

Online Tutoring and Collocations

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Abstract

At our institute, we are currently developing an online tutoring tool for French, consisting of a spelling, grammar and lexical checker. This application integrates information usually found in dictionaries and grammars that can adjust itself to the user's input and needs like other spelling and grammar checkers. Unlike these checkers, however, this tool does not necessarily correct every mistake found in the text, because automatic correction is too difficult for many items. It essentially identifies words or patterns which could contain errors. It is then up to the student, assisted by very specific contextual feedback, to reread his text and spot errors.

The application also includes a lexical checker, more specifically aimed at collocations. On the one hand, students often fail to use appropriate collocations because they are unfamiliar with typical word combinations. On the other hand, they often use incorrect collocations (ex. *demander une question, regagner des forces, une entreprise profitable*).

The collocation tool suggests relevant combinations for nouns, classified according to a 'light' version of Mel'čuk's lexical functions. It also scans submitted texts to find odd combinations like those mentioned above and to suggest alternatives.