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Real language for real learners:
Towards a new concept of teaching grammar

The present paper starts from the assumption that learners deserve to be presented with language descriptions which roughly mirror the language as it is really used by competent (native or near-native) speakers. As several studies in applied corpus linguistics have shown, there are often huge discrepancies between language in use and language in EFL coursebooks (cf. e.g. Conrad 2004, Mindt 1996, Römer forthcoming, Schlüter 2002). These studies observe that in many instances pedagogical descriptions of grammatical features are rather inadequate and that the classroom does not quite meet reality.

As a reaction to such observations, I would like to sketch a proposal for a new concept of teaching grammar – a concept which pays attention to real language and which takes into account the findings of corpus research. With reference to the teaching of English progressives, i.e. combinations of a form of the verb TO BE and the present participle of a verb (e.g. *'m having*, *were listening*), I argue for the development of a *corpus-driven communicative didactic lexical grammar*. This grammar will integrate some central implications of a large-scale comparative analysis of progressives in spoken English and 'school' English and respond to three of the key problems in language teaching: the problems of selection, progression, and presentation. I believe that such a grammar has the potential of providing some useful information for materials writers and teachers, and of considerably improving the situation for language learners

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