DIS315JU101 | i guess we went kind of on to the Reformation, and, i- i- i- it questions religious | authority | and sort of, the Pope's actual authority over people's ideas and, sort of spirituality and what not. | view |
| DIS315JU101 | well, um, what happens in the idea of | authority | ? well i mean i guess our bas | view |

Figure 3. The contextual uses of *authority* in MICASE

Similarly, polysemy, another important aspect of language, which can confuse English language learners like simple word *head* can be used to refer to the part of body on the top of your body, boss of the organization and important/top ranked (as an adjective). Corpus explains the meaning in vast context with various senses across disciplines.

Meanings of Difficult Words

Corpus can be used by the instructors to teach difficult words or terms and their usage in contexts. In Pakistani ELT classrooms, students learn new words, but do not know how to use them in suitable contexts (Lavelle, 2016). English language has borrowed some words from French language like café, cliché, vis-à-vis. Sometimes, these lexical items are difficult to understand in isolation and there is a possibility that knowing the dictionary meaning of borrowed or difficult words may lead the learners towards wrong context. Corpus may enable them to see the proper usage in context. The frequency of *vis-à-vis* (see Appendix A) is low as compared to other lexical items; still it may be useful to the learners to get appropriate meanings. Figure 4 shows that *vis-à-vis* is used as preposition to show relation like in first occurrence and as adverb to explain position like second occurrence.

EL105SU113	ings that women reformers along with um others who were um supportive of bolstering labor's position	vis-a-vis	, uh the uh um uh uh industry uh th- m- the idea that women needed re- to be protected if they were	view
LEL105SU113	d continue to be only women were protected they would continue to be disadvantaged in the work force	vis-a-vis	men. but in the end protective legislation was passed, first by the states, uh individually, and the	view

Figure 4. The uses of *vis-à-vis* in MICASE

Lexicography

Traditionally, lexicography deals with the meaning and use of words. Corpus linguistics brought modification in studying lexicon by exploring how common are different words? (Frequency), how common are the different senses for a given word? (Right and left collocate), how words have systematic associations with each other? (Phraseological structures) and do words have systematic associations with particular registers, dialects and community? (Genre) (Biber, Conrad, & Reppen, 1998).

Lexicography can be defined as the study of lexeme along with the grammatical category. Initially lexeme and grammar were studied in isolation, but in lexicography they are studied as a combined category, that is inter-woven together. One such approach is the study of synonyms and antonyms. It might be difficult for students to understand that significance and importance conveys

the same meaning, but when they put individual effort to find them in corpus and study it in a context, it will enhance their understanding leading towards better learning. Learners often learn synonyms, but in their eagerness to use new and better words, at times they use ill befitted synonyms in academic/non-academic writing. Hence, corpus facilitates the learners to use the lexicons effectively. On the other hand, instructors can also ask the students to rectify their mistakes by searching for the contextual usage of both words through corpus. In MICASE, *check* (see Appendix A) is used more frequently with 259 matches in 77 transcripts than *examine* (see Appendix A) with 32 matches in 12 transcripts. Although the synonym of *check* is *examine* but both lexical items are used in different contexts. Right and left collocate are important to determine and understand the meaning. For example, right collocates of check are email, out, in, the numbers positive, your calculation and right collocates of examine are the current situation, their addiction, the cultural and religious beliefs. The right collocate of check suggests that it is used for scrutinising (Check your record), measuring quality (check for plagiarism, check the quality), searching (check it out), seeing something (checking my email), checking quantity (check your calculations) and so on.

Phrasal Verbs and Idioms

To achieve native level proficiency in English, it is important to get familiar with the phrasal verbs or word groups used in English language (Gardner & Davies, 2007). The meaning of phrasal verbs cannot be guessed easily as literal meanings are different from superficial meanings. A study conducted by Gardner and Davies (2007) proved the usefulness of corpus based study to find out frequently occurring phrasal verbs and their proper contextual usage. If students are made to learn the usage of phrasal verbs and their proper usage through corpus study, it can prove very useful and would also include active learning as the students would have to find out the usage themselves.

The use of idioms can also be taught in a similar manner through corpus-based approach and it may also result in better level of proficiency and understanding. Some idiomatic expressions like 'at sixes and sevens, 'apple of someone's eye, ask for the moon are not given in available online corpora like MICASE. Shehzad (2005) explored time related idiomatic expression in MICASE for pedagogical implication and found frequent occurrences of time related idiomatic expressions in MICASE but some time related idiomatic expressions are not found in MICASE like time

out of mind, best of times, time tested, mark time, out on time. She suggested that online corpora also tells about modern trends of language use like the absence of a few time related idiomatic expression from academic discourse corpus shows that these idiomatic expressions are no more part of the academic discourse. Another idiomatic expression 'burn the midnight oil' is frequent occurrence of Pakistani ELT context but it is not found in MICASE which shows that it is probably no more the part of academic spoken/written discourse (Shehzad, 2005).

Conjunctions

Connecting words (hence, nevertheless, subsequently, consequently) are often used in academic and research writing. Learners may go through various research texts to explore their usage in academic writing, or how often they occur. Corpus may give them an idea about the usage of these words in various contexts. In MICASE, hence (see Appendix A) may be used in various ways as given in Figure 5.

LES495JU063	y benefited ultimately from free trade, because they trade uh traded under quite equal terms um, and	**hence**	of course they were, compliant and they were willing, to tolerate American leadership in throughout	view
LES495JU063	e United States. so Japanese companies set up subsidiaries, in the United States. of course you know	**hence**	, not, hence were reducing or eliminating their necessity to export cars from Japan to United States	view

Figure 5. The contextual uses of *hence* in MICASE

Distribution across Speech Events

Another important feature of MICASE is description of frequency across registers. When users search for any word, they get total number of matches and transcripts. There is another option of *view results statistics* that provides frequency distribution of lexical items across speech events. Furthermore, it also shows a total number of tokens by gender and academic roles that clarifies the use of lexicons in various domains. For example, *press* is used in twenty different speech events having frequency variation across events. Its frequency is highest in Graduate Buddhist Study Seminar and lowest in Rehabilitation Engineering and Technology Student Presentations. Hence, frequency distribution across speech events may guide the learners in using lexicons in various events.

Limitations

Although there are many advantages of corpus based approaches to ELT; yet, there are some limitations, which can also be observed in the context of Pakistan. According to Liu and Jiang (2009) using corpora in teaching language may mislead the instructor to overgeneralize the results. Moreover, it is also important to consider the right corpus used for instruction in classroom. Keeping these few but important considerations regarding the use of corpora in English language teaching, the following limitations might be considered prior to lesson planning.

1. For a developing country like Pakistan, which is facing many financial problems in budgeting basic living facilities, it is very difficult to modernize educational systems at grass root level owing to lack of IT facilities. Despite such administrative constraints, computer labs are available in some private institutes (schools and colleges) and universities which can be utilized for corpus-based language teaching.

2. Another limitation is the untrained staff, that is, the faculty members who belong to various institutions are traditionally educated, and therefore prefer to use old methodologies with their students and thus are not trained enough to teach through modern methodologies and tools. Training courses and workshops for corpus-based language teaching can be arranged for the instructors.

3. Large amount of data on a corpus becomes overwhelming for the students and thus they get confused as in how to deal with large amount of data generated for a single query. It is therefore important to educate and train teachers and students properly so that they can use corpus effectively for a better learning experience (Diew & Jiang, 2009).

4. The use of cultural specific lexicon is another important issue in using appropriate vocabulary. To cater to this problem, few universities are developing a bank of cultural specific lexicon for Pakistan.

5. English language has borrowed some words from other languages, which are not part of online corpora, which may cause hindrance in learning process.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Pakistan being a developing country is not in the list of technologically advanced countries; therefore, traditional pedagogical approaches are generally followed for ELT at all levels of education. Based on the approaches being used in the first world countries, modern technology and corpus based pedagogy in ELT can be started in Pakistan too, which would level up the standards of ELT in Pakistan. Therefore, corpus based ELT can be used as a tool in learning various dimensions of language. The large amount of data can also provide the students or researchers with endless possibilities and viewpoints to see each item in context, thus promoting the contextual view of language, which is usually ignored by traditional grammar. MICASE is used as a reference corpus for this study. Corpus based techniques can be useful in ELT for improving vocabulary, contextual understanding of meaning, idiomatic expression, phrasal verbs and grammar.

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Appendix- A

Lexical Item	Weblink
MICASE	https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/c/corpus/corpus?c=micase;page=simple
test	https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/c/corpus/corpus?c=micase&cc=micase&type=simple&q1=test
Authority	https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/c/corpus/corpus?c=micase&cc=micase&type=simple&q1=authority
vis-à-vis	https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/c/corpus/corpus?c=micase&cc=micase&type=simple&q1=vis-%C3%A0-vis
examine	https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/c/corpus/corpus?c=micase&cc=micase&type=simple&q1=examine
check	https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/c/corpus/corpus?c=micase&cc=micase&type=simple&q1=check
Blow up	https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/c/corpus/corpus?c=micase&cc=micase&type=simple&q1=blow+up
hence	https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/c/corpus/corpus?c=micase&cc=micase&type=simple&q1=hence