Dissertation

Classroom concordancing: what and how students learn

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Abstract

The use of small-corpora concordancing in the ESL classroom has been promoted by quite a number of researchers and the kind of learning that takes place with a corpus of authentic texts is given the name of data-driven learning. However, little has been done to find out how students can actually benefit from a corpus and what strategies students develop in order to learn from the data in a corpus. This dissertation reports the learner strategies used by a group of Higher-diploma level students in Computer Studies at the City Polytechnic of Hong Kong when they worked with a small specialist corpus to help them deal with an ESP writing task. The corpus was created from texts drawn from authentic software user manuals. Learning strategies and outcomes were uncovered from diary studies as well as interviews with student subjects as they attempted to master and use the language appropriate to the genre of software user manuals. The dissertation also reports attempts to evaluate the role of the concordancer as a learning tool by examining students’ writing and the extent to which they were able to apply what was learnt to their writing.
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