Chapter 4

Analyses and Discussion

The observation tasks make it easier for students to acquaint themselves with the real uses of verbs in an effective way. Instead of being “taught” and being forced to memorize the usages, they “realized” and created their own knowledge.

In this chapter, usages of the three verbs will be systematically analyzed. The reason why certain teaching methods were adopted in the previous chapter will also be explained here.

4.1 See

The concordance lines were checked again, and key words were highlighted with boldface fonts for the benefit of analyses.

Table 4.1: The concordance lines of “see” (1)

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>She saw <strong>a hideous face</strong> at the window and screamed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>They saw <strong>a big white animal</strong> like a rabbit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Suddenly I saw <strong>the hidden waterfall</strong> at last.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>As he neared the farm, he saw <strong>a police car</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>When I saw <strong>the rat</strong>, I was horrified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Then I saw <strong>a gun</strong> under the table so I knew that something</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
was wrong.

7. Would she know you if she saw you on the street?
8. If you see garbage in the corridor, pick it up.
9. Dad would go nuts if he saw bruises on me.
10. They saw a big flash and a huge ball of fire.

Table 4.2 The concordance lines of “see” (2)

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I saw a head-on collision between two airplanes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>He saw the shooting and memorized the number of the assassin's car.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Did you see the accident?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to COBUILD ON CD-ROM, when you “see” something, you are “aware of it through your eyes”, or you “notice” it. That is, you may not intend to see it; you are just an experiencer.

In these examples, the see-ers did not see something intentionally, but accidentally. The teacher can especially emphasize the three examples in Table 4.2, where unpredictable incidents were described clearly and the real use of “see” might thus be more comprehensible to the learners.

1. I saw a head-on collision between two airplanes.

In this sentence, “a head-on collision between two airplanes” only could be seen when someone happened to be around and witnessed the accident on the spot; he didn’t
expect to see the collision and might be frightened by it.

2. He saw the shooting and memorized the number of the assassin's car.

In Line 2, the witness saw the shooting unexpectedly; he was so smart that he even memorized the number of the assassin's car under such a appalling circumstance. The incident was described so vividly in the sentence, and students can easily visualize the situation where someone “saw” an incident like this.

In some concordance lines, although the reason of using “see” might not be so obvious, hints could still be discovered by observing other parts in these concordance lines. Take concordance line No.5 in Table 4.1 for example.

5. When I saw the rat, I was horrified.

The see-er was horrified after seeing the rat. It is very possible that he is afraid of rats, so when a rat suddenly appeared in front of him, a glimpse at it could just make him scared to death. The unexpectedness of this event could be further explained by the fact that it would be strange if the see-er purposely went and saw something horrible to scare himself.

In class, the concordance lines were divided into two groups for some pedagogical reason. The first ten examples in Table 4.1 contain concrete objects that are easier to recognize, while the three sentences in Table 4.2 contain some “events” such as a head-on collision, the shooting, and the accident, which might be easily
thought of as abstract concepts. However, if the students were asked to think deeper, they would understand that when someone says he saw an accident, there must be something concrete which caught his eyes: a broken car, police officers, or even injured people. Based on the finding, the teacher may thereby emphasize the importance of perception when teaching the usage of “see.”

Besides, judging from what we have discussed, “see something” is often a result that emphasizes “having or having not noticed something,” which is similar in meaning to “kandao (看到)” in Mandarin – the teacher may inform the students of this if they are still confused. This is also the purpose of the activity in the previous chapter, where we asked students to picture the event of each sentence in their mind. Through that activity, students could understand the real meaning of “seeing” something or someone.

Besides, because “see” is a stative verb which indicates “a state”, the progressive aspect is used in none of these concordance lines. However, we might as well discuss this later, when “watch” is introduced.

4.2 Watch

Again, we check the concordance lines of “watch,” and highlight the key words with boldface fonts for the benefit of instruction.
According to COBUILD ON CD-ROM, “When you watch something, you pay attention to it using your eyes because you are interested in what it is doing, or in what may happen.”, which clearly explains most usages of “watch” above.

We *watch* something when we care about its movement or condition.

3. *I don't often watch television, except for the news.*
4. Children stay at home and watch cartoons on TV.

Students may have already been familiar with the usage of “watch TV”, but they may not know that we use “watch” because we care about what happens on the TV screen; we enjoy the shows and pay close attention to what is going on during the program.

These two examples also show the fact that the objects to be watched are not necessarily concrete. When we watch TV, we are not watching the TV set; rather, it is the program shown on the TV screen that we really care about.

5. Those people left home early to watch the baseball game in the stadium.

Then in Line 5, we watch the baseball game because we care about what may happen, and we want to know what is going on throughout the game. We do not just take a glance at it and go away.

6. 2000 people went out and watched today's parade.

In Line 6, “parade” is obviously something which requires you to pay attention to. You are interested in the beautiful floats which were professionally built, and the intricate animation which reminded you of your childhood memory.

7. They watched the sunset behind the distant valley.

8. She watched the frantic flow of cars and buses along the street.

9. I sat in the garden and watched the passing cars.

The “sunset” in Line 7, the “frantic flow of cars and buses” in Line 8 and “the passing
“cars” in Line 9 all require your attention to make the action of “watch” possible.

10. I want you to watch my hand movements.

In this example, it is obvious that the “hand movements” rather than just the “hand” were watched.

While some verb uses rely heavily on the entities after the verbs, we also need to pay attention to other elements in sentences where the states of entities are not so clear. For example,

1. She sat on her bed and watched the clock for a few minutes.

2. He got up and watched her for a long time.

In Line 1, the clock was watched because for some reason, the watcher spent “a few minutes” on it. Since the clock was paid attention to for a period of time, it was watched instead of looked at or seen. In Line 2, “watch” is used also because of the action lasted “for a long time.” In these two sentences, we got clues from prepositional phrases (for a few minutes, for a long time) which indicate the duration of the actions.

11. I noticed that everyone was watching me with rapt attention.

12. A man was watching me very intensely.

13. Watch them carefully as they finish cooking because they can burn easily.

For similar reasons, in Lines 11, 12 and 13, “watch” was used based on the clues from
prepositional phrases (“with rapt attention”) or adverbs (“intensely”, “carefully”).

These clues reveal either the intensity or the duration of the actions.

Judging from what we have discussed above, the action of “watch” usually takes more attention and more time. Its meaning is thus similar to “guankan (觀看)” in Mandarin – the teacher may inform the students of this if they are still confused.

Last but not least, the presentation of Lines 11-13 reveals some grammatical information about “watch.” As we can see, not only progressive aspects but imperative mood are allowed. These facts should be directly shown to the students to benefit the instruction. The efficiency of data-driven learning is clearly demonstrated in this case.

There will be a comparison between “see” and “watch” in the last section of this chapter.

4.3 look at

The concordance lines of “look at” were checked again, and key words were highlighted with boldface fonts for the benefit of instruction.
Table 4.4: The concordance lines of “look at”

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Just sit down and look at yourself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I raised my eyes to look at her in the mirror.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>He looked at Michael and laughed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Alan looked at him and said calmly, “I don't believe you.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Can I come and look at your house?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Come and look at the washing machine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>She is looking at the papers around her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>He turned it over to look at the back.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Bob looked at the new TV set and smiled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>He was looking at me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Yes, I am looking at your paintings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Look at that dog! He's so cute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>&quot;Oh, yes. Just look at that picture.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>She called her son: look at this photo!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Stephen, come and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to COBUILD ON CD-ROM, “When you look at something, you direct your eyes towards it.” It is the “line of sight” which really matters when we look at something. Besides, when we look at something, we focus our attention on it but it is not important whether we see anything or not. According to Levin (1993), “One can look at something without seeing it.”

In the concordance lines above, we can easily figure out the fact that “line of
“sight” does play a crucial role when we look at something. For example,

2. *I raised my eyes to look at her in the mirror.*

in Line 2, the person “raised eyes” to look at someone, which is a good example to show the essential concept of “look at.” Through the example, we saw something indispensable in the process of looking at: the person did not look at the woman in the mirror until he directed his eyes towards it.

Besides, we usually use “look at” when the thing we look at doesn’t move, so it is acceptable to say “look at the picture” but not “look at the movies.” In Lines 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 13, and 14, all the entities being “looked at” — your house, the washing machine, the papers, the back, your paintings, that picture, this photo — were inanimate objects.

One sentence that should be especially noticed will be concordance line No. 9.

9. *Bob looked at the new TV set and smiled.*

In the sentence, what Bob looked at was the TV set, not the programs shown on the TV screen. This is another example where “look at” is followed by a motionless object.

There are in fact some animate objects in other concordance lines, but when we look at them, we focus on their state rather than their movements. For instance,

4. *Alan looked at him and said calmly, “I don’t believe you.”*

In Line 4, when Alan looked at the man, what he really cared about was the identity of
that man; namely, he looked at the man just for who he was, not for what he was doing. If Alan paid attention to the man’s movements, then we would say Alan “watched the man” rather than “looked at the man.”

Another issue to be discussed will be the duration of the action. Overall, it takes less time to “look at” something than to “watch” something, which is not surprising to us. We usually “look at” something just for a little while because we do not pay close attention to its movement or changes. Besides, since “line of sight” plays an important role when we look at something, the meaning of “look at” is thus similar to “(往某個方向)注視” in Mandarin – the teacher may inform the students of this if they are still confused.

Last but not least, the presentation of Lines 10-14 reveals the fact that not only progressive aspects but also imperative mood are allowed here.

4.4 Comparison of “see”, “watch” and “look at”

Finally, a comparison of “see”, “watch” and “look at” was made to put together all the crucial information about the three verbs. By integrating all the important facts, we can thus be reminded again of what has been discussed, which also gives us another chance to recheck the design of the class activity in Chapter 3.

Firstly, when you see something, you are aware of it through your eyes, or you
notice it. You do not see something intentionally, but accidentally; you are an experiencer. When you watch something, you pay attention to it using your eyes because you are interested in what it is doing, or in what may happen. When you “look at” something, you direct your eyes towards it. It is the “line of sight” which really matters when we “look at” something.

To assist students in figuring out the different usages of the three verbs, it is sometimes inevitable to use their Mandarin equivalents as assistance. The Mandarin equivalents are here to help differentiate the verbs, not to add burden to the students by asking them to memorize every detail. “See” is similar to “看到” in Mandarin based on its property that often emphasizes “having or having not noticed something.” “Watch” is similar to “觀看” in Mandarin because it usually takes a period of time and much attention. People care about the progress and movements when they watch something. Finally, “look at” can be translated into “(往某個方向)注視” in Mandarin based on its emphasis on the the “line of sight.”

As far as duration of actions is concerned, “watch”, overall, takes more time than “see” or “look at” since its action lays much stress on viewing the detailed progress of something. Besides, the beginning and end of the action are usually recognizable.

From the perspective of grammatical use, neither progressive aspects nor imperative mood are allowed to express the actions of see. However, in expressing
actions of “watch” or “look at”, both grammatical usages are acceptable. By presenting with concordances lines, the teacher should show the evidence to the students so that they can avoid making such mistakes next time they encounter these usages.

In Table 4.5 below, a clear comparison of the three verbs is shown.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition/ Mandarin equivalent</th>
<th>Progressive aspect</th>
<th>Imperative mood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>see</strong></td>
<td>When you <em>see</em> something, you are aware of it through your eyes, or you notice it.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandarin equivalent: 看到</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>watch</strong></td>
<td>When you <em>watch</em> something, you pay attention to it using your eyes because you are interested in what it is doing, or in what may happen. It usually takes more time to <em>watch</em> something.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandarin equivalent: 觀看</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>look at</strong></td>
<td>When you “<em>look at</em>” something, you direct your eyes towards it.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandarin equivalent: (往某個方向)注視</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Besides, in order to contrast the different distribution of the three verbs, there are some methods to be adopted. In Chapter 3, some of the questions in Q&A section were arranged during the procedure to aware students of these facts.

For instance, to distinguish “see” from “watch,” students are aware of the fact that to watch something “for a period of time” is reasonable, but not appropriate in the case of “see.” Contrast the following examples:

4.1 He watched TV for two hours.

4.2 *He saw me for two hours.

In example 4.2, saw is a stative verb, which describes a static situation. That a man saw or noticed somebody should be a description about one thing which had occurred. The use of “for two hours” in 4.2 is thus quite illogical.

In addition, as we have mentioned earlier, the objects being seen must be some concrete entity. Hence, in chapter 3, we emphasized the importance of “perception” during the progress of seeing something. We also have designed activities, asking students to immerse themselves in a situation where they experienced seeing things. In contrast, when we say someone watches something, he could possibly watch something concrete, e.g. the hand movements, or something abstract, e.g. TV programs.
Equally important, we have also presented methods to distinguish “watch” from “look at.” Like what we have talked about, we often use “look at” when the thing we look at doesn’t move; sometimes when we look at an animate being, what we really care about is its state, not its movements. This can be further explained by the following examples:

4.3 Bob looked at the new TV set and smiled.

4.4 Children stay at home and watch cartoons on TV.

In 4.3, what Bob looked at was the TV set, the concrete electric equipment, while in 4.4, watch is followed by TV programs, which is abstract and always moving with the plots. This set of example explicitly reveals the difference between “look at” and “watch.” People watch a TV program because they care about its internal structure and the movements on the screen, but when people look at a TV, they are in fact looking at the TV set, a motionless machine.

By now, a series of useful methods have been presented for junior high school students to differentiate these verbs. It is highly suggested that students be instructed with these methods because most of the time, they act as receivers who just sit in the classroom and memorize whatever the teacher says. Through the activities, they become participants, take part in the class discussion, and create their own knowledge.
In this chapter, we have analyzed the three verbs systematically, and explained purposes of most activities designed in the previous chapter. Information of the three verbs has been provided to meet the needs of junior high school students. It is hoped that both teachers and students will benefit from the study.