

ENHANCING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING THROUGH DATA-DRIVEN LEARNING: A CORPUS-BASED APPROACH TO TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Abstract

The increasing availability of digital language corpora has transformed approaches to English language teaching. Data-Driven Learning (DDL), introduced by Johns (1991), encourages learners to explore authentic language data and discover linguistic patterns independently. Unlike traditional teacher-centered instruction, DDL promotes learner autonomy, analytical thinking, and contextualized language learning. This article examines the role of Data-Driven Learning in teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). Through a review of relevant literature, the study explores how DDL contributes to vocabulary acquisition, grammar development, collocational competence, and learner engagement. Practical classroom examples are provided to demonstrate the pedagogical application of DDL. The findings suggest that Data-Driven Learning is an effective approach for improving language proficiency and fostering independent learning skills among EFL learners.

Keywords: Data-Driven Learning, Corpus Linguistics, English Language Teaching, TEFL, Vocabulary Learning, Learner Autonomy

The rapid advancement of technology has significantly influenced language education. Traditional language teaching methods often rely on textbooks and teacher explanations, which may not fully represent authentic language use. Consequently, learners may struggle to understand how words and grammatical structures function in real-life contexts.

Data-Driven Learning (DDL) emerged as an innovative pedagogical approach within Corpus Linguistics. The term was first introduced by Johns (1991), who described learners as "language detectives" capable of discovering language patterns through the analysis of authentic corpus data. Rather than receiving rules directly

from teachers, learners investigate examples and formulate conclusions independently.

DDL is based on the use of corpora—large electronic collections of authentic spoken and written texts. Through concordance software, students can examine numerous examples of language use, identify patterns, and develop a deeper understanding of vocabulary, grammar, and discourse.

The purpose of this article is to examine the effectiveness of Data-Driven Learning in English language teaching and discuss its contributions to vocabulary development, grammatical competence, and learner autonomy.

This study employs a qualitative literature review methodology. Academic publications related to Data-Driven Learning, Corpus Linguistics, and English language teaching were systematically analyzed.

Vocabulary knowledge is fundamental to language proficiency. Traditional vocabulary instruction often presents words in isolation, limiting learners' understanding of contextual usage.

DDL addresses this issue by exposing students to authentic examples. Through corpus exploration, learners observe how words occur naturally and identify common collocations.

Data-Driven Learning (DDL) is a pedagogical approach derived from Corpus Linguistics that enables learners to discover language patterns through the direct examination of authentic language data. The concept was first introduced by Tim Johns (1991), who described learners as "language detectives" actively investigating language rather than passively receiving information from teachers.

DDL is based on the premise that language learning becomes more effective when students engage in inductive learning. Instead of being given grammatical rules or vocabulary explanations, learners analyze concordance lines generated from corpora and infer linguistic patterns independently. This process encourages deeper cognitive engagement and promotes long-term retention of language knowledge.

A corpus is a large, electronically stored collection of authentic spoken or written texts that represents real language use. Modern corpora contain millions of words from diverse sources such as newspapers, academic articles, books,

conversations, websites, and social media. Examples include the British National Corpus (BNC), the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), and the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE).

For example, students investigating the word *make* may discover the following collocations:

make a decision

make a mistake

make progress

make an effort

By analyzing multiple concordance lines, learners understand which combinations are natural and frequently used.

Research indicates that corpus-based vocabulary learning improves retention and promotes deeper lexical knowledge because students actively engage with authentic language data rather than memorizing isolated definitions.

Grammar instruction traditionally involves explicit explanations followed by controlled practice. In contrast, DDL encourages inductive learning, where students discover grammatical rules through observation.

For instance, learners may investigate the use of the Present Perfect tense by examining concordance lines containing the word *have*.

Examples:

I have lived here for five years.

She has completed the project.

They have never visited London.

Through analysis, students infer the grammatical structure and communicative function of the tense.

Research has shown that DDL enhances grammatical awareness because learners focus on authentic usage patterns rather than abstract rules.

One of the greatest challenges for EFL learners is the appropriate use of collocations.

For example, learners may incorrectly produce expressions such as:

strong rain

do a mistake

Corpus investigation reveals that native speakers typically use:

heavy rain

make a mistake

By examining authentic examples, students develop collocational awareness and improve language accuracy.

A major advantage of DDL is its emphasis on learner-centered education. Students become active participants in the learning process by conducting linguistic investigations and evaluating evidence independently.

For example, when uncertain whether to use *interested in* or *interested on*, learners can search a corpus and compare frequency patterns. Such activities promote autonomous learning and reduce dependence on teacher explanations.

The findings indicate that Data-Driven Learning provides significant benefits for English language teaching. Unlike traditional approaches, DDL allows learners to interact directly with authentic language examples and construct knowledge through discovery.

The effectiveness of DDL can be explained through constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes active participation in the learning process. By exploring corpus data, learners become researchers who observe patterns, formulate hypotheses, and test conclusions.

Furthermore, DDL promotes deeper language awareness. Students not only learn vocabulary and grammar but also understand how linguistic features operate within authentic contexts. This contributes to greater language accuracy and communicative competence.

Despite its advantages, DDL also presents challenges. Teachers require adequate training in corpus tools, and learners may initially find concordance lines difficult to interpret. Therefore, scaffolded instruction and carefully designed activities are essential for successful implementation.

Nevertheless, numerous studies have demonstrated that the benefits of DDL outweigh these challenges, particularly in higher education and advanced language learning contexts.

Data-Driven Learning represents a valuable innovation in English language teaching. By utilizing authentic corpus data, DDL promotes vocabulary acquisition, grammatical competence, collocational awareness, and learner autonomy. Unlike traditional teacher-centered approaches, DDL encourages students to actively investigate language and construct knowledge independently.

The review suggests that integrating Data-Driven Learning into EFL classrooms can enhance both linguistic proficiency and analytical thinking skills. As digital resources become increasingly accessible, DDL is likely to play an important role in the future of language education.

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