

EdUHK Corpus-based ELT Lesson Design Competition

Lesson Topic/Title:

More than “SAY”: Corpus-based Dialogue Tag Writing Learning

Notes:

1. You may choose to focus on a separate linguistic skill, e.g., vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, writing, reading, etc., or a combination of different linguistic skills, in your lesson design.
2. Please provide concrete teaching activities/working sheets with necessary notes/instruction.

Competition No. CH 42

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Target Students: Secondary Level (Senior 2 Students)

Corpus Used: Little Women (novel by Louisa May Alcott)

Corpus Tool: Antconc (3.5.9)

Lesson Duration: 50 min

Learning Objectives:

1. To help students learn the sentence patterns that usually go with the reporting verb “say” in dialogue tag writing.
2. To help students learn the functions of these sentence patterns.

3. To help students improve their dialogue tag writing by experimenting with the writing techniques learned.

Background information:

1. Why are the learning objectives set as such?

In mainland China, story continuation writing has been one of the evaluative tools to gauge English language achievement of high school students. With only the beginning of the story given, the students are required to complete the story by writing two more paragraphs, each starting with a given sentence. Dialogue or conversation is one of the essential elements of a story, showing in a direct way the opinions or attitudes of the character. This lesson is thus intended to help students improve their skill in dialogue writing. Specifically, this lesson is designed based on one of their writing tasks (as shown in Appendix I), as part of the feedback on their work.

As indicated in their work, the students, who are beginner writers of English stories, were not quite familiar with creating dialogues in their narrative writing. Some dialogues seemed to be rigidly placed between acts of the characters and still in other cases the sentence structures which the reporting verbs went with tended to be simple. **Therefore, this lesson aims to improve the students' dialogue writing skill by helping them get aware of the structures clustered around the reporting verb "SAY", with which they will be able to produce sentences more neatly structured and to provide details to make their stories more vividly told.**

2. Explanation on the corpus used and corpus tool

Little Women by Louisa May Alcott is one of the classics in English literature, in which a story is told about the life and growth of four girls in a poor family. The language is in general not difficult for students to understand yet was wisely selected to create a vivid picture of family life and portraits of the characters. The dialogues, specifically, typically following certain patterns with their neat structure and capacity to connect ideas, are very well worth studying. The corpus tool utilized in this lesson would be Antconc (3.5.9), which could be easily installed on computers and ready for students' use with simple instructions.

3. Analysis of the Target Students

The target students of this lesson plan are senior 2 students. They have already learned all the grammar knowledge required of a high school English learner, including adverbial clauses, relative clauses and non-finite verbs, which are to be included in the analysis of sentence patterns in this lesson. They are cooperative and energetic, equipped with the ability to conduct analysis and summary, sharing interest in authentic language materials. With all these in mind, the teaching procedure of this lesson is therefore designed as follows:

Teaching Procedure:

Step 1: Comparison

Interaction Mode: Class Work Time Duration: 5 min

- Hold a class discussion on the differences between the two groups of sentences.

Group 1	Group 2
✓ Harry shouted, "Yeah, we can send it to Bernard now!"	✓ "Ought to have called me before," he said crossly.
✓ But the lady said, "Many of people in town had lost their jobs. Will they help us?"	✓ He sighed, and then said, in a spiritless tone, "Just as you like, sir. It doesn't matter."
✓ "Don't worry!" said Harry, "All of our neighbors are very kind!"	✓ "Teddy was only a boy, and soon got over his little fancy," said Jo, anxious to correct the Professor's mistake.
✓ "That's a nice idea. Let's tell Bernard this exciting plan." said Mrs. Meredith.	✓ "Very well, you can have it," said Jo, handing back the story with a satisfied air.
✓ "I shall spread the news that Bernard is to sell popcorn." said Clara.	✓ "A fellow can't live on books," said Laurie, shaking his head as he perched on a table opposite.

Questions asked by the teacher could include:

1. Compare the two groups of sentences. Which group do you like better? Why?
2. What seemed to have made the differences?

【Justifications for this step】

These two groups of sentences are extracted respectively from the students' work and the novel Little Women. By comparison, the students will be able to realize the defects of their dialogue writing and towards what end they can improve their writing.

Step 2: Preparation

Interaction Mode: Pair Work Time Duration: 5 min

- Ask students to underline the proper dialogue tag within the brackets. They may choose both if the two of them are acceptable.

- ✓ “Why don’t you tell Bernard your idea?” (Mrs. Meredith said, said Mrs. Meredith).
- ✓ “We could make popcorn,” (John explained, explained John), “and you can earn some money by selling it.”
- ✓ (Bernard shouted excitedly, Shouted Bernard excitedly), “We made it! The popcorn’s been sold out!”
- ✓ (She said, Said she), “I think you guys can help little Bernard with your wonderful idea.”
- ✓ “Thank you,” (he said, said he), “I wouldn’t have done this without you.”

- Help students recall the basic structure of a dialogue tag, including the rules below.
 - ✓ A dialogue tag can be placed before or after a quote, as well as in between two quotes.
 - ✓ Both the “name + reporting verb” and “reporting verb + name” structures can be placed after a quote or in between two quotes, yet only the former can be put before a quote.
 - ✓ If the name is replaced by a personal pronoun such as “he” or “she”, in no case could it be placed after the reporting verb. Only “Personal pronoun + reporting verb” is acceptable.

【Justifications for this step】

This step is designed to check and consolidate students’ knowledge of the basic structure of a dialogue tag so as to prepare them for the next step where they will be dealing with the more complex structures developed based on it.

Step 3: Analysis of Dialogues in *Little Women*

Interaction Mode: Group Work Time Duration: 30 min

- Divide students into groups of four, each with specific duties:
 - ✓ Leader and technician: organize and pace discussion; run the software;
 - ✓ Presenter: take notes of their findings on worksheet (see Appendix II); present findings;
 - ✓ Form analyzer: lead discussion in categorizing sentence patterns;
 - ✓ Function analyzer: lead discussion in analyzing functions of sentence patterns.
- Show students step by step how to run Antconc on computer, and specifically, how to create concordance of the reporting verb “said” with the first, second and third word to the right of it highlighted with different colors for the convenience of later analysis. Concordance samples are demonstrated in Appendix III.
- Ask students to work in groups of four and try to figure out the **sentence patterns** that usually go after the verb “said”.
- With the sub-task above completed, students should figure out the **function** of each sentence pattern.
- At the beginning of the students’ exploration, the teacher should, based on students’ actual performance, give them an example of these sentence patterns together with its function. He or she is then to provide necessary guidance and assistance when needed.
- Invite several groups to present their findings.
- Show teacher’s version for reference (see table below).

Sentence Pattern	Function
sb said + ADV.	to describe the attitude or manner of speech
sb said + in a/sb’s ... tone/voice/way/manner	to describe the tone of speech
sb said, with + NOUN PHRASE	to describe one’s voice/manner/facial expression/motion

sb said, V-ing	to describe accompanying actions/facial expressions/feelings
sb said, ADJ.	to describe one's feelings
sb said, as + clause (adverbial clause)	to describe accompanying actions
said sb, who + clause (relative clause)	to add further information about the speaker

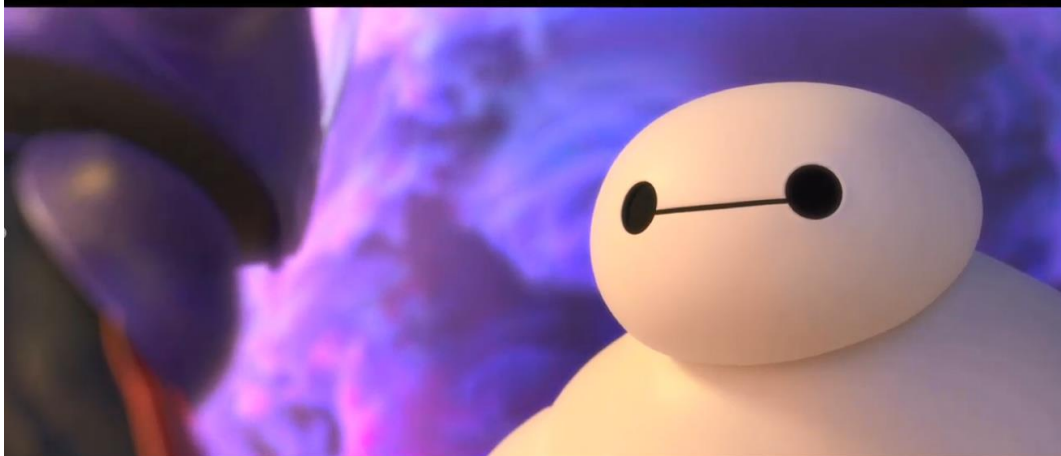
【Justifications for this step】

Students will be rewarded with a better understanding and command of the sentence patterns after their exploration where inductive learning takes place. Meanwhile, pressure will be relieved with group cooperation. Besides, though probably more complicated and challenging, a chance of free exploration of sentence patterns by use of the corpus tool will be more appealing to the students than concordance directly provided by the teacher for analysis.

Step 4: Application

Interaction Mode: Individual Work Time Duration: 10 min

- Play a video clip of *Big Hero 6* in which Baymax offered to sacrifice himself to save a girl but Hiro would not allow that to happen at first when he said “Please, No! I can’t lose you too.” Ask students to **rewrite the dialogue tag** on their worksheet (as shown below) by using the sentence patterns just learned.



- Are you satisfied with your care? - Please, No!



I can't lose you too.

Based on the video, please polish the dialogue tag, as underlined in the sentence below, by using the sentence patterns you've just learned.

"Please, no! I can't lose you too," said Hiro.

(1) "Please, no! I can't lose you too," said Hiro _____.

(Use **ADV.** to describe manner of speech.)

(2) "Please, no! I can't lose you too," said Hiro _____.

(Use “in a/sb’s ... tone/voice/way/manner” to describe tone of speech.)

(3) “Please, no! I can’t lose you too,” said Hiro _____.

(Use “with + NOUN PHRASE” to describe Hiro’s voice or facial expression.)

(4) “Please, no! I can’t lose you too,” said Hiro _____.

(Use **V-ing** to describe accompanying actions or feelings.)

(5) “Please, no! I can’t lose you too,” said Hiro _____.

(Use **ADJ.** to describe Hiro’s feelings.)

(6) “Please, no! I can’t lose you too,” said Hiro _____.

(Use “as + clause” to describe accompanying actions.)

(7) “Please, no! I can’t lose you too,” said Hiro _____.

(Use “who + clause” to give further description of Hiro.)

[Answers for reference]

(1) sadly / emphatically / decidedly

(2) in his most persuasive tone / in his cracked voice / in his trembling voice

(3) with a little quiver in his voice / with a despairing look

(4) feeling his heart grasped by a pang of pain

(5) broken-hearted / unwilling to leave his beloved friend

(6) as he gazed intently into Baymax’s eyes

(7) who could not bear the thought of leaving his most loyal friend

- Homework for students to finish after class:

Students are required to **polish their own continuation writing** by altering the dialogues using the sentence patterns learned in this lesson. The novel *Little Women* in txt form will be sent to the students so that they will be able to refer to it on Antconc while writing.

[Justifications for this step]

For the in-class activity, students are provided chances to practice using the sentence patterns they've just learned. Additionally, the students have already watched this movie because they've been learning about robotics in their English classes. They were strongly affected and deeply moved by the connection between Hiro and Baymax. Therefore, it should be likely that they would have much to write about this scene. Besides, students can make good use of the language input in their corpus research in step 2. As regards the homework, students will be able to put what they've learned into practice and, by comparison, witness real changes and progress in their writing.

Appendix I: Students' Writing Task Before This Lesson

阅读下面材料，根据其内界和所给段落开头语续写两段，使之构成一篇完整的短文。

The Meredith family lived in a small community. As the economy was in decline, some people in the town had lost their jobs. Many of their families were struggling to make ends meet. People were trying to help each other meet the challenges.

Mrs. Meredith was a most kind and thoughtful woman. She spent a great deal of time visiting the poor. She knew they had problems, and they needed all kinds of help. When she had time, she would bring food and medicine to them.

One morning she told her children about a family she had visited the day before. There was a man sick in bed, his wife, who took care of him and could not go out to work, and their little boy. The little boy - his name was Bernard - had interested her very much.

"I wish you could see him," she said to her own children, John, Harry, and Clara. "He is such a help to his mother. He wants very much to earn some money, but I don't see what he can do."

After their mother left the room, the children sat thinking about Bernard. "I wish we could help him to earn money," said Clara. "His family is suffering so much."

"So do I," said Harry. "We really should do something to assist them."

For some moments, John said nothing, but, suddenly, he sprang to his feet and cried, "I have a great idea! I have a solution that we can all help accomplish (完成)."

The other children also jumped up all attention. When John had an idea, it was sure to be a good one. I'll tell you what we can do," said John. "You know that big box of com Uncle John sent us? Well, we can make popcorn (爆米花), and put it into paper bags, and Bernard can take it around to the houses and sell it."

注意：

1. 续写词数应为 150 左右；
2. 请按如下格式在答题卡的相应位置作答。

When Mrs. Meredith heard of John's idea, she thought it was a good one, too.

With everything ready. Bernard started out on his new business.

Appendix II: Students' Worksheet

More than "SAY": Corpus-based Dialogue Tag Writing Learning

● Pair Work: Basic Structure of a Dialogue Tag

Please underline the proper dialogue tag within the brackets. You may choose both if the two of them are acceptable.

- ✓ "Why don't you tell Bernard your idea?" (Mrs. Meredith said, said Mrs. Meredith).
- ✓ "We could make popcorn," (John explained, explained John), "and you can earn some money by selling it."
- ✓ (Bernard shouted excitedly, Shouted Bernard excitedly), "We made it! The popcorn's been sold out!"
- ✓ (She said, Said she), "I think you guys can help little Bernard with your wonderful idea."
- ✓ "Thank you," (he said, said he), "I wouldn't have done this without you."

Rules regarding the basic structure of a dialogue tag:

- ✓ _____
- ✓ _____
- ✓ _____

● Group Exploration: Analysis of Dialogues in *Little Women*

- ✓ Leader and technician: _____
- ✓ Presenter: _____
- ✓ Form analyzer: _____
- ✓ Function analyzer: _____

Our Findings:

Sentence Pattern	Examples (at least 5 for each pattern)	Function

(Enough space will be provided in actual use)

● **Individual Work: Expanding Dialogue Tag**

Based on the video, please polish the dialogue tag, as underlined in the sentence below, by using the sentence patterns you've just learned.

“Please, no! I can’t lose you too,” said Hiro.

(1) “Please, no! I can’t lose you too,” said Hiro _____.

(use **ADV.** to describe manner of speech)

(2) “Please, no! I can’t lose you too,” said Hiro _____.

(use **“in a/sb’s ... tone/voice/way/manner”** to describe tone of speech)

(3) “Please, no! I can’t lose you too,” said Hiro _____.

(use **“with + NOUN PHRASE”** to describe Hiro’s voice or facial expression)

(4) “Please, no! I can’t lose you too,” said Hiro _____.

(use **V-ing** to describe accompanying actions or feelings)

(5) “Please, no! I can’t lose you too,” said Hiro _____.

(use **ADJ.** to describe Hiro’s feelings)

(6) “Please, no! I can’t lose you too,” said Hiro _____.

Appendix III: Concordance Samples

so,' said Amy consolingly. 'Serves me right for trying to be fine. I wish I'
od,' said Amy critically. 'I knew it! I knew it! Oh, my Jo, I am
em,' said Amy decidedly. 'Mother didn't say anything about our money, and
do,' said Amy decidedly. 'Shall I rush into town and demand one?' asked Jo,
ak,' said Amy despairingly. Poor Jo looked abashed, and silently chafed the
he said, as he shook hands, and said it in a way that I could
he said, as I stopped and stared like a goose, 'you peep at me, I
iah said, as she hung out of the upper window to watch them. 'Now, Jo
Jo said, as she slipped away to her bed. She wondered what the business w
she said, as she slowly replaced the shining rosary and shut the jewel cases c
icy,' said Jo, anxious to correct the Professor's mistake. 'Good! Then I shall r
ow,' said Jo, always ready with a plan. 'Bless me! How old I shall be,
de,' said Beth, laughing as she went into the study where Jo sat writing. 'Wh
ter,' said Beth, laying her cold hands on her hot forehead and trying to look
ys,' said Amy, in a tone of solemn conviction, which would have convulsed tl
ief,' said Amy in her most grown-up tone. 'What's the name?' asked Beth,
rd,' said Amy in her most energetic tone. 'What delightful enthusiasm!' And
es!' said Meg, who could remember better times. 'You said the other day yo
on,' said Meg, who firmly believed that this book was the most remarkable r
elf,' said Meg, who presided and felt quite matronly behind the teapot. So a
ce,' said Meg, who was a little sentimental. 'What do you know about his ey
ily,' said Meg, who was out of sorts. 'We go grubbing along day after day,
so,' said Aunt March, with a decided nod to Aunt Carrol. 416 Little Women
ay,' said Aunt March, with an approving; pat on the head, as Amy picked up
efore said, with more energy than discretion. While the cooking mania laste
e and said with pleased surprise, 'Why, little mother, how gay we are tonigh
Beth said, with recovered serenity, 'You'll tell them this when we go home: