

USING CORPORA IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

Teacher: Toshpulatova Mehriniso Qilichevna

Termez State University,

mehrinisotoshpulatova@gmail.com

***Abstract:** Over the past yearss, corpora have not only revolutionized linguistic research but have also had an impact on second language learning and teaching. In the field of applied linguistics, more and more researchers and practitioners treasure what corpus linguistics has to offer to language pedagogy. Still, corpora and corpus tools have yet to be widely implemented in pedagogical contexts. The aim of this article is to provide an overview of pedagogical corpus applications and to review recent publications in the area of corpus linguistics and language teaching. It covers indirect corpus applications, as well as direct applications of corpora in the second language classroom.*

***Key words:** corpora, language teaching, second language teaching, DDL, indirect approach.*

After Tim Johns suggested that the use of corpora in language learning could have numerous positive effects on EFL/ESL students' and teachers' way of describing a language, the potential of corpora for language pedagogy was widely acknowledged.¹ The contribution of corpora to the language learning environment had not developed for the last 50 years because until the 1980s, researchers did not start to emphasize that corpora could have a beneficial influence on foreign or second language teaching and learning (Chambers, 2007). However, the use of corpora has also inspired heated debates among linguists since it was introduced into the field of foreign/second language teaching. Widdowson (1991), for example, took issue with both the usefulness of corpora and the effectiveness of

¹ Hunston, S. (2002). Corpora in applied linguistics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

descriptions of corpora on language pedagogy. He also claimed that corpora in language teaching could provide language learners, teachers and researchers with important information about how language should be used; however, it should be more important to think about how useful the language emerging from corpora could be to language learners, teachers and researchers. He suggested that language learners, teachers and researchers should regard language descriptions arising from corpora as factors to be considered rather than facts to be uncritically incorporated into language teaching. According to him, language teaching should be informed by the descriptions that are emerging from corpus linguistics, rather than determined by it. Sinclair approved Widdowson's claims by stating that 'Corpus linguistics has no direct bearing on the way languages may be presented in a pedagogical context. Corpus linguistics makes no demands on the methodology of language teaching. It is not geared to serving any particular method, and the current software is quite neutral'.²

Controversy among linguists about whether to apply corpora to language teaching or not took another form after the article titled 'Spoken grammar: what is it and how can we teach it?' by McCarthy and Carter (had been published. In the article, McCarthy and Carter argued that some choices related to written and spoken grammars needed to be presented to learners in order to let them make decisions between these two kinds of grammars. The researchers also claimed that the teaching of correct English was based on traditionally written examples; however, it was crucial to be informed about the interpersonal implications of spoken grammars, rather than only adopting the 3Ps (Presentation-Practice-Product) in traditional grammar books. They suggested that examples of informal spoken English were more appropriate for designing classroom materials than the spoken English encountered in textbooks . In opposition to what McCarthy and Carter suggested. The controversy in the context of using corpora in language teaching later continued with Carter and Cook³ . Carter stated that corpus

² Sinclair, J. M. (1991). *Corpus, concordance collocation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

³ Cook, G. (1998). The uses of reality: A reply to Ronald Carter. *ELT Journal* 52, 1, 57–63

linguistics was not a revolution, but the evolution of language teaching, and there should be more corpus description, particularly in international contexts. According to him, language description was not language teaching, but language teaching could benefit from better language descriptions.

However, Cook argued that a corpus was a record of language behaviors and these patterns of behaviors could not lead us to see how language was organized in the mind, and how it should be organized for language teaching.⁴ He also claimed that it was not well known whose language was recorded, and why such recording should be a model for language learners and teachers.

Despite the heated debates among linguists about whether to apply corpora to language teaching, some EFL teachers and researchers strongly claim that the use of corpora is very beneficial for EFL learners because corpora bring the natural and authentic real life language to the classroom to help the students to understand the descriptions of a language (Hunston, 2002). Especially since digital computers and corpus linguistics were introduced, new trends (e.g., concordancing, DDL DataDriven Learning), and corpus-based/corpus-oriented/corpus-driven approaches) have started to occur in the field of EFL/ESL with an aim to help language teachers and learners see real language descriptions and benefit from those descriptions in language learning and teaching. One of those trends, concordancing, has taken its place in language teaching as a new method. Concordancing is basically a kind of method which deals with language analysis, and studies structures and lexical patterns found in digital databases.⁵ This method helps language learners study corpora with a computer program (i.e., a concordancer). A selected word and portions of sentences including that word, called the Key-Word-In Context (KWIC), can be found via a concordancer. A concordance of a search can present many concordance lines for language learners to read and analyze. This format also lets users see the lexical or grammatical items

⁴ Cook, G. (1998). The uses of reality: A reply to Ronald Carter. *ELT Journal* 52, 1, 57–63

⁵ Cobb, T. (1997). Is there any measurable learning from hands on concordancing? *System* 25, 3, 301–15

that collocate with the key word. EFL learners and teachers can benefit from this information on lexical or grammatical patterns of real language.⁶

DDL (Data Driven Learning) has also taken its place in language teaching.

The idea of DDL was actually first proposed by Johns (1991) with an aim to implement concordancing materials in the field of second language acquisition (SLA). It is an approach which differs from traditional learning approaches in that it requires students to observe a particular phenomenon of a language presented by concordance lines and hypothesize how this phenomenon of a language works, and then see whether the hypothesis is correct. It is indeed a pedagogic continuity from a product approach, which presents the specific aspects of language to the learners by exposing them to contexts, to a process approach in which DDL stimulates creativity and self-discovery learning among learners.

The teaching of grammar through DDL seems to rely on both product and process approaches, and it is suggested that grammar learning should mainly include activities which can raise language learners' consciousness rather than activities which try to focus on the teaching of rules.

Corpus-based /corpus-oriented/corpus-driven approaches have taken their place in the field of EFL/ESL. Teubert distinguishes a corpus-based approach from a corpus-driven approach by stating that linguistic findings can be considered as corpus-based findings if everything that is included is validated by corpus evidence, whereas linguistic findings can be considered as corpus-driven findings if they are directly taken from corpora.⁷ Additionally, a corpus-based approach differs from concordancing or a DDL approach in that learners make use of concordancing (i.e., a concordancer) to search corpus data in the DDL approach in order to observe a language phenomenon, whereas in a corpus-based approach,

⁶ Gavioli, L. & Aston, G. (2001). Enriching reality: Language corpora in language pedagogy. *ELT Journal* 55, 3, 238–46.

⁷ Hadley, G. (2002). Sensing the winds of change: an introduction to data-driven learning. *RELC Journal*, 33, 2, 99-124.

they use corpus data in order to test their existing ideas (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001). Tognini-Bonelli (2001) also defines the corpus-driven/corpus-based/corpus-oriented approach as a methodology in which the corpus serves as an empirical basis where language researchers, learners and teachers see real linguistic data prior to their assumptions and expectations. The researcher also claimed that a corpus is an inventory of language data, and appropriate materials, for which the corpus-driven/corpusbased/corpus-oriented approach was taken into consideration while being prepared, could support intuitive knowledge, and verify expectations. The corpus driven/corpus-based/corpus-oriented approach is apparently a method where data is used to confirm linguistic pre-set explanations and assumptions .⁸

The combination of corpora and concordancers shows that a promising future in the field of language teaching and learning is offered to language teachers and researchers by letting learners discover specific patterns and change their minds by observing extensive naturally occurring examples in real texts .By using the information based on corpora, materials developers and teachers can also increase the meaningful input that is provided to learners.

There are two ways in which corpora can influence language teaching. The indirect approach centers upon the researchers who are the provider of corpora for language teachers, materials designers, and course developers, all of which use the evidence derived from corpora while designing courses for language classes or developing teaching materials for the field ⁹. On the other hand, the direct approach centers upon language learners and teachers who search and use corpora themselves in order to discover the specific patterns of language or the behavior of words .¹⁰ The next section will focus on the indirect applications of corpora in language teaching.

⁸ Tognini Bonelli, E. (2010). Theoretical overview of the evolution of corpus linguistics. In: A. O'Keeffe & M. McCarthy (eds.), *Routledge handbook of corpus linguistics*(pp. 14-27). London: Routledge.

⁹ Hunston, S. (2002). *Corpora in applied linguistics*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University

¹⁰ Bernardini, S. (2002). Exploring new directions for discovery learning. In B. Kettemann & G. Marko (Eds.), *Teaching and learning by doing corpus analysis*(pp. 165–182). Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Rodopi.

REFERENCE

1. Aston, G. (2000). Corpora and language teaching. In L. Burnard & T. McEnery (Eds.), *Rethinking language pedagogy from a corpus perspective* (pp. 7–17). Frankfurt, Germany: Peter Lang.
2. Aston, G. (2001). *Learning with corpora*. Houston, TX: Athelstan.
3. Bennett, G. R. (2010). *Using corpora in the language learning classroom*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
4. Bernardini, S. (2002). Exploring new directions for discovery learning. In B. Kettemann & G. Marko (Eds.), *Teaching and learning by doing corpus analysis* (pp. 165–182). Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Rodopi.
5. Gaskell, D., & Cobb, T. (2004). Can learners use concordance feedback for writing errors? *System*, 32, 301–319.
6. Hunston, S. (2002). *Corpora in applied linguistics*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University
6. Sinclair, J. M. (1991). *Corpus concordance collocation*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
7. Tognini Bonelli, E. (2010). Theoretical overview of the evolution of corpus linguistics. In: A. O'Keeffe & M. McCarthy (eds.), *Routledge handbook of corpus linguistics* (pp. 14-27). London: Routledge