# Corpus Linguistics and Grammar: A Guide for Research

**Authors:**  Christian Jones and Daniel Waller
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*Corpus Linguistics and Grammar: A Guide for Research* is one of the most useful references for graduate students who are really new in the field of Corpus Linguistics. Although other corpus linguistic textbooks largely cover a wide range of language aspects, such as lexis, semantics, pragmatics, discourse study, stylistics, translation, this book places special emphasis on grammar and how to conduct corpus-based research on grammar. Fortunately, despite its specificity on one single topic, i.e. grammar, the authors clearly present basics in corpus linguistics necessary for readers with little background in general linguistics.

As regards the structure of this publication, three major parts exist, namely *Part 1 Defining grammar and using corpora, Part 2 Corpus linguistics for grammar: areas of investigation*, and *Part 3 Applications of research*. Each part comprises three chapters related to one another. What seems to be of readers' interests and distinguishes this book from others lies in a good number of practical exercises particularly designed to allow readers to undertake mini-research on the topic being discussed. To be more precise, two types of exercises are available, i.e. 'sample exercises' and 'try in yourself'. 'Sample exercise' involves a task in which readers are asked to analyze the corpus data given or access a free online corpus to search for the answer from the corpus recommended, and then they can check the answers provided in the next paragraphs right under the exercise. Similar to 'sample exercise', 'try it yourself' is another kind of DIY practice with a slightly higher degree of difficulty requiring more effort and longer time to complete. With this exercise, students will learn how to develop a research mind step by step in order for them to be ready for more challenging concepts and tasks in subsequent chapters. The answer for each 'try it yourself' is available at the back of the book.

Part 1 of the book deals with definitions of grammar and language corpora, together with fundamental tools commonly used by corpus linguists in language study. More specifically, readers will be familiarized with key concepts relevant to grammar study through corpus analysis. Free online software programs, e.g. LexTutor and AntConc, and open-access corpora, e.g. MICASE, VOICE, and HKCSE, are also introduced in this part to enable learners to obtain certain tools for their own preliminary corpus-based studies. In addition, basic uses of some common statistics tools, e.g. log-likelihood, are also introduced and illustrated with concrete examples which readers can easily follow through their hands-on research experience.

Part 2 consists of three principal areas on which corpus researchers regularly carry out studies, viz. Frequency, Chunks and Colligation, and Semantic Prosody. The writers highlight the way frequency plays a pivotal role in corpus-based research, e.g. why corpus frequency allows for more reliable, convincing confirmation than native speakers' intuition about some particular language points, with certain limitations of

frequency being mentioned. One, furthermore, can also learn how to find chunks and colligation in corpora for their own initial linguistic analysis. Compared to some other introductory textbooks in corpus linguistics (e.g. Lindquist, 2009), Jones and Waller's supplies relatively clearer explanations and ample research-based instances of colligation, due to the fact that colligation centers around the grammatical aspect, which is the focus of this book. The final component of this part is dedicated to semantic prosody, a term coined by Louw (1993) to refer to the phenomenon when some neutral words can be perceived with positive or negative associations through occurrences with specific collocations. Not only is this key concept as well as its significance in lexical study reviewed but also a method of finding patterns of semantic prosody is introduced in an easy-to-follow manner.

The last part, i.e. Part 3, pertains to how researchers can apply corpus techniques to their linguistic investigation. It starts with applications of language corpora to English language teaching, a very important discipline in Applied Linguistics, followed by potentialities of using corpora for research in journalism and discourse analysis. Finally, three sample studies on English grammar, namely conditionals, corpus stylistics, and colloquial language, are shown as examples of viable research projects. Such projects could be inspirational to novice researchers as the related research methodologies have been clearly demonstrated before the major findings are revealed and discussed.

The book, by and large, is actually meant not merely for graduate students but also those who are interested in doing research in corpus linguistics where grammar is the main entity of the examination. The authors aim at "…produc[ing] a book that would not only provide guidance on the sorts of things corpus can tell us, but that would also show people how to go about carrying out their own investigations." (Jones and Walller, 2015, p. 1). As a readable introductory book, it proves to be one of the best to be included alongside other core textbooks in a reading list for a course in Corpus Linguistics.

## About the Reviewer

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