



Slovak University Students' Assessment of Corpus-Driven Grammar Teaching Materials

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Corpus linguistics with its tools has become influential in the area of foreign languages teaching in recent decades; still, the direct use of corpus-driven materials in the classroom seems to be restricted. The present paper deals with the usability of corpus-driven teaching materials oriented on the specific field of articles in the university surroundings. The research will strive to investigate the effectiveness of corpus-driven teaching materials from several points of view. In order to collect data for the research, the researcher utilized a questionnaire consisting of 48 questions that was distributed to 94 university undergraduates. After carrying out the statistical evaluation, the research results show that university students are inclined to assess corpus-driven grammar teaching materials positively mainly because of these aspects: the access to authentic language, the access to information and topic that are relevant to the students, the compatibility with the syllabus. On the other hand, factors like the development of linguistic awareness, the development of critical thinking, the cooperation with other students do not play a substantial role since their statistical significance reaches only a negligible percentage. The study results indicate that it is advisable to include a corpus linguistic course into the training of prospective teachers.

Keywords: corpus linguistics, corpus-driven teaching material, article, English as a foreign language, EFL

INTRODUCTION

Recently, we have been observing trends, under the influence of several factors, like the global pandemic, the impact of IT technologies on everyday life, the development of artificial intelligence, urging expanding requirements on the quality of educational preparation of future professionals in numerous spheres. These processes find their reflection in the training of prospective teachers, too. Consequently, they have advanced to the adjustment of principal demands that are imposed on the qualification of a modern teacher who should show competence in incorporating new methodological procedures within the process of self-improvement – methodological procedures having their roots in corpus linguistics belong to prospective trends a modern teacher should follow.

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The mutual cooperation and integration of diverse spheres of science when searching for new solutions and learning styles in the contemporary educational situation is becoming very topical (Karpenko, 2017; Peñarroja, 2021; Demir, & Ari, 2023; Hendriani et al., 2023). This point has naturally lead to the increased need to determine connections between individual linguistic disciplines (morphology, corpus linguistics, in our case) and didactics when teaching a foreign language (the English language, in our case). As languages are complex systems including both linguistic and extra linguistic components; they make it possible from their essence to satisfy these requirements on the reciprocal bonds between disciplines.

This study is inspired by the trends mentioned above and by the fact that almost any teacher with experience in the area of English as a foreign language will point out articles as a source of difficulties for students, especially if articles as formal expressive means of the category of determination do not exist in their mother tongue. Therefore, the study will focus on this specific aspect of grammar learning – articles in the English language and investigate how Slovak university students perceive the application of corpus-driven materials for the needs of articles learning.

Literature Review

Corpus linguistics

With the above-enumerated interdisciplinary aspects in mind, the researcher employs theoretical and methodological background provided by corpus linguistics. In the most general understanding, the textual or linguistic corpus is described as a huge collection of information of a linguistic character elaborated via the utilization of IT technologies usable for the needs of linguistic research (Baker et al., 2006). Lindquist (2009) emphasizes that corpus linguistics is a methodology, comprising a series of related procedures that can be employed by researchers within numerous diverse theoretical learnings. Linguistic corpora are now applied intensively in numerous linguistic spheres, including contrastive linguistic studies, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, lexicography, forensic linguistics, semantics, translation studies, and language pedagogy (Flowerdew, 2012).

Linguistic corpora are transforming the procedures how the scholars work when exploring vocabulary and grammar systems of individual languages (Schmitt, 2010; Jones & Waller, 2015; Behrens et al., 2008; Wilson et al., 2006). In recent decades, corpus linguistics with its tools and techniques has been appropriate for vocabulary and grammar studies since linguistic corpora provide a direct empirical foundation how a lexical unit behaves instead of relying on traditional linguistic approaches (Meyer, 2002; O'Keeffe et al., 2007; McEnery et al., 2006). Considering this, corpus-based studies have provided better descriptions of different registers and dialects of native English (Lelakova & Toman, 2023; Granger et al., 2002).

The researcher will indicate within the research section that the choice of lexical units for the investigation has been motivated by their frequency, which is a useful starting point for grammar or vocabulary instruction (Reppen, 2010). Nevertheless, scholars often describe frequency as a relative feature that can be measured since diverse textual

corpora provide diverse frequency lists. In connection with this fact, Mahlberg (2005) claims that single lexical units in selected frequency lists provide limited information about the content of the whole text; on the other hand, their place in the frequency list does not provide much information about individual semantic components.

When speaking about the application of corpus linguistics for the study of grammar, the following areas of investigation have already been covered: frequency; chunks and colligation; semantic prosody (Jones & Waller, 2015). In other words, a linguistic corpus might inform a scholar about the frequency of a structure in a particular context (also in contrast with other grammatical forms), the collocations and colligations of individual structures of a language, the semantic prosody of a linguistic unit in certain contexts, and the differences between spoken and written forms in specific contexts. Moreover, corpora might tell a scholar about specialized applications of grammatical structures usable within English for Specific Purposes (Lacková, 2021; Leľáková, 2018; Biber et al., 1998; Flowerdew, 2012). To be more specific, Lindquist (2009) claims that many areas of grammar can be studied in textual corpora by means of relatively simple search procedures. He illustrates this assertion on the analyses of *who/whom*, on *be-* and *get-*passives, on adjective complementation, and on prepositional gerund or directly linked gerund.

Applications to English language teaching

Linguistic corpora have been influencing English language teaching for more than five decades, they have been applied to create self-study grammar practice books, reference grammars, usage manuals, syllabuses, learner dictionaries, and to develop supplementary teaching materials (Leňko-Szymańska & Boulton, 2005; Hidalgo et al., 2007; Frankenberg-Garcia et al., 2011; Campy-Cubillo et al., 2010). These corpus-driven activities can be implemented both in primary and secondary schools for teaching language subjects (Posavec, 2020); interest is also increasing in the integration of the use of corpora into university English language courses (Torsello et al., 2008), alternatively, specialised corpora have been applied into teacher education programmes (Flowerder, 2012), for example, to prepare teachers to teach the grammar and vocabulary of academic prose.

When applied to teaching English as a foreign language, corpus linguistics provides learners with meaningful and relevant data; namely this reliance on real-world, accurate data is in support of numerous theories that promote successful language teaching and learning (Friginal, 2018). Moreover, IT technologies, mobile technologies, data visualization, and individual instruction are integral parts of corpus linguistics that contribute to the fact that digital learners may adapt and appreciate corpus-based approaches when learning English.

The significance of this lies in the fact that corpus has the potential to support the quality of the language input which is a salient aspect of successful language learning and teaching (Phoocharoensil, 2012). The teachers of English as a foreign language can consult corpora to decide which materials to include into classes, which materials to prioritize or directly teach (Conrad, 2000; Timmis, 2015). Introducing these aspects to Slovakia where English is a foreign language, it is important to realize the role of

corpora in the given sphere. However, a small number of corpus studies have been carried out that demonstrate the direct use of corpora for the needs of English language teaching (Leláková, 2018). Therefore, the study can be seen as a small contribution to the lack of studies investigating these aspects.

Previous research findings have suggested numerous benefits of learning with the help of corpus-driven materials. First of all, it improves critical thinking skills and encourages autonomous learning (Kirk, 2002; Gitsaki, 2005), then it increases learners' lexical and contextual awareness (Tribble, 2002) and it contributes to interdisciplinary language studies (Boulton, 2011). Corpus use encourages learners to be more active rather than passive in the teaching process (Chambers, 2010) and supports student lifelong learning without the direct assistance of the teacher (Boulton, 2016).

Textual corpora enable students to encounter a huge quantity of contextual expressions, in this way, they help students retain them in the long-term memory (Nation, 1990). Stubbs (2001) emphasizes the significance of concordances which have the potential to reveal more reliable facts about typicality of words and their frequency than the ones provided by the native speaker's intuition.

Despite all the enumerated learning aids, language learners seldom have direct experience with textual corpora in direct education, which is regrettable since foreign language learners can benefit from the direct corpora use. Römer (2010) argues that applied linguistics aspects that are offered by corpora to language teaching are not broadly implemented into pedagogical environment, and seemingly few language teachers and learners are familiar with corpus resources.

Relevant literature review on the investigated topic indicates that there appear many reasons for English teachers' reluctance to exploit corpus-driven materials in their work, moving from technical problems with hardware to their computational skills and their unwillingness to learn about different ways corpora might be exploited in the classroom (Römer 2010). Then, there is usually a lot of time and effort required from the side of teacher to locate, edit, and construct exercises for a specific area of grammar or vocabulary.

Using corpora in the classroom brings with it certain limitations to learners, too. Some learners perceive work with textual corpora to be a challenging and demanding technique because it requires from them appropriate technical skills when manipulating with corpus software and formulating suitable queries (Leńko-Szymańska & Boulton, 2005). Moreover, learners might find some concordancing instruments and formats difficult to generalize, or even interpret (Yoon & Hirvila, 2004).

In addition to this, Aijmer (2009) stresses that teachers should not overemphasize the role of textual corpora while teaching foreign languages as they cannot replace either a natural communication or teacher in the classroom. The utilization of textual corpora should be in concord with what is generally known about the principles of language acquisition principles, and what we understand as an effective learning procedure within didactics.

METHOD

Research Design

Before the design of the research procedure, the researcher found it necessary to investigate the perceptions of English as a foreign language learners on the application of language corpora in the process of learning. Several studies have been devoted to these aspects (Hirata et al., 2013; Lai, 2015, Leńko-Szymańska, 2015); unfortunately, such investigations have not been carried out in the Slovak contexts.

A questionnaire following the elaboration of a set of corpus-driven exercises was utilized as a principal research tool. After the data from the questionnaire had been collected, they were analysed with the help of statistical instruments; furthermore, their interpretation represents an integral part of the research discussion. The primary aim of the study is to determine students' evaluation of corpus-driven grammar teaching materials in the Slovak university surroundings since the interest in this area of research is still lacking and we do believe that it is necessary to conduct further investigation in this field. Further research objectives cover the detection of factors that are decisive when a student expresses his/her evaluation of corpus-driven materials and possible increased learning atmosphere of teaching grammar via corpus-driven materials.

In order to fulfil the above-mentioned research aims, the researcher stated the following research questions:

Q1: Do university undergraduate students assess corpus-driven teaching materials in a positive or negative way?

Q2: Which factors are considered to be decisive for the students' evaluation of corpus-driven materials?

Q3: Do corpus-driven teaching materials increase positive learning atmosphere while teaching grammar?

In the discussion section, the research is supposed to answer the above-mentioned questions and relate them with other relevant studies in the investigated field. It might prove or refute the previous findings and highlight the need to apply corpora in teaching English in Slovakia.

Research Tool

The researcher preliminary created a series of corpus-driven exercises and brought them printed to the classroom. When building them, the researcher adhered to the principles of creating corpus materials for corpus use as introduced by Reppen (2010), to be more specific, principles of developing hands-on activities: the researcher had a clear idea of the grammar point she wanted to practice; the researcher selected the British National Corpus as the best resource for the lesson; the researcher made sure that the selected examples focused on the point the researcher was teaching, concentrating on the application of the definite/indefinite/zero articles; we used a variety of 10 exercises, and eventually, the researcher made sure that the directions were complete and easy to follow. The variety of activities covered the subsequent types of exercises: a listening

activity, a reading activity, pair work, gap filling, matching words from the corpus with their definitions, choosing the correct word, completing the concordances, guessing the meaning of a word, an accuracy-focused activity. The whole grammar material was elaborated within 50 phrases typical of the youth slang which is a topic close to the life of participants of the study.

In order to make everything go smoothly, the researcher worked through each step before doing the activity with the students; subsequently, the students were very familiar with the activity and had very clear step-by-step directions.

For further needs of the investigation, we applied both the quantitative and qualitative research methods. We used a 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire to collect data in order to determine students' assessment of corpus-driven grammar teaching materials. Yet, the first three questions are of a 3-point scale nature since they map the students' previous experience (if any) with corpus-driven activities.

When generating, validating, and evaluating individual items of the research tool, the researcher followed fundamentals of the developing and validating processes of a questionnaire to explore English language learners' preferences presented by Spada et al., 2009; Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2009. Originally, the questionnaire consisted of 60 items; yet, its final version comprised 48 items since some statements had been deleted because of duplicity of factors they were describing. The items of the questionnaire cover questions on the participants' previous experience with corpora (items 1 – 3); on their general attitudes to learning grammar (items 4 – 14); on their understanding of the importance of communicative activities while learning grammar (items 15 – 19), on the role of the teacher while learning grammar (items 20 – 21); on the evaluation of the corpus-driven activities they have been exposed to (items 22 – 32); on their personal feelings and attitudes while working with the corpus-driven exercises and activities (items 33 – 44); on their preferences to work with the corpus-driven materials in the future (items 45 – 48).

We distributed the questionnaire to the participants of the study; they were required to choose one of these 5 options: SA (Strongly Agree): you are absolutely sure about the accuracy/truth of the statement; A (Agree): you are fairly confident about the accuracy/truth of the statement; DK (Don't Know): you don't have an opinion about the statement partly because you don't know the terms used; D (Disagree): you believe the statement is inaccurate/wrong; SD (Strongly Disagree): you know for sure that the statement is wrong/inaccurate. The participants were asked to express their personal preferences about corpus-driven activities after the completion of their series in the actual teaching process.

Research Sample

The participants of the study were 94 undergraduates – first (65 participants) and second (29 participants) year English foreign language students with the mean age of 20.7; they were Majoring in Teacher Training of English Language and Literature and Civics at a Slovak university. The study was carried out within the Determination in the Contemporary English Language course; the course was offered to the students in the

winter semester of the academic year 2022/2023. The participants of this course are students who will enrol in a Corpus Linguistics course within the third year of their studies; they will be provided with corpus materials and they will be introduced how to work in the corpus environment. In the study, 25 male and 69 female learners took part; 87% of them were Slovak, 13% were Ukrainian. The students' proficiency level in English ranges from B2 to C1 levels according to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). It is strongly believed that the participants already have sufficient linguistic knowledge since they have all passed introductory linguistic course of morphology. The participants were reassured in advance that the information they were giving will remain confidential and that their responses will not influence their evaluation from the Determination in the Contemporary English Language course in any way.

FINDINGS

This section demonstrates the results of the questionnaire filled by the participants of the survey. The questionnaire analysis was conducted by the categorization of the questionnaire items, their percentage calculation and comprehensive description.

Discussing the statistical interpretation connected with the first three statements of the questionnaire, it is evident that 89% of participants did not consciously encounter with corpus-driven exercises within their primary education. A very similar situation is observable in their secondary education – solely 3% of the study participants confess that they were working with corpus-driven teaching aids. We suppose that these findings could influence their responses also to the remaining statements of the questionnaire. These findings show that the use of language corpora is relatively novel in Slovak educational content. The application of corpora is not widely known among Slovak teachers and pupils/students; the direct work with corpora should begin earlier than at the university level.

Table 1

The percentage evaluation of the items from the questionnaire 1, 2, 3

	I agree (%)	I do not know (%)	I do not agree (%)
1. Corpus-driven activities were integrated into my primary education.	0	11	89
2. Corpus-driven activities were integrated into my secondary education.	3	11	86
3. The grammar activities within the Determination in the Contemporary English Language course were my first contact with corpus-driven exercises.	89	11	0

The statements from 4 to 21 strive to elicit the general attitudes of students to learning grammar. Nevertheless, these statements have a cognitive background which is closely tied to the corpus-driven activities, too. The statistical evaluation of respondents' replies to them indicates their possible viewpoints of grammar exercises that are created with the help of textual corpus.

To be more specific, the reactions to the statements 4, 5, 6, 7 clearly show that the respondents prefer the implicit and inductive styles of grammar teaching, which is actually in favour of corpus-driven teaching materials. This finding is in concord with the knowledge that students do not appreciate being provided with the strict rules. Moreover, the corpus use can cultivate critical thinking since corpus-driven materials utilized directly in the classroom contribute to the implementation of discovery learning; the participants are taught to be more critical of language data and to think inductively (Hirata & Hirata, 2007; Hunston, 2002).

Table 2

The percentage evaluation of the items from the questionnaire 4, 5, 6, 7

	SA (%)	A	D K(%)	D	SD (%)
4. Grammar is best taught explicitly – rules are clearly stated.	9	20	8	41	22
5. Grammar is best taught implicitly – rules are hidden in the text.	21	43	12	24	0
6. Grammar is best taught inductively – students analyse examples to find patterns.	23	48	4	20	3
7. Grammar is best taught deductively – students are taught the rules first.	5	18	3	50	24

When evaluating the attitudes of the respondents to 4 fundamental skills within the statements 8, 9, 10, 11 in connection to learning grammar, the participants assign the highest preference to the productive skill of speaking and the receptive skill of reading. Again, this finding is applicable for the needs of learning aids with their roots in textual corpora since it is straightforward to prepare reading exercises on the basis of them. We believe that these results are informative for English teachers who might develop their students' perceptive skills also in the corpus environment.

Table 3

The percentage evaluation of the items from the questionnaire 8, 9, 10, 11

	SA (%)	A	D K(%)	D	SD (%)
8. I can learn grammar during speaking activities.	12	71	3	10	4
9. I can learn grammar during reading activities.	82	3	1	12	2
10. I can learn grammar during listening activities.	20	27	9	41	3
11. I can learn grammar during writing activities.	12	21	0	49	8

The statements 12, 13, 14 were included into the questionnaire in order to elicit the respondents' perception of the importance of grammar while learning English. Unfortunately, in accordance with the general trend, the participants neglected the role of grammar in the given context. A new different approach, in this case the corpus-driven teaching materials, strive to contribute to the modification of these attitudes.

Table 4
The percentage evaluation of the items from the questionnaire 12, 13, 14

	SA (%)	A	D K(%)	D	SD (%)
12. Grammar knowledge is the most important to the success of learning English.	0	15	12	61	12
13. It is impossible to use English without mastering grammar rules.	13	21	9	54	3
14. I like lessons which focus solely on grammar.	2	15	5	46	32

When assessing the responses to the statements 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, it is evident that the context, real life examples and communicative activities are statistically significant items.

At the same time, respondents appreciate activities when they have the access to the discovery-based approach. On the other hand, grammar exercises in the traditional understanding are not in favour of the respondents. From these responses, the researcher notices that most participants are aware that language teaching should correspond to real English because of language corpora.

Table 5
The percentage evaluation of the items from the questionnaire 15, 16, 17, 18, 19

	SA (%)	A	D K(%)	D	SD (%)
15. Grammar should only be taught when it appears in context.	8	61	12	19	0
16. Real-life examples enable a better understanding of grammar.	11	72	2	13	2
17. Communicative activities are the best way to learn to use English grammar more accurately.	52	17	10	21	0
18. Exercises is the best way to learn to use English grammar more accurately.	3	11	5	60	21
19. I look beyond the sentence level when I fix my grammar.	5	32	21	41	1

The remaining statements of this section 20 and 21 map the role of the teacher in the process of grammar acquisition. Our study revealed that the teacher is a strong predictor of a successful completion of this process. Therefore, there appears another strong urge to introduce corpus oriented courses for prospective teachers at Slovak universities.

Table 6
The percentage evaluation of the items from the questionnaire 20, 21

	SA (%)	A	D K(%)	D	SD (%)
20. I like learning grammar by myself.	0	5	2	45	48
21. I like the teacher to correct my mistakes after a grammar activity is completed.	23	55	4	18	0

Within the second part of the questionnaire, after knowing the participants' background knowledge, the statements from 22 to 48 are oriented on the elicitation and evaluation of their direct experience with the corpus-driven activities to which they were exposed during the Determination in the Contemporary English Language course. When discussing the statements from 22 to 32, the participants assign the highest importance to the access to authentic language (75 % of respondents agree or strongly agree with 24), to information that is interesting or relevant to them (68% of respondents agree or strongly agree with 25), and to the consistency of the teaching materials with the syllabus goals (67% of respondents agree or strongly agree with 23). Simultaneously, the respondents were able to express their point of view on the reflection of the language development, they do believe that the textual corpora depict the latest trends in the language (70% of respondents agree or strongly agree with 29). More than half of the respondents feel that they were provided with a wide range of exercises (53% of respondents agree or strongly agree with 26), that their skills were developed simultaneously (53% of respondents agree or strongly agree with 27), that they were exposed to a variation of topics (51% of respondents agree or strongly agree with 28). Differently, at about one third of the respondents cannot evaluate background cognitive factors connected with the investigated topic, namely the importance of their general knowledge in the given context (37% of respondents ticked do not know in 22), the refinement of their linguistic understanding (35% of respondents ticked do not know in 30), and the clarity of the teaching materials (29% of respondents ticked do not know in 32). Solely the statement 31 was refuted by the respondents (53% of respondents disagree or strongly disagree with it), the respondents do not perceive the information available in a corpus to be richer than in other teaching materials. This section of the questionnaire manifested a favourable picture in regards to the perception of corpus-driven materials since the percentage score for the strongly disagree option is very low.

Table 7

The percentage evaluation of the items from the questionnaire 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32

	SA (%)	A	D K(%)	D	SD (%)
22. General background information can help when working on corpus-driven activities.	15	38	37	10	0
23. I think that the content of corpus-driven activities is consistent with the goals related to syllabus.	31	34	18	13	2
24. Corpus-driven activities provide access to authentic language.	11	64	3	21	1
25. Corpus-driven activities bring information which is interesting and relevant to me.	5	63	9	18	5
26. Corpus-driven activities provide a wider range of exercises than traditional textbooks.	8	45	11	20	6
27. Corpus-driven activities can develop different skills simultaneously.	6	47	12	32	3
28. Corpus-driven activities cover variation of topics.	2	49	18	26	5
29. Corpus-driven activities keep track of language development.	21	49	12	17	1
30. Corpus-driven activities refine my understanding of how language really behaves.	3	34	35	23	4
31. The information available in a corpus is richer than any account offered by reference or teaching materials.	1	14	32	42	11
32. Corpus-driven activities are more understandable than traditional teaching materials.	3	44	29	23	2

The statements from 33 to 44 strive to concentrate on the evaluation of not only respondents' linguistic awareness but also of their feelings which might have appeared while working with corpus materials. In particular, the respondents felt relaxed, satisfied, enjoyed, and motivated in the process (approximately 70 % of respondents agree or strongly agree with 37, 42, 43, 44). On the other hand, almost 34% of the respondents felt anxiety, mainly due to the fact that work in the corpus environment was absolutely new to them. At the same time, the respondents are of the opinion that the corpus-driven exercises might improve their English quickly (54% of respondents agree or strongly agree with 33), that they are more effective than traditional teaching materials (78% of respondents agree or strongly agree with 35), and that they are created for their level of English (81% of respondents agree or strongly agree with 36). These responses portray their perception of language corpus as a useful and effective resource of teaching materials; at the same time, the respondents are aware of positive feelings connected with their work in the corpus environment.

Unfortunately, the respondents did not feel either concentrated (31% of respondents agree or strongly agree with 39) or with the sense of cooperation with their colleagues since solely 22% of respondents agree or strongly agree with 34. The respondents did not feel competent to judge the development of their critical thinking (32% of respondents ticked do not know in 41) and general linguistic awareness with the help corpus-driven materials (62% of respondents ticked do not know in 38). These factors

reflect the fact that the respondents do not feel absolutely safe, they still find some difficulty while working with corpus-driven materials since they are novel to them. In the future, the application of corpus disciplines for the needs of teaching should be promoted to enhance the quality of the teaching process.

Table 8

The percentage evaluation of the items from the questionnaire 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44

	SA (%)	A	D K(%)	D	SD (%)
33. I believe my English will improve quickly if I study and practice grammar from corpus-driven activities.	18	36	17	14	15
34. Corpus-driven activities provoked cooperation with my peers in the classroom.	10	12	29	44	5
35. Corpus-driven activities are more effective while learning grammar than traditional teaching materials.	27	51	3	10	9
36. I believe the corpus-driven activities were appropriate for my level of English.	48	31	8	10	3
37. Corpus-driven activities motivate me to succeed.	4	63	5	18	10
38. Corpus-driven activities help develop my general linguistic awareness.	8	11	62	12	7
39. It is easy to stay concentrated when working on corpus-driven activities.	2	29	12	50	7
40. I feel anxiety when working with corpus-driven activities.	2	32	2		
41. Corpus-driven activities help develop critical thinking.	6	23	32	31	8
42. Learning is more enjoyable for me with the application of corpus-driven activities.	3	69	0	17	11
43. I am satisfied with the corpus-driven activities I was working on.	7	61	0	23	9
44. I felt more relaxed while working with the corpus-driven exercises.	4	68	0	15	13

The last part of the questionnaire concentrates on possible work of the respondents with the corpus-driven materials in the future. A statistically greater importance is imparted on the willingness of the respondents to acquire more information about corpus linguistics in the future (63% of respondents agree or strongly agree with 48). The responses to the statements 45, 46, 47 indicate that the respondents would prefer synergy of corpus-driven and traditional teaching materials (Table 9). Nevertheless, they realize that they need more practice to take the maximum advantage of corpus-driven materials for English language teaching.

Table 9

The percentage evaluation of the items from the questionnaire 45, 46, 47, 48

	SA (%)	A	D K(%)	D	SD (%)
45. I would you like to work with corpus-driven activities in the future.	8	56	12	24	0
46. I would like to work only with traditional teaching materials in the future.	25	12	7	35	21
47. I would like to have all the grammar activities in the corpus environment.	3	27	45	20	15
48. I would like to learn more about corpus linguistics, its tools, methods, and procedures in the future.	5	58	21	12	4

DISCUSSION

The researcher discussed the findings from the research in connection with 3 pre-set research questions. The results connected with the Research Question No. 1 suggest that university undergraduate students assess corpus-driven teaching materials in a positive way although most of the participants have not worked with corpus-driven materials before. They find corpus-driven exercises and activities for articles acquisition beneficial, albeit previous unfamiliarity with language corpora. This finding is similar to research results introduced by Oktavianti (2015) suggesting that the advantages of applying corpora for language teaching outweigh the challenges that appear in the process. Other studies also support this claim, Gilmore (2007) proposed to apply corpora to consult language aspects in the process of teaching since the language inputs primarily from textbooks may be distant form being communicatively competent in real world communication. Still, for the future, Slovak university students would appreciate the combination of both corpus-driven and traditional teaching materials. However, this finding is inconsistent with Leńko-Szymańska (2015), in which students would prefer to use corpus when they become teachers.

Furthermore, the results associated with the Research Question No. 2 demonstrate that most participants were, in general, aware of the importance of authentic language, information that is interesting or relevant to them, and the consistency of the teaching materials with the syllabus goals. Previous studies on the topic indicated similar results; according to Römer (2010), it is interesting for students to work with corpus since they have the opportunity to analyse a large amount of linguistic data in order to generate patterns. This option is not available when working with traditional textbooks. In addition to this, the study strengthens research results supporting practical linguistic aspects beneficial for their learning process (Leńko-Szymańska, 2015; Yanto & Nugraha, 2017). Yet, they would need further development of their critical thinking and linguistic awareness.

Eventually, the results linked to the Research Question No. 3 reveal that the participants of the questionnaire felt positive learning atmosphere while working with corpus-driven

teaching materials. These positive perceptions from their side are in line with previous studies devoted corpus use in vocabulary (Varela, 2012; KiLiMci, 2017) or grammar learning (Leńko-Szymańska & Boulton, 2005). The motivation approved by them mirrors findings of Gilquin and Granger (2010) who claim that using corpora makes learning more motivating and fun. On the other hand, a certain level of anxiety was detected mainly since they were exposed to these types of activities for the first time. A number of similar factors was reported by Yanto & Nugraha (2017) whose research results exhibit that students might perceive applying corpus materials while studying grammar as difficult or even tedious. Some other studies (Hirata et al., 2013; Leńko-Szymańska, 2015) identify problematic aspects of corpus use in the classroom mainly because of unfamiliarity and technical problems.

CONCLUSION

In this study, university students' views about grammar learning have been examined. In particular, the results of this study provide insights into how Slovak university students perceive corpus-driven teaching materials in the process of articles acquisition. The results suggest that nearly all the participants did not have any previous experience with corpus and corpus linguistics, the perception of corpus-driven materials were based on the corpus introduction within this research procedure. Yet, the participants' responses were appropriate and reflected their attitudes to the investigated topic. They find corpus-driven exercises and activities for articles acquisition beneficial, albeit previous unfamiliarity with language corpora. Their positive responses are related to the usefulness of corpus-driven materials in foreign language teaching, future English teachers might become more aware of the nature of the English language. As for future research perspectives, it would be interesting to investigate the effectiveness of such materials for mother tongue learning.

From the above-mentioned description of the research findings, it is possible to consider further implications of pedagogical studies. One of the implications of our study is that future teachers at Slovak universities would need more training in corpus linguistics to familiarize themselves with the nature of corpus and how it works in the pedagogical contexts. To be more specific, equipment of the students with specialized corpora lessons should be considered, then they would be able to implement the knowledge and skills within other university courses and into their teaching practice. The teachers would be able to create teaching materials and activities that would make their potential pupils/students motivated and at the same time, make their learning easier. Furthermore, being able to work in the corpus environment can be helpful and beneficial potentially for their research activities in the future. This finding can contribute to the promotion of corpus linguistic courses at Slovak universities training future teachers.

There exist certain limitations naturally arising out of the applied research instrument, research sample, and research design. When speaking about the research sample, the research findings are founded on its relatively small size; possible future investigations involving a larger number of participants studying at Slovak universities and having some previous experience with corpus-driven activities would provide a more

comprehensive picture. Furthermore, in-depth interviews as a research tool would contribute to the reliability and more general character of the findings.

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