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**Ye Dongling**  
Department of Foreign  
Languages, Yangtze  
University, Jingzhou, Hubei,  
China

## A study on corpus-based vocabulary teaching in secondary classroom

**Ye Dongling**

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### Abstract

The indirect application of corpora in foreign language teaching has won wide recognition. The application of corpora in teaching is in line with the development of educational trends, with data-driven theories, guiding students' independent inquiry, in line with the concept of student-centered teaching, and promoting the development of discovery, independent and inquiry-based learning concepts. This paper focuses on the direct application of corpora in foreign language teaching (i.e., foreign language classroom teaching practice), and summarizes the achievements of the foreign language community in the field of corpus construction and pedagogical applications, with a view to providing teachers and learners with certain reference in the teaching and learning of vocabulary.

**Keywords:** Corpus; vocabulary teaching; secondary teaching

### Introduction

Tim Johns (1991) <sup>[10]</sup>. First proposed a foreign language learning method - Data-driven learning (DDL). Data-driven learning is student-centered, and all activities and exercises in the classroom are centered around the student. Students first observe the designed teaching materials, make hypotheses and inferences, and finally summarize the language facts and patterns through analysis and discussion and experimental demonstration, which is also known as OHE (Liang *et al.*, 2010:109) <sup>[7]</sup>. In such an autonomous learning process, student exploratory learning is fostered, and the teacher only guides, encourages, and helps the students to learn. The corpus that students are exposed to in this process is all derived from real-life situations, which is different from the traditional mode of learning materials selected from grammar books or dictionaries. The direct application of corpus data and retrieval technology to foreign language teaching opens up a new way of thinking and provides new methods for foreign language teaching.

### The Theoretical Development of Corpus-based Language Teaching

A corpus is a collection of real-life cases of real occurrences, which provides a certain basis for linguistic research. Corpus is not only a research resource for scholars when studying language usage, but also an important part of language teaching. Early applications of corpus classroom teaching were selective and fragmented corpus-assisted teaching, so there is a need to move from DDL to educational needs-driven corpus-assisted teaching (He, 2019) <sup>[6]</sup>. Corpora and their methods have been directly or indirectly applied to foreign language teaching over the past nearly 40 years. So far the direct application of corpus in foreign language teaching is still in the experimental stage and has not become a mainstream foreign language teaching concept, while the indirect application of corpus has won wide recognition and attention (Xu *et al.*, 2017) <sup>[13]</sup>. Vocabulary teaching is one of the fields in which corpus resources and research tools have been applied to foreign language teaching for the earliest time and with the most achievements. Synthesizing the research results of existing scholars, corpus has been developed rapidly in recent years, becoming an important resource and means in language research and English teaching, and promoting English teaching.

### The Application of Corpus-based Language Teaching

In recent decades, corpus linguistics has developed rapidly in teaching and vocabulary. The research of corpus linguistics in teaching mainly includes the theoretical research of corpus-

**Corresponding Author:**  
**Ye Dongling**  
Department of Foreign  
Languages, Yangtze  
University, Jingzhou, Hubei,  
China

assisted foreign language teaching and the utilization of corpus resources in teaching practice. However, most of them are used in language research, and fewer of them are really used in practical teaching, and the research on the application of corpus in vocabulary teaching is mostly theoretical research.

In terms of empirical research, several researchers have conducted studies on different levels of educators at different stages. Sun (2007)<sup>[9]</sup>. Applied corpus and DDL approaches to the teaching of high school English and proved that new technologies and learning methods are helpful for high school students to learn vocabulary, especially in terms of deeper knowledge of vocabulary and long-lasting vocabulary memorization. This is consistent with the results of Chen's (2014)<sup>[5]</sup>. Experimental study, in which a corpus was used in high school English classroom teaching, and the teaching design was centered on word block learning, and the experiment proved that the students' composition scores could be significantly improved. Huang (2014)<sup>[11]</sup>. Conducted a study on the data-driven learning method for vocabulary grammar learning, and found that the experimental group that utilized the corpus used more collocations, and the error rate was lower, which indicated that the experimental group utilized the corpus to learn vocabulary in the same way, and the error rate was lower. And had a lower error rate, indicating that the corpus-indexed line learning approach helps learners to improve the accuracy of vocabulary use. Nina (2015)<sup>[12]</sup> preferred collocation in vocabulary teaching. He conducted verb-adverb collocations to explore the differences between corpus-based and traditional activities, and the results showed that students who participated in corpus-based activities outperformed those who participated in traditional activities in all areas. And Al-Mahbashi *et al.* (2015)<sup>[1]</sup> found that by comparing the differences in learning outcomes between corpus-based and dictionary-based vocabulary learning methods, the following was found: corpus-based corpus-based vocabulary learners have a better understanding of word meanings and collocations, and their learning outcomes are better than dictionary vocabulary learning method regardless of the length of time they use the corpus-based vocabulary learning method.

## Materials and Methods

At the beginning of this study, it aimed to address a broader question: what is the basic application of corpus resources in secondary school English classroom teaching? As the study progresses, it can be refined into two research questions: 1) What are the attitudes of secondary school English teachers towards the use of corpora in teaching and learning, and 2) What are the influencing factors or challenges that secondary school English teachers perceive in the use of corpora in teaching and learning? In this way, the feasibility and practicability of corpus resources for secondary school English teaching can be explored.

This study was conducted with pre-service and post-service novice secondary school English teachers (1-2 years of teaching experience) with some corpus knowledge background, including two pre-service and two novice teachers who were employed in different secondary schools. Based on the case study paradigm, this study adopted a qualitative research methodology through semi-structured interviews to find out, through the perspectives of four secondary school teachers, what is the basic application of

corpus resources in the actual teaching and learning in secondary school classrooms. The outline of the interviews is as follows:

1. What do you know about corpus technology?
2. What is your attitude towards the application of corpus in teaching English in secondary schools?
3. Have you tried to apply corpus to secondary school English teaching? What are the main aspects?
4. What are the problems and difficulties in the current application?
5. What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of corpus teaching compared with traditional teaching methods?
6. Would you like to continue to apply corpora in teaching in the future?

## Results and Discussion

Overall, all four teachers recognized the feasibility and effectiveness of corpus teaching. They think there are several advantages from the students' point of view, firstly, finding patterns and summarizing from the corpus in a cooperative group learning way can improve students' analytical and predictive ability, and enhance their sense of cooperation and independent learning; secondly, through the presentation of the corpus to make the words that the students have learned recurring, the students continue to deepen their impression of the vocabulary during the participatory activities, so as to help the students to break the bad learning style of rote memorization; furthermore, through the effective teaching of vocabulary by using the corpus, the students can improve their output vocabulary ability, enrich their vocabulary, and improve their speaking skills. Moreover, through the use of corpus for effective teaching of vocabulary, students can improve their output vocabulary ability, enrich their vocabulary and improve their speaking and writing ability.

But the teachers are little reluctant to utilize corpora due to lack of corpus-based teacher training. Without proper training, teachers may not be able to learn about corpora and thus view corpus use as "limited to higher education". In addition, although most teachers believe that DDL is effective for both teachers and learners, they believe that the use of corpora is time-consuming, with the variety of language sources in corpora, and the complexity of corpus retrieval reducing their motivation to use corpora in language teaching. Also in terms of corpus applications, many teachers face technical difficulties in their use: this is further exacerbated by the fact that many widely accessible corpora are used as tools for language research rather than with pedagogical goals in mind, and that their content and design do not necessarily meet pedagogical needs. Another problem with corpus use in secondary education is also related to curriculum requirements. Many language teachers agree that language learning should be based on rich materials, which seems to make the use of corpora an attractive option. However, factors such as the matching of school syllabus and the ensuing time constraints of the course were also cited as an additional problem that hinders the integration of corpus use in the classroom.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the use of corpora in teaching and learning can be of great benefit to both teachers and learners. Corpora can guide students to observe, analyze and

summarize more comprehensively and intuitively, and provide students with more opportunities for independent thinking. The relative lack of corpus application in secondary school English teaching was found through combing through the literature, and it is hoped that through further research, corpus will be brought more into the field of secondary school teaching in order to better guide the teaching practice.

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