Data-driven learning: Can and should language learners become corpus linguists?

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Corpora, or large digital textual databases, have been attracting attention of language educators since their emergence in the 1960s. Materials developers have used corpus information to create reference grammars, dictionaries, and textbooks that more adequately represent the target language than artificial examples. More recently, applied corpus linguists started using corpora in their language classes in a more direct fashion: while either creating corpus-based worksheets for classroom use or teaching their students to search corpora in order to complete learning tasks. Nevertheless, such more direct corpus-based applications, a.k.a. Data-Driven Learning (DDL), are still far from common pedagogical practice. One of the obstacles for a wider spread of DDL is its discovery-based nature that is akin to hypothesis-building and hypothesis-testing in academic research, which is deemed too challenging for language learners, especially at lower second language (L2) proficiency levels. In this talk, I address this challenge and ask the question: can and should we expect language learners to become researchers, or corpus linguists?

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