SVETIMŲJŲ KALBŲ STUDIJOS / STUDIES OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Using Concordances as Supplementary Materials in Teaching Grammar

Huseyin Uysal, Talat Bulut, Youssef Al Hosein

Abstract. In many educational institutions in Turkey, including universities, state schools, and private schools, a common problem in grammar teaching is the lack of authenticity due to the wide use of rule-based teaching. Consequently, some teachers prefer to adopt a deductive teaching approach with more explanation for grammar structures and less use of examples from various contexts. This case may sometimes end up with a traditional English lesson with mechanical exercises, as students call it, "Ali goes to cinema" kind of exercises, and it is not uncommon for students to complain about the frequency of encountering the same examples given on certain grammar topics, examples that often fail to be attuned with current real life situations, which obviously limits their productive skills by its failure to stimulate their ability to think of similar simple sentences. In order to overcome this, we propose a technique based on Data-Driven Language Learning with particular regard to corpus linguistics, and we consider the learner as research workers constructing their language themselves, and learning with less language description, hence they are expected to succeed in integrating meaning and form more. In this respect, the purpose of this article is to provide some insight into modern practices of teaching English language, and specifically to show a model lesson for grammar teaching from a critical perspective towards currently used English grammar books and textbooks. It will provide a brief and practical introduction to easily accessible concordances which can be utilized to assign the learner a constructive role by supplying him/her with input from real-life contexts, while touching on the principle of awareness with a few suggestions by using our data in our classes. It will also provide a brief outline of how online and offline programs can be easily adapted for grammar teaching and to generate authentic in-class materials.

Key words: concordance, grammar teaching, DDL, CALL, corpus, real-life context, modern facilities.

Introduction

In our classes, we have always enjoyed it more when students are actively involved in the lesson, whatever the point of teaching is. Of course, as teachers our focus is not only enjoyment, but the fact that students generally seem better able to learn things that they are active participants in. For this reason and for many others, we will try to illustrate teaching in an environment where learners construct what they are learning themselves; analyzing, synthesizing, and researching, while at the same time shunning the naivety of oversimplifying the actual context of the language classroom.

Out of the four skills, teaching grammar can be the easiest, or sometimes the hardest, but rarely in between. It is often easy to compute a rule just like a simple equation. But sometimes the existing schema of the learners is too fixed to even budge and integrate a hard-to-grasp rule, however hard one tries, and however reasonable the rule seems for the teacher. We think of grammar more as a fascinating system that underlies our competence for language. Leaving aside the debate whether it is hard-wired in the brain or not, in our case our university students, who are between 18-20 and studying at English Preparation School, are at upper-intermediate level and have little access to what may remain of universal grammar in their minds, so for them grammar acts like a unitary device helping a dazzled mind combine a plethora of jigsaw puzzle pieces hard-wired in the brain.

Not really knowing where the borders of the four skills intersect, for the purposes of this article we will be dealing with grammar alone. In the course book we use in our classes, New English File, the grammar point being taught is given in a meaningful context with attention paid to function, meaning, and form sequentially. First, a passage and/or a picture, as well as small activities, are combined with what was learned previously in order to lay out the background for the grammar point and familiarize learners with the function and meaning of what they are about to learn. Only then is the grammar point explicitly given. This method is so meaningful and natural that we do not see any need to question the mentality and effectiveness of such an approach. After all, as human beings we like to consider stuff in meaningful contexts, rather than discretely, and the approach used helps learners deal with the idea behind the point being taught in order to easily consume it. What we want to direct attention to is the point where the integration of function, meaning and form is made. In our course books, after the context is provided, students are directed to the end of the book where they can see the rules and practice them through exercises. Generally, at this point we adopt an explicit approach and illustrate the rules with practice items, usually on the board, and carry on with the exercises in the grammar section. It is our opinion that there is something missing here. Although the context is given and students get familiar with the meaning and function of the point, they are not active enough when it comes to elaborating the rules. In our classes, most often

students are at a loss in the integration stage of meaning and form. Some have problems in acquiring a new rule, some in changing a previous misconception, and some simply need more time and examples to properly digest what they have just been taught. This is natural, but we have failed to notice the real reason as a teacher. We cannot know exactly what is going on in the minds of learners, but we can adjust our techniques to include some possible solutions which we will try to do in this article.

Literature Review

All approaches to language instruction have incorporated an idea of teaching grammar, either in an explicit or implicit manner. Some of these ideas of teaching grammar have crystallized into a systematic approach such as the most-commonly-known PPP model (Present-Practice-Produce) and Harmer's (1998) ESA model (Engage-Study-Activate). Krashen's Comprehensible Input Hypothesis affected ELT for good, providing a framework for shaping approaches to teaching grammar. Batstone and Ellis (2009) propose certain principles that should guide any teaching process organized in any approach. Those are the given-to-new principle, the principle of awareness, and the real-operating conditions principle. The first emphasizes the importance of linking the new meaning/function of a certain grammatical construct to already known meanings/ functions. This principle refers to the idea of making connections between what is already known by the learner, and what is to be taught. The stress of this principle is primarily on introducing a point of grammar by first touching on the relevant knowledge of the learners. The second is the principle of awareness, which concerns the students' awareness of the point of focus explicitly, so it involves the explicit teaching of grammar. Batstone and Ellis (2009) justify this principle by pointing out that people learn more about the things they attend to, and less about the things that they do not. The activities which are argued to foster learner attention include exercises, questions, etc. about the topics which turn the learners' attention to form and meaning mappings. The last principle is the real-operating conditions principle. Unlike the two principles summarized above, the focus of this principle is on communicativeness in the process of teaching grammar. There are basically two ways to look at grammar; one as the object, and the other as a tool for facilitating the exchange of meaning. The first two principles take grammar as the object of lesson, focusing on its explicitness. The real-operating principle, on the other hand, emphasizes studying grammar as a tool for communication and conveying speaker meaning, which is the case in everyday authentic language use. By introducing activities which feature learners' active use of the form in a communicative way, their attention to form is thought to increase along with the likelihood of monitoring their own language use, as well as being monitored by their peers and the teacher. Thus, by engaging in a communicative activity which incorporates the grammar point to be used, learners will develop an explicit conscious representation of the form.

In this article, we focus on the second one of these principles, the principle of awareness, which we consider to be inadequately developed. We believe in teaching grammar inductively, so that the learner constructs the rules or structures for himself/herself, but we also believe this should be done systematically and that the learner should be aware of the process of learning, thus there should be some components of deduction present.

A recent and efficient technique to foster the learners' awareness, as well as encourage them to construct their own rules, is proposed under the framework of data-driven learning (DDL). DDL is an approach in which the language learners are also research workers whose learning is driven by access to linguistic data (Johns, 1991). Originally, this framework proposes that the language learner will discover and analyze rules and patterns from authentic data, rather than being given language descriptions by the teacher (Gavioli, 1997, 2001; Johns, 1988). However, rather than taking this approach and extending it to all teaching experiences, it can be applied as a supplementary technique, which we believe would take into better account the limitations of time and the structure of syllabi. Johns supports the idea of using concordances in the classroom which provide authentic examples of language use as regards any teaching point that the teacher wants to focus on (Johns, 1986, 1988, 1991). He devised a concordance program CONTEXTS (Johns, 1997) which teachers, as well as students, can use to access concordances. Nowadays, there are many websites as well as programs that allow access to a large number of corpuses such as BNC and Brown.

The Scope of the Issue

As we have illustrated in the introduction, we have noticed that learners need more than just explanations of rules and some exercises to cope with the process of integrating a meaning, function, and form trio. They need structured input tailored to their needs from which they can induce and construct the rules for themselves and create meaning, function, and form mappings. This can be done through concordances. We will attempt to illustrate how.

Provided Suggestions in the Literature

Data-driven language learning (DDL) is an extension of what came to be known as Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). In the latter, the language classroom tries to make the best benefit of computer technology. In DDL, the language learner is like a researcher trying to investigate the pattern behind the uses of certain structures or words, just as Cobb (1999) places the theoretical philosophy of such an approach under the rubric "learner as linguist". In DDL, the techniques of corpus linguistics are utilized. A concordance program, or a website designed as such a program, enables the teacher/learner to access different usage instances of various items of interest. Basically, the program is downloaded via Internet and installed on a computer. A text sample is loaded into the program and everything is ready to be used. Alternatively, there are websites which provide access to large corpuses and one can search for any keyword on these sites by entering certain parameters. The target item, which can be a word, prefix, suffix or phrase, is entered into the search box and the search key is hit. Magically, all instances of the key words are listed with the key item highlighted in

between, allowing the user to see the contexts in which the key expression was used. The point is to illustrate the context of use, which is invaluable in language learning in order to convey the meaning, collocation and other relationships between the structures that are intended to be learned. Concordances are an excellent tool for providing such context. However, the question is how to implement this strategy in the language classroom. We will outline a few proposals that have already been made.

First, we want to offer an example of how we used concordances by searching for key expressions in a text that we loaded into a program installed on our laptops.

For instance, if the target item is a preposition, in this case *on*, the concordance user produces an output as in Figure 1.

1	Motorists from the South-East can also reach Somerset	ON	the M3 and A303.
2	The prices given are a guide line for the reader and are normally based	ON	the cost of one person sharing a double or twin bedded room with breakfast included (a single guest should expect to pay more).
3	Your travel agent or insurance broker can advise you further	ON	this.
4	We will find it very helpful to receive comments from the public about establishments listed in this publication and suggestions	ON	how to improve the brochure.
5	Weston- s Mare turning); Bridgwater (Watsons Lane); Burnham-	ON	-Sea (Pier St car park and Sea View Rd); Cheddar (Cliff St car park); Highbridge (Bank St car park); Nether Stowey (Castle St); North Petherton (High St).
6	Majority of toilets are locked and require a RADAR key -- available from Social Service departments or may be purchased from Burnham-	ON	-Sea or Cheddar Tourist Information Centres.

Figure 1. Concordance Showing Instances of *on*

As we can see, the use of the preposition "on" is displayed in context, with some words to the left and some to the right. When this information is properly utilized from a teaching perspective, it is possible to extract the rule and rationale behind the use of "on". The possibility of coming up with the rules inductively is not only restricted to teachers, but is equally available for students. Of course, the raw material of such a corpus should be worked on before bringing it into class, which we will focus on in the limitations section below.

Figure 2 shows another example for suitable usage of concordances in the classroom as proposed by Cobb (2010).

ABLE (76) sentence examples in corpus_graded_1k.txt   LDOCE Dictionary for *ABLE*

1	But he had always been	ABLE	to talk to them.
2	So I was	ABLE	to study the book for a good long time.
3	You will be	ABLE	to see more clearly with these.'
4	At the moment I am fighting against fear, but	ABLE	to fight any more !

Figure 2. An Example Concordance Illustrating the Uses of *able*

In the concordance window, sentences with "able" are shown in their contexts. Here the input is more orderly than the one shown in Figure 1, as the "noise", such as unrelated sentence pieces, and some unnecessary shorthand, are left out and a complete sentence with the keyword is given. So how can this set of information help learners to integrate meaning, function, and form? The answer to this question is simple according to Cobb (2010), who says that "a corpus gives learners access to pattern information that they cannot get in any other way." As suggested by N. Ellis (2002), the "power law" of accumulation necessitates that the learner incrementally access input that builds up to form a glacier of competence, which can be best provided by concordances within the best available time frame. The diverse contexts in which a certain structure, word, phrase, or affix is used are illustrated quite effectively via a concordance.

There are many techniques described in literature and websites that try to achieve the best result in using concordances in language teaching. Websites such as *www.lextutor.ca* provide activities, worksheets as well as online material to make the best use of this technique. However, we do not aspire to implement all aspects of DDL because of time and technology limitations, but rather adopt a partial perspective in that matter. We believe that using concordances to create activity worksheets, concurrent with the explicit teaching of rules in our classes, may help our students build more robust links between function, meaning and form, and that these activities will give them sufficient opportunities to search for, find out, and in the process, construct, the target structure efficiently and in a relatively short time.

Possible Implementations in the Classroom

In Appendix I, there is a sample activity worksheet we prepared that can be used as a supplementary activity while teaching "anything" and "nothing". In Unit 8A of the NEF Pre-Intermediate Course book, the grammar point is the uses of *something, anything,* and *nothing*. As usual, the course book introduces the topic through a context that provides a link between function and form. The context is weekends and people who like or dislike weekends talking about the things they do on weekends by using some-, any- and no- expressions with -body and -thing, and -where endings. After being introduced to the meaning and function, learners are referred to the back of the book to explicitly study the point of focus. Again as usual, the rules are given with a few examples and learners are then directly instructed to proceed with exercises. Normally, in this phase we explain the rules in more depth on the board by giving more examples and then go to the exercise part. But as we mentioned before, the integration process presents some difficulties; that is, learners generally have problems digesting the structure, possibly because they have questions in their minds and it may take time and more exercises to answer those questions, time which is usually not there when needed, especially in crowded classes such as ours. Consequently, we believe that including some concordance activities at this stage would be extremely beneficial. We have already done this in our own classrooms by accessing the webpage *www.lextutor.ca*, opening the concordance page, entering some parameters such as the keywords, *anything* and *nothing,* and the corpus we wished to use (written BNC). The website then listed all the instances of these expressions, out of which we selected a handful and copied them to a Word document. Next, we prepared two sets of activities; one finding the rule about the topic, another for practicing with the target items by filling in gaps as can be seen in Appendix I.

The beauty of the whole thing is the naturalness and richness of the data. It is natural because it is not drawn from a grammar book based on the intuitions of a single person, but

rather from the collective data of native speaker language production. It is rich because one can see many uses of the target items in many different contexts and pick out the ones that one wishes to focus on. Usually some tailoring of the data is required such as cutting out some portions of sentences, and selecting only grammatically correct sentences because native speaker production does not always mean pure grammar. After trimming the data in these respects, it is possible to provide a systematic and comprehensible set of input from which the learners may derive the rule through induction and self-exploration, hence the constructivist nature of the technique.

The second implementation we propose is about the uses of *neither/so + auxiliary* in sentences expressing parallelism between events or states. The point is handled in Unit 8D of the same book. The activity we prepared is given demonstrated in Appendix II. Similar to the first implementation, a concordance list is prepared to give a comparison of the uses. One rule completion activity and one structure analysis activity are added to the concordance worksheet.

The last implementation aims to familiarize learners with different uses of *to* + infinitive. This is illustrated in Appendix III. In the same course book, Unit 5A focuses on the use of *to* with certain verbs and adjectives, and on its use to express purpose. Similar to the points we made above, we think the course book does not provide a sufficient set of examples for students to construct the rules and functions of the target item. Once again we designed a concordance activity by taking the same steps as explained above. This time, we ask learners to study the sentences and work out the functions of *to,* used with some adjectives, verbs, or as a purpose marker.

Limitations of Concordances

As we hinted above, as much as this technique has merits that make it worth taking pains to implement the technique, concordances have some drawbacks of their own. First, a concordance can be hard to prepare on the part of the teacher, and even harder for the learner. For that reason we did not extend the use of concordances outside of the classroom in this article, as their usage may become complicated within a wider context. To use concordances, a teacher should be able to use a computer program or a website and be able to set the parameters suited to his/her teaching group. In actuality we have found this to be a rather simple process, especially once one has become acclimated to using it. However, the job is not finished when the teacher simply accesses the data. The data needs to be processed before it is brought into the class. It needs to be copied from the program or website onto a Word document and the corresponding exercises have to be written. Another setback concerns the nature of concordances. They may not be suitable for certain grammar points. For example, it would be hard to provide a concordance worksheet to compare the uses of the future tense in *going to* and *will*. It may also be hard to find instances in which the spontaneity of *will,* and the planned nature of *going to,* are highlighted. In such cases it may be more efficient and less time-consuming to come up with contrived examples.

Conclusions

In this article, we tried to address the issue of grammar teaching and integration of function, meaning, and form by the learner. In our course book, as in many others, a context is provided before each grammar point to familiarize the learner with the target item before explicitly focusing on it. Afterwards, the point is covered quickly with generally inadequate examples which are neither quantitatively, nor qualitatively, sufficient for learners to internalize the rules. Here we emphasize the time that the learner takes to analyze the instances of the target structure and construct the point himself/herself. Concordances are probably best suited for this end, as they have the potential to show the pattern of a certain structure. When prepared appropriately by the teacher, concordances can serve as good supplementary material in teaching grammar due to their natural and rich quality. They are natural as they provide authentic examples of language use by native speakers, and they are rich as they illustrate various uses of a certain structure or item.

Regardless of the weaknesses, in terms of hardships involved in preparation and limited extent of use, concordances are proving to be a constructive tool to make use of in the language teaching classroom.

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Huseyin Uysal, Talat Bulut, Youssef Al Hosein

Konkordancijų kaip papildomos medžiagos naudojimas mokant gramatikos

Santrauka

Daugelyje Turkijos mokymo įstaigų, įskaitant universitetus, valstybines ir privačias bendrojo lavinimo mokyklas, mokant gramatikos susiduriama su autentiškumo trūkumo problema, nes dažniausiai mokoma tik taisyklių. Kai kurie mokytojai ir dėstytojai mielai taiko dedukcinį mokymo metodą, aiškindami gramatikos struktūras, mažiau pasitelkdami įvairių kontekstų pavyzdžių. Taip pamoka tampa tradicine anglų kalbos pamoka, kurioje gausu mechaniškai atliekamų pratimų, studentų vadinamų „Aš einu į kiną" tipo pratimais. Dažnu atveju studentai skundžiasi, kad pratimai visada tokie patys, nesusiję su realiomis gyvenimo situacijomis, tai akivaizdžiai riboja studentų produktyvumo įgūdžius ir neskatina gebėjimo patiems sugalvoti sakinių pavyzdžių. Siekdami įveikti šią problemą, siūlome *Data-Driven Language Learning* metodą akcentuodami tekstynų lingvistiką (*corpus linguistics*). Mes laikome, kad studentai yra mokymosi proceso dalyviai, kurie mokosi kalbos patys ją konstruodami, o ne kalbėdami apie ją. Integruojant reikšmę ir formą, galima tikėtis didesnės sėkmės. Šio straipsnio tikslas – pateikti tam tikrų šiuolaikinės kalbos mokymo praktikos įžvalgų, parodant pavyzdinės gramatikos mokymo pamokos modelį ir kritiškai žvelgiant į dabar naudojamus anglų kalbos ir gramatikos vadovėlius. Straipsnyje trumpai ir praktiškai supažindinama su lengvai prieinamais konkordansais, kurias galima naudoti paskiriant studentui konstruktyvinį vaidmenį ir nurodant jam realių situacijų kontekstus, tuo pačiu įtraukiant jo paties suvokimo principą bei papildant jį dėstytojo medžiaga. Straipsnyje taip pat bus trumpai apžvelgiama, kaip lengvai pritaikyti internetines ir vadovėlines programas gramatikai mokyti ir generuoti autentišką medžiagą darbui klasėje ir auditorijoje.

About the authors

Huseyin Uysal, English language lecturer, Hasan Kalyoncu University, Turkey.
Research interests: cognitive semantics, language development in children, conceptual development.
Address: Hasan Kalyoncu Universitesi, Yabanci Diller Yuksekokulu, Havalimani yolu uzeri 8. km, Sahinbey, Gaziantep, Turkey.
E-mail: huysal9@gmail.com

Talat Bulut, PhD student in Cognitive Neuroscience, National Central University, Taiwan (R.O.C.).
Research interests: neural correlates of sentence processing, syntactic processing, first/second language processing.
Address: National Central University, College of Science, Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience, No.300, Jhongda Rd., Jhongli City, Taoyuan County 32001, Taiwan (R.O.C.).
E-mail: buluttalat@gmail.com

Youssef Al Hosein, Assistant Professor, English Language Teaching Department, Hasan Kalyoncu University, Turkey.
Research interests: foreign language acquisition, language structure teaching, translation and language teaching, real life context in language acquisition.
Address: Hasan Kalyoncu Universitesi, Egitim Fakultesi, Ingiliz Dili ve Egitimi Bölümü, Havalimani yolu uzeri 8. km, Sahinbey, Gaziantep, Turkey.
E-mail: youssef.alhosein@hku.edu.tr

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1

Part I. Read the sentences below, and fill in the blanks in the rules with *nothing* or *anything*:

a. We use _____ with negative sentences and the meaning is negative.
b. We use _____ with positive sentences, but the meaning is negative.
c. _____ also means "everything" in positive sentences.

1) …letter again and again. "That's wonderful news," he said. "NOTHING can stop us now!" The next day, when Edward came down.
2) …the cabin boy. "But nothing, Tom!" replied Pugwash sternly. "NOTHING to do with you that is. This is man's work. Run along…
3) …taken to be true. It's the currency of living. There may be NOTHING behind it, but it doesn't make any difference so long…
4) …would happen next. The overheard conversation had conveyed NOTHING useful to her. The princes had not been mentioned an…
5) …grace by the easy means of a self-chosen deprivation did NOTHINGto mitigate the deepershame; some original wrong…
6) …I saw it in the paper, and I've never been so pleased about ANYTHING in all my life.
7) … Elisabeth never craved to remove items; to take away ANYTHING from The Tamarisks would be, she felt, to disfigure…
8) …upset him, and that was innovation; if the Vicar discovered ANYTHING new, on either thetheological or the social…
9) … "I will be arrested again. They can arrest me; they can do ANYTHING they want…
10) …service satellite for Europe. We won't actually make or do ANYTHING, but it will be really neat lying in the meadows…

Part II. Fill in the blanks with *nothing* or *anything*.
1. They asked me about my political views, but I don't know _____ about politics, at all.
2. There is _____ to worry about, said the doctor.
3. There was an accident yesterday, but fortunately _____ serious happened.
4. The teller said to the bank robber: "I'll do _____ you want. Just don't hurt me."
5. When the boss accused him, employee said that he didn't do _____ wrong.

APPENDIX 2

Part I. Look at the sentences and complete the rules with *so* or *neither*.
a. We use _____ to say that there is a negative thing in common between things or people.
b. We use _____ to say that there is a positive thing in common between things or people.

1) …Carnegey and Toni Besset dropped out of a rear door. SO did hostages Casey, Cleveland, and Mullen.
2) …The books of the school hold a memorial to her; and SO do the hearts of students and of teachers.
3) …The businessmen and racketeers also have a story. And SO do the prostitutes.
4) …Physical exercise raises the appestat. SO does cold weather. In moderate doses, alcohol narcotizes.
5) …first communion. No more. My mother was deeply religious. SO was my brother. He knelt down at his bed as long as he…
6)…It goes all watery. Look I'm not amused at all. Well NEITHER am I. na na na na na He said he wants butter. Yeah.
7) …fun with their families. Camp meals are no great problem. NEITHER are beds, thanks to air mattresses and sleeping bags…
8) …I didn't know which animal to choose and NEITHER did the robot. Hee-Haw and Hoo-Woo didn't understand.
9) …n't like doing this. Pardon? And I don't like this weather. NEITHER do I. It's terrible, isn't it? Sometimes it's colder…
10) …he's about two pound weakling! I wouldn't go that far. No.NEITHER would I. I noticed! That's right! Would she never go…

Part II. Underline the verbs or auxiliaries that the auxiliaries with *so* and *neither* refer to.
1) …Carnegey and Toni Besset dropped out of a rear door. SO did hostages Casey, Cleveland, and Mullen.
2) … I wouldn't go that far. No. NEITHER would I. I noticed! That's right!

APPENDIX 3

Read the sentences, and match the uses of *to/not to* with the sentences.

a. purpose   b. after some adjectives   c. after some verbs

1) …help colleges build dormitories. The education bill appears TO be temporarily stalled in the Rules Committee.
2) …a title like that, but I knew you'd like it". "Yes", he lied TO shorten the conversation, "I still have it…
3) …homes in case of disaster", he said. "Nobody really expects TO evacuate. I think everybody is agreed that we need to…
4) … well he put the video on you see of erm Queen. So I went inthere TO watch it. And I said to him last night "Is that…
5) …up to them, and to consider what further developments are necessary TO achieve adequate performance.
6) …where he had left them. He smiled to himself, and decided NOT TO mention them till Dolores did. It was too easy…
7) …"Tell me about Minerva, how she behaved, what she did TOplease you". "I'll tell you nothing. I don't ask you who…
8) …cab with his money. The victim was beaten when he attempted TO stop the bandit. He said the assailant, who was…
9) …him with odd, coy looks. Clearly she had been instructed NOT TO say a word. For some reasonthis ellipsis in the…
10) …chapters to of had one to about chapter seven were very easy TO understand, once you understand what they say…
11) …and cookies because alcoholics require a lot of sweets TO replace the sugar in their system. Mrs. Marr also has a...