



## **THE ROLE OF THE NOW CORPUS IN DEVELOPING STUDENTS' LANGUAGE SKILLS**

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### **Abstract**

This study explores the role of the NOW (News on the Web) Corpus in enhancing students' language skills, focusing on vocabulary acquisition, collocation awareness, and contextual usage. The research examines how Corpus Linguistics facilitates language learning by providing authentic, up-to-date language data. Using both qualitative and quantitative methods, the study evaluates students' performance before and after integrating the NOW Corpus into their learning process. Results indicate a significant improvement in students' ability to recognize and use collocations, understand lexical nuances, and develop more natural language production. The discussion highlights the teaching implications of using corpus-based learning and the challenges associated with its integration into the curriculum.

**Keywords:** NOW Corpus, Corpus Linguistics, language skills, vocabulary acquisition, collocation awareness, contextual learning, language learning.

### **Introduction**

The increasing availability of digital linguistic resources has transformed language learning, with Corpus Linguistics playing a crucial role in providing real-world language data. The NOW Corpus, which compiles news articles published online since 2010, offers an up-to-date repository of authentic language usage. Given its extensive coverage and real-time updates, the corpus provides valuable insights into language trends, lexical patterns, and collocational behavior, which are essential for language acquisition.



While traditional language instruction often relies on textbooks that may not reflect contemporary usage, corpus-based approaches allow students to engage with real-world examples, fostering deeper lexical and grammatical awareness. This study aims to investigate how the NOW Corpus can support students in developing their language skills, particularly in improving vocabulary acquisition, enhancing collocation awareness, and fostering a better understanding of contextual usage.

The research addresses the following questions:

1. How does the NOW Corpus contribute to students' vocabulary acquisition?
2. To what extent does corpus-based learning improve collocation awareness?
3. What challenges do students and educators face in integrating the NOW Corpus into language learning?

The study involved 3 first-year university students specializing in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), all of whom were non-native English speakers. Participants were divided into two groups: an experimental group (30 students) who received corpus-based instruction and a control group (30 students) who followed traditional textbook-based learning.

- NOW Corpus: Used as the primary linguistic resource for vocabulary and collocation exercises. The NOW Corpus is a constantly updated database of online news articles, containing billions of words from English-language news sources. It is an excellent resource for analyzing real-world language use, identifying collocations, and improving vocabulary skills.

Identify word frequency – Understanding how often a word appears in real contexts.

Discover new vocabulary – Find emerging terms and expressions used in media.

Study word usage in different contexts – Observe how words change meaning in various news topics.

The NOW Corpus is a valuable tool for expanding vocabulary and recognizing natural collocations. By analyzing real-world examples from news articles, learners can improve their lexical accuracy and fluency in English.

- Pre-test and Post-test: Designed to assess students' vocabulary size, collocation knowledge, and contextual understanding before and after the intervention. The experimental group was trained in using the NOW Corpus to analyze word meanings, collocations, and contextual usage. Activities included searching for collocations, identifying lexical patterns, and comparing different usages across



various news sources. The control group followed traditional textbook-based vocabulary exercises without access to corpus tools. Before students engage with the NOW Corpus, they take a pre-test to evaluate:

Vocabulary Size – How many words they understand.

Collocation Knowledge – Their familiarity with common word pairings.

Contextual Understanding – Their ability to comprehend words in real-world usage.

After using the NOW Corpus for vocabulary and collocation exercises, students take a post-test to assess improvements in:

- Their ability to recognize high-frequency words in real contexts.
- Their accuracy in using collocations in sentences.
- Their understanding of nuanced word meanings in different contexts.

Using the NOW Corpus for pre-test and post-test assessments helps measure real progress in students' vocabulary size, collocation knowledge, and contextual understanding. It provides a data-driven approach to evaluating language learning outcomes.

- Surveys and Interviews: Collected qualitative data on students' experiences, difficulties, and perceived benefits of using corpus-based learning. Surveys and interviews were conducted to gather qualitative data on students' experiences, difficulties, and perceived benefits of using the NOW Corpus for learning vocabulary, collocations, and contextual understanding. Surveys and interviews showed that using the NOW Corpus helped students develop better vocabulary, stronger collocation skills, and improved contextual awareness. However, some students needed additional training to navigate the corpus effectively.

Participants from the experimental group provided feedback on their learning experience.

- Quantitative Analysis: Paired-sample t-tests were used to measure improvements in vocabulary and collocation recognition.

- Qualitative Analysis: Content analysis of student feedback identified key themes regarding the usability and effectiveness of the NOW Corpus.

### **Results: Vocabulary Acquisition**

The experimental group demonstrated a 35% improvement in vocabulary test scores, while the control group showed a 15% improvement. The use of the NOW



Corpus enabled students to recognize word meanings more effectively due to exposure to varied real-life contexts.

### **Collocation Awareness**

The experimental group exhibited a significant increase in accurate collocation usage. Pre-test scores indicated that students correctly identified collocations only 40% of the time, whereas post-test results showed an accuracy rate of 78%. The control group improved from 42% to 55%, highlighting the superiority of corpus-based learning.

### **Contextual Understanding**

Students in the experimental group demonstrated a better ability to use words appropriately in different contexts. Surveys revealed that 85% of students found corpus searches helpful in distinguishing between similar words (e.g., “highly recommended” vs. “strongly suggested”).

#### **Student Perceptions**

Interviews and survey data revealed that students appreciated the authenticity of corpus-based learning but found it initially challenging due to unfamiliarity with corpus tools. However, after practice, 90% of students reported feeling more confident in understanding and using new vocabulary.

#### **Discussion**

The findings highlight the effectiveness of corpus-based learning, particularly in enhancing collocation awareness and contextual understanding. The NOW Corpus provided exposure to real-life usage, helping students recognize patterns that are often absent in traditional learning materials.

- Authentic Language Input: The use of real-time data ensures that students engage with current language trends, reducing reliance on outdated textbook examples.
- Independent Learning: The corpus encourages self-directed exploration, allowing students to develop research skills crucial for lifelong learning.
- Enhanced Collocation Awareness: Unlike traditional learning, which often presents collocations in isolation, corpus-based learning allows students to discover patterns through contextual exposure.



These findings align with previous research on corpus linguistics in language education, supporting the argument that corpus-based learning enhances lexical competence.

This study demonstrates that integrating the NOW Corpus into language learning significantly improves students' vocabulary acquisition, collocation awareness, and contextual understanding. By engaging with real-world examples from authentic news sources, students develop a deeper and more practical grasp of language usage, moving beyond memorization to active language application.

The findings suggest that corpus-based approaches complement traditional learning methods by providing learners with authentic, dynamic, and contextually rich language exposure. Unlike conventional textbooks, which often present static and decontextualized examples, corpus-based learning allows students to explore real-time language trends, lexical variations, and natural collocations. This not only enhances their ability to use language accurately but also increases linguistic flexibility and adaptability in different communicative situations.

In conclusion, the integration of the NOW Corpus into English language teaching represents a powerful and innovative approach to language learning. Future research should explore longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of corpus-based learning, as well as the development of user-friendly corpus analysis tools and teacher training programs to optimize its implementation in language classrooms.

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