

Homework 7 – Corpus-Based Activity

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Part I:

In the Arabic language neither the present tense of the verb “to be” nor the indefinite articles exist. Therefore it is the assumption that speakers of Arabic may omit the verb “to be” + the indefinite articles following pronouns and preceding adverbs, adjectives, and nouns. Therefore, the purpose of this activity is to review, with speakers of Arabic in a beginning level college English class, the use of the present tense “to be” + “a” or “an” followed by adverbs, adjectives, and nouns. The goal is for students to then reproduce this structure correctly in their own speaking and writing. To fully participate in this activity, students must have been previously exposed to personal pronouns, the present tense of “to be,” the indefinite articles, adverbs, adjectives, and nouns. To accomplish this task, students will use the online “Virtual Language Concordancer” located at <http://www.edict.com.hk/concordance/default.htm> and will be instructed to search the Robert Louis Stevenson text to find their examples. This corpus is being used because it has good examples for most of the search terms and I like the user-friendly nature of this concordancer compared to others I’ve seen. Answers will be recorded on a paper-based worksheet, as shown in Part II on the next page.

Using the Verb “to be” with Indefinite Articles

Let’s notice the use of the present tense of the verb “to be” followed by indefinite articles “a” and “an.”

Getting Started:

Step 1: Go to the following Web site on the Internet:

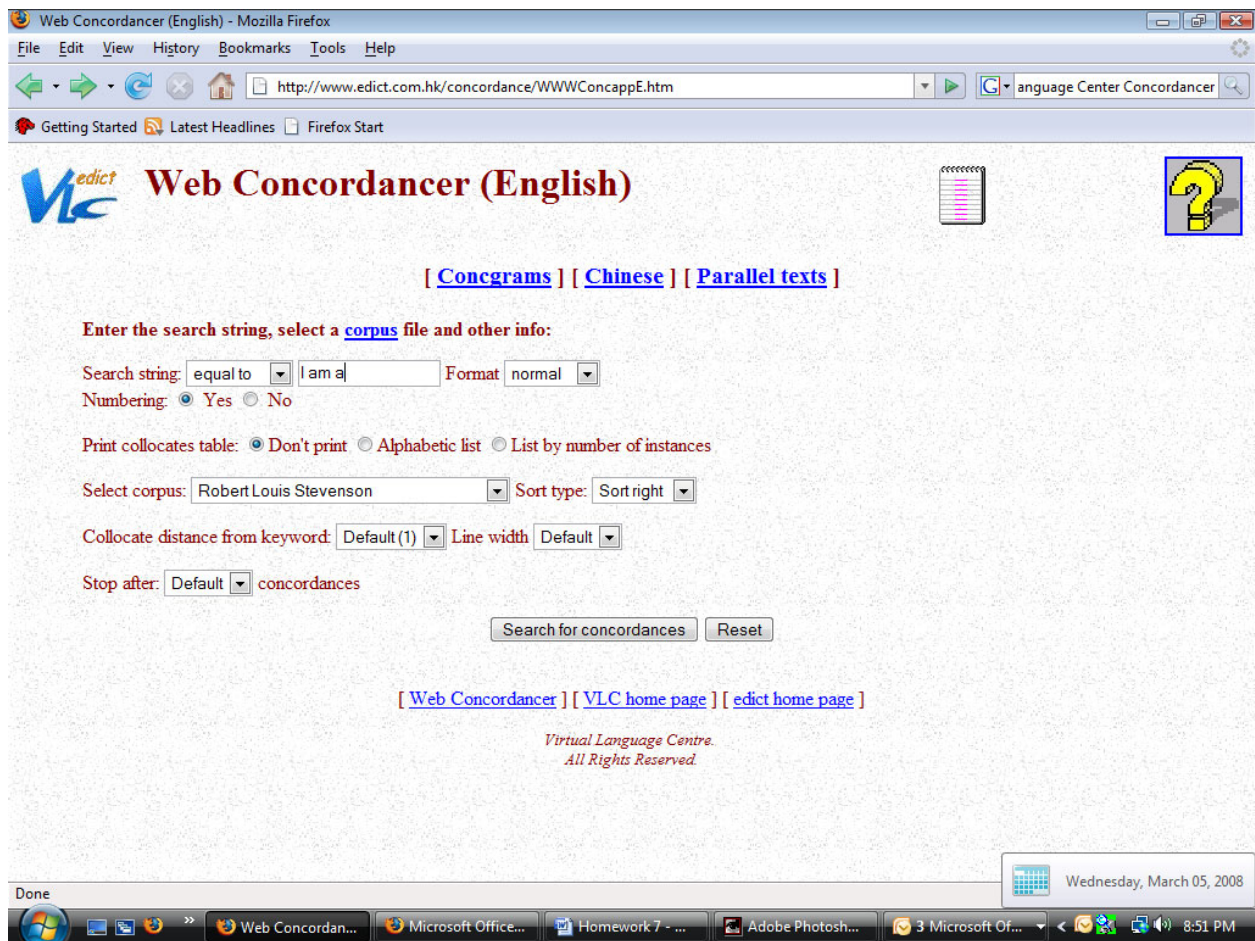
<http://www.edict.com.hk/concordance/default.htm>

Step 2: Click on “Simple Search” below the word “English.”

Step 3: Type in the words “I am a” (without the quotations) in the first blank box near the top left of the screen.

Step 4: In the drop down box next to the words “Select Corpus,” choose “Robert Louis Stevenson.”

Below is an image of how your screen should look.



Step 5: Click on “Search for concordances.”

Step 6: To go back to the search screen, click on the browser’s back arrow.

Step 7: Using the following chart as a guide, search the concordance and record your results to complete the activities that follow. Keep your paper for a class discussion.

Concordance Activities

Part A: Searching and Recording

Instructions: Search for the words indicated below in the “search terms” column. Record the total number of examples found (hits). Look through the results and record at least two interesting examples from each search. Write the search terms plus all the words that follow up to the next punctuation point (ie: .,“!”). Two examples have been completed for you. Not all search terms will yield results. If you get 0 hits, remove the word “a” or “an” and just search on the pronoun and the verb (ie: she is).

Search Terms	Number of Hits	Write the search terms plus the words that precede punctuation.
I am a	59	<i>I am a coward!</i>
		<i>I am a very quiet man,</i>
I am an		
You are a		
You are an		
He is a		
He is an		
She is a		
She is an		
It is a		
It is an		
We are a		

Search Terms	Number of Hits	Write the search terms plus the words that precede punctuation.
We are an		
They are a		
They are an		

Part B: Analyzing the Data

Instructions: Answer the following questions.

1. What do you notice about the first letter of every word that follows the indefinite article “an”?
2. What types of words normally follow the indefinite articles? (ie: verbs, nouns, articles, etc.)
3. Some of the examples you recorded may fit into the following patterns. Write some examples in the chart below. Two examples are completed for you.

subject pronoun	to be	indefinite article	adverb	adjective	noun
I	am	a			coward
I	am	a	very	quiet	man

4. What other patterns do you see in your examples?
5. Write five original sentences using the patterns shown in the table above and other patterns you noticed in your examples. (You may use the back of this sheet or a separate sheet of paper.)