**Doing Corpus-Aided Ecological Discourse Analysis**

EXERCISES

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These searches are designed to help you learn how to complete your own corpus queries. All searches on this worksheet should be completed using the Corpus of Contemporary American English (the COCA) and the Google N-Gram Viewer.

Before beginning the activities, you will need to create a free account at <http://corpus.byu.edu/>

After you register at corpus.byu.edu, open the COCA and begin the tutorials.

**Question 1**

Complete a basic *List* search for the phrases *climate change* and *global warming.* Record the frequencies for each.

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| **1. ANSWER** |  |
| climate change: | |
| global warming: | |

**Question 2**

Search the phrases *climate change* and *global warming* again but use the *Chart* search function. Record any interesting trends or findings.

*Note: When you do a chart search, you get a PM score in your results. This stands for ‘per million’ and is useful when comparing corpora of different sizes.*

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| **2. ANSWER** |  |
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**Question 3**

Complete a *collocates* search for *wolves*; close the collocation window to 1L-0R so that your findings will show only the words which occur immediately before the word lemma [wolf]. By searching [wolf], you search for both *wolf* and *wolves.* Notice that a high frequency collocation for *wolf/wolves* is *lone*. Click on *lone* and review the concordance lines. Why might this particular collocation be worthy of ecolinguistic critique?

*Note: When you do a collocates search, you get an MI score in your results. MI stands for mutual information and indicates how frequently the two words appear together.*

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| **3. ANSWER** |  |
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**Question 4**

One grammatical phenomenon often critiqued within ecolinguistics is the removal of agency within environmental discourse, i.e. the person/institution responsible for an action is removed from the sentence. Do a corpus search for the nominal ‘pollution’ and scan the first 20 concordance lines. In how many sentences is the agent/cause of the pollution clearly named?

*Tip. Complete the search in Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) using the KWIC search function.*

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| **4. ANSWER** |  |
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**Question 5**

This issue of diffusion and/or obfuscation of agency and responsibility is worthy of further investigation. Perhaps our previous search was limited and we should investigate this further. Do a COCA search to determine the most frequent forms of the base word ‘pollute’. Does the frequency list offer further evidence of this practice of agency removal?

*Tip: Search pollut\* using the list search function.*

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| **5. ANSWER** |  |
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**Question 6**

Google N-gram Viewer enables searches of a massive web corpus. Open a new tab and go to the Google N-Gram Viewer. In the search bar, enter *vegetarian, vegetarianism, vegan, veganism* and hit search. Describe the trend/s you notice.

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| **6. ANSWER** |  |
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**Question 7**

With the Google N-Gram Viewer, we can see broad discourse trends and may sometimes gain insights into cultural change and movements. For example, search ‘teenager’ in Google N-gram. Why does the usage of this term grow at that specific point in history? What may we speculate? Think of an additional word/s of environmental interest that may have only recently been coined and have grown in use. Search and see what you discover.

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| **7. ANSWER** |  |
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**Question 8**

Some claim that NASA’s image of Earth taken from Apollo 17 was an important moment in American ecological thinking. Search ‘Gaia” in the Google N-gram Viewer. Does the trend support or refute the claim?

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| **8. ANSWER** |  |
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**Question 9**

Back to the COCA: “Disposable” is defined as article which is intended to be used once or until no longer useful and then thrown away. This modern phenomenon where so many of our everyday items are depicted as “disposable” is an ecologically destructive condition. In other words, what we deem “disposable” still loads our landfills, etc. and perpetuates our consumerist culture.

Do a collocates search to determine what nouns most regularly occur with the adjective “disposable”. From an ecological perspective, is there space to critique?

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| **9. ANSWER** |  |
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**Question 10**

Compare the use of “sustainable” across the various registers and track its use over time. Summarize your findings.

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| **10. ANSWER** |  |
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**Question 11**

In *New Ways of Meaning* (1991), Halliday claims that speakers of English never ask “What’s the forest doing?” because that would actually extend agency to the forest and prompt responses such as “It’s holding water.”. Test this claim in the corpus. Is he correct?

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| **10. ANSWER** |  |
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**Question 12**

Also in *New Ways of Meaning* (1991), Halliday states the word “greenie” to describe an environmentally conscious person. Are there new words in our daily language that reflect a growing awareness of environmental issues? Can you think of one? Search for the word in one of the available corpora, and see what evidence of its use you can find in a corpus.

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| **10. ANSWER** |  |
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**Question 13**

If you could build a corpus in which you would analyze some item of environmental relevance or investigate the language of a particular environmental issue, what would the corpus be? What would you attempt to answer with the corpus?

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| **10. ANSWER** |  |
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**References**

Halliday, M.A.K. (1991/2001). New ways of meaning: the challenge to applied linguistics. In A. Fill and P. Mühlhäusler (Eds.), *The ecolingusitics reader* (175-202). London: Continuum.