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Department of TESOL
Introduction to Corpus Linguistics
Course Syllabus (Spring 2026)

Week 1: March 9

Assignment 1 – The Winter Reading due

Schmitt (2000) Chapter 7 – Vocabulary acquisition

Introduce the design and nature of the course. This will lead into a basic introduction of vocabulary as a system that rests at the center of language.

Homework: Read Nation (2008) pp. 1-16, Schmitt (2000) pp. 1-9 and Thornbury (2002) pp. 1-31.

Week 2: March 16

-Nation (2008) Chapter 1 – The Big picture

-Schmitt (2000) Chapter 1 - Introduction

-Thornbury (2002) Chapter 1 - What's in a word?

-Thornbury (2002) Chapter 2 – How words are learned

This week we begin the first phase of the course which is just trying to get a feel for the nature of vocabulary (lexis). We start off by looking at words and their size and different componential structures. We also take a quick look at how words are learned.

Homework: Read Schmitt (2000) pp. 22-67. Do Assignment 2.

Week 3: March 23

Assignment 2 – The Nature of Vocabulary due

-Schmitt (2000) Chapter 3 - Aspects of knowing a word: Meaning and organization

-Schmitt (2000) Chapter 4 - Aspects of knowing a word: Word form and grammatical knowledge

This week we go a bit deeper into our discussion of what vocabulary is really like by looking at what is commonly thought to be some of the main components of words.

Homework: Read Schmitt (2000) pp. 10-21 and 96-115 and Thornbury (2002) pp. 32-52.

Week 4: March 30

-Schmitt (2000) Chapter 2 - History of vocabulary in language teaching

-Schmitt (2000) Chapter 6 - Vocabulary in discourse

-Thornbury (2002) Chapter 3 – Classroom sources of words

This week we are looking first at how vocabulary is related to discourse or language production. Moving from this we will also take a practical look at the different sources of vocabulary items (words) in the classroom. We combine these two by taking a quick look at some basic approaches to teaching vocabulary.

Homework: Read Schmitt (2000) pp. 142-162, Nation (2008) pp. 97-124, and Nation and Webb (2011) pp. 59-76.

Week 5: April 6

-Schmitt (2000) Chapter 8 – Teaching and learning vocabulary

-Nation (2008) Chapter 7 – The Deliberate Teaching and Learning of Vocabulary

-Nation & Webb (2011) Chapter 4 – Designing and Using Learner's Dictionaries

This week we go over some of the more basic concepts in teaching vocabulary overtly. We start with a general review of teaching approaches. We then delve into overt approaches to the teaching and learning of vocabulary. Finally, we look specifically at dictionaries as a special type of tool for vocabulary teaching and learning. This will provide important background for the lexis notebook project that will be running concurrently.

Homework: Read Meara (2009) pp. 29-44 and 59-72. Do Assignment 3.

Week 6: April 13

Assignment 3 – Lexis Notebooks due

- Meara (2009) Chapter 2 – Word associations in a foreign language
- Meara (2009) Chapter 5 – Network structures and vocabulary learning in a foreign language
- Meara (2009) Chapter 6 – V-Links: Beyond vocabulary depth

This week we take a quick look at the idea of word associations as a way of not only getting a better feel for what words are like in language, but also finding ways of testing and teaching our students. Over the years there has been a small but devoted group of researchers in the area of word associations and we will be quickly jumping into this interesting area.

Homework: Read Nation & Webb (2011) pp. 223-243, Milton (2009) pp. 117-147, and Milton (2009) pp. 148-169.

Week 7: April 20

- Nation & Webb (2011) Chapter 12 – Measuring Depth of Vocabulary Knowledge
- Milton (2009) Chapter 6 – Measuring Productive Vocabulary Knowledge
- Milton (2009) Chapter 7 – Measuring Vocabulary Depth

In this week we expand our discussion of approaches to measuring vocabulary knowledge away from associations. We look at general measures of vocabulary depth as well as other ways of dealing with vocabulary and vocabulary knowledge from productive perspectives. This sheds further light on what students are doing related to the next assignment.

Homework: Read O’Keeffe et al. (2007) pp. 10-30, Schmitt (2000) 68-95 and Anderson & Corbett (2010) pp. 1-21. Complete Assignment 4.

Week 8: April 27

Assignment 4 – Using Word Associations due

- O’Keeffe et al. (2007) Chapter 1 – Introduction
- Schmitt (2000) Chapter 5 – The use of corpora in vocabulary studies
- Anderson & Corbett (2017) Chapter 1 – Introducing online corpus

This week we move into the second phase of the course, which is about corpora and other computer-based tools that can be used for attaining a better knowledge not only of how words are actually used but, by extension, how we can get our students to become more familiar with the behavior of words. This week we take a basic look at what corpora are, how they work and how they can be used.

Homework: Read O’Keeffe et al. (2007) pp. 31-57, O’Keeffe et al. (2007) pp. 58-79, O’Keeffe et al. (2007) pp. 80-99, and Anderson & Corbett (2017) pp. 70-92.

Week 9: May 4

- O’Keeffe et al. (2007) Chapter 2 – Establishing basic and advanced levels in vocabulary teaching

This week we take a look at different types of vocabulary items by looking at their different behaviors as shown in corpus. A major distinction is made between basic and more advanced vocabulary items. From this we will look at issues related to the teaching of different types of vocabulary items.

- O’Keeffe et al. (2007) Chapter 3 – Lessons from the analysis of chunks
- Anderson & Corbett (2017) Chapter 4 – Exploring lexis with corpora

This week we look at the interesting and somewhat controversial phenomenon of chunks. We take a look at how words link together to form larger units of meaning and how these actually manifest themselves in real language use. By looking at this we seek to expand the view that language is made up of individual words which are just slotted into grammatical positions based on some template. It will be an interesting and most productive extension.

- O’Keeffe et al. (2007) Chapter 4 – Idioms in everyday use and in language teaching

Having looked at chunks we take a look at the related but often misunderstood lexical phenomenon of idioms. By looking at their role in real language use through an examination of corpus data, we will generate a better understanding of what idioms are in the lexis family.

Homework: Read O’Keeffe et al. (2007) pp. 100-119, Thornbury (2002) pp. 93-105, and Anderson & Corbett (2017) pp. 93-128. Do Assignment 5.

Week 10: May 11

Assignment 5 – Corpora/Design and Use due

- O’Keeffe et al. (2007) Chapter 5 – Grammar and lexis and patterns

-Thornbury (2002) Chapter 6 – Putting words to work

-Anderson & Corbett (2017) Chapter 5 – Exploring grammar with corpus

This week we change our focus a bit by looking at the connection between vocabulary/lexis and grammar. Basically, we will be looking at the grammatical behavior of certain lexical items in instances of real language use and how this is revealed only through corpus based research. It should be a very enlightening week.

Homework: Read O'Keeffe et al. (2007) pp. 120-139 and Anderson & Corbett (2017) pp. 129-153.

Week 11: May 18

-O'Keeffe et al. (2007) Chapter 6 – Grammar, discourse and pragmatics

-Anderson & Corbett (2017) Chapter 6 – Exploring discourse with corpora

This week we extend the ideas discussed one week previously take a look at the role of vocabulary in larger pieces of language, namely texts. In doing so we are looking at the behavior of clauses and phrases and other larger textual units. This leads us into a discussion of discourse and pragmatics and the role of vocabulary in these areas.

Homework: Read O'Keeffe et al. (2007) pp. 14-158, Thornbury (2002) pp. 75-92 and Anderson & Corbett (2017) pp. 154-187. Do Assignment 6.

Week 12: May 25 (Holiday, well not really)

Assignment 6 – Grammar and Vocabulary due

-O'Keeffe et al. (2007) Chapter 7 – Listening and response

-Thornbury (2002) Chapter 5 – How to present vocabulary

-Anderson & Corbett (2017) Chapter 7 – Exploring Pronunciation with corpus

This week we shift gears slightly and turn our attention to spoken discourse. We look at the behavior of lexical units and the role they play in conversation, both from the perspective of listening and responding to what we have listened to. Lexical patterning within conversation will be explored.

Homework: Read O'Keeffe et al. (2007) pp. 159-183 and Thornbury (2002) pp. 53-74 and Anderson & Corbett (2017) pp. 22-47.

Week 13: June 1

-O'Keeffe et al. (2007) Chapter 8 – Relational language

-Thornbury (2002) Chapter 4 – Texts, dictionaries and corpora

-Anderson & Corbett (2017) Chapter 2 – Interpreting corpus data

This week we use corpus data to get a feel for how vocabulary items work to link different aspects of an utterance or a text together. This is a very important, often overlooked aspect of vocabulary and one which is essential if we expect our students to be able to put together and produce effect texts, utterances in English.

Homework: Read O'Keeffe et al. (2007) pp. 184-197, Thornbury (2002) pp. 144-161 and Anderson & Corbett (2017) pp. 49-69. Do Assignment 7.

Week 14: June 8

Assignment 7 – Relational Language/Linking Language due

-O'Keeffe et al. (2007) Chapter 9 – Language and creativity: Creating relationships

-Thornbury (2002) Chapter 9 – How to train good vocabulary learners

-Anderson & Corbett (2017) Chapter 3 – Contextualizing corpus texts

This week we focus on language production and how we can get the students to produce language which obviously can't be done without vocabulary. The focus here is on getting students to be creative and have fun with their language use and vocabulary is the key to this.

Homework: Read O'Keeffe et al. (2007) pp. 220-245 and Anderson & Corbett (2017) pp. 188-204.

Week 15: June 15

-O'Keeffe et al. (2007) Chapter 11 – Exploring teacher corpora

-Anderson & Corbett (2017) Chapter 8 – Issues in the use of corpora in teaching and research

We finish off this course by looking at some specific uses of corpora. One of the ways in which corpora can be useful is in helping teachers and students get a feel for how language is used differently in different genres. This week we will be taking a look at how this can be done with corpora by looking at teacher corpora.

Homework: Do your final project.

The final project is due on June 20th.