

Fall 2016

Getting Started with COCA

K. David Harrison

Swarthmore College, dharris2@swarthmore.edu

Jamie A. Thomas

Swarthmore College, jthomas6@swarthmore.edu

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Due Thursday

10/4

Exercise: Getting started with COCA contemporary English

Part 1: Pre-corpus work

one sentence on why you decided?
Why it connects to social change?

- Decide what you will search
- Come up with a word or phrase that you are interested in, and say why; or think of a pair of terms that are similar in meaning and whose semantic spaces may reveal something about culture (more advanced)
 - o Examples: *bossy* is a gendered term; *lady* vs. *woman*
- Form a hypothesis about your search term(s).
 - o Example: My hypothesis is that *bossy* is a gendered term
- Write a short paragraph about what you expect to find and why.

Part 2: Proceed to the corpus


- Open a browser on a computer or tablet and go to the Corpus of Contemporary American English: <http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/>
 - If your question has to do with the history of a word or phrase, go to the Corpus of Historical American English: <http://corpus.byu.edu/coha/>
- Click on the Login icon on the upper right of the page and register (create username and password)
 - You are ready to go!

Part 3: Search the corpus

one phrase per person in group

We will first explore what you see with the default search setting, List View

- Keep all the settings at their default, and type in your word; click **Find matching strings** to search
 - This will bring you to the FREQUENCY tab
- How many times does the word occur in the corpus?
- To see what contexts the word occurs in, click on your search word shown in all caps under the **Context** button (what happens if you click the **Context** button? Do you know why?)

- This brings you to the CONTEXT tab
- Click the Help button, which is the question mark next to the login icon. What do you learn from this?
- What does this icon  stand for?
- Go back to the Context tab. For any individual token, how do you see the larger context that it occurs in?
- Go back to the Search tab
- Change the search view setting from **List** to **Chart**
- Search the corpus by clicking **See frequency by section**
- What genre is your word most frequent in? Do you see any trends?
- Consider the top row, SPOKEN. What are the numbers under **FREQ**, **SIZE (M)**, and **PER MIL**?
- What's the result if you divide **FREQ** by **SIZE (M)**?
- Next, look at the different time period bins. What time period is your word most frequent in? Is it increasing or decreasing in use?
- In general, your first few corpus searches will not yield the best results for your research question; keep refining your search! Keep track of the refinements that you make.

Part 4: Saving the data for offline analysis

- Once you have a search that you think brings up some useful data, you can save the data for offline analysis
- Open up a spreadsheet program like Excel and create a new document
- Go back to the Context view of your search
- Select and copy the results
- Paste the results into Excel (if you are given the option, paste as text)
- Clean up the spreadsheet as necessary
 - You might want to remove unnecessary rows
 - You might want to add rows for coding the data

what's your process? — how did you refine?

some sort of chart w/ frequency of tokens/types.