

Evaluating the effectiveness of Data-driven learning in the context of Italian L2 learning and teaching

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Data-driven learning (DDL) is known as the direct use of corpus data in the second language classroom (Leech, 1997), and is generally, though not exclusively, based on inductive, collaborative and pattern-hunting activities focused on concordances (Johns, 1991; Sinclair, 2003).

Over time, a variety of DDL approaches have been experimented with in terms of the corpus data used and the learning approach adopted (Boulton, 2017). A recent meta-analysis indicates that empirical studies aimed at evaluating its effectiveness show promise (Boulton & Cobb, 2017), though a number of shortcomings have been repeatedly pointed out. Two of these are:

- limited evidence concerning learners with a proficiency level other than advanced;
- limited evidence concerning learners of languages other than English.

This seminar will focus on an ongoing PhD project aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of using DDL principles and materials with pre-intermediate learners in an Italian L2 context.

More specifically, it addresses the following research questions:

1. Are there any significant differences when comparing a DDL to a traditional approach, in terms of collocational proficiency development?
2. How does transparency influence the development of collocational proficiency?
3. What is the students' general attitude towards working with concordance-based materials?

The project integrates native corpus data from PeC – Perugia Corpus (Spina, 2014) and learner corpus data from LoCCLI – Longitudinal Corpus of Chinese Learners of Italian (Spina, 2017), and focuses on Verb-Noun collocations, widely recognised as challenging even for learners at higher levels of proficiency (Bestgen & Granger, 2014; Nesselhauf, 2005; Wang, 2016).

Preliminary results of the research project will be presented and reflections on the steps discussed, especially in relation to data analysis and interpretation.

References

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