**Surround**

**BNC at English-corpora.org**

In this task you will search the British National Corpus through the interface developed by Professor Mark Davies of Brigham Young University in the US. It is a more complex tool than SKELL and allows for much more sophisticated explorations of words and grammatical patterns.

1. First, we will study the frequency of the word ‘surround’ and its different forms.
2. Open the BNC website: <https://www.english-corpora.org/bnc/>.
3. Make sure that you are in the *Search* tab and that the function *List* is selected above the search box.
4. Enter the word ‘surround’ in the box and click on the *Find matching strings* button.
5. The next screen reports the frequency of the word ‘surround’. Click on the word and study the concordance lines. How many different forms of the word can you see?
6. In order to see all the forms of our target word, we need to modify our search. Lets’ go back to the *Search* tab again (at the top of the screen).
7. This time put the word ‘SURROUND’ spelled with capital letters in the box. Follow the same steps as before. Now you can study multiple forms of the target word. Which forms are most and least frequent? Click on the most frequent one and study its grammatical behavior in context. What preposition is it followed by?
8. Now, we will search for the prepositions with go together with the word ‘surrounded’.
9. In the previous analysis we saw that the word ‘surrounded’ (as past participle) is frequently followed by the proposition ‘by’. This wasn’t probably much of a surprise to you. But can our target word be followed by any other preposition? What does your intuition say?
10. Let’s check your intuition. Go back to the *Search* tab and this time choose the function *Collocates* from the list. Put the word ‘surrounded’ in the top box. Click on the [POS] button (POS stands for part of speech) next to the bottom box. Choose prep.ALL from the drop-down list. When you click on it, the tag ‘\_i\*’ should appear in the bottom box. Underneath, select number ‘1’ on the right (NOT on the left) of number ‘0’. Make sure that only this number stays green and all the other numbers are unselected. The quarry basically means that we are looking for all prepositions which appear immediately to the right of the word ‘surrounded’.
11. Now click on the *Find collocations* button. What other prepositions can follow our target verb? What are their frequencies? Have any of the findings surprised you?
12. Now study the concordance lines of the prepositions following the word ‘surrounded’ (by clicking on each preposition). Can you see any characteristic contexts for each of them.
13. Which of the prepositions and their characteristic contexts are worth teaching to students?
14. We can also compare the collocational bahaviour of two words.

Consider the following sentences. What are the missing prepositions?

* Many exotic plants filled the garden.
* A fancy iron wrought fence surrounded the garden.
  + The ambassador filled the garden \_\_\_\_ many exotic plants.
  + His wife surrounded the garden \_\_\_\_ a fancy iron wrought fence.
    - The garden was filled \_\_\_\_ many exotic plants.
    - The garden was surrounded \_\_\_\_ a fancy iron wrought fence.

1. Go back to the *Search* tab and this time choose the function *Compare* from the list.
2. Put the word ‘surround’ as Word 1 and the word ‘filled’ as Word 2. As before, chose a preposition as the collocate word in the position first to the right (see the detailed instructions above).
3. Click the *Compare words* button and study the results. Can you see the differences in the frequency of prepositions following the two verbs. Would you consider this oservation interesting for your students?
4. Finally, we will study the distribution of the word ‘surround’ across different registers.
5. Once more, go to the *Search* tab and this time choose the function *Chart* from the list.
6. Put the word ‘SURROUND’ in the box. Using capitals means that we are searching for a lemma and not its individual form.
7. Click the *See frequency by section* button and study the results. The graph presents the frequency of the word in different registers. In which register is the word least frequent? Why?
8. Now click on the *Academic* column heading.In which of the academic registers is the word most and least frequent?
9. Click on the bar in the medicine column to study the concordance lines. Study the examples. The way I see it, they can be split into two general kinds of context. Can you see what they are? What nouns collocate with the target verb in each context?

The tool offers many more functionalities and search options. If you want to learn about them, you are encouraged to play with the corpus and read the help files. When you press on the large white arrow at the top of the screen, you will get access to many other corpora using the same interface, including the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA).

©Agnieszka Leńko-Szymańska, Institute of Applied Linguistics, University of Warsaw