

Using bilingual novice and expert corpora to teach academic writing at the university: the case of ROGER and EXPRES

Using native and learner corpora to inform teaching has proven particularly useful in the field English for Academic Purposes. EAP practitioners can consult native corpora to check their intuition about language, to collect authentic examples of language, or to discover new ways in which language is used (Hewings, 2012, p. 13). Results emerging from the analysis of learner data uncover problematic areas for learners of English that could be considered when developing teaching materials (Gilquin et al., 2007, p. 322). Nevertheless, the applicability of corpus-based teaching for EAP writing courses is limited by the fact that most corpora do not distinguish between expert and non-expert writing and neither do they offer access to discipline-specific language samples. At the same time mother tongue corpora have been almost completely ignored in the corpus-based teaching strategies for academic writing improvement. While various EAP corpora have been built at universities around the world or by publishers, many of them are not publicly available due to copyright laws or commercial reasons (Nesi, 2012, p. 409).

At our research centre, CODHUS (Centre for Corpus Related Digital Humanities), we have developed two corpus search platforms that allow free access to corpus data for teaching and research purposes. The two platforms are: (a) ROGER platform which offers free searches (concordance lists, n-grams, statistical analyses) in the bilingual comparable corpus ROGER (Corpus of Romanian Academic Genres), containing learner / student discipline-specific writing data in Romanian (L1) and English (L2), and (b) a platform which offers the same type of corpus searches within the EXPRES corpus (Corpus of Expert Writing in Romanian and English), containing expert (i.e. research articles) discipline-specific writing in Romanian (L1) and English (L2). Both platforms can be accessed via a simple login account allowing for user-friendly searches of terms / phrases, filtered by: language (English, Romanian), student genre (currently 20 genres), study year (1 through 4), level (BA, MA or PhD), discipline (currently 8 disciplines) and gender (male, female or unknown).

In the present paper, we aim at presenting the main functionalities of the two platforms and introducing several research-based teaching models which make use of the ROGER and EXPRES corpora and platforms to facilitate academic writing learning. We also showcase video and text tutorials uploaded on the platforms created with the purpose of popularizing the use of authentic data (mother tongue and English L2, learner and expert) for the design and implementation of corpus-based academic writing teaching activities.

References

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