**Graduate Writing Center**

Notes to Using Corpora to Improve Grammar and Language in Academic Writing

**What is a corpus and how can it help my writing?**

* A corpus is a searchable database of electronic texts
* Accessing texts through a corpus can help you see how language is applied in different written contexts and what patterns emerge in these contexts

**Where do I begin?**

* MISUCP: the Michigan Corpus of Upper-Level Student Papers (http://micusp.elicorpora.info/)
  + Provides a large body of academic papers (all of which received an “A” grade)
* COCA: Corpus of Contemporary American English (http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/)
  + Allows you to examine common applications of a particular word
* Wordandphrase.info
  + Provides information about general usage of an academic word
  + Particularly useful for synonyms and collocations

**Exercise 1:**  Article Use

Is evidence a countable or uncountable noun?

Using COCA:

Type in evidences 🡪 add a period (without a space) 🡪 click ? beside POS LIST 🡪 select noun.ALL 🡪 select ACADEMIC 🡪 click SEARCH

**Exercise 2**: Verb Tense

Using COCA, search for the verbs that most frequently follow the phrase “the purpose of this study?” Then compare the results with those for “the purpose of this paper.” What is the difference? Why do you think there is a difference?

**Exercise 3:** Prepositions

What are the top two prepositions that appear with the noun “research”?

Using COCA:

Type in “research” 🡪 click ? beside COLLOCATES 🡪 decide where you’d like the collocation to occur 🡪 click ? beside POS LIST 🡪 selection prep.ALL 🡪 click SEARCH

Based on the results, what do you see as the difference between “research in” and “research on”?