



DATA-DRIVEN LEARNING AS A STRATEGY FOR ENHANCING IELTS TASK 2 WRITING PERFORMANCE

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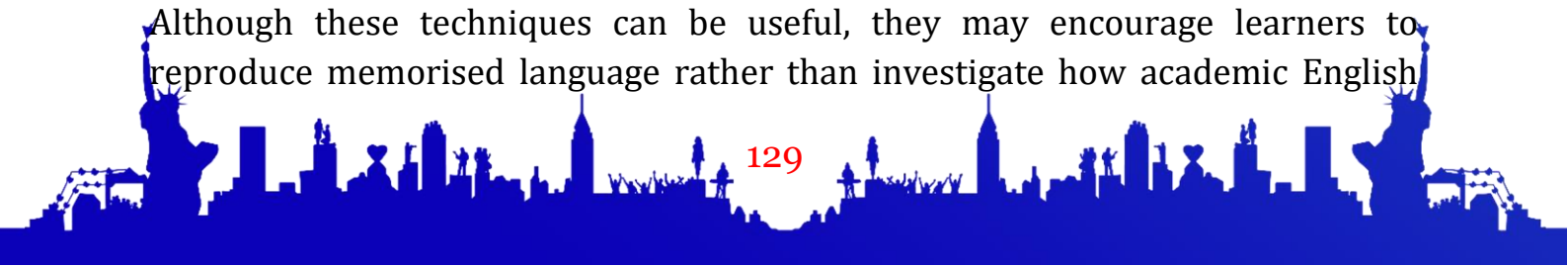
Abstract

IELTS Academic Writing Task 2 presents EFL learners with simultaneous linguistic and cognitive demands. Candidates must interpret a question, formulate a position, develop arguments, organise ideas and demonstrate appropriate vocabulary and grammatical control within a limited period. This article examines Data-Driven Learning (DDL) as a corpus-informed approach to addressing these challenges. An integrative review of research on corpus-based pedagogy and IELTS writing was conducted. The findings indicate that DDL can contribute to writing development through learner-centred investigation of authentic language patterns, particularly in the areas of collocation, phraseology, grammar and academic discourse. Corpus-based activities can also promote noticing, metalinguistic awareness and learner autonomy. However, corpus use may create cognitive and technological difficulties, particularly for lower-proficiency learners. The article concludes that DDL is most effective when supported by explicit teacher guidance, carefully designed tasks, collaborative learning and systematic writing practice. A corpus-informed IELTS writing cycle is proposed as a practical framework for classroom implementation.

Keywords: Data-Driven Learning; corpus linguistics; IELTS Writing Task 2; EFL writing; academic discourse; learner autonomy; writing pedagogy

1. Introduction

IELTS Academic Writing Task 2 requires candidates to respond to a point of view, argument or problem and produce an extended academic response. Task 2 contributes twice as much to the Writing score as Task 1, making it particularly important for candidates seeking to improve their overall IELTS performance. The task is evaluated through four criteria: Task Response, Coherence and Cohesion, Lexical Resource, and Grammatical Range and Accuracy. Strong performance therefore requires more than grammatical knowledge. Candidates must construct and support arguments, organise ideas logically and use language appropriately. Conventional IELTS preparation frequently focuses on model essays, fixed paragraph structures, vocabulary lists and teacher correction. Although these techniques can be useful, they may encourage learners to reproduce memorised language rather than investigate how academic English





operates. Data-Driven Learning offers a different approach. Learners use corpus evidence to investigate authentic examples, identify patterns and formulate hypotheses about language.

2. Methodology

This article employed an integrative review of research concerning:

- * corpus linguistics;
- * Data-Driven Learning;
- * corpus-based writing instruction;
- * academic discourse;
- * IELTS Writing Task 2.

The reviewed literature was analysed according to three dimensions:

- **linguistic development**, including vocabulary and grammar;
- **writing development**, including coherence and argumentation;
- **learner development**, including noticing, autonomy and metalinguistic awareness.

The resulting evidence was used to develop a concise corpus-informed model for IELTS writing instruction.

3. Results

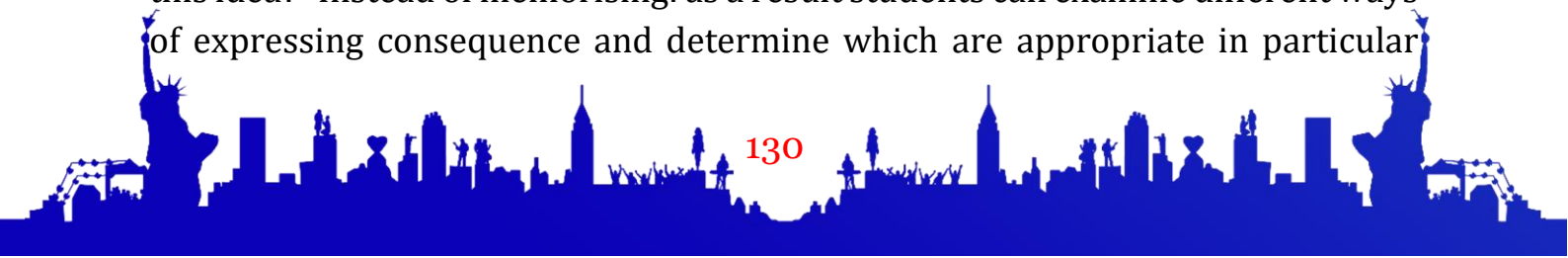
The literature indicates that DDL can produce positive effects on second-language development. Boulton's meta-analysis found large overall effects for corpus-based learning in both control/experimental comparisons and pre/post designs.

Corpus-based instruction is particularly useful for writing because students can investigate the language they actually need for written production.

The systematic review by Lusta et al. examined 89 relevant studies published between 1997 and 2022. It found significant pedagogical potential for DDL but also identified difficulties related to unfamiliar vocabulary, large amounts of data, technological issues and inductive interpretation. Tailored activities, supplementary guidance and peer/group learning were identified as useful forms of support. These findings indicate that the effectiveness of corpus-based IELTS instruction depends substantially on **how** corpus activities are designed.

4. Discussion

The central pedagogical advantage of DDL is that it changes learners' relationship with language. Instead of receiving a rule such as: "Use academic vocabulary." Students can investigate: "How do academic writers actually express this idea?" Instead of memorising: as a result students can examine different ways of expressing consequence and determine which are appropriate in particular





contexts. The process can be represented as: IELTS task → linguistic problem → corpus investigation → noticing → hypothesis → practice → writing → feedback → revision. This process is compatible with process-oriented writing pedagogy because corpus consultation can occur during both drafting and revision. However, unrestricted corpus exploration may be inappropriate for less proficient learners. The systematic review evidence shows that learners may struggle with the quantity and complexity of corpus information. Therefore, a teacher-guided approach is recommended: Phase 1: Diagnose: students complete an IELTS Task 2 essay.

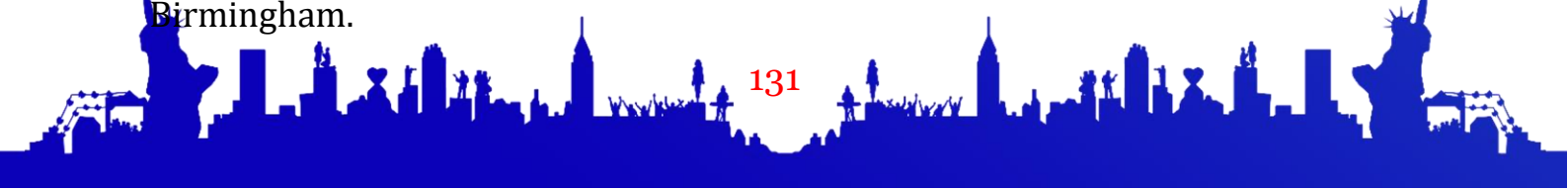
Phase 2: Identify: teacher and student identify recurrent linguistic problems. Phase 3: Investigate: Students explore selected corpus examples. Phase 4: Notice: Students identify recurring patterns. Phase 5: Apply: students use the patterns in new sentences and paragraphs. Phase 6: Revise: students apply corpus findings to their original essay. Phase 7: Reflect: Students record useful patterns and recurring errors. This framework combines corpus-based learning with IELTS assessment and process writing. A further advantage is learner autonomy. When students learn how to investigate language independently, they become less dependent on teachers for every lexical or grammatical decision. However, autonomy should develop progressively rather than being assumed from the beginning.

5. Conclusion

Data-Driven Learning provides a promising framework for integrating corpus linguistics into IELTS Academic Writing Task 2 preparation. Its principal contribution is the use of authentic language evidence to help learners notice, analyse and apply linguistic patterns. The approach can support vocabulary, grammar, phraseology, cohesion and academic discourse while simultaneously encouraging learner autonomy and metalinguistic awareness. Nevertheless, corpus use should not be regarded as an independent solution to IELTS writing difficulties. It should be combined with explicit instruction in task requirements, argument development, timed writing, feedback and revision.

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