VOCABULARY IN AGRIBUSINESS: CONCORDANCE AS A CLASS ACTIVITY

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RESUME: This article is related to ESP, vocabulary teaching, and computer corpus data. These three elements together can lead to new methodologies in language teaching, for example, computer-generated concordances that are very helpful for grammar and vocabulary teaching (BUTLER, 1998). Based on discourse analysis, genre theories, and corpus linguistics teacher have new ways of vocabulary practices, using authentic and contextualized data. Moreover, working with computer corpus data gives a great support to teachers in terms of use of language and with more specialized vocabulary. I suggest also that this proposal can also be helpful in the development of reading materials for classes of ESP classes.

KEY WORDS: ESP – corpus linguistics - vocabulary

1 INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary can be investigated from different perspectives of studies, not only from traditional or morphological description, but also from language use, sociological perspectives, language teaching, and corpus linguistics analysis (NAGY, 1997). These different types of studies bring about productive results of studies such as: possible lexical choices people make to interact in their communities, cognitive processes used to learn new words, and how corpus are constructed.

Discourse Analysis also contribute for vocabulary development in two directions: increasing vocabulary through introducing learners new words and establishing vocabulary by using words in meaningful contexts (NATION 1990, apud
These two vectors lead to two other approaches in which vocabulary could be under consideration: specialized and authentic data. In the last years, English language studies are focusing on these two aspects based on the need for specialized language areas in which learners use a limited amount of words in their natural environment and because of specific objectives in learning a language or ESP (NELSON, 2002).

According to MOTTA-ROTH (2002), the concept of genre presupposes an interconnection between textual and contextual factors. This perspective developed, mainly in English, new approaches and parameters of teaching and analyzing written and spoken language as it can be found in literature. An investigation of how textual features and context can be represented through the analysis of vocabulary use illustrate these previous statements in an agricultural science academic community and it is described in the following sections.

Two methodological procedures were used to develop this work: first, I collected some data in a ‘computer-readable form’ BUTLER (1998: 213) to investigate how the word ‘agribusiness’ is represented in the agricultural context and then, I applied genre perspectives to produce activities in an ESP teaching context focusing on learning new vocabulary.

Based on this proposal above, the following sections represent how this paper is organized. First, by this introduction where I contextualized the area of study. Then, six more sections complement the work: the educational setting is reviewed, the social context of data is stated, the area of corpus linguistics is described, some language activities based on genre theory using a concordance are proposed, and finally, I present the final discussions.

2 NEW BRANCHES IN ESP

Within the development of ESP studies, new subdivisions started being created and one example is Business English which has been addressed to depending on even more specific language use such as English for General Business Purposes (EGBP) and English for Specific Business Purposes (ESBP) (DUDLEY-EVANS and ST. JOHN
1998, apud HEBERLE and SALM, 2002). The distinction between them is that the first is directed towards a more general language level, and the second dealt with learners who have pre-determined objectives of studies based on their job positions. These definitions may vary depending on the skills and purposes to be achieved in the language teaching process. In Brazil, in a general definition, ESP concentrated more in the development of reading materials for undergraduate and graduate program - English for Academic Purposes (EAP), or known as ‘instrumental’ (SALM, 1999). It is in this area of English that I focus my study, more specifically in Agricultural Science.

3 ENGLISH TEACHING AND AGRIBUSINESS

Within Business English, Agribusiness, has to do with agricultural science and, consequently, with the use of a specific vocabulary. In a genre analysis perspective, vocabulary use can be analysed to confirm how language is represented in that specific context. In the words of MCCARTHY and CARTER (1994: 24) this theory ‘complements theories which posit a correlation between language use and specific situations’.

Vocabulary analysis through computer can be exploited in some different ways. According to BUTLER (1998) for classroom use computer-generated concordances (a list of typical collocations and calculated word frequencies) are very helpful for grammar and vocabulary teaching. Moreover, in a genre perspective concordance is very suitable, since it brings to class real patterns of language, and genre contextualization. Since the number of agricultural studies in ESP Brazilian courses dealing with corpus analysis are not so representative, this topic can give some contribution to research in this context.

4 SOCIAL CONTEXT

Brazil, an economic dependent country from external aid, has in its agricultural resources a strong tool for competing with more developed countries. Researchers in
this area, as all others, need to apply the English language to develop new studies and to exchange knowledge to be internationally recognized. Some Brazilian government agricultural projects as ENBRAPA, and universities with agricultural science projects are responsible for the majority of the scope of research in this field. In addition, a considerable amount of publications in agribusiness is found in sites at the Internet. A Brazilian television program dealing with agricultural matters and a TV channel for cattle negotiations are also representations of this community. I understand that these different contexts and many others, from the international community, are representative of a community in which this specific vocabulary is applied. Then, specifically for the word agribusiness, commonly used in agricultural subjects, students and participants of this community need to be aware of language representation. But the question is how to look at such a representative data. The difficulty of creating a corpus of analysis of all the millions of words produced is being solved of, for instance, by researchers in the different data banks at our disposal through Internet (STUBBS, 2002).

5 CORPUS ANALYSIS

A corpus is a set of written or transcription of spoken language texts compiled in a computer. English language is the most representative in the corpora of the main data banks all over the world. Some examples are: Bank of English, COBUILD, BNC, ICE. Other languages also have been creating their data banks. In Brasil, BARBER SARDINHA (2000) summarizes Portuguese, from Brasil and from Portugal, main corpora data banks. More specific corpora are the ones being created at PUC- SP, dedicated to professional language - DIRECT project, and that of CORPRAT project, a corpus on process for the analysis of translation studies from The Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG).

A great quantity of language research is being developed using software programmes such as MicroConcord, WordSmith tools and Oxford Concordance Program for example. The Bank of English, also known as COBUILD from the University of Birmingham, is the one applied for this task. The types of linguistic
5.1 WORK WITH CONCORDANCE

Data banks such as COBUILD produce lists of concordance showing patterns of use (see Appendix). In my analysis, 36 collocations were shown for the word agribusiness. In general, a sample of 20 to 40 occurrences in the COBUILD corpus, only as demonstration, appears ‘in lines of 80 characters with 6 or 7 words to the left and right’ (STUBBS, 2002:67). However, this assertion is not fixed as can be observed in the examples collected in the BNC corpus (http://thetis.bl.uk/cgi-bin/saraWeb?qy=agribusiness). The first is in a middle position and the second in a final position.

E.g. 1 F9S 1855 This has been particularly heightened by the growth of so-called agribusiness, where large food-processing companies like Bird's Eye, Ross and Walls control and direct individual farmers.

E.g. 2 AHB 171 JOHN West, 64, chairman of Christian Salvesen, is to succeed Sir Peter Carey as chairman of Dalgety, the food and agribusiness group.

The indication of the source in which the collocation was located is also possible and this can give more hints about the genre being investigated. In the previous examples the letters F9S and AHB show that this collocation is extracted from: i) ‘FPR Green and pleasant land. Newby, H. Middlesex: Wildwood house (1985). ii) AHB [Daily Telegraph, electronic edition of19920404]. London: The Daily Telegraph plc. (1992) Commerce material, 781 s-units, 16222 words (http://thetis.bl.uk/cgi-bin/saraWeb?qy=agribusiness). The tiles can direct to a possible answer of the type of genre.

Different activities can be designed to explore vocabulary learning and computable-data in ESP classroom (FUENTES 2001). Of course that the teacher must take into account the level of the students and their needs when preparing the activities. Considering our specific context of agricultural area in an ESP language teaching class, and directing to vocabulary learning I state below four activities.
a) To highlight and classify grammatically the words that just precede or follow the collocation.

b) To check the meanings in each collocation and compare the similarities and differences among the collocates.

c) Try to guess the type of text and where the word can be found. If it is written/spoken genre, then check it if computers are available.

d) Ask the students to bring complete text collected from different sources such as magazines, newspapers, and sites in the Internet and to skim the focused word.

e) Give data banks addresses at the Internet and ask students to bring a query of a word (free choice) and share with classmates by exposing it in panels in the classroom or writing them in the board to be visualized by everybody. Also, ask the students to try to explain the meanings for the searches.

These are some examples of how to explore concordance in the classroom. Because of limitations of time and space the sample of corpora and activities are limited, but sufficient to exemplify how an ESP instructor can explore a concordance in the classroom. In the next section I present my final remarks.

FINAL DISCUSSION

Following the new tendencies in ESP teaching environments, that means, dealing with language for a real purpose of use, my proposal in this paper is to give some contribuiton to EFL and agricultural science. Moreover, the use of computers in language classroom activities can be of great help if well oriented.

According to GROOT (2000) some controversial assumptions concerning corpus analysis perspectives in teaching contexts does exist, yet it seems that in ESP classes these types of tasks produce positive reactions on learner’s participation in the classroom. I myself had this experience of using concordance in a Business English class and, at least for the active participation and interest shown by the students I can affirm that the class was very productive, and although real numbers are not shown statistically, the majority of the students produced very well organized sentences using
the word ‘Business’ in an evaluation test. Furthermore, the limitation of this work is also related to results of applicability since these tasks were not yet put to practical use.

To sum up, in spite of the lack of data results, I suggest that this kind of research be further investigated and applied, since the language, and, consequently, the vocabulary are permanently changing and constantly being reorganized and restructured depending on the development of new media inventions used to convey messages.

**BIBLIOGRAFY**


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http://embrapa.br
Appendix A – Query search

Results of your search

Your query was
agribusiness

Only 36 solutions found for this query

**ACN 2255** At Beltsville in Maryland, a pig injected with human growth hormone grew up to display substantially less backfat (potentially valuable from the AgriBusiness point of view), but it also suffered from arthritis, poor vision, lack of leg coordination and `;susceptibility to stress';.

**ACN 2256** `;New'; animals may be subject to `;new'; disorders, and `;better';, more disease-resistant animals may tempt AgriBusiness to keep them in worse conditions.

**ACN 2303** Certainly the AgriBusiness side of it looks less rosy than it did even two years ago.

**AHB 171** JOHN West, 64, chairman of Christian Salvesen, is to succeed Sir Peter Carey as chairman of Dalgety, the food and agribusiness group.

**AJH 264** The sale is part of Unilever's withdrawal from many of its agribusiness operations.

**AKU 195** GOLDEN Vale, the Irish dairy products and agribusiness, pushed pre-tax profits on by 18 p.c. to 14.7m last year on sales 41 p.c. ahead at I£296m.

**AN3 583** The process of proletarianisation has also received some impetus from the spread of agribusiness in the region.

**AN3 584** Agribusiness refers not just to large-scale rural enterprises, but to concerns which have an integrated system of production and distribution.

**AN3 586** The influence of agribusiness is felt throughout the Third world, though North American firms have found a major outlet in Latin America.

**AN3 589** Large-scale commercialised farming, that is agribusiness and domestic agricultural enterprises, have to compete with other big corporations for investment capital and markets and must therefore make profits as efficiently as possible.

**AN3 603** Agribusiness that operates in sectors marked by seasonal fluctuations has been prone to this sort of employment.
The small farmer can combine the seasonal work offered by agribusiness and urban enterprises with his family farm and must do this to survive.

Agribusiness, which has been moving into the luxury end of the market, with the growth of carnations in Colombia and strawberries in Mexico for sale in the United States, has contributed to the high level of exports.

Agribusiness has also found a profitable outlet in the production of animal feed.

Armstrong and McGee make a more explicit connection between the growth of agribusiness and commercial farming on the one hand and increase in agricultural imports on the other.

Between 1960 and 1978, ‘Food imports rose in a number of countries where agribusiness and local commercial farmers have been most active in modernising the sector (Argentina, Colombia, Guatemala and Mexico)’; (Armstrong and McGee 1985: 77).

The colono system and rural proletarianisation, encouraged by agribusiness, led to a factory-like situation.

Thus far only a small fraction of overseas investment of multi-national corporations has been allotted to agribusiness in the poor countries, but the amount is increasing.

The agribusiness