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Review Of Corpus-Based Approaches To English Language Teaching

Krista Bittenbender Royal

Univeristy of South Florida, kbittenb@usf.edu

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IEPIS Newsletter

The Newsletter of the Intensive English Programs Interest Section

BOOK REVIEW

REVIEW OF CORPUS-BASED APPROACHES TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

Krista Bittenbender Royal

M. C. Campoy-Cubillo, B. Bellés-Fortuño, & M. L. Gea-Valor. (2010). *Corpus-based approaches to English language teaching*. New York, NY: Continuum.

Corpus-Based Approaches to English Language Teaching is part of the Continuum International Publishing Group's *Corpus and Discourse* series. It is a compilation of research by a range of contributors, with two introductory chapters to frame the subsequent studies. The book is divided into four main parts, beginning with an overview of the intersection of corpus linguistics and English language teaching (ELT) and a discussion of the history (and future) of corpus-influenced ELT. Parts 2 and 3 focus on the use of corpora for ELT, for both English for specific purposes and more general learner corpora and corpus-informed teaching materials. The individual chapters each cover specific scenarios or settings, from teaching the grammar of adverb placement with corpora to using a corpus-based approach to teaching lecture comprehension skills. The last section of the book, part 4, addresses select multimodal tools that modern technology has offered and how those might be used in ELT.

Part 1, which provides a framework for the rest of the book, is very accessible, even to those with little background in corpus linguistics. Chapter 1 introduces each of the book's themes and chapters in brief, which is helpful in identifying which chapters may be of most interest and relevance to the reader. U. Römer's chapter, which discusses the past 25 years of corpus linguistics, informs readers of the highlights of ELT research in corpus linguistics from using corpora directly to the development and use of corpus-informed materials, while pointing out that there is still a long way to go before English language teachers know where to find and how to effectively use corpora. Römer includes a helpful list of Web-based, searchable corpora, which may help to narrow that gap. Parts 2 and 3 are the core of this book, and the chapters here address a great range of contexts, providing something for nearly everyone involved in ELT. Of particular interest to those of us in IEPs may be A. Ädel's chapter on the challenges of teaching academic writing with corpora (along with suggested workarounds); A. Mendikoetxea, S. Murcia Bielsa, and P. Rollinson's chapter about the INTELeNG project, which uses a small learner corpus to improve curriculum and develop materials; T. Rankin's chapter addressing the application of learner corpus data in the teaching of grammar and syntax; and I. Elorza and B. García-Riaza's chapter, in which they suggest using corpus analysis software to help select the best texts for class input. Part 4 discusses technical tools that, while fascinating, may be out of reach for many of us. Overall, though not all aspects of the book are relevant to IEP settings, the book provides a great introduction to some of the ways that corpora and corpus-informed materials can be used in an English language classroom. If you are interested in learning more about the intersection of corpus linguistics and English language teaching, this is a good choice.

Krista Bittenbender Royal, krista.bittenbender@gmail.com, is the Special Academic Programs Coordinator at the University of South Florida's English Language Program. She started teaching in 2001 and has her MA in Applied Linguistics/TESL.