



Book Review: Demystifying Corpus Linguistics for English Language Teaching¹

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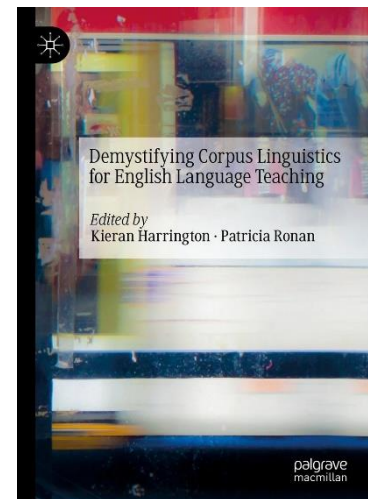
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Harrington, K., & Ronan, P. (Eds.). (2023). *Demystifying
Corpus Linguistics for English Language Teaching*.
Palgrave Macmillan Cham.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-11220-1>



¹ Reseña bibliográfica

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HOW TO CITE THIS REVIEW

Mohebbi, M., & Qasim Mahmood, R. (2025). Book Review: Demystifying Corpus Linguistics for English Language Teaching. *Lenguaje* 53(2), e40214877. <https://doi.org/10.25100/lenguaje.v53i2.14877>

Book Review

As second language (L2) learners and now L2 teachers in an English as a foreign language context, we have been fascinated by learning from songs, movies, and books written by famous authors. Our reason was to learn English from native speakers. Since we began teaching English as a second/foreign language, we have used authentic materials. During his master's degree, Rizgar Qasim Mahmood learned about using corpora and was introduced to the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA).

Although we have read extensively about using authentic materials as primary sources in L2 classes (Flowerdew, 2009; Jones & Waller, 2015; O'Keeffe & McCarthy, 2022), we had not encountered a comprehensive source to equip readers on how to use corpus linguistics for English language teaching (ELT) until we read the book '*Demystifying Corpus Linguistics for English Language Teaching*' edited by Kieran Harrington and Patricia Ronan. Taken as a whole, the volume offers a critical investigation into the pivotal contributions of corpus linguistics to English language teaching.

This book is a must-read source for expanding our knowledge on using corpora as the primary authentic resource in teaching. It provides comprehensive guidelines on using corpora in L2 teaching processes. The volume strives to demystify corpus linguistics and foster its incorporation into a holistic language-teaching framework. Throughout the chapters, the contributors demonstrate the versatility of corpus resources and their concrete pedagogical applications across grammar instruction and the development of reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills.

The volume is organized into fourteen chapters, commencing with Chapter 1, a concise overview of corpus linguistics authored by Kieran Harrington and Patricia Ronan. Chapter 1 provides a fertile ground for readers new to the field, starting with some thought-provoking questions to engage them and inspire them to continue reading. It also provides a solid foundation for those who may be less familiar with the precise meaning of corpus linguistics. From this chapter, readers can understand what corpora are, with references to several types.

L2 teachers often question the materials used in their classes during the teaching process. Interestingly, in the first chapter, the authors address why corpus linguistics should be used in second language (L2) teaching. They state that "the nature of language is best studied and described through real, naturally occurring language and that observing how speakers perform, including their mistakes, provides valuable insights not only into their language performance but also their competence"(p. 2). This chapter convincingly argues for incorporating corpora into our teaching materials. Chapter 2, authored by Patricia Ronan, examines the pedagogical benefits and potential obstacles of classroom corpus use from the perspective of preservice teachers. Ronan contends that corpora are particularly apt for language instruction because they empower learners to test their own hypotheses

about grammaticality, locating authentic examples that confirm or disconfirm the patterns they observe. Thus, it can be inferred that corpora can lead learners to become more autonomous when they are familiar with using them as a learning resource.

The following chapters (3 - 8) extensively discuss how corpus linguistics can revolutionize language teaching to teach all skills of L2 learning. For instance, in Chapter 3, Jane Templeton and Ivor Timmis propose incorporating Data-Driven Learning into classroom activities. They restate that data-driven learning is essentially about having students probe the corpus independently to detect recurrent lexical, grammatical, and lexico-grammatical patterns. Interestingly, Chapter 3 bridges teaching practices with L2 theories, such as Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. In addition, throughout reading Chapter 4, readers can feel confident using corpus linguistics as an authentic and natural source. However, the authors caution readers not to confuse naturalness with native-like performance in the target language.

One of the main concerns of L2 teachers is the application of corpora in their classes. The authors of this book have addressed these concerns as if they were in teachers' minds. For example, Chapters 5 to 8 demonstrate using corpora tools in writing, reading, vocabulary, and grammar instructions. For example, the contributors argue that corpus-based work can heighten learners' motivation by blending computer-mediated collaboration with peers, offering explicit exposure to salient textual features, and nurturing greater learner autonomy during writing and editing tasks. Chapters 6 and 7 then extend this discussion, outlining the pedagogical gains of data-driven learning, most notably its positive impact on reading comprehension, and detailing practical strategies for integrating corpus analysis into grammar instruction. Concluding the section, Chapter 8 by Leo Selivan supplies hands-on guidance for exploiting corpus tools in vocabulary teaching, rendering it a handy reference for both instructors and students. Leo argues that corpora help teachers and learners understand the frequency of word occurrences in discourse, offering rich language exposure that learners, particularly EFL students, might otherwise lack. As such, corpora are an important resource for learning multi-word units like chunks and collocations.

As it is well-established, language and culture are two inseparable components of any language worldwide. The authors of this book have paid close attention to these two crucial aspects of teaching and learning an L2, and they have taken corpora to a deeper level. Chapter 9, written by Kieran Harrington, clearly demonstrates how data-driven learning can be operationalised in English-language classrooms, enabling students to probe and interpret the cultural subtleties embedded in authentic language use. Harrington also delves into the connection between culture and language teaching, arguing that "the embodiment of ways of life is omnipresent in all language" (p.166). Chapter 10, authored by Sarah Buschfeld and Emily Rose Weidle, enters the long-standing debate on "nativeness" in second-language pedagogy by interrogating traditional native-speaker norms and calling for the systematic inclusion of emerging English varieties in ELT. Drawing on research in World Englishes, language education, and corpus linguistics, they show how corpus-based inquiry can

expose learners to contemporary English's sociolinguistic and cultural breadth. Their argument anticipates Chapter 11, where Stefanie Riegler advances a persuasive case for a dedicated annotation framework for an English-as-a-Lingua-Franca corpus—an innovation designed to strengthen the pedagogical value of corpus evidence and streamline its adoption in language-teaching contexts. Riegler also highlights the urgent need for more mediation work to strengthen the relationship between ELF corpora and language instruction.

Fluency and accuracy are two main goals that teachers and learners have while learning an L2. To investigate how corpus linguistics can lead to achieving these goals, Chapters 12 and 13 explain how corpora can identify common errors learners make, providing educators with valuable insights to refine their teaching materials. Chapter 13 advances the discussion by illustrating how corpus-linguistic analysis can reconcile the discrepancy between the language presented in textbooks and the expressions that occur in authentic communication. Le Foll shows that when interrogated systematically, learner corpora reveal the recurrent difficulties that speakers of first-language backgrounds experience when attempting to produce specific grammatical constructions, thereby raising teachers' awareness of challenges related to their L1.

The volume concludes with a concise yet persuasive contribution by Patricia Ronan and Kieran Harrington (Chapter 14), which strongly advocates incorporating hands-on, corpus-based tasks into language pedagogy and details the substantial benefits that corpus methods can bring to classroom practice. The authors forge an explicit connection between the book's earlier theoretical discussions and day-to-day teaching by urging teachers to explore innovative, data-driven approaches. Numerous practical activities included in the chapter exemplify the pedagogical value of corpus work; however, readers lacking a formal background in linguistics may find portions of the material demanding, and the exclusive emphasis on English-language contexts could limit the book's resonance with a broader community of language educators. Even so, the chapter convincingly demonstrates how corpus insights can be translated into effective instructional techniques, thereby narrowing the gap between theory and practice.

Overall, *Demystifying Corpus Linguistics for English Language Teaching* is a timely and comprehensive resource for English instructors, teacher educators, and curriculum designers. By weaving conceptual discussion with classroom-oriented applications, the authors offer a clear blueprint for integrating corpus findings into pedagogical practice and show how corpus data can serve as a rich, authentic input for second-language acquisition.

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