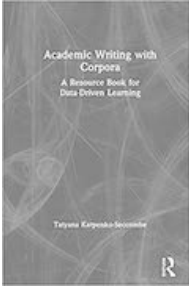


Academic Writing with Corpora: A Resource Book for Data-Driven Learning

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Academic Writing with Corpora: A Resource Book for Data-Driven Learning			
Author:	Tatyana Karpenko-Seccombe (2020)		
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Pp. x + 217	978-0-429-05992-6 (e book)	£27.99	

Data-driven Learning (DDL), generally defined as the use of corpora for L2 language learning and teaching, has been touted, both theoretically and empirically, to be a promising pedagogical approach (see e.g., Boulton & Cobb’s, 2017 meta-analysis); however, its use is still confined both geographically and contextually. Despite calls for endeavours to normalise corpus-based pedagogy in L2 classes, it is often acknowledged that a limitation of DDL is that it has not made serious inroads into the L2 classroom due to the lack of appropriate materials introducing teachers and learners to corpus-based learning. Nevertheless, efforts have been made to resolve this issue, and *Academic Writing with Corpora: A Resource Book for Data-Driven Learning* is a step in this direction.

This resource targets teachers and learners alike. It guides teachers to incorporate corpus-based learning into their writing classes and helps learners to independently utilise corpus materials to improve their writing by fostering autonomous problem-solving and consciousness-raising skills regarding communicative aspects of academic writing. It assumes at least basic familiarity with grammatical terms necessary for conducting corpus work. It also relies on freely-accessible materials and comprises activities to use and analyse corpora, as well as to develop academic writing skills. The book includes four parts: an introductory segment and

three main sections covering a) working on language patterns, b) writing for different academic purposes, and c) writing for research purposes. There is also an answer key and a glossary.

In the introductory segment, Karpenko-Seccombe acquaints readers with corpus terminology and the chosen corpora and concordancing programmes, including Lextutor, BNC-English corpora, MICUSP and Skell. Corpora are introduced in turn and a sequence for navigating them is adopted by the author; that is, they are first briefly described. Then, search options are shown and their different affordances are demonstrated, starting with reading concordance lines and moving to manipulating concordancing functions (e.g., keyword search options, frequency information, part of speech, and keyword in context). This part is essential, particularly for corpus novices, as it familiarises and prepares them for corpus work in subsequent sections.

Having familiarised readers with corpus tools, Karpenko-Seccombe moves to the first section dedicated to the exploration of language patterns. Herein, problem-solving activities demonstrating how to use corpora to correct typical ESL/EFL learner difficulties in grammar, lexico-grammar, vocabulary, sentence construction, and paraphrasing are introduced. Guided corpus queries start with working on word combinations, word choice (e.g., formality, appropriacy), word meaning, and misused/confused words and phrases. Readers are led to conduct corpus queries to resolve grammatical issues, such as tenses. Then the work turns to lexico-grammatical issues. Tasks in this area concentrate on achieving “naturalness” by scrutinising collocations. Attention is eventually turned to learning how to use linking words and phrases appropriately. In this section, the lexico-grammar segment is particularly important, as it lies at the heart of corpus-based learning and has been proven to be a problematic area for EFL/ESL student writers.

In section two, the focus is on specific features relevant to academic writing courses. One target structure covered is (counter) argumentation, where readers are directed to choose rhetorical structures for presenting and refuting arguments. Another feature considered is “stance-making.” The activities here centre around searching for different stance devices (e.g., attitude markers, hedges, boosters, and self-mention) and other structures (e.g., evaluative language) through different corpus functions, like frequency of occurrence, register, and disciplinary variation. Other aspects of these activities involve comparing/contrasting and causality. Graduate students with advanced language proficiency may highly value the abstract concepts in this section, particularly stance and voice.

After dealing with general features in academic papers, Karpenko-Seccombe turns to specific aspects of research writing in section three, namely the introduction, methods, results, and discussion sections (IMRD structure), in addition to other features. Corpus functions are used to scrutinise how seasoned writers utilise specific rhetorical moves to structure their research paper sections. Students can inspect how writers use strategies to integrate sources, express claims and criticism, evaluate argument and evidence, disagree with others, and establish a research niche. Other tasks include evaluating the use of rhetorical moves to present and discuss findings, compare and contrast study findings with others from previous research, assess the study hypothesis, and highlight the research’s originality and its field contribution. Although content in this section, according to the author, suits both undergraduate and graduate learners,

most appears to be conducive to graduate students, as they are often engaged in higher-level research writing.

By and large, this resource is a timely response to “normalisation” calls in the arena of corpus-based pedagogy, aiming to make DDL part of mainstream classes. It is a practical resource for extending corpus literacy beyond the confines of applied corpus linguistics circles, as up until now, “the main consumers of research are other researchers rather than teachers or decision-makers” in this field (Boulton, 2019, p. 5).

One of the major strengths of *Academic Writing with Corpora* pertains to its approach. Instead of the pure, inductive, discovery-based method traditionally involving the “observation, hypothesization, and experimentation” triad, a more “guided approach” reflecting tenets of social-constructivism (scaffolding) is espoused. This may alleviate the cognitive workload for readers, specifically learners who are used to deductive learning approaches (Smith, 2009). Further, the reliance on free and user-friendly corpora eases access to DDL, particularly for users from disadvantaged backgrounds with no previous concordancing knowledge or experience. Lastly, unlike other traditional instructional materials for academic writing pedagogy, the book offers an alternative approach for confronting certain current problematic areas in ESL/EFL writing contexts such as paraphrasing and stance-making (Wu & Paltridge, 2021). A corpus-based approach such as the one adopted in this book could be the key for improving these features.

Nonetheless, there are some caveats. First, from a DDL perspective, the content would be more appreciated if some parts were extended; for instance, little attention was given to lexicogrammar (less than 3 pages), although it is a challenge for L2 writers. Also, many tasks rely on Lextutor Concordancer; however, it would be more appealing to lower-proficiency readers if simpler and more user-friendly interfaces (e.g., Skell) were extensively used.

Despite this, *Academic Writing with Corpora* makes an important contribution to corpus-driven pedagogy. The author has accomplished a balance of covering varied areas (both in terms of target structures and concordancing functions) within the space constraints of a small resource. In short, the adopted corpus consultation method, the selected corpus tools and the targeted wide array of features enable this resource to attain broad appeal in the academic English classroom.

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