

Chapter 3

Methodology

This study aims to take “see, watch, and look at” as examples to show a corpora-based teaching procedure. In this chapter, the researcher is going to introduce the subjects, the materials, and the way to adopt corpora in helping differentiate these three verbs in second language teaching.

3.1 Subjects

Junior high school students in the 8th grade are the main subjects in this study. The 7th graders only need to know some simple usages of these verbs. As they turn into the 8th grades, the usages of the verbs are getting more and more complicated; some are beyond their comprehension and cannot be explained clearly unless systematic and explicit methods are provided. Besides, the 8th graders have built some basic vocabulary, which enables them to handle the concordance lines more easily. Therefore, the 8th graders will be chosen to be the subjects of this study. Through the quizzes, the practicability of this corpora-based method will be judged based on the improvement of their command of these verbs.

3.2 Materials

Two kinds of tools will be adopted in this study: corpora and dictionaries.

3.2.1 Corpora

Two corpora are main tools in this study: COBUILD ON CD-ROM and COBUILD ENGLISH COLLOCATIONS.

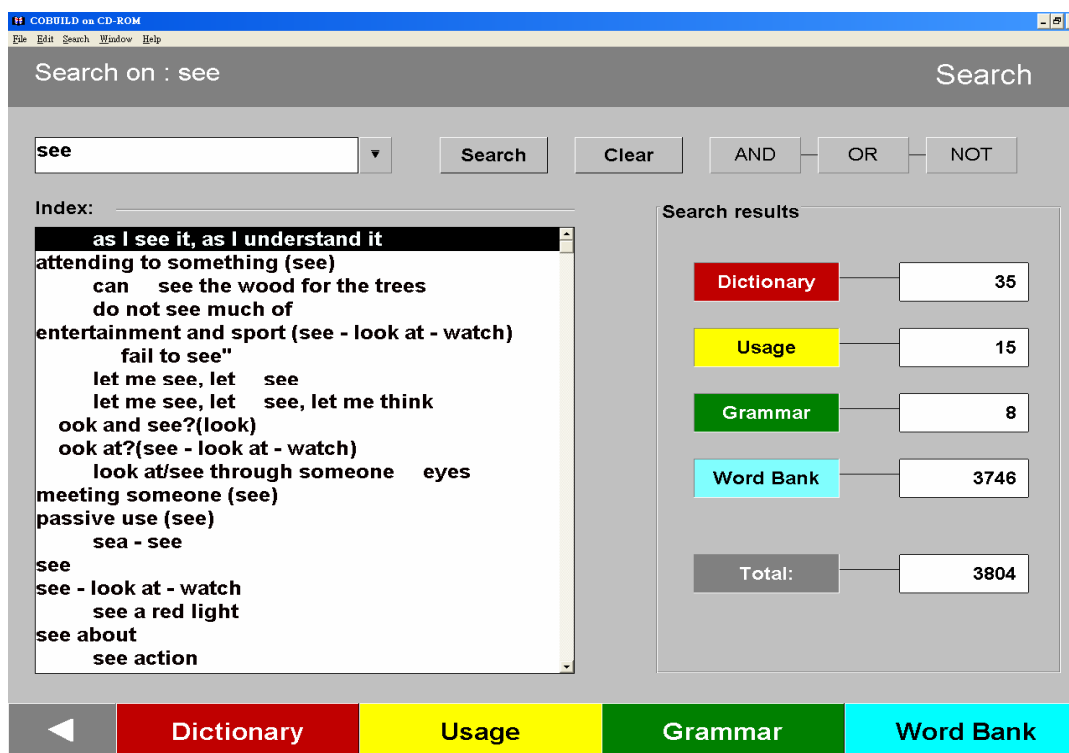


Figure 1. The main screen of COBUILD ON CD-ROM

COBUILD ON CD-ROM is an electronicized collection of three paper volumes: Collins Dictionary of the English Language, Collins English Grammar, and Collins English Usage. It contains five million words, their usages, grammar, and

their examples extracted from the Bank of English corpus, which contains examples from authentic speeches, writings, and other publications.

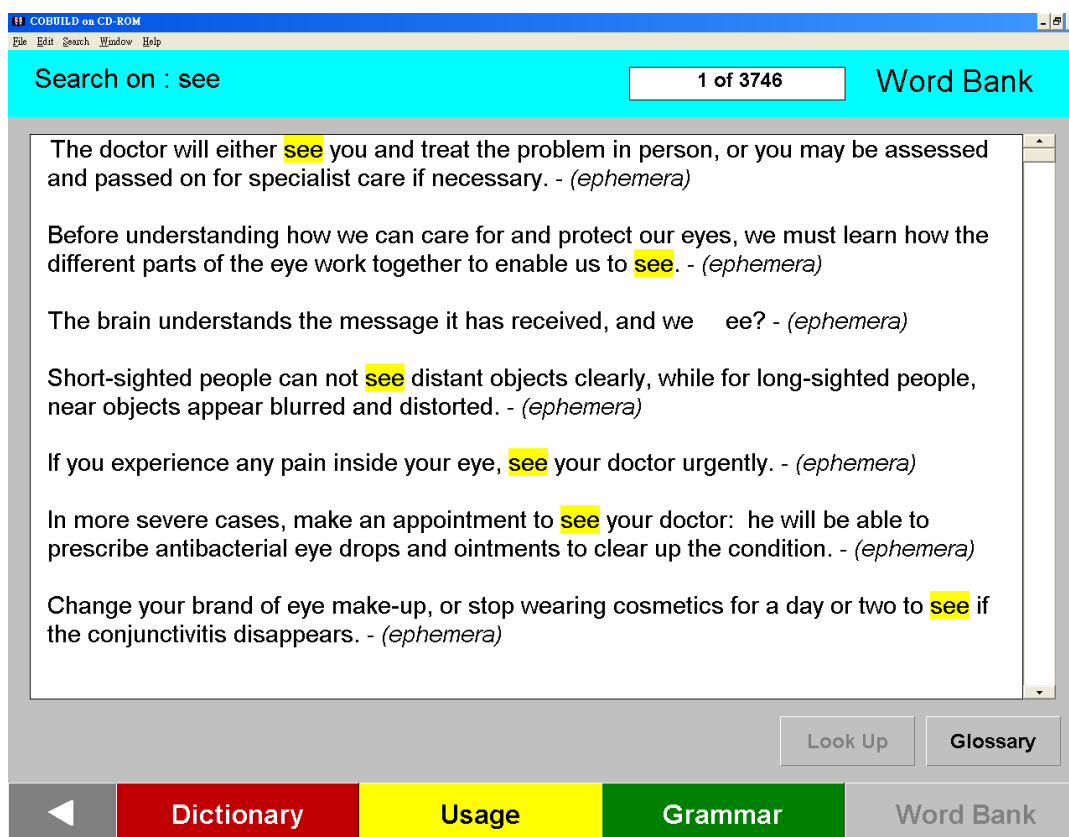


Figure 2. The word bank of “see” in COBUILD ON CD-ROM

Besides, the usage and grammar sections are useful in a way that they offer guidance so that we can analyze the examples much more efficiently. As we can see in Figure 3, the usages of “see” are listed in a systematic manner.

The screenshot shows a software window titled "COBUILD on CD-ROM" with a menu bar (File, Edit, Search, Window, Help). The main content area has a yellow header with "Current term : attending to something (see)", "Section 6 of 6", and "Usage". Below this, the word "see" is listed, followed by the sub-section "attending to something". The text explains that "see" means to ensure something is done, either by getting someone else to do it or by doing it yourself. It provides two example sentences: "*See that everything is marked with your initials.*" and "*I see to it that there is some action.*". Another explanation states that when someone attends to something, you can say they "see to it" or "see about it", with a corresponding example sentence: "*A man was there to see to our luggage.*" and "*Rudolph went into the station to see about Thomas ticket.*". At the bottom, there are navigation buttons: "Occurrence", "Index", "Table", "Look Up", and "Glossary". A bottom bar contains a back arrow, "Dictionary", "Usage", "Grammar", and "Word Bank".

Figure 3. The “usage” section of “see” in COBUILD ON CD-ROM

In Figure 4, some important grammar uses of “see” are provided so that learners can avoid making grammatical mistakes when they use the vocabulary.

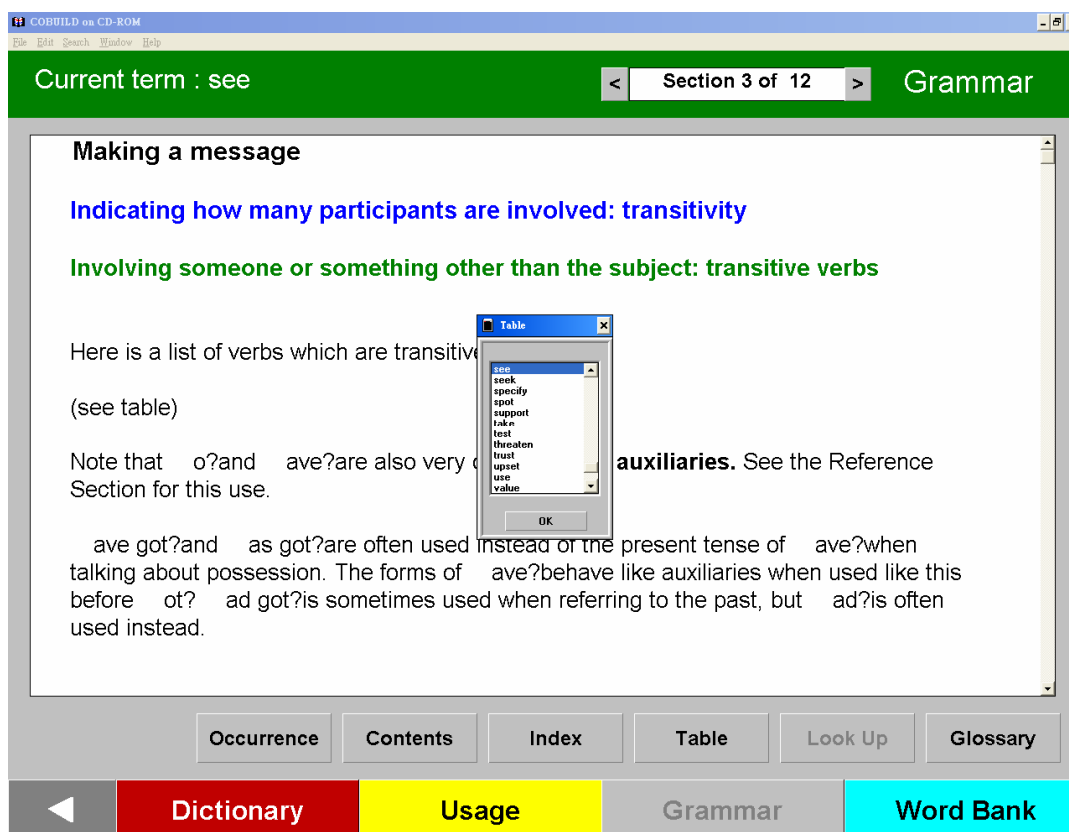


Figure 4. The “grammar” section in COBUILD ON CD-ROM

Another corpus we use in this study is COBUILD ENGLISH COLLOCATIONS.

It contains 140,000 English collocations and real examples, which are also extracted from the Bank of English corpus. In COBUILD ENGLISH COLLOCATIONS, collocates are listed in order of their frequencies. Idioms, fixed phrases and grammatical patterns are also provided.

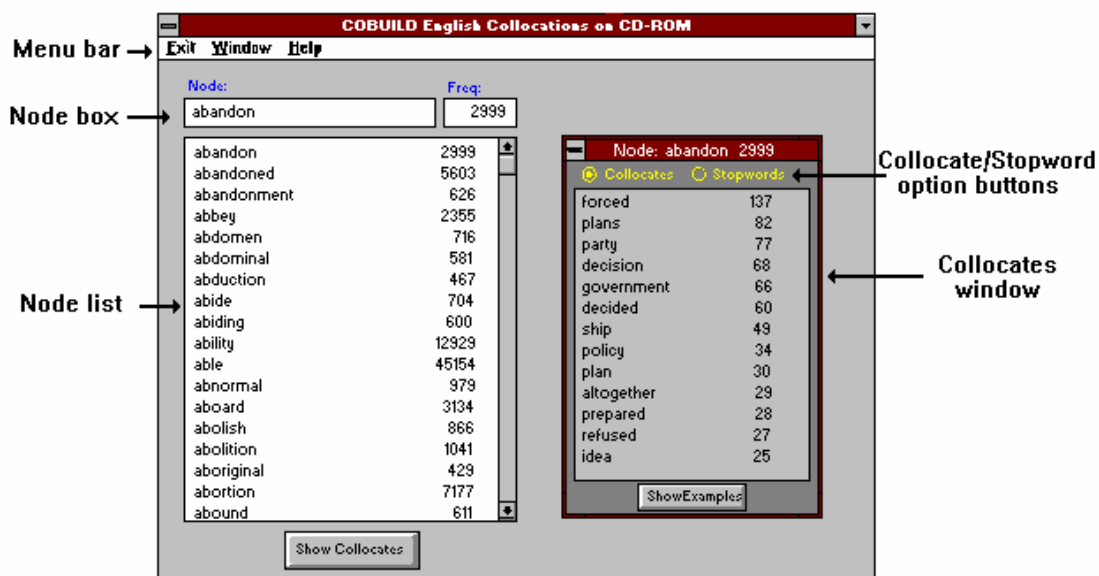


Figure 5. The main screen of COBUILD ENGLISH COLLOCATIONS

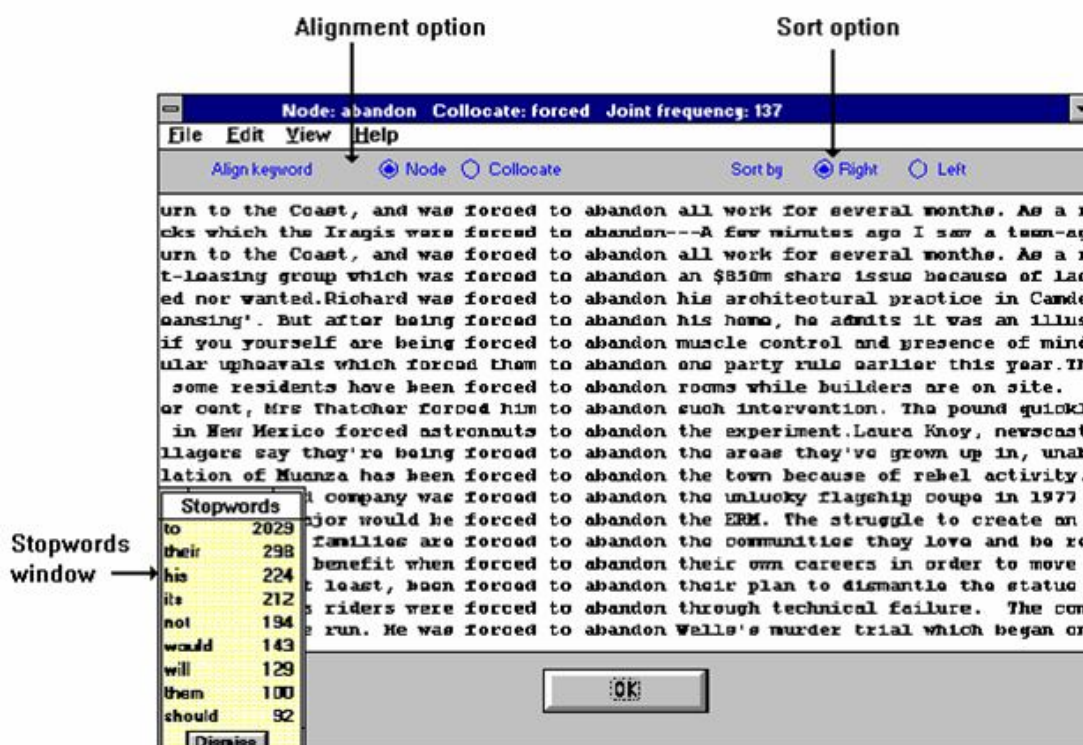


Figure 6. The “short examples screen” of COBUILD ENGLISH COLLOCATIONS

The two corpora provide us with authentic examples in a systematic way, and they are the main tools in this study.

3.2.2 Dictionaries

Dictionaries will also be used to help acquire as more information about the three verbs as possible, including word usages, examples, and their comparison with other words that are similar in meaning.

In this study, four “advanced learner's dictionaries” will be adopted to decide the core meaning of each verb. Since the four dictionaries are all compiled from an EFL point of view and intended for non-native speakers who need information about the meanings and usages of words and phrases, their definitions of words are expected to be similar.

The four dictionaries include:

- 1) the *Collins COBUILD Advanced Learner's English Dictionary (COBUILD)* from HarperCollins. The dictionary is different in both word definitions and examples from the two corpora we have mentioned earlier,
- 2) the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (OALD)* from Oxford University Press,
- 3) the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDOCE)* from Longman,

and

- 4) the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (CALD)* from the Cambridge University Press.

They are the main tools with which we decide the core meanings of words. Other dictionaries for reference include:

- 1) the *Longman Active Study English-Chinese Dictionary*,
- 2) the *Wen Shin English-Chinese Dictionary of Contemporary English*,
- 3) *A Dictionary of Common Errors in English*, and
- 4) *A Concise Dictionary of English Synonyms and Antonyms*.

These dictionaries will also be used because they provide EFL learners with information about usages of words and phrases.

3.3 Procedures

3.3.1 Teacher's Preparation before Class

Since the subjects in this study are not capable of dealing with “raw” (unedited) concordance data, examples in the corpora should be carefully selected to match these students' English language competence. Also, according to Hunston (2002), examples which consist of exceptionally difficult vocabulary or complex structures are excluded. In some selected concordance lines, words or usages having little to do with the study

will also be changed or left out, and some concordance lines which do not make whole sentences will be edited for better comprehensibility to the students.

The concordance lines will be selected according to the usages of the verb. As we have mentioned in Chapter One, for the efficiency of instruction and to prevent the students from being confused, we will focus mainly on the prototypical use of each verb. As for deciding the prototypical meaning of each verb, we will resort to the four advanced learner's English dictionaries, which have been listed in 3.2.2. The concordance lines will then be selected according to the core meaning of the verbs.

The selected concordance lines will be categorized in groups based on the features which distribute systematically in some of these lines and which are helpful to the instruction of the verbs. The categorization is based on the teacher's needs; according to Johns (1997), the result of classification and the task that will be carried out in class are “closed” in the sense that the result is known to the teacher in advance.”

3.3.2 Activities in Class

In the beginning of the class, students will be presented with concordance lines, which are clearly shown to them by the projector or posters. After the presentation, the teacher should ask students to observe the common features in the sentences and

to share with others what they have seen. If the students can not find anything, the teacher should remind them of some key words in these sentences by means of asking questions inductively.

All the crucial features which the teacher wants students to know will finally be shown to them after they finish their observation. When the discussion of the first two verbs have been finished, there will be a comparison between the two verbs and a quiz conducted to remind learners of what they have learned. Finally, after the three verbs have been discussed separately, a comparison among all of them will be presented right afterwards, and another quiz will be given to the students to check if there is any improvement in the students' command of these verbs.

What follows are the detailed procedures which will be conducted in this study.

3.3.2.1 See

Before the teacher's selection of concordance lines, the four dictionaries will be consulted to decide the prototypical meaning of "see." What follows are the first definition listed under the headword of "see" in each of the four dictionaries.

Table 3.1: First definitions of “see” from four learners’ dictionaries

<p><i>COBUILD</i></p> <p>see /.../ (sees seeing saw seen)</p> <p>1 When you see something, you notice it using your eyes.</p> <p><i>You can't see colours at night...</i></p> <p><i>I saw a man making his way towards me...</i></p> <p><i>She can see, hear, touch, smell, and taste...</i></p> <p><i>As he neared the farm, he saw that a police car was parked outside it...</i></p> <p><i>Did you see what happened?</i></p> <p>VERB: no cont, V n, V n -ing, V, V that, V wh</p>
<p><i>OALD</i></p> <p>see /.../ <u>verb, noun</u></p> <p>■ <i>verb (saw , seen)</i></p> <p><u>USE EYES</u></p> <p>1 (not used in the progressive tenses) to become aware of sb/sth by using your eyes: [VN] <i>She looked for him but couldn't see him in the crowd.</i> ◊ <i>I looked out of the window but saw nothing.</i> ◊ [V (that)] <i>He could see (that) she had been crying.</i> ◊ [V wh-] <i>Did you see what happened?</i> ◊ <i>If you watch carefully, you'll see how it is done.</i> ◊ [VN-ADJ] <i>I hate to see you unhappy.</i> ◊ [V, VN] <i>The opera was the place to see and be seen (= by other important or fashionable people).</i> ◊ [VN -ing] <i>She was seen running away from the scene of the crime.</i> ◊ [VN inf] <i>I saw you put the key in your pocket.</i> ◊ [VN to inf] <i>He was seen to enter the building about the time the crime was committed.</i> HELP This pattern is only used in the passive.</p> <p><i>LDOCE</i></p> <p>see /.../ <i>past tense saw, past participle seen</i></p> <p>1 NOTICE/EXAMINE [transitive not in progressive] to notice or examine someone or something, using your eyes:</p> <p><i>The moment we saw the house, we knew we wanted to buy it.</i></p> <p><i>He crouched down so he couldn't be seen.</i></p>

Can I see your ticket, please?

I saw the offer advertised in the newspaper.

can/can't see

You can see the Houses of Parliament from here.

see where/what/who etc

Can you see where the marks are on the wall?

see (that)

He saw that she was crying.

see somebody/something do something

I saw him leave a few minutes ago.

see somebody/something doing something

The suspect was seen entering the building.

As you can see, the house needs some work doing on it.

Have you seen Chris (=do you know where he is)?

*The accommodation was so awful, it **had to be seen to be believed** (=you would not believe it if you did not see it yourself).*

CALD

see (USE EYES) /.../

verb **seeing, saw, seen**

1 [I or T] to be aware of what is around you by using your eyes:

Turn the light on so I can see.

"I can see you!"

[+ (that)] *The teacher could see (that) the children had been fighting.*

[+ infinitive without to] *Jacqui saw the car drive up outside the police station.*

[+ ing form of verb] *From the window we could see the children **playing** in the yard.*

[+ past participle] *His parents saw him **awarded** the winner's medal.*

See (= Look at) p. 23 for prices and flight details.

*See **over** (= Look at the next page) for further information.*

In a dictionary, the first definition listed under a headword is generally considered the prototypical and most frequently used usage of the word; therefore, we will decide the core meaning of words through consulting the dictionary. Moreover, to

make the core meaning we later use more convincing, the first definitions of “see” from four dictionaries are collected to be compared and integrated. After we compare the four descriptions of “see”, it is found that they resemble each other. Hence, concordance lines of “see” can then be selected based on the definition “to become aware of somebody/something by using eyes.”

In class, students are presented with the following concordance lines, which were selected, edited and categorized by the teacher in advance. The teacher may firstly give some interpretations for the words unfamiliar to students.

Table 3.2: The concordance lines of “see” (1)

1.	She saw	a hideous face at the window and screamed.
2.	They saw	a big white animal like a rabbit.
3.	Suddenly I saw	the hidden waterfall at last.
4.	As he neared the farm, he saw	a police car.
5.	When I saw	the rat, I was horrified.
6.	Then I saw	a gun under the table so I knew that something 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 3.3: The concordance lines of “see” (2)

1.	I saw	a head-on collision between two airplanes.
2.	He saw	the shooting and memorized the number of the assassin's car.
3.	Did you see	the accident?

The teacher then asks students to read every concordance line. After that, students will be asked to observe the columns before and after “see”; the last column in each concordance line, especially the noun phrases, should be strongly emphasized. Then students will be asked to answer some questions according to what they have observed.

It is highly suggested that students be divided into groups to answer the following questions. For Taiwanese junior high students, it is often difficult to share with others what they are not so sure of; such is especially the case when they encounter questions which have no fixed answers. For teachers, this is not only a good way to improve students’ enthusiasm and devotion to this activity, but a method to motivate their creative thinking.

What follows are some suggested questions for students:

- i. In examples 1-10, what did the see-ers see? Do you think the see-ers

expected to see what they saw? What might have happened to them? In your mind, picture the event in each sentence; try to visualize the situation under which these see-ers experienced the actions of “seeing” something. Share your ideas with your group members.

- ii. Observe the three concordance lines in Table 3.3. In these sentences, observe the things which have been seen. What are their common features? Were they concrete objects or abstract ideas? Did the see-ers prepare themselves to see these before they happened?
- iii. Observe all the concordance lines. Do you think the see-ers experienced these events on purpose or in accident? What would you say in Mandarin if someone “saw” something?

Instead of telling the students all the answers immediately, the teacher should encourage them to think more. After most of them have shared their opinions, the teacher can then help reorganize what they have discussed, and provide them with some information they have not noticed.

While these Q&A practices allow the students to find the answers on their own, the teacher may proceed to provide more information in order to enlarge their knowledge about the verb. Abstracted from the *Collins COBUILD Advanced Learner's English Dictionary*, what follows are some basic but important usages of

see which have been or will soon be taught to the students. Some words highlighted with bold fonts are important descriptions that students need to pay more attention to.

Table 3.4: Important usages of *see* for junior high school students

see

1 When you **see** something, **you notice it using your eyes.**

You can't see colours at night...

I saw a man making his way towards me...

She can see, hear, touch, smell, and taste...

Did you see what happened?

Note: This usage has been taught in today's class.

2 If you **see** someone, **you visit them or meet them.**

Mick wants to see you in his office right away...

You need to see a doctor.

3 If you **see an entertainment** such as a play, film, concert, or sports game, you watch it.

He had been to see a Semi-Final of the FA Cup...

It was one of the most amazing films I've ever seen.

= watch

4 If you **see** what someone means or **see** why something happened, you **understand** what they mean or understand why it happened.

Oh, I see what you're saying...

I really don't see any reason for changing it...

Now I see that I was wrong.

= understand

5 You can say '**I see**' to indicate that you **understand** what someone is telling you. (SPOKEN)

'He came home in my car.' 'I see.'*

6 See is used in books to indicate to readers that they should look at another part of the book, or at another book, because more information is given there.

See Chapter 7 below for further comments on the textile industry.

7 People say **'let me see'** or **'let's see'** when they are trying to remember something, or are trying to find something.

*Let's see, they're six*no, make that five hours ahead of us...*

Now let me see, who's the man we want?

8 'See you', 'be seeing you', and 'see you later' are ways of **saying goodbye** to someone when you expect to meet them again soon. (INFORMAL, SPOKEN)

'Talk to you later.' **All right. See you love.'*

= bye

3.3.2.2 Watch

First, the teacher consults the four dictionaries to decide the prototypical meaning of “watch.” What follows are the first definition listed under the headword of “watch” in each of the four dictionaries.

Table 3.5: First definitions of “watch” from four learners’ dictionaries

*COBUILD***watch** /.../ LOOKING AND PAYING ATTENTION**(watch watches watching watched)**

1 If you **watch** someone or something, you look at them, usually for a period of time, and pay attention to what is happening.

The man was standing in his doorway watching him...

He watched the barman prepare the beer he had ordered...

Chris watched him sipping his brandy...

I watched as Amy ate a few nuts.

VERB: V n, V n inf, V n -ing, V

*OALD***watch** /.../ verb, noun■ *verb*

1 to look at sb/sth for a time, paying attention to what happens: [VN] *to watch television / a football game* ◊[VN, V] *He watched the house for signs of activity.* ◊*He watched for signs of activity in the house.* ◊[V] *‘Would you like to play?’ ‘No thanks—I’ll just watch.’* ◊*She stood and watched as the taxi drove off.* ◊*We watched to see what would happen next.* ◊[V **wh-**] *Watch what I do, then you try.* ◊[VN **-ing**] *She watched the kids playing in the yard.* ◊[VN inf] *They watched the bus disappear into the distance.* ⇨ note at LOOK

*LDOCE***watch** /.../

1 **LOOK** [intransitive and transitive] to look at someone or something for a period of time, paying attention to what is happening:

Do you mind if I watch?

We sat and watched the sunset.

watch carefully/closely/intently etc

He watched helplessly as Paula fell into the icy water.

Watch carefully. You may learn something.

watch (somebody/something) with interest/amusement/delight etc

Harriet watched him with interest.

watch somebody/something do/doing something

I watched him go, then went home.

*Ruth could **not bear to watch** her parents arguing.*

watch to do something

I watched to see how he'd react.

watch television/a film etc

The debate was watched by 97 million viewers.

*Most parents don't know what their kids are **watching on TV**.*

watch what/how/when etc

It's useful to watch how other pilots handle the glider.

→ see usage note SEE¹

CALD

watch_(LOOK AT) /.../

verb

1 [I or T] to look at something for a period of time, especially something that is changing or moving:

I had dinner and watched TV for a couple of hours.

He spent the entire afternoon watching a cricket match.

[+ object + infinitive without to] *I watched him get into a taxi.*

I got the feeling I was being watched.

[+ object + ing form of verb] *I sit by the window and watch people **walking** past.*

[+ question word] *Just watch **how** he slides that ball in past the goalkeeper.*

Bonner watched helplessly as the ball sneaked in at the near post.

She'll pretend that she hasn't seen us - you watch.

Concordance lines of “watch” are selected according to the definitions from four dictionaries. In class, students will be presented with the following concordance lines which also have been edited by the teacher. The teacher may give some interpretations for the words unfamiliar to the students.

Table 3.6: The concordance lines of “watch”

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.
3.	I don't often	watch	television, except for the news.
4.	Children stay at home and	watch	cartoons on TV.
5.	Those people left home	watch	the baseball game in the stadium.
	early to		
6.	2000 people went out and	watched	today's parade.
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.
10.	I want you to	watch	my hand movements.
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.

After reading all the concordance lines, students are asked to observe the columns before and after “watch” to find the regularities. The last column in each concordance line, especially the “noun phrase” parts, should be strongly emphasized

by the teacher.

Then, students will be asked to answer the following questions according to what they have observed:

- i. Observe all the concordance lines. In these sentences, point out the entities which have been *watched*. Did people *watch* these entities on purpose or accidentally?
- ii. How long does it take to *watch* something? In your opinion, does it usually take a long while to *watch* something? Can you find any clue about this in the first two concordance lines?
- iii. When you *watch* something, do you pay attention to its movement? When you say “watch TV”, do you mean the TV programs or the TV set?
- iv. What would you say in Mandarin if someone *watches* something?

After most students have shared their opinions, the teacher can then help summarize what they have discussed, and provide them with information they have not noticed. The teacher may even proceed to provide more information to enlarge students' knowledge about the verb *watch*. What follows are some other important usages of “watch” which junior high school students may need to know; they are

abstracted from the *Collins COBUILD Advanced Learner's English Dictionary*. Some words highlighted with bold fonts are important descriptions that students need to pay more attention to.

Table 3.7: Important usages of “watch” for junior high school students

<p>watch LOOKING AND PAYING ATTENTION</p> <p>1 If you watch someone or something, you look at them, usually for a period of time, and pay attention to what is happening.</p> <p><i>The man was standing in his doorway watching him...</i> <i>He watched the barman prepare the beer he had ordered...</i> <i>Chris watched him sipping his brandy...</i> <i>I watched as Amy ate a few nuts.</i></p> <p>Note: This usage has been taught in today’s class.</p> <p>2 If you watch something on television or an event such as a sports match, you spend time looking at it, especially when you see it from the beginning to the end.</p> <p><i>I'd stayed up late to watch the film...</i> <i>They spent a great deal of time watching television.</i></p> <p>3 If you watch a situation or event, you pay attention to it or you are aware of it, but you do not influence it.</p> <p><i>Human rights groups have been closely watching the case...</i> <i>Annoyed commuters could only watch as the departure time ticked by.</i></p> <p>4 If you watch people, especially children or animals, you are responsible for them, and make sure that they are not in danger.</p> <p><i>Parents can't be expected to watch their children 24 hours a day.</i></p>

5 If you **watch** someone, you **follow them secretly** or **spy on them**.

Ella was scared that someone was watching her...

6 If you tell someone to **watch** a particular person or thing, you are **warning them to be careful** that the person or thing does not get out of control or do something unpleasant.

You really ought to watch these quiet types...

If you're watching the calories, don't have mayonnaise.

7 You say '**watch it**' in order to **warn someone to be careful**, especially when you want to threaten them about what will happen if they are not careful.

'Now watch it, Patsy,' the Sergeant told her.

By now, both “see” and “watch” have already been introduced. Students should already possess some basic knowledge about these two verbs. Before the next verb is introduced, it is highly recommended to give them a review and a comparison about “see” and “watch.”

3.3.2.3 The Comparison between “see” and “watch”

A review here is intended to remind students of what they have already learned before they learn the next verb, *look at*. It is conducted in two parts: Q&A and a quiz.

What follows are some suggested questions for students to compare the two verbs:

- i. Do you pay close attention to the movement of what you *see*? Do you

pay close attention to the movement of what you *watch*? From this perspective, can you tell any difference between “watch” and “see”?

- ii. Let’s go back to Table 3.6., the concordance lines of “watch”. Observe the sentence patterns of concordance lines 11-13. Do they show any difference in the grammatical use of “see” and “watch”?
- iii. Also in Table 3.6, observe the first two concordance lines. Like what we have discussed earlier, we sometimes say that someone *watches* something “for a period of time.” Can we say someone *see* something for a period of time? Why or why not?
- iv. In the concordance lines of “see”, we have observed that the entities which have been *seen* are all concrete objects. Now in Table 3.6, observe the entities which have been *watched*. Are they all concrete objects?

It is also recommended to give students a little quiz after the Q&A. Here is an example:

Table 3.8: The quiz on the use of “see” and “watch”

Quiz**Fill in the blanks with “see” or “watch”****(Be sure to use the correct form of the word.)**

Susan loves little animals, and she also likes to _____ TV programs that are about animals. Last night, when she went jogging after dinner, she _____ a white animal under the bridge. It looked like a rabbit, but Susan knew for sure that it was not!

Susan was confused about what it was and then started to _____ its movements. “The animal was so cute!” said Susan. However, it was afraid of her and just ran away.

The next morning, Susan went shopping and met her daughter, Julie. Julie was _____ the parade with her boyfriend. Susan told them about the animal; they both shouted out loud.

“Mom! That was Mrs. McClusky’s mouse, Nancy!” said Julie. “Nancy is so fat that no one knows it’s actually a mouse. If you _____ it again, can you call me immediately? Mrs. McClusky is so worried about it!”

The quiz is designed in the form of an article. Through this kind of practice, students may get to know the real use of these verbs more profoundly. When observing the concordance lines, what they saw were just separate sentences; the quiz

enables them to see the verbs' use in a context, which may to a large degree lead to a more effective learning.

In the article, the first blank should be filled with *watch*, which should not be a difficult problem for students. Then the second blank has to be filled with *saw*, the past tense of *see*, to represent the fact that Susan met the animal in accident. Then the two blanks in the second and the third paragraphs should be filled with *watch* because both movements and parades need to be paid attention to. In the blank of the last paragraph, *see* should be used because it is an unexpected event which focuses on the fact whether Susan has experienced seeing it or not.

3.3.2.4 Look at

First, the teacher consults four dictionaries to decide the prototypical meaning of “look at.” What follows are the first definition listed under the headword of “look” in each of the four dictionaries.

Table 3.9: First definitions of “look” from four learners’ dictionaries

*COBUILD***look** /.../ USING YOUR EYES OR YOUR MIND**(look looks looking looked)**

- 1** If you **look** in a particular direction, you direct your eyes in that direction, especially so that you can see what is there or see what something is like.

I looked down the hallway to room number nine...

*She turned to **look at** him...*

He looked away, apparently enraged...

If you look, you'll see what was a lake.

VERB: V prep/adv, V prep/adv, V prep/adv, V

Look is also a noun.

Lucille took a last look in the mirror...

Assisi has a couple of churches that are worth a look if you have time.

N-SING

*OALD***look** /.../ verb, noun, exclamation

■ *verb*

USE EYES

- 1** [V] ~ (**at sb/sth**) to turn your eyes in a particular direction: *If you look carefully you can just see our house from here.* ◊*She looked at me and smiled.* ◊*'Has the mail come yet?' 'I'll **look and see**.'* ◊*Look! I'm sure that's Brad Pitt!* ◊*Don't look now, but there's someone staring at you!*—see also FORWARD-LOOKING

*LDOCE***look** /.../

- 1** SEE [intransitive] to turn your eyes towards something, so that you can see it:

We sneaked out while Jessie's mom wasn't looking.

If you look carefully you can see that the painting represents a human figure.

Gina covered her eyes, afraid to look.

look at

'It's time we left,' Ian said, looking at his watch.

The men all turned to look at her as she entered the room.

look away/over/down etc

Dad looked up from his paper and smiled.

'We can't go out in this weather,' said Bob, looking out of the window.

→ see usage note SEE¹

CALD

look (SEE) /.../

verb [I]

to direct your eyes in order to see:

Look! There's grandma.

They looked at the picture and laughed.

Look at all this rubbish on the floor.

She looked up from her book and smiled at me.

I looked out (of) the window.

Look over there - there's a rainbow!

Concordance lines of “look at” are selected according to the definitions of “look” from four dictionaries. Though in some dictionaries there is no explicit sub-entry for “look at,” we can still find the suitable definition according to the examples which are provided.

Students are presented with the following concordance lines in class before the activity is conducted.

Table 3.10: The concordance lines of “look at”

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

Students are asked to observe the columns before and after “look at.” In each concordance line, the noun phrase in the last column should be strongly emphasized; then students are asked to answer the following questions according to what they have observed:

- i. In these sentences, point out the entities which have been *looked at*. Did

people *look at* these entities on purpose or accidentally?

- ii. When you *look at* something, do you pay close attention to its movement? Does it usually take a long time to *look at* something?
- iii. Observe the noun phrases right after “look at.” Among these noun phrases, which of them are animate beings, and which are inanimate objects? When you *look at* some animate being, do you put stress on its state, or its movement?
- iv. What would you say in Mandarin if someone *looks at* something?

After the discussion is finished, the teacher may proceed to provide more information about “look at.” What follows are some other important usages of “look at” which junior high school students may need to know; they are abstracted from the *Collins COBUILD Advanced Learner's English Dictionary*. Some words highlighted with bold fonts are important descriptions that students need to pay more attention to.

Table 3.11: Important usages of “look at” for junior high school students

look USING YOUR EYES OR YOUR MIND**(look looks looking looked)**

1 If you **look** in a particular direction, you direct your eyes in that direction, especially so that you can see what is there or see what something is like.

I looked down the hallway to room number nine...

She turned to look at him...

He looked away, apparently enraged...

If you look, you'll see what was a lake.

Look is also a noun.

Lucille took a last look in the mirror...

Assisi has a couple of churches that are worth a look if you have time.

2 If you **look at** a book, newspaper, or magazine, you read it fairly quickly or read part of it.

You've just got to look at the last bit of Act Three.

Look is also a noun.

A quick look at Monday's British newspapers shows that there's plenty of interest in foreign news.

3 If someone, especially an expert, **looks at** something, they examine it, and then deal with it or say how it should be dealt with.

Can you look at my back? I think something's wrong.

Look is also a noun.

The car has not been running very well and a mechanic had to come over to have a look at it.

4 If you **look at** a subject, problem, or situation, you think about it or study it, so that you know all about it and can perhaps consider what should be done in relation to it.

Next term we'll be looking at the Second World War period...

He visited Florida a few years ago looking at the potential of the area to stage a big match.

Look is also a noun.

A close look at the statistics reveals a troubling picture.

After all the three verbs were introduced, another Q&A and a quiz should be conducted in order to make sure that most students have better command of these three verbs.

3.3.2.5 The Comparison of “see”, “watch” and “look at”

What follows are some suggested questions for students to compare all the three verbs:

- i. Do you *look at* something motionless? Do you *watch* something motionless?
- ii. We have learned the usage of “*watch TV*”, but do we say “*look at TV*”? Why or why not? What does it mean by saying “*look at a TV*”?
- iii. When you *look at* something, do you emphasize its state, or its movement? From this perspective, what is the difference between “*watch*” and “*look at*”?
- iv. In Table 3.10, observe the sentence patterns of lines 10-14. Do they show any difference in the grammatical use of “*see*” and “*look at*”?

Can you find any similarity in the grammatical use of “watch” and “look at”?

In the end of the class, there should be another quiz designed in the form of passages. Here is an example:

Table 3.12: The quiz on the use of “see”, “watch” and “look at”

<p>Quiz</p> <p><u>Fill in the blanks with “see”, “watch” or “look at”</u></p> <p>(Be sure to use the correct form of the word.)</p> <p>Mary is a junior high school student. She likes to go to the movies, go shopping, and _____ TV programs at home. One day, when she went out with Jenny, she _____ a little cat at the corner of the street. Mary turned around and said to Jenny, “Do you _____ the poor cat over there? It’s so cute!” Jenny went and held the cat in her arms. They played with it and happily. However, Mary found that one of its legs was hurt!</p> <p>Suddenly, Jenny shouted out loud because she _____ a hospital across from the bookstore. She said to Mary, “There’s a hospital! We should send the cat there!” Then they took it to the hospital right away.</p> <p>Two days later, Mary brought the cat home, and gave it a cute name, “Ginger.” Mary played with Ginger every day. Ginger likes to stand beside the window and _____ the passing car outside. Besides, it often _____ a picture on the wall. That is a picture of a cat, which looks just like Ginger! That’s why Mary always says, “Are you _____ yourself?”</p>

In the beginning of the article, *watch* should be filled in the first blank to form “watch TV programs.” Then, to show the unexpectedness of the events, the second and the third blanks have to be filled with *saw* and *see* respectively.

Then in the second paragraph, *saw* is the most appropriate choice to fill in the first blank because Jenny noticed the hospital through her eyes. In the last paragraph of the article, *watch* is suitable for the first blank because the cat pays attention to the movement of the cars. Finally, the last two blanks should be filled with *looks at* and *looking at* respectively due to the same reason that “line of sight” is what really matters in both actions.