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Usefulness of English Corpora Regarding Encyclopedic Meaning of Grammatical Constructions: Count Noun Vs. Non-Count Noun, Noun Vs. Verb

Introduction

The objective of the present paper is to demonstrate the usefulness of English specific key-constructions in concordance lines of the BNC (British National Corpus¹), simple keywords and complex expressions, in relation to creating assignments in English grammar for Polish students of English, especially during the remote studying determined by the pandemic of Sars-CoV-2 (also known as COVID-19). The paper has a demonstrative character since it attempts to signal how to elicit information about nouns and verbs based on the anaphoric function of linguistic elements called “triggers” in Leonard Talmy’s² quite recent approach to grammar, or rather philosophy of grammar, within the cognitive science. In the present article, the triggering function is applied to words occurring in a readily accessible corpus of the English language.

Two basic definitions of a linguistic corpus were formulated by John Sinclair, who first defined it as “[a] collection of naturally occurring language

¹ See: The British National Corpus. <https://www.english-corpora.org/bnc/>.

² L. Talmy, *The Targeting System of Language*, Cambridge, Massachusetts 2017.

text, chosen to characterize the state or variety of a language”³. Then, over a decade later, Sinclair⁴ described corpus as “[...] a collection of pieces of language text in electronic form, selected according to external criteria to represent, as far as possible, a language or language variety as a source of data for linguistic research”⁵. Douglas Biber⁶ added that a “corpus” is “[...] a large and principled collection of natural texts [...]”⁷. Consequently, a linguistic corpus constitutes a source of authentic use of grammatical constructions in natural situations and provides direct encyclopedic context for non-native speakers of English who have to study English grammar being exposed to their class assignments on-line. The term a “grammatical construction”, i.e. a “linguistic construction”, used in the present paper, is linked to the “symbolic principle”⁸ of the constructional achievements to grammar in cognitive linguistics. It underlies the grammatical constituents considered herein as the particular key-constructions in the context on the web of the BNC. Another crucial principle of cognitive linguistics, the “usage-based principle”⁹, can be linked to movement of corpus linguistics and corpus-driven studies on language and concordance lines containing the particular key term. According to Ronald Langacker, the “linguistic system” and “the speaker’s knowledge of this use” involves the grammar which “is held responsible for the speaker’s knowledge of the full range of linguistic conventions, regardless of whether these conventions can be subsumed under more general statements”¹⁰. Concordance lines comprise the studied key-constructions in diversified linguistic conventions, ranging from colloquial speech to academic discourse. Concerning the said principles, meaning has encyclopedic nature in cognitive linguistics, since words serve as points of access to vast areas of knowledge on the particular topic. Substantial authentic sources of use of specific linguistic constructions provide encyclopedic feedback comprising various grammatical patterns,

³ J. Sinclair, *Corpus, Concordance, Collocation*, Oxford 1991, p. 171.

⁴ J. Sinclair, *Corpus and Text-Basic Principles*, [in:] *Developing Linguistic Corpora: a Guide to Good Practice*, ed. M. Wynne, Oxford 2004, p. 1–20.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁶ D. Biber, *Corpus-based and Corpus-driven Analyses of Language Variation and Use*, [in:] *The Oxford Handbook of Linguistic Analysis*, eds. B. Heine, and H. Narrog, Oxford 2010, p. 159–191.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

⁸ R. Langacker, *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar: Volume 1 Theoretical Prerequisites*, Stanford, California 1987.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 494.

especially useful for non-native users of English. The said two principles are briefly discussed in the methodological section. The main section presents the key-constructions as “triggers”¹¹ in the English language in concordance lines containing the given key-constituents.

1. Other Research on Related Topics – an Abridged Overview

Although other texts on linguistic corpora¹², and corpus-based¹³ or corpus-driven studies¹⁴, have dealt with key linguistic expressions, none of the works to date, to the knowledge of the present author, have related to “triggers” in the search results on the BNC-web for particular grammatical elements, treated as “targets” in the English language¹⁵. The said linguistic “triggers” are addressed here from a theoretical, “corpus-based”, approach drawing on the experience gained by the present author from administering remote assignments on descriptive grammar of English to first year students at ATH in Bielsko-Biała during the time of Sars-CoV-2 in 2021.

In the chapter on “Corpus-Based and Corpus-Driven of Language Variation and Use”, Douglas Biber¹⁶ stated that the corpus-based approach to corpus studies concentrates on analyzing “the systematic patterns of variation and use”¹⁷ of “pre-defined linguistic features”¹⁸ observed in concordance lines of linguistic corpora. Nonetheless, according to Biber, in “«corpus-driven» research [...] the linguistic constructs themselves emerge from analysis of a corpus”¹⁹, involving special input provided by

¹¹ L. Talmy, *The Targeting System of Language ...*.

¹² See: “Linguistic Corpora” by A. Curzan. <https://acurzan.english.lsa.umich.edu/index.php/english-language-study-resources/linguistic-corpora>.

¹³ See, e.g. D. Biber, S. Johansson, G. Leech, S. Conrad, and E. Finegan, *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English*, Harlow 1999.

¹⁴ See, e.g. D. Glynn, *Correspondence analysis: Exploring data and identifying patterns*, [in:] *Corpus Methods for Semantics. Quantitative studies in polysemy and synonymy*, eds. D. Glynn, and J. Robinson, John Benjamins 2014, p. 443–486. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/275647208_Correspondence_analysis_Exploring_data_and_identifying_patterns; D. Glynn, *Quantifying polysemy: Corpus methodology for prototype theory*, “*Folia Linguistica*” 2016, vol. 50, no. 2. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/309882397_Quantifying_polysemy_Corpus_methodology_for_prototype_theory.

¹⁵ L. Talmy, *The Targeting System of Language ...*.

¹⁶ D. Biber, *Corpus-Based and Corpus-Driven Analyses of Language Variation and Use*, [in:] *The Oxford Handbook of Linguistic Analysis*, Oxford 2015), p. 193–223 (Original work published 2010).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

the capacities of “computational tools”²⁰. Multiple theoretical texts on corpus-driven and corpus-based studies, as well as on the movement of the corpus linguistics itself, were published in one volume in 2009²¹, among others, on the emergence of the said movement by Barbara Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk and Katarzyna Dziwirek, and on “[e]xtraction of multiword expressions for corpus-based discourse analysis” by Piotr Pęzik. From a practical perspective, Sebastian Hoffmann et al.²² analyzed keywords, collocations, and categorizing the results obtained from BNC concordance lines. Another practical approach to corpus linguistics²³, collection and analysis of data from linguistic corpora, was presented by Martin Weisser²⁴. An applied linguistics view on samples of language in linguistic corpora had been previously demonstrated by Winnie Cheng²⁵. Hans Lindquist²⁶ also concentrated on the English language viewed by means of linguistic corpora. As far as the particular constituents of language are concerned, Paweł Szudarski²⁷ focused on various aspects of vocabulary accessed in lines of English corpora, such as frequency of occurrence, discourse and pragmatic functions of specific keywords. Wen Li²⁸, however, described approaches to grammar through linguistic corpora and concordance lines compiled from media and “health discourses”, from “Systemic Functional and Other Perspectives”. The publications by Susan Conrad and Douglas Biber, together and respectively, can be highlighted here as significant contributions to corpus linguistics and corpus-driven studies applied to

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ B. Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk and K. Dziwirek, eds., *Studies in Cognitive Corpus Linguistics*, vol. 18, Frankfurt am Main 2009.

²² S. Hoffmann, S. Evert, N. Smith, D. Lee, and Y. Berglund Pryts, *Corpus Linguistics with “BNCweb” – a Practical Guide*, Frankfurt am Main 2008.

²³ On the theory and practice of the ‘corpus linguistics’ approach, see e.g.: D. Biber, and R. Reppen (eds.), *Corpus Linguistics; Volume Four: Methods and Applications*, London 2011; T. Mcenery, and A. Hardie, *Corpus Linguistics, Method, Theory and Practice*, Cambridge 2015.

²⁴ M. Weisser, *Practical Corpus Linguistics: An Introduction to Corpus-Based Language Analysis* Wiley-Blackwell 2016.

²⁵ W. Cheng, *Exploring Corpus Linguistics: Language in Action (Routledge Introductions to Applied Linguistics)*, Routledge 2011.

²⁶ H. Lindquist, *Corpus Linguistics and the Description of English*, Edinburgh 2018.

²⁷ P. Szudarski, *Corpus Linguistics for Vocabulary: A Guide for Research*, Routledge 2017.

²⁸ W. Li, *Corpus-based Approaches to Grammar, Media and Health Discourses: Systemic Functional and Other Perspectives*, Singapore 2021.

“glottodidactics”²⁹. Conrad³⁰ noted “The importance of Corpus-based Research for Language Teachers” and focused on the question whether corpus linguistics is able to exert a significant influence on teaching grammar in the 21st century³¹. The works by Biber³² and other scholars³³ used corpus findings in discussing grammar and its use addressed at teachers and students of English as well, for example, in a landmark academic functional grammar³⁴. Vast research, performed among others by Biber³⁵, within the functional approach to discourse and grammar, employs the potentials offered by extensive concordance networks and technical tools of computers.

2. Methodology

Computers can be useful when creating assignments in English grammar, especially concerning particular linguistic constructions in the context of occurrence in concordance lines, demonstrating the actual usage. A problem may arise, among others, when a given keyword represents more than one linguistic category, then adequate linguistic hints are required, i.e. “triggers” in this paper. Linguistic “triggers” are different elements in the English language in the sense of Talmy’s³⁶ theory on “[...] how language can direct attention to objects and events in the world and to the language that preceded it”³⁷. A key-construction in concordance lines is considered the “target” of the particular “trigger”. Such a “trigger” was defined by Talmy

²⁹ See also: A. Boulton, and T. Cobb, *Corpus use in language learning: A meta-analysis*, “Language Learning. A Journal of Research in Language Studies” 2017, vol. 67, no. 2, p. 348–393. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/lang.12224>.

³⁰ S. Conrad, *The Importance of Corpus-based Research for Language Teachers*, “System” 1999, vol. 27, p. 1–18.

³¹ S. Conrad, *Will Corpus Linguistics Revolutionize Grammar Teaching in the 21st Century?*, “TESOL Quarterly” 2000, vol. 34, no. 3, (Wiley, Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc., 2000), p. 548–560.

³² D. Biber, *Corpus Linguistics and the Study of English Grammar*, “Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching” 2005, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 1–22.

³³ D. Biber, S. Conrad, and R. Reppen, *Corpus linguistics: investigating language structure and use*, Cambridge 1998.

³⁴ D. Biber et al., *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English ...*

³⁵ See: D. Biber, *Representativeness in corpus design*, “Literary and Linguistic Computing” 1993, vol. 8, p. 1–15; D. Biber, *University Language: A Corpus-Based Study of Spoken and Written Registers*, Amsterdam 2006; D. Biber, *Corpus-based analyses of discourse: dimensions of variation in conversation*, [in:] *Advances in Discourse Studies*, eds. V. Bhatia, J. Flowerdew, and R. Jones, London 2008, p. 100–114; D. Biber, *Corpus-based and Corpus-driven Analyses of Language Variation and Use ...*

³⁶ L. Talmy, *The Targeting System of Language ...*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, from an excerpt of the review by Kenny R. Coventry on the back cover.

as “[a] linguistic constituent, prototypically a closed-class form, that the speaker places at a certain point in her discourse to initiate the three-stage targeting procedure in the hearer”³⁸. The three stages are addressed below, in relation to the ‘usage-based thesis’, emerging from the ‘symbolic thesis’.

The ‘symbolic thesis’ holds that a notion gains a unit status by a “symbolic association between a semantic and a phonological structure”³⁹, constituting a “symbolic unit” “[...] deployed in cognitive grammar for the representation of both lexical and grammatical structure”⁴⁰. According to Langacker, grammatical patterns, i.e. constructions, constitute “[...] **schematic** symbolic units, which differ from other symbolic structures not in kind, but only in degree of specificity”⁴¹. Langacker posits that “the simplest kind of symbolic unit is a morpheme [...]”⁴² and “[b]asic symbolic units combine to form progressively larger symbolic structures, which are themselves often mastered as units [...]”⁴³. Consequently, they range from single morphemes, bound, by *un-* or *-ed*, and free, with *have* or *give*, to ‘argument structures’, such as clauses, as the “ditransitive” construction “Subject Verb Object 1 Object 2” (“Subj V Obj1 Obj2”⁴⁴, e.g. *he gave her a flower*). Langacker argues that “[...] the grammar of a language represents a speaker’s knowledge of linguistic convention, and much of this knowledge resides in his mastery of conventional expressions”⁴⁵. What is more, in the grammar developed by Langacker, i.e. cognitive grammar, there is a “[...] gradation uniting lexicon, morphology, and syntax”⁴⁶ in the symbolic assemblies residing in the linguistic convention of the given speech community.

The linguistic convention itself derives from the use of the particular linguistic system, also that acquired by second language learners. Therefore the usage based approach has been adopted by researchers dealing with the teaching and learning process⁴⁷ from the perspective of cognitive linguistics. Langacker defined the “usage-based approach” as

³⁸ Ibid., p. 612.

³⁹ R. Langacker, *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar: Volume I*..., p. 58.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ A.E. Goldberg, *Constructions at Work: The Nature of Generalization in Language*, Oxford 2006, p. 5.

⁴⁵ R. Langacker, *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar: Volume I*..., p. 36.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ See: L. Ortega, A.E. Tyler, H. In Park, and M. Uno (eds.), *The Usage-based Study of Language Learning and Multilingualism*, Washington 2016; N. Dolgova, and A. Tyler, *Applications of Usage-Based Approaches to Language*

[a] non-reductive approach to linguistic structure which holds that rules are simply schematizations of expressions; that specific expressions are capable of being learned as units, hence included in the grammar, even when they conform to such rules; that high-level schemas expressing global generalizations coexist in the grammar with low-level schemas spelling out how these generalizations are implemented in actual conventional usage; and that low-level schemas expressing only local generalizations may be activated preferentially for the categorization of usage events⁴⁸.

From an educational perspective of second language (L2) acquisition, within the framework of cognitive linguistics, Nick Ellis and Stefanie Wulff analyzed how “usage leads to an emerging language system”⁴⁹. According to the said authors, “[t]hrough usage experience, form–function mappings are woven into a network of construction forms and their meanings. This language system is sometimes referred to as the «construction»”⁵⁰. Ellis and Wulff treat “Constructions as the Targets of L2 Acquisition”⁵¹. The notion “target” appears in Talmy’s theory as “[s]omething in either the speech-internal or speech-external environment that the speaker has her attention on and that she wants the hearer to place his attention on jointly with her own at the point in her discourse where she places a trigger”⁵². Our interest falls on “triggers” in the English language identified in the BNC concordance lines in search for instances of usage containing particular linguistic constructions related to the descriptive grammar of English as L2.

“Trigger” and “target” are new terms in Talmy’s theory, wherein the former “[...] generalizes over two types of linguistic form, an «anaphor» and a «deictic»”⁵³. The latter, however, “[...] generalizes over two types of referent: the referent of an anaphor—that is, an antecedent—and the

Teaching, [in:] *Second Handbook of English Language Teaching*. Springer International Handbooks of Education, ed. X. Gao, Springer, Cham 2019, p. 939–961.

⁴⁸ R. Langacker, *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar, Volume II Descriptive Application*, Stanford, California 1991, p. 555.

⁴⁹ N.C. Ellis, and S. Wulff, *Cognitive Approaches to Second Language Acquisition*, [in:] *The Cambridge Handbook of Language Learning*, eds. John W. Schwieter, and A. Benati (June 2019), p. 41–61, DOI: 10.1017/9781108333603.003. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334041055_2_-_Cognitive_Approaches_to_Second_Language_Acquisition.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁵² L. Talmy, *The Targeting System of Language...*, p. 609.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

referent of a deictic”⁵⁴. According to the encyclopedia of linguistics edited by Kazimierz Polański⁵⁵, “anaphor” is a relation between two expressions which occur in the same sentence or in different sentences belonging to the same multi-sentential utterance⁵⁶. “Deixis”, however, concerns indicating an object or a phenomenon by a certain linguistic expression (particularly by a pronoun or adverb) by means of determining its relation to suitable reference points in a given “consituation” or context⁵⁷. In Talmy’s⁵⁸ theory, the term “trigger” encompasses different linguistic ‘constructions’ as anaphoric or deictic elements, the traditional “proforms” and other linguistic elements as well, such as “[...] tense markers, certain prosodic effects, and semantic components as in the verb *come* [...]”⁵⁹. Talmy posits that one of the advantages of the term “trigger” is that it initiates “[...] a cognitive procedure in a hearer”⁶⁰, who is led “[...] toward determination of a target”⁶¹. The said procedure involves three stages, the first one is named “the **trigger-to-cues** stage”, whereby “the trigger directs the hearer to find certain elements of information to which he does not have ready access. These elements of information function as **cues** to the speaker’s intended target”⁶². In the second stage, “the **cues-to-target** stage”, the hearer is able to elicit the target from “alternative candidates”⁶³. The third stage is called “the **target-back-to-trigger** stage” since “[...] having determined the target, the hearer maps his concept of it back onto the trigger in the speaker’s sentence”⁶⁴. Talmy calls the system of the three stages “targeting”, which is the main topic in his study on “The Targeting System of Language”. According to Talmy⁶⁵, the “trigger” and the “target” can be either “speech-internal”, indicating entities which are parts of the “current discourse”, and “speech-external”, in the non-speech domain⁶⁶. Moreover,

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ K. Polański, ed. *Encyklopedia językoznawstwa ogólnego*, Wrocław 1993, 1999.

⁵⁶ Ibid., L. Talmy, *The Targeting System of Language...*, p. 41.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 638.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 73.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., p. 2.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 73.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

Talmy⁶⁷ argues that a “trigger” is “[...] a highly complex construction, in the sense of construction grammars”⁶⁸. Consequently, the following section contains selected sample elements which function as “triggers”. They signal the specific English constructions, i.e. “targets”, to be elicited from the BNC concordance lines including the keywords in bold, encompassed by square brackets to signal changes applied to the extracts of concordances cited from the BNC.

3. Possible “Triggers” in the BNC Concordance Lines as Hints for Selecting Particular Extracts of Discourse

Talmy argues that “triggers” are constructions exhibiting various “formal realizations”⁶⁹. Apart from mono-morphemic or “multi-morphemic-word triggers”, such as *she*, *that* (in *that* girl), “the English past tense suffix *-ed*, as in *walked*”, and *thereabouts*, *himself*, or *nevertheless*⁷⁰, there are “phrasal triggers”, such as *all the same*, meaning *nevertheless*, or *in that manner*, whose actual “trigger” is *that*⁷¹. Talmy⁷² also posits that in “specific **trigger constructions**”, there are “distinctive syntactic patterns” which perform triggering functions, such as the “cleft trigger construction”, which involves two triggers, *that* and *which*, and “an additional clause”⁷³. Talmy indicates that “[...] a triggering function can also be performed by a semantic component within a single morpheme, joined there by semantic components not directly related to targeting”⁷⁴. Talmy calls such a trigger a “**componential trigger**.” Talmy signals the following elements functioning as componential triggers: the present tense in *is*, “whose semantic complex also includes the components ‘be’, ‘<indicative mood>’, and ‘<agreement with third person singular subject>’”⁷⁵. There are also “zero triggers”⁷⁶ manifested by “ellipsized” elements, retrieved from the context.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 83.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 85.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 86.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., p. 87.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 87–88.

I. The indefinite article *a/an* in (1a), (2a), and (3a) functions as a “trigger” in distinguishing between the particular nominal used as a count noun in the said extracts of concordances vs. a non-count noun in (1b), (2b), and (3b) below. However, the no article also functions as a “trigger” in (1b), (2b), and (3b), indicating that the noun in bold is uncountable.

1. the noun BUSINESS

- a) “309 AAY W_commerce to. As Harvey Wilson, says, ‘Nobody puts their name to [**a business**] they’re not proud of and, by the same token, it gives the” (BNC)
- b) “71 HA5 W_fict_prose last night when I invited you back here. I truly did intend to discuss [**business**]. ‘But the woman tempted me?’ she suggested, her laugh” (BNC)

2. the noun DINNER

- a) “110 JXV W_fict_prose we have to move fast, so I want you to accompany me to [**a dinner**] that the developers are giving tonight. There’s bound to be Press coverage,” (BNC)
- b) “44 KCA S_conv I wouldn’t take one cos I used to think right I like my Sunday [**dinner**] and I will never give up my Sunday [**dinner**] when I’m dieting right (SP:PS0DM)” (BNC)

3. the noun WORRY

- a) “21 KRH S_broadcast###_discussn in school. Now of course it may be that the child has caught [**a worry**] about schooling from the parent, but I think that’s the first thing to” (BNC)
- b) “58 KDS S_conv must have cried Kate for two hours. (SP:PS0NR) Yeah I know it’s awful [**worry**], if they only understood how, how the parents worry about it. (SP:PS0NS)” (BNC)

II. The “infinitive marker” *to* functions as a “trigger” in distinguishing between the particular word used as a verb in (1a) and (2a), contrasted with the definite article *the* in (1b) and (2b) and the indefinite article *a* in (2c), functioning as a “trigger” before a noun. The word *to*, however, may also be a preposition. Therefore, the other elements prior to the infinitive marker *to* appear to function as “componential triggers”: the negative particle *not* in (1a), and the degree adverb *so* preceding the adjective *eager* in (2a).

1. the term WORRY

- a) “53 KDB S_conv go and get my wallet and I’ll be down (pause) she said [**not to worry**] she’d got money anyway (pause) whe-- when I got there she bumped to Maggi” (BNC)
- b) “138 ABWW_fict_prose [...] He made himself ill with [**the worry**]. [...]” (BNC)

2. the term WORK

- a) “64 AC7 W_fict_prose to the surprise of my new employers, since I had been [**so eager**] [**to work**] for them, I told them I should not be able to start for a” (BNC)
- b) “59 KRP S_unclassified away with the knowledge, and with the technical know-how, to put across [**the work**] which, as I said earlier, we all recognize is a very important part” (BNC)
- c) “39 AE0 W_fict_prose [...]. It was not enough that they had been questioned at length about [**a work**] in which they had secretly collaborated: they were now to be insulted by having” (BNC)

Different contextual linguistic elements, especially prior to the particular term which can either be categorized as a noun or as a verb, such as WORK, may also perform a triggering function.

III. Possible “triggers” prior to the “target” WORK as a NOUN

1. A preposition, such as *to* in (1a), *at* in (1b), and *without* in (1c), functions as a “trigger” prior to WORK occurring in the function of the oblique object in (1a), through (1c) below.

- a) “1 KB7 S_conv, that is not good. (SP:PS02G) but she saw him on the way [**to work**] in town, had a bloody great barney with him on the market place on” (BNC)
- b) “426 FAH W_commerce conditions and so on. A fourth is new values, ambitions and attitudes [**at work**], which result in demands from employees to participate in problem-solving and decision-making. Companies” (BNC)
- c) “253 CE1 W_ac_soc_science to look at alternative ways of approaching and coping with the circumstances of life [**without work**], [...]” (BNC)

While the preposition *at* in (1b), and *without* in (1c), unhesitatingly indicate that WORK should be categorized as a noun, the element *to* prior to WORK in (1a) is ambiguous as a lexical category, hence the predicate of

the whole clause which includes *to work* (i.e. “saw him on the way **to work** in town”) provides the semantic components, whose function can be called “componential triggers”, such as the adjectives pre-modifying WORK in (2a), through (2c).

2. The adjective in the noun phrase whose HEAD is WORK exhibits the triggering function, namely *hard* and *happy* in (2a), *experimental* in (2b), and *waged* in (2c).

- a) “47 KNB S_sermon in the harvest field, because although it was [**hard work**], it was [**happy work**]. Harvest is always a good time. All the year’s work, the” (BNC)
- b) “275 HPM W_ac_soc_science. It was, however, the dominant theory driving some of the earlier [**experimental work**] on arousal and memory. [...]” (BNC)
- c) “363 EGO W_non_ac_soc_science undermined after the Second World War by married women refusing dependence and returning to [**waged work**] while also having children [...]” (BNC)

3. A determinative also constitutes “a trigger” for a forthcoming nominal element: the “closed-class quantifier” *much* in (3a), the “emphatic determinative” *own* in (3b), the genitive *teacher’s* functioning as a determiner prior to *work* in (3c), the demonstrative determiner *this* in (3d), the possessive determiner *his* in (3e), the indefinite article *a* in (3f) or the definite article *the* in (3g), the nonassertive determiner *any* in (3h), and, finally, the negative determiner *no* in (3i).

- a) “95 HGV W_fict_prose [...] So [**much work**]! Why, Theda?’ I am used to work.’ He” (BNC)
- b) “69 AN8 W_fict_prose with the child; she is indeed now only anxious to return to her [**own work**], which she will do in about ten days’ time.” Hence” (BNC)
- c) “258 CM5 W_ac_soc_science attempt has been made to explore some evidence about teachers, teaching and [**teachers’ work**]. [...]” (BNC)
- d) “229 HWS W_ac_medicine with butyrate (J P Bali, personal communication). In conclusion, [**this work**] shows negative modulation by protein kinase C of the stimulation of [...]” (BNC)
- e) “232 A05 W_ac_humanities_arts of the imagination’, states Ackroyd’s Wilde, is that’ in [**his work**] the artist is someone other than himself.’ Greek love is virtuous, Wilde” (BNC)

- f) “239 A6U W_ac_humanities_arts pages of Vogue, the glossy surface of the images in direct opposition to [**a work**] such as Kahlo’s The Suicide of Dorothy Hale (1939) (Fig. 9)” (BNC)
- g) “250 ALN W_ac_soc_science Report acknowledged the problems involved in determining the levels of difficulty and complexity in [**the work**] that has to be carried out [...]” (BNC)
- h) “325 CAKW_non_ac_polit_law_edu [...] There have been months when he hasn’t found [**any work**] at all and so he returns home for short periods. But he always comes” (BNC)
- i) “329 HH3 W_non_ac_polit_law_edu the floods in 1984 when lots of people lost their crops and there was [**no work**] for them. [...]” (BNC)

4. In the fractions of the concordance in (4a) and (4b), the word *work* performs a syntactic function of the subject element in the former and of the object of DO in the latter extract. In (4c) the word *work* constitutes a nominal complement of the verb *dislike* and in (4d) of the verb BEGIN.

- a) “396 CL2 W_biography rival in love. [...] [**Work**] was all about those three, the exhaustion and boredom of work, the fear” (BNC)
- b) “51 FLR S_brdrst_discussn the, in the Brook are er (pause) advisory peer groups, are [**are doing work**], people are suggesting, they they they think that should be extended, what” (BNC)
- c) “431 G0U W_commerce is as natural as play or rest. The ordinary person does not inherently [**dislike work**]: according to the conditions it may be a source of satisfaction or punishment.” (BNC)
- d) “305 AS4 W_non_ac_nat_science actually bankrupted himself as a result of a drainage scheme. In 1793 Roscoe [**began work**] on Trafford Moss, part of the mighty Chat Moss, [...]” (BNC)

In (4c) and (4d) the word *work* would be turned to a verb if it were preceded by *to*, whose absence indicates that *work* is a nominal element.

IV. Possible “triggers” prior to the “target” WORK as a VERB

1. In the extracts of concordances in (1a), through (1e), there are triggering constructions containing auxiliary verbs, “catenative verb constructions”⁷⁷, and semi-auxiliary verbs, such as *did not* in (1b) and the

⁷⁷ See: R. Quirk, S. Greenbaum, G. Leech, and J. Svartvik, *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*, Harlow 1985, p. 146.

central modal *can* in (1c), the catenative verb construction SEEM *to* in (1c), the semi-auxiliary HAVE *to* in (1d) and BE *able to* in (1e). In (1f), it is the position filled by *work* in the clause, constituting “a componential trigger”, namely in *they work ...*, which determines the lexical class of *work*.

- a) W_ac_polit_law_edu course, things did not always go so smoothly. Party members [**did not**] always [**work**] enthusiastically or have entirely unselfish motives for joining the party -- membership could be a” (BNC)
- b) “9 KCW S_conv really close to you now. (SP:PS0H8) Hey? (SP:PS12C) Why? (SP:PS0H8) I [**can work**] out by the height of where the hand was on my back that it was” (BNC)
- c) “268 FBC W_ac_soc_science unfortunately it [**seems not to work**] too well in practice. [...]” (BNC)
- d) “85 H0M W_fict_prose with the diesels, bull faggots, strippers, cross-dressers and money-lovers I [**have to work**] around, I can’t get worked up about abnormality any more. The world” (BNC)
- e) “418 CDF W_commerce standards in the past since George and Marie insisted on these and [**were able to work**] together to achieve them. # b. # It did so without incurring high costs” (BNC)
- f) “463 B21 W_misc aware that you are not always what you want to be. You [**need to work**] on yourself, to strive towards perfection of yourself. This is not an” (BNC)
- g) “134 CBF W_newsp_other_report to marry into the Royal Family and have separate but equal status. Either [**they work**] together or one of them is more important.’ On the matter of family” (BNC)

2. The two following extracts of concordance contain phrasal expressions consisting of the verb *work* in constructions containing other verbs, such as *try to work* in (2a) and the pattern “MAKE somebody DO something”, expressed by *makes you work* in (2b).

- a) “246 HY6 W_ac_humanities_arts [...] experienced as a gift and those eager to know God should always [**try to work**] with the grain of their own particular natures rather than force any prescribed activity:” (BNC)
- b) “357 CLL W_non_ac_soc_science by (deleted:name) # A two-part intermediate course for the adult learner, that [**makes you**

work] and allows you to think. # Do you like to think... # English” (BNC)

3. Other phrasal expressions with the verb *work*, realizing the construction “BE noun or adjective TO WORK *with*”, are used in (3a) *is a joy to work with*, and (3b) *being easy to work with*.

- a) “400 ADR W_biography despite everything. It’s not just hype, but she [**is a joy to work with**] too. Unlike some singers, she has an inbuilt discipline. She will” (BNC)
- b) “412 HRF W_biography that time, Michael didn’t have a very good reputation for [**being easy to work with**].’ Freddie Jones recalled the reaction of other actors on hearing that he” (BNC)

4. In (4a) and (4b), it is not only the position of the predicator in the clause occupied by the word *work*, but also the adverb in front of it, *currently* in (4a) and *really* in (4b), which determines the lexical category of WORK as a verb.

- a) “266 FAF W_ac_soc_science policy will decide to look for other employment in the locality in which they [**currently work**]. These jobs will hopefully be filled by unemployed people in the area into which” (BNC)
- b) “497 HX8 W_misc [...] Make sure that changes of formation [**really work**]. Each performer needs to understand exactly what to do. Instruct each individual as” (BNC)

V. The semantics of the main verb, such as the motion verb GO vs. the stative verb WANT, prior to WORK, can also function as a “componential trigger” in determining the lexical category of WORK, as a noun or as a verb. The lexical class of TO is also set, as either the preposition *to*, in GO *to work* in (1a), through (1c), or the ‘infinitive marker’ *to*, in WANT *to work* in (2a), through (2c) .

1. WORK as a NOUN; TO as a preposition

- a) “84 FLK S_brdcst_discussn Does that appeal to you? (SP:FLK PS001) No. (SP:FLKPS002) I’d be quite happy to [**go to work**] if erm (pause) if I had a good job and my boyfriend (pause)” (BNC)
- b) “1 KB6 S_conv [...] Anyway he [**goes to work**] in the morning. [...]” (BNC)

- c) “3 KB8 S_conv cooking, and I wasn’t cooking anything at all. I mean (pause) Jim [**went to work**] at one o’clock and the last of the kids (pause) went home,” (BNC)
2. WORK as a VERB; TO as an ‘infinitive marker’
- a) “73 K2N W_newsp_other_report we must find a new way of running our society so that people, who [**want to work**], can. That’s top of the agenda. I hope that” (BNC)
- b) “9 GW2 W_fict_prose [...] ‘ Who [**wants to work**] when you’ve been offered a holiday?’ [...].” (BNC)
- c) “24 AA8 W_newsp_brdsh_t_nat_misc I was favourably surprised at the reaction I received. People could see why I [**wanted to work**] in that way and did what they could to make it possible.” (BNC)

VI. The same term *work* occurring in the complement position of WANT may be used either as a noun or as a verb. Its class is determined by the “trigger”, which is the infinitive marker TO prior to the verb *work* in *to work* in 1. In 2, however, there is a schematic “componential trigger”, which is the Accusative case of the Direct object position filled by *work* in *want work*.

1. The word *work* as a verb in WANT TO WORK
 “38 CKD W_fict_prose ‘ Hari Morgan’s face was tight with controlled anger.’ I don’t [**want to work**] for you, I’m employed very nicely working for myself and the” (BNC)
2. The word *work* as a noun in WANT WORK
 “310 B77 W_non_ac_nat_science It is not that today’s graduates have especially high expectations, they just [**want work**]. [...]” (BNC)

The extracts of discourse from I. to VI. constitute samples of the usefulness of the BNC, and other linguistic corpora as well, in terms of designating assignments on English grammar from a descriptive perspective. It is recommended that a selected anaphoric “trigger” be used to signal information on a specific lexical category, for example, to determine whether it is a count noun or a non-count noun, a verb or a noun, which can be identified on the basis of the other elements in the context of occurrence of the specific element. The corpora of the English language provide non-native users of English with reliable context, constituting encyclopedic background for the particular constructions.

Conclusion

Computer assisted language learning, for instance via the Ms Teams applications during the time of COVID-19 pandemic in 2021, when face to face contacts were limited to virtual reality on-line, brought about problems in grading and evaluation of the students. The present paper attempted to present a viable solution to creating assignments on the grammar of the English language administered on-line, for example on the MS Teams assignment application. Assignments constructed on the basis of the English corpora are likely to check and broaden the students' knowledge on specific linguistic categories, particularly when the students search for adequate extracts of concordances themselves. In this case, the examples depicted from I. to VI. concern nouns in context and determining whether the given noun is countable, i.e. *a business*, *a dinner*, and *a worry*, or uncountable, i.e. *business*, *dinner*, and *worry*, in I, also recognizing nouns when the particular term, such as *worry* and *work*, occurs both as a verb and as a noun, in II. The specific lexical class of a 'mono-morphemic' verb or noun, in this case *work*, in III and VI, can be disclosed by the other elements related to it in the context of occurrence, called "triggers" here. They indicate the relevant information on the "target" element, in the case of the particular noun, for example, whether it is countable or uncountable, or its nominal status when it is also a verb. It is recommended here that the students be asked to compile lists of adequate extracts of concordance themselves, after being given the "target terms", i.e. keywords. It is the encyclopedic background of occurrence that is required for a particular linguistic element, or a linguistic category, to be realized and identified. The present paper does not present specific assignments or results obtained, since its aim is to signal possible solutions in designing virtual grammar assignments based on the concepts of a "trigger" and a "target" in a language, which relate to context, such as offered by linguistic corpora.

Dorota Chłopek

Użyteczność angielskich korpusów w odniesieniu do encyklopedycznego znaczenia konstrukcji gramatycznych: rzeczownik policzalny vs. niepoliczalny, rzeczownik vs. czasownik

W artykule podjęto próbę ukazania, w jaki sposób ciągi konkordancji korpusu językowego mogą być użyteczne w zadaniach z gramatyki opisowej języka angielskiego, które tworzone były on-line za pośrednictwem aplikacji Ms Teams w celu nauczania i uczenia się podczas pandemii Sars-CoV-2. Wyrażenia językowe traktuje się jako konstrukcje wyabstrahowane z usytuowanych przypadków użycia języka w świetle „tezy o symbolizacji” Langackera, która jest zgodna z „tezą o uzusie językowym” i encyklopedyczną naturą znaczenia. W związku z tym, słowa są punktami dostępu do obszernych skarbnic wiedzy. Korpusy językowe mogą stanowić obszerne repozytoria wzorów użycia poszczególnych słów kluczowych w rozmaitych konstrukcjach językowych. Tekst koncentruje się na rozróżnieniu między angielskimi rzeczownikami policzalnymi i rzeczownikami niepoliczalnymi reprezentowanymi przez tę samą formę leksykalną, zwaną „docelową”, ang. „target”, taką jak worry, dinner i work, oraz eksponuje worry i work jako czasowniki w alternatywnych kontekstach użycia cytowanych z konkordancji Brytyjskiego Korpusu Narodowego (BNC). Termin work ukazany jest również jako słowo kluczowe, którego kategoria leksykalna, rzeczownik lub czasownik, jest wyznaczana na podstawie innych elementów zdania, określanych w kontekście występowania „wyzwalaczami”/ „zapalnikami”, ang. „triggers”.

Słowa kluczowe: konstrukcja językowa, korpus, konkordancje, gramatyka, znaczenie encyklopedyczne, forma „docelowa”, element „zapalnik”

Keywords: linguistic construction, corpus, concordances, grammar, encyclopedic meaning, “trigger”, “target”