ACTION RESEARCH IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Human beings are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection. But while to say the true word…is to transform the world, saying that word is not the privilege of some few persons, but the right of everyone. (Freire, 1970/2000)

ENGAGEMENT

- *with* research – by reading
- *in* research – by doing

ENGAGEMENT *WITH* RESEARCH

How often do you read research? (N=1351)

50% — sometimes

What does ‘sometimes’ mean?

“Once or twice a year” (Japan)
“In the past at university” (Switzerland)
“When I am away from teaching” (China)
“When I have the time” (Turkey)

(Borg, 2013)

ENGAGEMENT *IN* RESEARCH

How often do you do research?

35% — sometimes
13% — often

The ‘research’ teachers say they do:

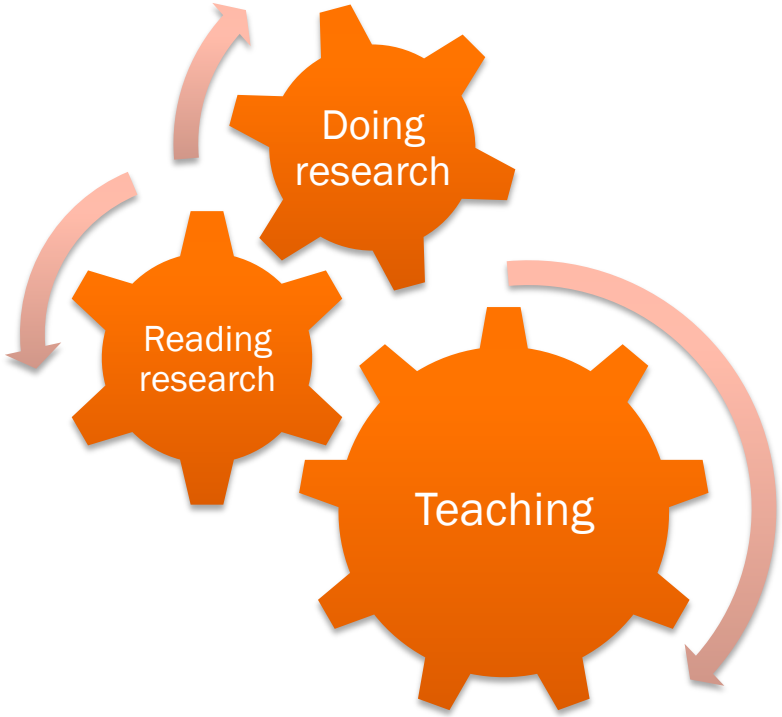
Looking for teaching ideas online
Evaluating new course books
Attending workshops
Designing materials

(Borg, 2013)

MISCONCEPTIONS

Research that produces nothing but books will not suffice.
(Lewin, 1946)

RESEARCH-ENGAGED PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE



Teacher-led

Classroom-based

Practical

Relevant

WHAT'S ACTION RESEARCH?

- What does it mean to you?
- Have you ever done it?
- Have you ever involved others in your AR?

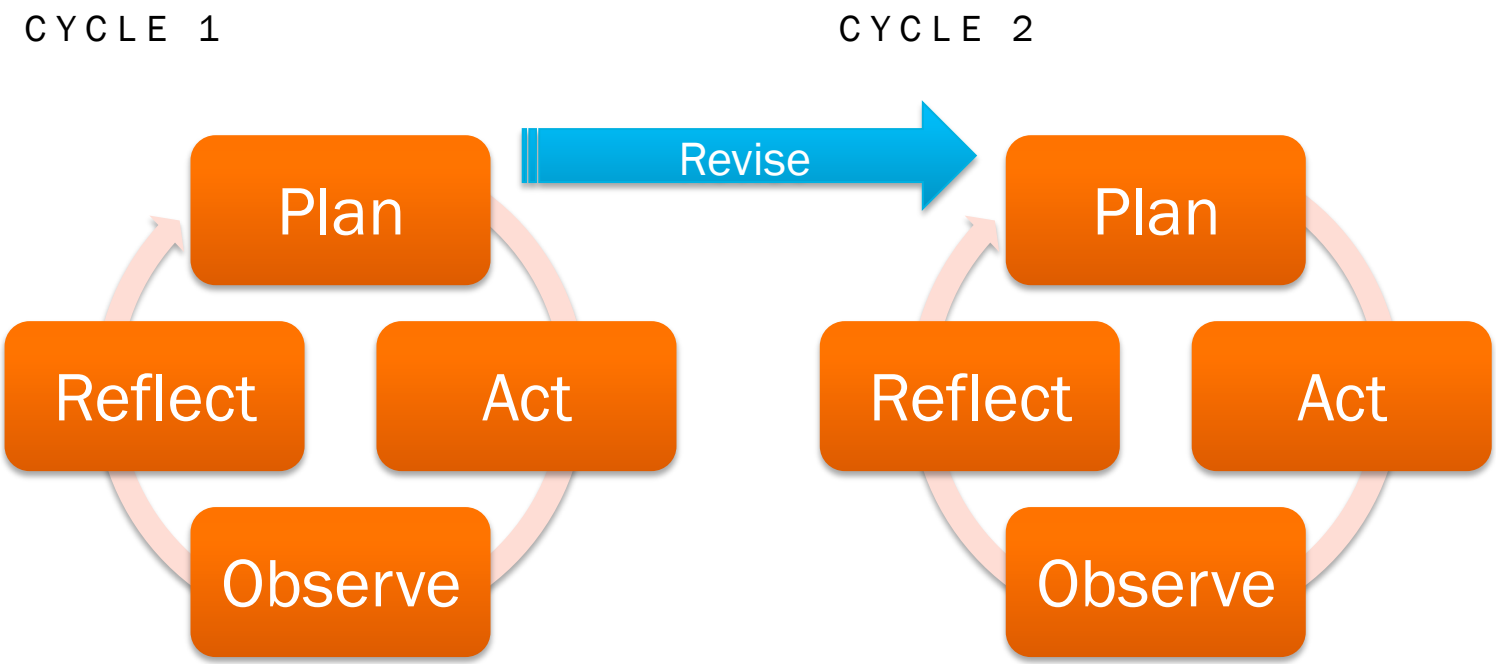
Action research is simply a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situations in which the practices are carried out. (Carr & Kemmis, 1986)

AR FEATURES

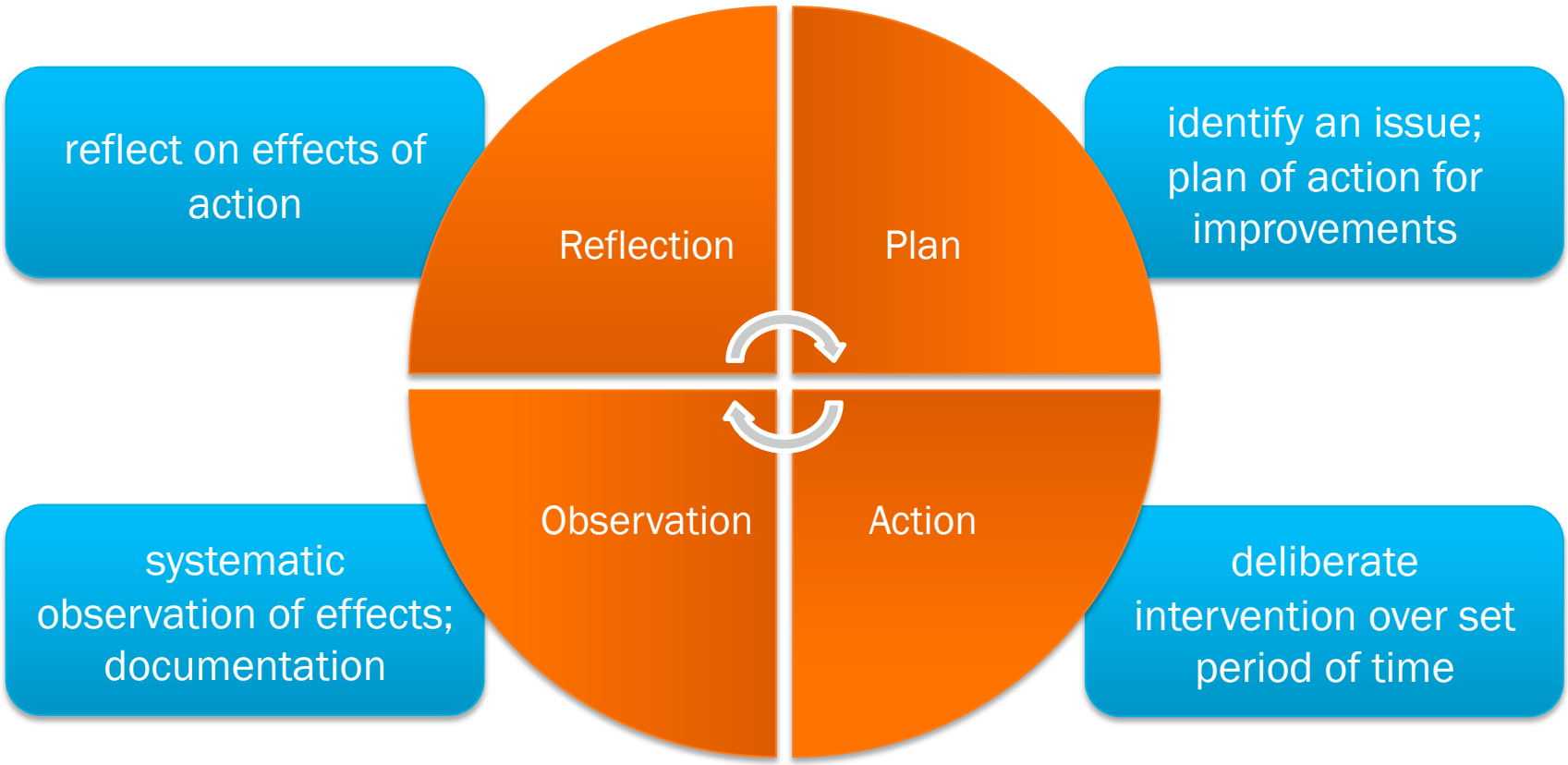
- Reflection for change in practice
- Small-scale and contextualised
- Participatory and inclusive
- Systematic
- Empowering

(Burns, 2010)

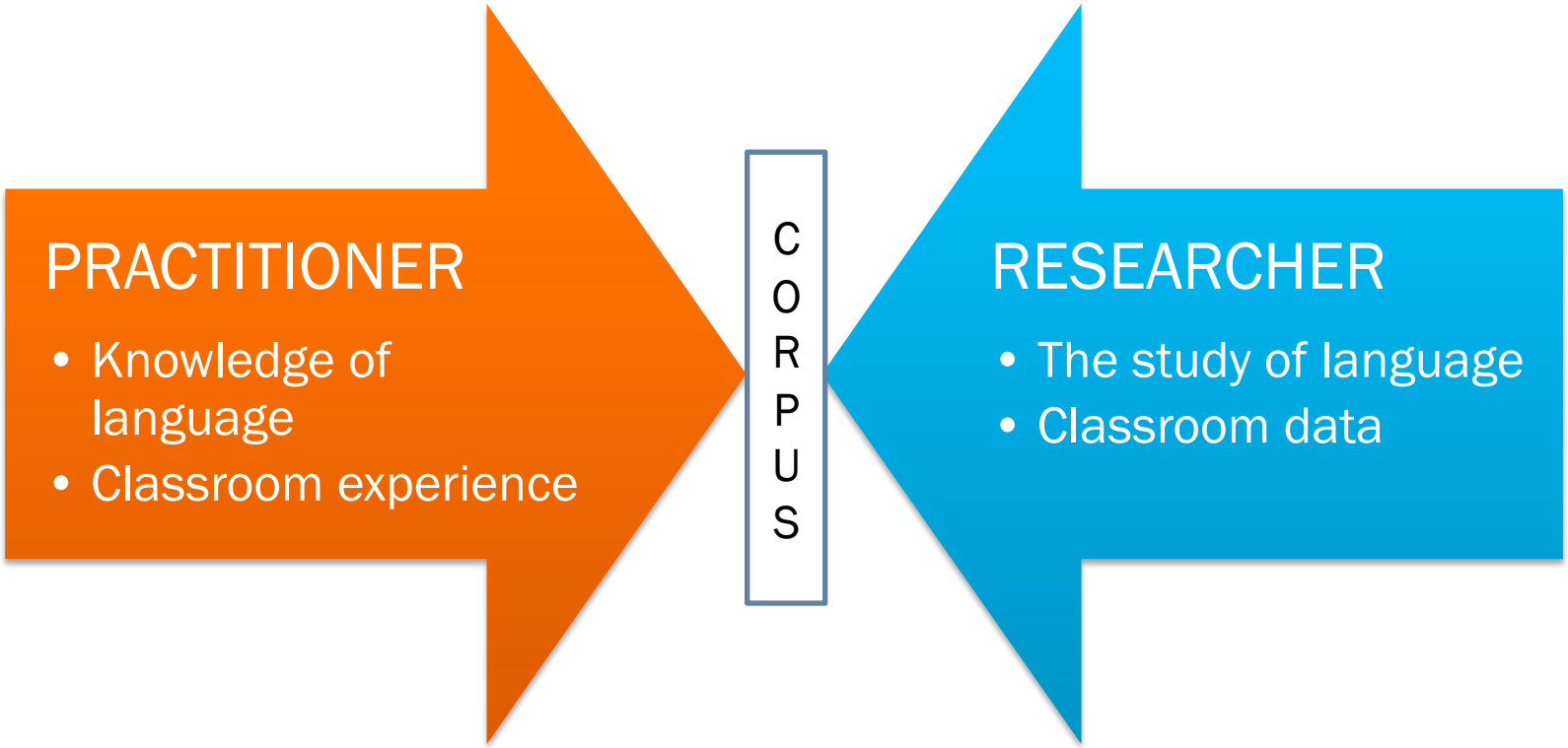
PROBLEMATISE AN ISSUE



(Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988)


reflect on effects of action
Reflection
Plan
identify an issue; plan of action for improvements
Observation
Action
systematic observation of effects; documentation
deliberate intervention over set period of time

POINT OF INTERSECTION



CORPUS AND AR

What is a corpus?

- It is ‘a collection of texts or parts of texts upon which some general linguistic analysis can be conducted’ (Meyer, 2002, p. xi).
- It is ‘a collection of texts, written or spoken, which is stored on a computer’ (O’Keeffe, McCarthy, & Carter, 2007, p. 1).
- It is a principled collection of texts (Biber, Conrad, & Reppen, 1998).

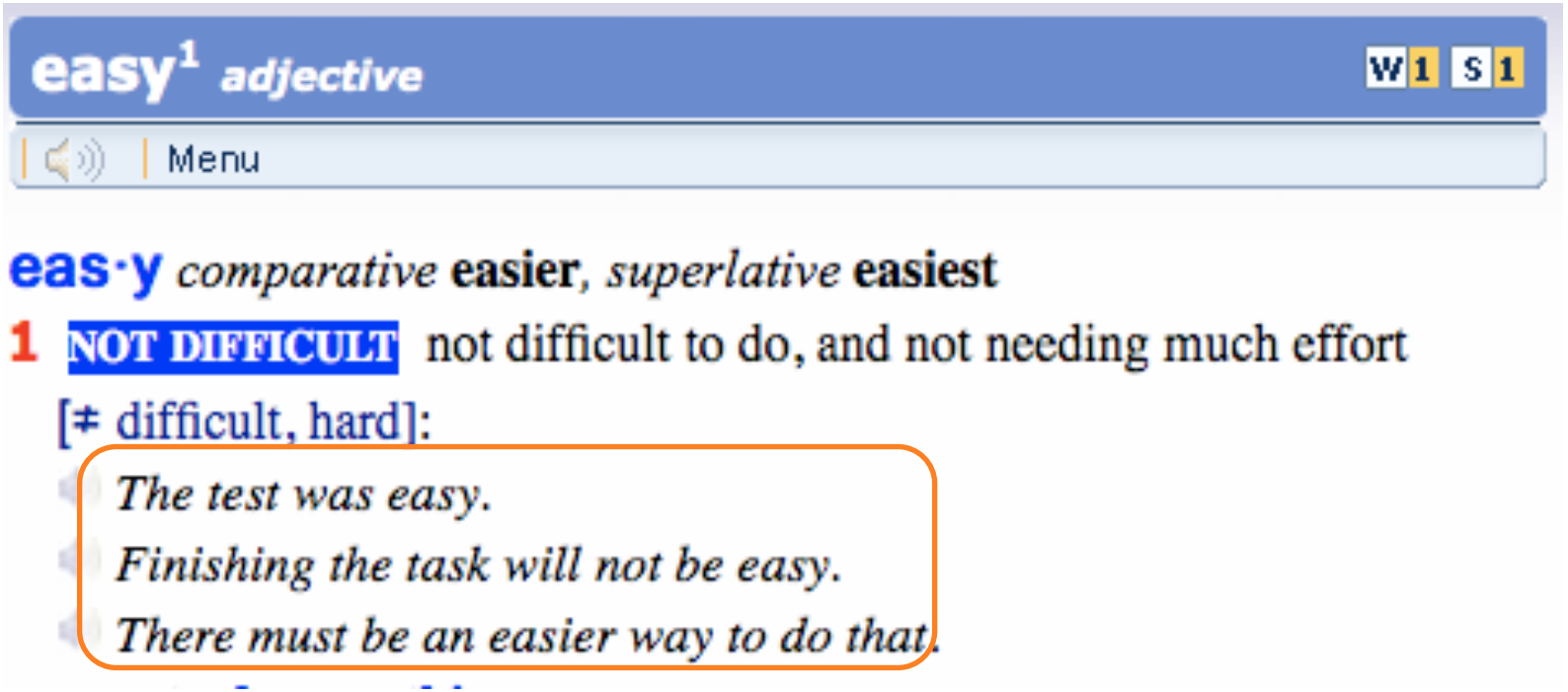
CORPORA - AN EVER GROWING PRESENCE

Corpus–based dictionaries and ELT material

Examples

- *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*
- *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*
- Cambridge English Corpus

LONGMAN DICTIONARY OF CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH



easy[1] *adjective* W1 S1

Menu

eas·y *comparative* **easier**, *superlative* **easiest**

1 **NOT DIFFICULT** not difficult to do, and not needing much effort [≠ difficult, hard]:

The test was easy.

Finishing the task will not be easy.

There must be an easier way to do that.

CAMBRIDGE ADVANCED LEARNER'S DICTIONARY

easy

adjective (NOT DIFFICULT) UK US /ˈiː.zi/

Definition

A1 needing little effort:

an easy exam

Would a ten o'clock appointment be easier ***for*** *you?*

[+ to infinitive] *It's easy* ***to*** *see why he's so popular.*

She's very easy ***to*** *talk to.*

The easiest thing ***to*** *do would be for us to take the train home.*

It *isn't easy be* ***ing*** *a parent.*

Getting into the film business is ***no*** *easy* ***matter****.*

I don't trust that easy (= relaxed) charm of his.

INFORMAL *My car can do 250 kph, easy.*

→ OPPOSITE **difficult**

CAMBRIDGE ENGLISH CORPUS

The Cambridge English Corpus contains written and spoken English from books, newspapers, advertising, letters, emails, websites, and recordings of conversations, lectures, TV, meetings, radio and many other sources, totalling several billion words.

http://www.cambridge.org/gb/elt/catalogue/subject/item2701617/Cambridge-International-Corpus/?site_locale=en_GB

Concluding note:

Cambridge University Press remains at the forefront of corpus-based ELT publishing.

PRACTITIONER/RESEARCHER - CYCLE 1 (1)

PLAN

- Investigate language use in the classroom
- Act on intuition derived from monitoring of students' work
- Decide to focus on the use of the verbs 'do' and 'make' – commonly confused by L2 learners

ACT

- Build a small learner corpus based on students' written work
- Design a simple task that would highlight students' choice for either 'make' or 'do'
- Ask students to submit their work electronically
- Save the texts in plain text format (e.g. NAME.txt)
- Organise texts in files and export them to a concordancer

PRACTITIONER/RESEARCHER - CYCLE 1 (2)

OBSERVE & REFLECT

- Result: a corpus of learner English (a principled collection) based on very specific variables: age, gender, nationality, year of study, level descriptor, text type, etc.
- Start analysing the use of the verb 'to do' using the concordance tool (do, does, doing, did, done)
- Take action ➔➔ Cycle 2

ANTCONC CONCORDANCE TOOL

A software program which analyses corpora and lists the results

- Free concordance tool developed by Prof. Anthony Laurence
- Works with all languages
- Does word lists and Keyword in Context (KWIK)
- Other interesting features available

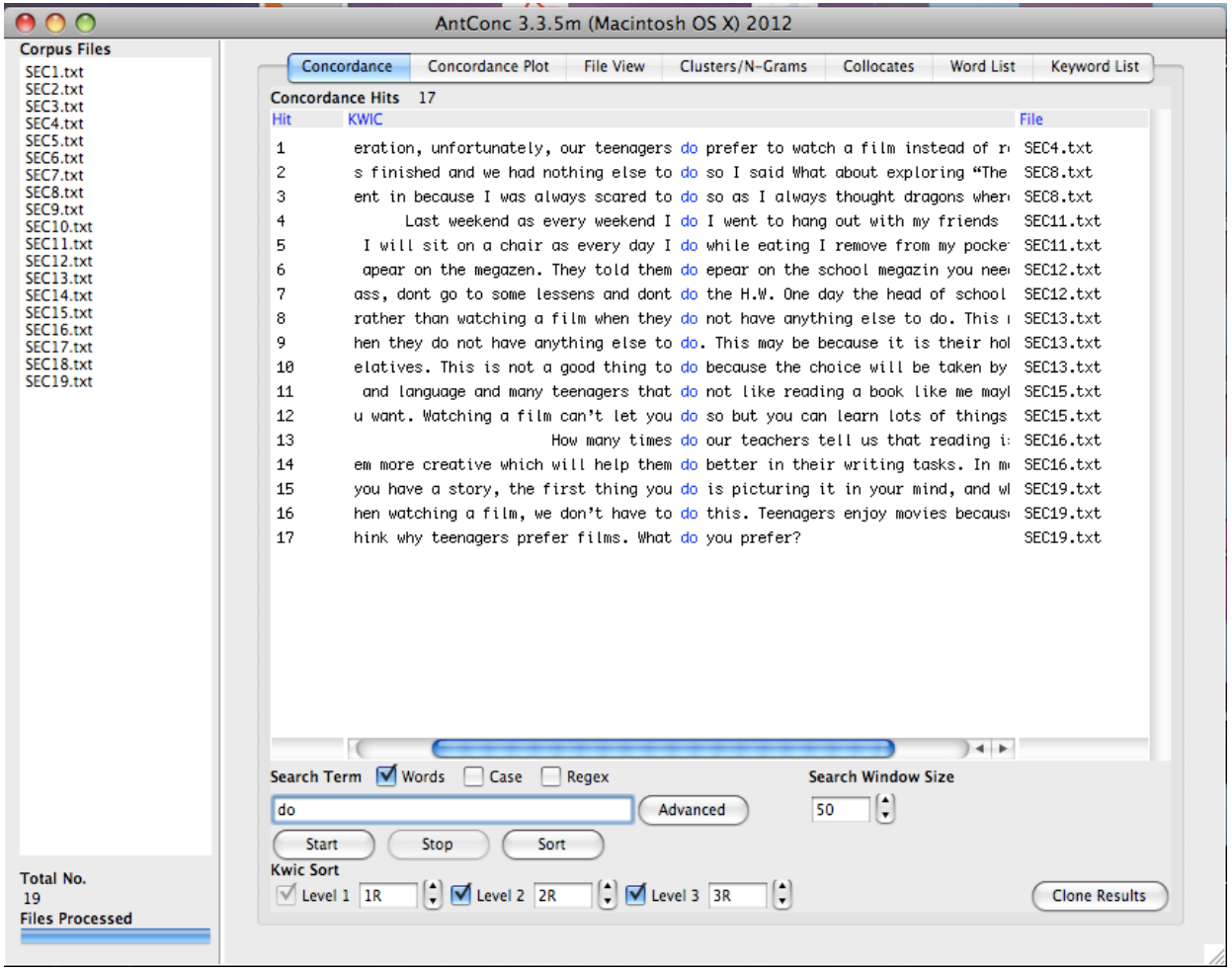
http://www.antlab.sci.waseda.ac.jp/software.html

PROCESS

The process involves the following steps:

- Export the text files to AntConc and load corpus (students' texts) in the concordancer;
- Insert word do in Search Term;
- Press return and the hits will appear in the main window;
- Select Sort to highlight the context surrounding do;
- Other advanced features are possible.

Follow tutorial on YouTube:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9TsqFVrUYO0


AntConc 3.3.5m (Macintosh OS X) 2012
Corpus Files
SEC1.txt
SEC2.txt
SEC3.txt
SEC4.txt
SEC5.txt
SEC6.txt
SEC7.txt
SEC8.txt
SEC9.txt
SEC10.txt
SEC11.txt
SEC12.txt
SEC13.txt
SEC14.txt
SEC15.txt
SEC16.txt
SEC17.txt
SEC18.txt
SEC19.txt
Total No.
19
Files Processed
Concordance
Concordance Plot
File View
Clusters/N-Grams
Collocates
Word List
Keyword List
Concordance Hits 17
Hit KWIC File
1 eration, unfortunately, our teenagers do prefer to watch a film instead of r SEC4.txt
2 s finished and we had nothing else to do so I said What about exploring “The SEC8.txt
3 ent in because I was always scared to do so as I always thought dragons wher SEC8.txt
4 Last weekend as every weekend I do I went to hang out with my friends SEC11.txt
5 I will sit on a chair as every day I do while eating I remove from my pocke SEC11.txt
6 apear on the megazen. They told them do epear on the school megazin you nee SEC12.txt
7 ass, dont go to some lessens and dont do the H.W. One day the head of school SEC12.txt
8 rather than watching a film when they do not have anything else to do. This SEC13.txt
9 hen they do not have anything else to do. This may be because it is their hol SEC13.txt
10 elatives. This is not a good thing to do because the choice will be taken by SEC13.txt
11 and language and many teenagers that do not like reading a book like me mayl SEC15.txt
12 u want. Watching a film can’t let you do so but you can learn lots of things SEC15.txt
13 How many times do our teachers tell us that reading i SEC16.txt
14 em more creative which will help them do better in their writing tasks. In m SEC16.txt
15 you have a story, the first thing you do is picturing it in your mind, and wl SEC19.txt
16 hen watching a film, we don’t have to do this. Teenagers enjoy movies becaus SEC19.txt
17 hink why teenagers prefer films. What do you prefer? SEC19.txt
Search Term Words Case Regex
Search Window Size
do
Advanced
50
Start
Stop
Sort
Kwic Sort
Level 1 1R
Level 2 2R
Level 3 3R
Clone Results

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1       elatives. This is not a good thing to do because the choice will be taken by  SEC13.txt
2       em more creative which will help them do better in their writing tasks. In m  SEC16.txt
3        apear on the megazen. They told them do epear on the school megazin you nee  SEC12.txt
4             Last weekend as every weekend I do I went to hang out with my friends   SEC11.txt
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7        and language and many teenagers that do not like reading a book like me mayl  SEC15.txt
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9       eration, unfortunately, our teenagers do prefer to watch a film instead of r  SEC4.txt
10      ent in because I was always scared to do so as I always thought dragons wher  SEC8.txt
11      u want. Watching a film can't let you do so but you can learn lots of things  SEC15.txt
12      s finished and we had nothing else to do so I said What about exploring "The  SEC8.txt
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15      hen watching a film, we don't have to do this. Teenagers enjoy movies becaus  SEC19.txt
16       I will sit on a chair as every day I do while eating I remove from my pocke  SEC11.txt
17      hink why teenagers prefer films. What do you prefer?                          SEC19.txt
```

PRACTITIONER/RESEARCHER – CYCLE 2

The practitioner/researcher may choose to:

- Repeat search using a native speaker based corpus (BNC);
- The British National Corpus (BNC) is a 100 million word collection of samples of written and spoken language from a wide range of sources, designed to represent a wide cross-section of current British English, both spoken and written. The search result will show the total frequency in the corpus and up to 50 examples. http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/
- Follow students' progress throughout the year (snapshots of their work);
- Build a small corpus of texts selected from sources on the internet; (online newspaper editorials, short stories, etc.)
- Record classroom discussions, transcribe and analyse the discourse; etc.

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