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Dictionary-cum-corpus: A step towards more customisation in pedagogical lexicography

Corpus use has become a standard practice in lexicography, most particularly English lexicography. Lexicographers make use of corpus data to select the words they include in a dictionary, describe their meaning and use and illustrate their preferred environment in context (Atkins and Rundell, 2008). With the advent of electronic dictionaries, corpus data is making its way into the dictionary via new components such as example banks or corpus-query systems. In the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (5th edition, DVD-ROM, 2009), a sample of 1 million sentences taken from the Longman Corpus Network is used to provide additional examples (via the Example Bank frame of the right menu) and collocations (via the Collocations frame of the right menu) for each lexical entry. In the Collins COBUILD Advanced Learners' English Dictionary on CD-ROM (2006), users can search a five million sample from the Bank of English Corpus via the WordBank tool.

In my presentation I will first investigate the role of corpus-query-tools in pedagogical lexicography. I will focus on electronic learner dictionaries and online tools such as the Base Lexicale du Français (Verlinde et al, 2009). I will argue that, to be useful (and used!), a corpus-query-tool needs to be fully integrated into the dictionary: it has to be available from each lexical entry and point straight at concordance lines for the relevant item. The corpora should also be user-oriented so as to allow learners to visualise senses in a context close to their own working environment (Granger & Paquot, 2010a and in preparation). By way of illustration, I will then introduce the Louvain English for Academic purposes Dictionary (LEAD) (Granger & Paquot, 2010b), a dictionary which contains a rich description of academic words (Paquot, 2010), with particular focus on their phraseology (collocations and recurrent phrases). It is a web-based integrated tool where the actual dictionary is linked up to an open-source corpus-query system, viz. CQPweb (Hardie, 2009). The LEAD innovates by automatically adapting the content to users' needs in terms of discipline and mother tongue background and by giving access to discipline-specific corpora rather than generic corpora. With the example of the LEAD dictionary, I will also argue that the future of specialised pedagogical lexicography lies in more customisation.

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