

Guidelines for using corpus-based tool BACKBONE

The BACKBONE video corpus environment consists of a suite of **corpora** and a suite of **corpus tools**. The corpora consist of narratives by speakers from different walks of life including education, local politics, tourism, banking, environmental protection, sports and the media. The speakers were asked to talk freely about their professional lives, their projects and/or about social, cultural or political issues. Available corpora were produced with native speakers of English, French, German, Polish, Spanish and Turkish; a corpus called ‘English as a Lingua Franca’ including narratives in English by non-native speakers is also included. Speakers were given only short prompter questions to elicit natural, semi-formal monologic speech. The corpora include the video recordings of these narratives and time-aligned transcripts.

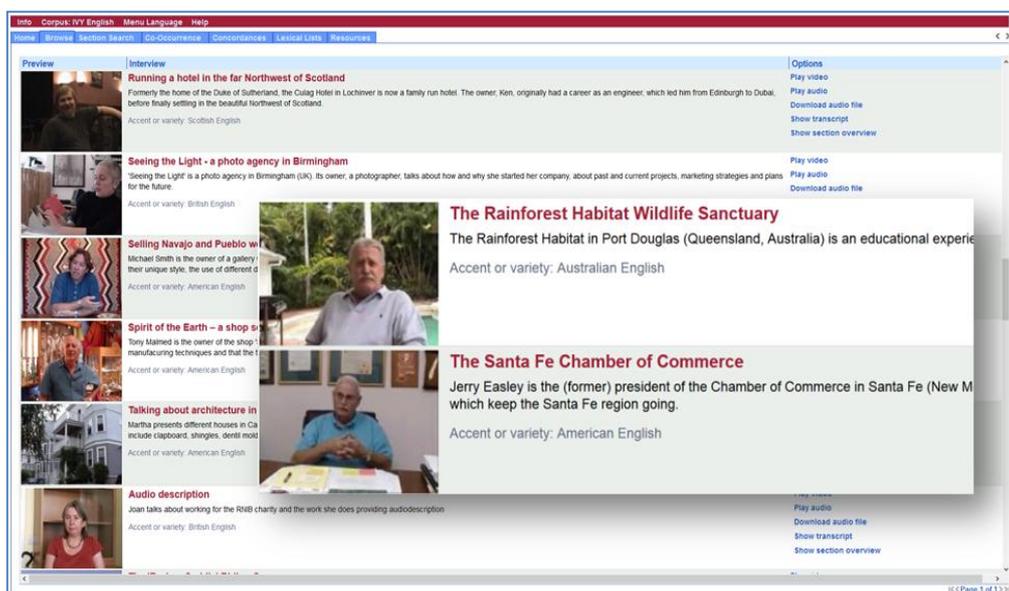


Fig.1: English BACKBONE corpus



Fig. 2: Spanish BACKBONE corpus

Individual interpreting practice in a corpus-based environment

The video content and transcripts, together with different levels of annotation and search functions, enable students to use video corpus environments such as BACKBONE in a variety of ways. They can:

- Select corpus content as source text for interpreting practice;
- Select corpus extracts as source text to focus on an individual aspect of interpreting such as source text comprehension, active listening, memorisation, note-taking, target text production;
- Explore the videos and transcripts in terms of their linguistic properties to study subject-related terminology and phraseology in the student's working languages;
- Select a corpus in the target language as a comparable corpus to inform the preparation of an interpreting assignment on a chosen topic.

In preparation of an interpreting assignment involving a speaker of American English, it would be useful for the student to retrieve several examples of speech with an American accent. Similarly, to prepare for an environment-related topic, students can retrieve all sections linked to this topic and explore how different speakers talk about the environment from different perspectives and in different contexts. This can be complemented by lexical searches to create concordances, lexical or co-occurrence lists. Whilst concordance options generate classic KWIC concordances centering on the search word, BACKBONE also offers a co-occurrence similar to Google searches in that it enables the retrieval of corpus sections in which specified keywords co-occur. Figure 5 below, for example, shows the results of a co-occurrence search focussing on *environment**, *water* and *provid**.

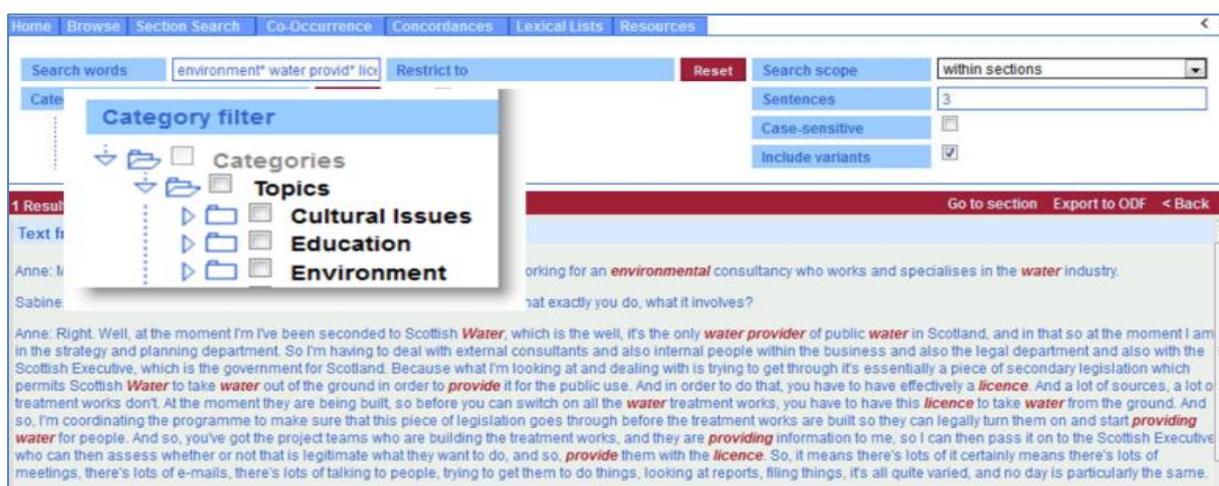


Fig. 5: Co-occurrence function in the BACKBONE corpus

To learn how to cope with specific interpreting challenges, students using BACKBONE can also retrieve relevant challenges (see Fig. 6). This can be linked with exercises asking students to explore the source of the problem in each case and then to reflect on appropriate interpreting strategies. The availability of a whole series of instances will enable students to see possible 'patterns' and make links between the source of a problem and appropriate strategies for its resolution.

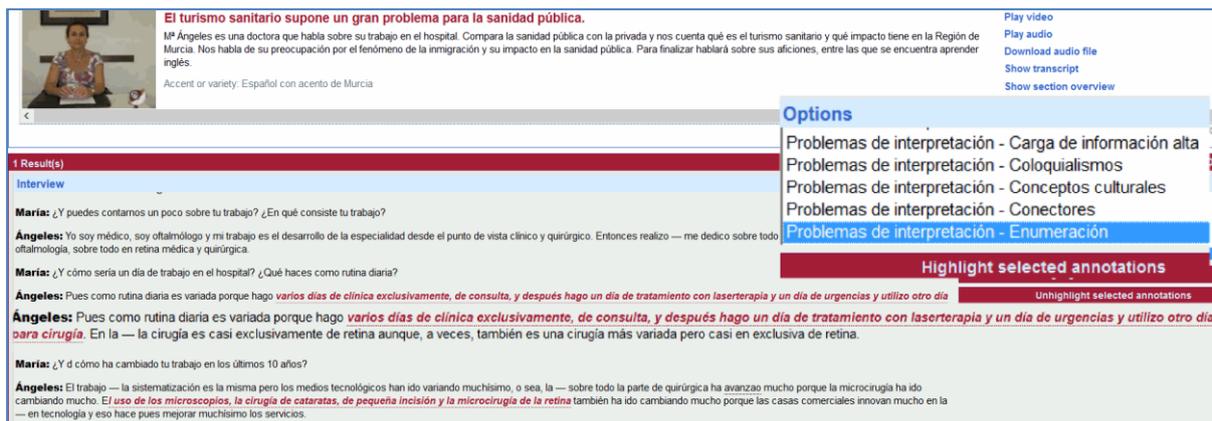


Fig. 6: Retrieving source-text related interpreting challenges in the Spanish BACKBONE corpus

The annotation of interpreting challenges can also be used by tutors as predictors for potential interpreting difficulties. They provide a strong basis for selecting suitable practice material and can serve as ‘benchmarks’ for analysing students’ interpreting performance.

The combination of video-based practice and text-based exploration makes for a rich learning environment combining options for situated and exploratory learning. Whilst the focus is on linguistic and transfer skills for interpreting, video-based environments also offers possibilities for practising interactional aspects, which are crucial for consecutive and dialogue interpreting, especially managing the chunks or turns to be interpreted or asking for repetition. In BACKBONE, students can choose between playing an entire video clip and pausing it themselves at appropriate points (self-spaced consecutive interpreting), and playing the video clip in pre-defined sections, as shown in Fig. 7 below. Students can also replay any part of a video clip. However, this should be embedded in exercises encouraging students to explore when it is appropriate to ask for repetition and how to do this effectively.

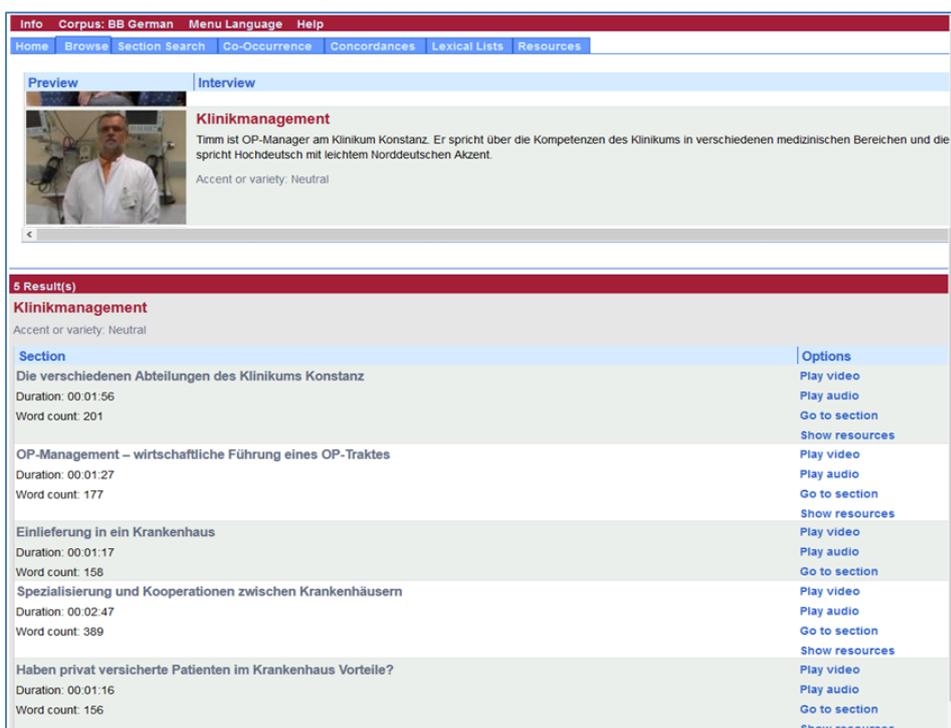


Fig. 7: Section overview of video clip showing section title, duration and word count along with options to play the audio or video of the section



The approach adopted in BACKBONE can be used as a model for the further expansion and customisation of the available practice content. The annotated materials together with the multiple browse and search functions offer a rich source for interpreting practice. The 'do it yourself', open source and open access approach of BACKBONE has made it possible to exploit the BACKBONE tools and content for the creation of source texts for other Virtual Learning Environments.