

IMPROVING STUDENTS' LEXICAL RESOURCE AND CRITICAL THINKING THROUGH CORPUS LINGUISTICS

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Abstract

The development of lexical resource and critical thinking skills is essential for successful language learning in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. Traditional vocabulary instruction often emphasizes memorization of isolated words, which may limit learners' ability to use vocabulary appropriately and critically analyze language in authentic contexts. Corpus Linguistics offers an innovative pedagogical approach by providing learners with access to authentic language data through corpora and concordance tools. This article examines how corpus-based learning can enhance students' lexical resource and critical thinking skills. Drawing on previous empirical studies and theoretical perspectives, the paper discusses the role of Data-Driven Learning (DDL) in promoting vocabulary expansion, collocational competence, learner autonomy, and analytical thinking. Examples of classroom activities are provided to illustrate practical applications of corpus-based instruction. The findings suggest that Corpus Linguistics significantly contributes to vocabulary development while simultaneously fostering critical thinking through discovery-based learning.

Keywords: Corpus Linguistics, lexical resource, critical thinking, Data-Driven Learning, TEFL, vocabulary acquisition

Vocabulary knowledge is one of the strongest predictors of language proficiency. Learners with a broad lexical resource can communicate more effectively, comprehend authentic texts, and produce more accurate written and spoken language. However, many EFL learners struggle with vocabulary acquisition because traditional teaching methods frequently focus on rote memorization rather than contextualized language use.

At the same time, educational institutions increasingly emphasize the development of critical thinking skills. Critical thinking enables learners to analyze information, identify patterns, evaluate evidence, and make informed decisions. In language learning, these skills help students understand how language functions in authentic contexts.

Critical thinking is an essential educational skill that enables learners to analyze information, evaluate evidence, and make reasoned decisions. In English language teaching, it supports deeper comprehension, effective communication, and learner autonomy. Activities such as discussions, problem-solving tasks, text analysis, and corpus-based investigations help students develop critical thinking while improving their language proficiency.

Corpus Linguistics, the study of language through large collections of authentic texts known as corpora, provides opportunities to address both challenges simultaneously. Through corpus-based activities, learners investigate language patterns, discover meanings, and formulate conclusions independently. Such an approach transforms students from passive recipients of information into active language researchers.

Therefore, this study aims to explore how Corpus Linguistics can improve students' lexical resource and critical thinking skills in EFL classrooms.

This article adopts a qualitative literature-review approach. Relevant studies on Corpus Linguistics, vocabulary acquisition, and critical thinking development were analyzed. Sources included peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and conference papers focusing on corpus-based language teaching and Data-Driven Learning (DDL).

Corpus Linguistics exposes learners to authentic language usage rather than artificially constructed textbook examples. Through concordance lines, students observe how words occur in different contexts and identify common collocations, grammatical patterns, and semantic associations.

For example, a learner investigating the word *commit* in a corpus may observe the following collocations:

commit a crime

commit an offense

commit suicide

commit oneself to a project

By examining multiple examples, students learn not only the meaning of the word but also its typical usage patterns.

Research indicates that corpus-based instruction enhances vocabulary acquisition, retention, and appropriate usage by allowing learners to discover linguistic patterns independently. Corpus-based learning also develops collocational awareness, which is essential for achieving native-like fluency.

Corpus-based learning requires learners to analyze linguistic evidence, compare examples, formulate hypotheses, and evaluate conclusions. These processes align closely with core components of critical thinking.

For instance, students may investigate the difference between the words *big* and *large*. By examining concordance lines, they discover that:

big problem

big decision

big mistake

occur more frequently than:

large problem

large decision

large mistake

From these observations, learners infer that although both words have similar meanings, their usage differs according to context.

Such activities encourage:

- observation,
- analysis,
- interpretation,
- hypothesis formation,
- evidence-based reasoning.

Studies have reported that corpus-based research and Data-Driven Learning contribute to the development of critical thinking because learners actively explore

and interpret authentic linguistic data rather than simply accepting teacher explanations.

The findings demonstrate that Corpus Linguistics provides a powerful framework for vocabulary learning and cognitive development. Unlike traditional vocabulary instruction, corpus-based learning emphasizes authentic language use and learner discovery.

The theoretical foundation of Data-Driven Learning positions learners as language investigators. According to this approach, students learn more effectively when they actively explore linguistic patterns rather than passively receive information. Corpus tools encourage learners to notice recurring structures, compare examples, and formulate generalizations about language use.

Furthermore, vocabulary growth and critical thinking appear to be interconnected. Research suggests that greater vocabulary knowledge is associated with stronger critical thinking abilities because lexical competence facilitates comprehension, analysis, and reasoning.

The use of corpora also promotes learner autonomy. Students gain the ability to verify language usage independently, reducing reliance on teachers and dictionaries. This aligns with modern educational goals that emphasize lifelong learning and self-directed inquiry.

Corpus Linguistics offers significant pedagogical benefits for EFL education. By providing access to authentic language data, corpus-based instruction enhances students' lexical resource through contextualized vocabulary learning, collocation awareness, and improved language accuracy. Simultaneously, it promotes critical thinking by engaging learners in observation, analysis, hypothesis formation, and evidence-based reasoning.

The review suggests that integrating corpus tools into language classrooms can transform vocabulary learning from memorization into an active process of linguistic discovery. Consequently, Corpus Linguistics should be considered an essential component of modern EFL instruction aimed at developing both linguistic competence and higher-order thinking skills.

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