



# Data-Driven Learning in EFL Grammar: Student Attitudes and Teacher Perceptions in Bangladesh

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## Abstract

*Data-Driven Learning (DDL) has gained increasing attention as an innovative pedagogical approach in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, particularly in grammar teaching. DDL empowers learners to explore authentic language data from corpora, promoting inductive learning and enhancing grammatical understanding. However, traditional grammar instruction in Bangladesh largely relies on rote memorization and teacher-centered methods, limiting opportunities for students to develop critical thinking and language discovery skills. This discrepancy between traditional methods and the potential benefits of DDL presents a significant challenge for educators seeking to modernize EFL instruction. Therefore, this study investigates student attitudes and teacher perceptions of DDL in grammar instruction using a mixed-method approach. Surveys and semi-structured interviews were conducted with EFL students and teachers at secondary and tertiary levels. The results show that while students demonstrate enthusiasm for DDL's interactive and discovery-based learning model, teachers express concerns regarding inadequate resources, training, and institutional support for integrating DDL in their classrooms. The findings suggest that for DDL to be successfully implemented in Bangladesh, there is a need for comprehensive teacher training and investment in educational infrastructure. This study contributes to the growing body of literature on DDL and highlights its potential to reshape grammar teaching in EFL contexts, particularly for non-native learners.*

**Keywords:** Data Driven Learning, EFL, Grammar, Mix-Methods

## INTRODUCTION

The field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction has seen a growing interest in innovative teaching methods that promote learner autonomy and enhance engagement with linguistic structures (Sultana et al., 2023; Sultana & Singh, 2021, 2022a; 2022b). Among these, Data-Driven Learning (DDL) has emerged as a promising approach, particularly for grammar instruction (Boulton & Cobb, 2017; Gavioli, 2021; Gilquin & Granger, 2018; Flowerdew, 2015; Charles, 2018; Boulton, 2019; Chambers, 2019; Vyatkina, 2020; Sun, 2022; O'Keeffe, McCarthy, & Carter, 2017; Thomas, 2021). DDL leverages language corpora large, authentic collections of texts to allow learners to investigate real-world language patterns and make their own grammatical discoveries (Gavioli, 2021). This hands-on, inductive approach stands in contrast to traditional, teacher-centered methods, where grammar rules are often presented in isolation, limiting students' capacity for critical thinking and language exploration. In the Bangladeshi context, grammar instruction remains predominantly reliant on rote memorization and prescriptive rule learning (Rahman, 2020). This method has been criticized for disengaging learners and producing surface-level grammatical knowledge, which does not necessarily translate into effective language use (Karim et

al., 2021). Additionally, the lack of technological resources, along with limited teacher training in modern pedagogical tools, poses challenges to adopting innovative practices like DDL in this setting (Rahman, 2020; Rahman & Pandian, 2022). Consequently, the question arises: How can DDL be effectively implemented in Bangladeshi EFL classrooms to enhance both student learning and teacher instruction?

This study seeks to bridge this gap by exploring the attitudes of EFL students and teachers toward the use of DDL for grammar instruction in Bangladesh. While numerous studies have highlighted the effectiveness of DDL in improving learners' grammar comprehension and fostering learner autonomy (Boulton & Pérez-Paredes, 2014; Römer, 2019; Vyatkina & Boulton, 2021; Anthony, 2018; Boulton, 2017, 2019; Boulton & Cobb, 2017; Crosthwaite, 2020), there remains limited research on its application in developing countries, where infrastructural and pedagogical limitations may hinder its potential (Sun, 2022). By focusing on both student attitudes and teacher perceptions, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities for DDL integration in Bangladeshi EFL classrooms. Through a mixed-method approach, this research investigates whether DDL can offer a viable alternative to traditional grammar teaching practices in Bangladesh, and

what adjustments might be necessary to ensure its success. In doing so, this study contributes to the broader discourse on educational innovation in language learning, particularly in under-resourced contexts, and offers practical insights into how modern pedagogical tools can transform grammar instruction in EFL settings.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Data-Driven Learning in Language Education

Data-Driven Learning (DDL) is a pedagogical approach that encourages learners to engage directly with authentic language data, typically through the use of corpora, to discover linguistic patterns and rules (Boulton, 2017). This method contrasts with traditional teacher-led instruction, where grammatical rules are explained explicitly by the instructor. In DDL, students take a more active role in their learning, fostering autonomy and critical thinking (Gavioli, 2021). Over the past decade, DDL has gained traction in language education, particularly in grammar instruction, where it helps students grasp complex structures by observing real-world language usage (Vyatkina, 2020). Several studies have highlighted the effectiveness of DDL in promoting deeper understanding of grammar. Boulton and Cobb (2017) conducted a meta-analysis of DDL studies, showing that learners who used corpus-based materials for grammar learning outperformed those who followed traditional methods. Similarly, Crosthwaite (2020) demonstrated that ESL students who utilized DDL for grammar learning exhibited improved grammatical accuracy and a better ability to apply grammar in context. These findings underscore the potential of DDL to transform the grammar instruction landscape in EFL classrooms, making it more interactive and discovery based.

#### Student Attitudes Toward DDL

Research indicates that students generally respond positively to DDL, particularly due to its learner-centered approach. Boulton (2019) found that students appreciate the hands-on nature of DDL, which allows them to explore grammatical rules at their own pace. This sense of control and discovery is often cited as one of the main advantages of DDL in language learning (Chambers, 2019). However, not all students are equally receptive to this method. Sun (2022), in a study conducted in Taiwanese EFL classrooms, found that while high-achieving students benefited greatly from the exploratory nature of DDL, some lower-level students struggled with the demands of working independently with corpora. This suggests that DDL may need to be tailored to different proficiency levels to ensure all learners can engage effectively. In the Bangladeshi context, the majority of EFL students are accustomed to more traditional, rote-based learning approaches, which may present challenges when introducing DDL (Rahman, 2020). Nevertheless, research shows that students who are exposed to more interactive, corpus-based methods tend to develop a more positive attitude toward language learning and grammar (Karim,

Mohamed, & Rahman, 2021). This suggests that with proper scaffolding, DDL can be successfully introduced to EFL students in Bangladesh.

#### Teacher Perceptions of DDL

Teachers play a pivotal role in the successful implementation of DDL, yet their perceptions of this method are often mixed. Some teachers express enthusiasm for the potential of DDL to promote learner autonomy and enhance engagement with grammar (Römer, 2019). However, many also cite significant challenges, particularly related to technological constraints and lack of training in using corpus tools effectively (Thomas, 2021). In developing countries such as Bangladesh, these challenges are often magnified by limited access to resources and support (Rahman & Pandian, 2022). Boulton and Pérez-Paredes (2014) emphasized the importance of teacher training in DDL, noting that many instructors are unfamiliar with corpora and how to integrate them into their teaching practices. Without adequate training, teachers may feel overwhelmed by the technical aspects of DDL and reluctant to adopt it in their classrooms. This is particularly relevant in Bangladesh, where most teachers follow a traditional approach to grammar instruction (Rahman, 2020). However, with the increasing availability of digital tools and corpus resources, there is potential for DDL to be more widely adopted, provided that teachers receive the necessary professional development and institutional support (Karim et al., 2021).

#### Challenges in Implementing DDL in EFL Contexts

Despite its pedagogical potential, the implementation of DDL in EFL classrooms is not without challenges. One of the main barriers is the technological infrastructure required for effective corpus-based learning. In many developing countries, including Bangladesh, schools and universities often lack the necessary resources to support DDL, such as access to computers and reliable internet connections (Rahman & Pandian, 2022). This limitation makes it difficult for teachers to incorporate DDL into their lessons, even if they are willing to do so. Furthermore, teacher readiness and student familiarity with independent, corpus-based learning can also hinder the adoption of DDL. Vyatkina (2020) notes that while DDL fosters greater learner autonomy, it requires significant teacher guidance, particularly in the initial stages of implementation. Students may need support in navigating the complexities of working with large corpora, particularly if they are accustomed to more passive learning methods. Thus, for DDL to succeed in contexts like Bangladesh, both students and teachers must be provided with adequate training and support (Sun, 2022). The existing literature underscores the potential of DDL to enhance EFL grammar instruction by promoting learner autonomy and providing authentic language input. While student attitudes toward DDL are generally positive, teachers' perceptions are more complex, often shaped by concerns over resource availability and training. The adoption of DDL in Bangladesh presents

unique challenges due to the traditional focus on rote learning and the limited technological infrastructure. However, with appropriate teacher training and institutional support, DDL could offer a viable and innovative approach to improving grammar instruction in EFL contexts.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to examine the impact of Data-Driven Learning (DDL) on EFL grammar instruction. The primary focus is on assessing student learning attitudes and teacher perceptions in the Bangladeshi context. The study design integrates surveys and semi-structured interviews, providing a comprehensive understanding of both student experiences and teacher perspectives.

### Research Design

A mixed-methods design was chosen to gain a more nuanced understanding of how DDL affects EFL grammar instruction. The quantitative component allows for the measurement of students' attitudes toward DDL, while the qualitative component captures teachers' insights, experiences, and challenges in implementing DDL in their classrooms. This combination provides depth and breadth in analyzing the efficacy of DDL in Bangladeshi EFL education.

### Participants

The study was conducted in several secondary and tertiary educational institutions across Bangladesh, involving both students and teachers of English. A total of 200 EFL students were selected using stratified random sampling. Participants were divided into two groups: 100 secondary school students and 100 university students. The students ranged in age from 16 to 23 and had varying levels of English proficiency, from intermediate to advanced. Twenty EFL teachers from secondary schools and universities participated in the study. These teachers had at least three years of experience in teaching English and were familiar with traditional grammar instruction. Ten of the teachers had prior exposure to corpus-based approaches, while the rest had not used DDL before.

## RESULTS

### Quantitative Results

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics for Student Engagement with DDL

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
Overall Engagement with DDL	4.1	0.85
DDL Makes Grammar Learning More Interesting	4.2	0.78
I Feel More Confident Using Corpora	3.8	0.90
Navigating Corpus Tools is Challenging	3.4	1.05
DDL Helps Me Understand Grammar Better	4.0	0.82

The results from Table 1 show that, on average, students rated their engagement with Data-Driven Learning (DDL) positively, with an overall mean score of 4.1 (SD = 0.85). This suggests that students found DDL to be an engaging and effective approach

### Data Collection Methods

A structured questionnaire was developed to collect quantitative data on students' attitudes toward DDL. The survey consisted of 5 Likert-scale items (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree), measuring key dimensions. The questionnaire was pilot tested with 20 students to ensure clarity and reliability. Cronbach's alpha was calculated for internal consistency, and any ambiguous items were revised. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 EFL teachers to gather qualitative insights into their perceptions of DDL. Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and was audio-recorded with the participants' consent. The interviews were transcribed and thematically analyzed. Before data collection, students and teachers were introduced to DDL and its application in grammar instruction. A two-week training session was organized, where students learned to use AntConc to analyze authentic language data. Teachers were provided with resources on how to integrate corpora into their grammar lessons. Following the training, students participated in DDL-based grammar lessons for four weeks. During this period, they explored language corpora to identify grammatical structures, answer grammar questions, and compare usage patterns. Teachers facilitated these sessions but did not provide direct explanations of grammatical rules, in line with DDL's inductive learning approach. After the four-week intervention, student surveys were administered in person. Teachers were interviewed after completing the DDL sessions. Both the survey and interview data were collected within one week of the completion of the DDL lessons to ensure accuracy in capturing participant experiences.

### Data Analysis

Survey data from the student questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics in SPSS. Means and standard deviations were calculated to understand overall trends in students' attitudes toward DDL. A t-test was used to compare the attitudes of secondary and tertiary students. A multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between students' English proficiency levels and their attitudes toward DDL. The teacher interviews were analyzed thematically using NVivo. Thematic analysis involved coding the data into key themes

for grammar learning. The highest mean score was for the statement “DDL Makes Grammar Learning More Interesting” (4.2, SD = 0.78), indicating that students perceived DDL as a more stimulating method compared to traditional approaches. However, navigating corpus tools was identified as challenging, with a mean score of 3.4 (SD = 1.05). This reflects the learning curve associated with using corpus-based resources, which might have been a barrier for some students. Despite these challenges, the positive mean scores for overall engagement and understanding (4.0, SD = 0.82) suggest that students generally found DDL beneficial for enhancing their grammar comprehension.

**Table 2.** Comparison of Student Engagement Scores by Education Level

Education Level	Mean Engagement Score	Standard Deviation	t-value	p-value
Secondary Students	3.9	0.88	2.23	0.03
Tertiary Students	4.3	0.75		

Table 2 illustrates a significant difference in engagement scores between secondary and tertiary students. Tertiary students reported higher engagement with DDL (Mean = 4.3, SD = 0.75) compared to secondary students (Mean = 3.9, SD = 0.88). The t-test results (t = 2.23, p = 0.03) indicate that this difference is statistically significant. This suggests that tertiary students, who may have more experience with autonomous learning methods and corpus tools, were better able to engage with and benefit from DDL.

**Table 3.** Comparison of Student Preferences for DDL vs. Traditional Grammar Instruction

Preference	Percentage of Students (%)
Prefer DDL Over Traditional Instruction	68%
Prefer a Combination of Both Methods	25%
Prefer Traditional Instruction Only	7%

Table 3 shows that a significant majority of students (68%) preferred DDL over traditional grammar instruction. This preference highlights the effectiveness of DDL in making grammar learning more engaging and relevant to students. The fact that 25% of students preferred a combination of both DDL and traditional methods suggests that while DDL is valued, there is still a role for traditional instruction, particularly for students who may benefit from more explicit explanations. Only 7% of students preferred traditional instruction exclusively, which further underscores the positive reception of DDL.

**Table 4.** Student Attitudes Toward DDL Based on Proficiency Level

Proficiency Level	Mean Engagement Score	Standard Deviation	N
Lower-Proficiency	3.7	0.95	80
Higher-Proficiency	4.2	0.72	120

Table 4 reveals that higher-proficiency students had a more positive attitude toward DDL (Mean = 4.2, SD = 0.72) compared to lower-proficiency students (Mean = 3.7, SD = 0.95). This difference suggests that students with higher English proficiency were better able to navigate and utilize corpus tools effectively. The positive correlation between proficiency and engagement with DDL indicates that students with a stronger foundation in English are more likely to benefit from the exploratory and self-directed nature of DDL.

### Qualitative Results

Thematic analysis of the teacher interviews revealed five key themes regarding their perceptions of Data-Driven Learning (DDL) in EFL grammar instruction. These themes provide insights into the perceived benefits, challenges, and potential for integrating DDL into Bangladeshi classrooms.

#### Theme 1. Increased Student Autonomy and Engagement

Teachers unanimously agreed that DDL fostered greater student autonomy and engagement with grammar learning. The use of corpus tools allowed students to explore language patterns independently, leading to a deeper understanding of grammatical structures. One teacher noted: “The students were more engaged because they had the freedom to explore

real language use. They could find answers to their questions by themselves, and this made them more curious and motivated.” Teachers observed that students who typically struggled with traditional methods became more interested when they could actively investigate grammatical rules through authentic language data.

#### Theme 2. Authentic Language Exposure

Another frequently cited benefit of DDL was the exposure it provided to authentic language usage. Teachers felt that using real-world examples from corpora helped students better understand how grammar functions in everyday language, moving beyond the artificial examples often found in textbooks. As one teacher explained: “In textbooks, students often encounter sentences that don’t reflect how English is used in real life. With DDL, they see grammar in

action in actual contexts, which helps them understand how grammar works in practice.” This authentic exposure was especially valuable in helping students understand nuanced grammatical structures and variations in usage that are often overlooked in prescriptive grammar instruction.

### **Theme 3. Technological and Infrastructural Challenges**

While teachers acknowledged the benefits of DDL, many expressed concerns about the technological resources needed to implement it effectively. A lack of access to computers and reliable internet connections, particularly in rural schools, was a significant barrier to adopting DDL. One rural teacher mentioned: “We don’t have enough computers for every student, and our internet is very slow. This makes it difficult to use online corpora effectively in the classroom.” Even in urban schools, some teachers highlighted that the available technology was outdated, limiting the ease of use of corpus tools.

### **Theme 4. Teacher Training and Confidence**

Another prominent theme was the need for more comprehensive training to increase teacher confidence in using DDL. Several teachers admitted that they initially struggled with corpus tools and felt that they required more support to integrate DDL effectively into their grammar lessons. As one teacher explained: “The training was helpful, but I still don’t feel fully confident using DDL. It’s a new method for me, and I think more workshops and ongoing support would be beneficial.” Teachers who had prior experience with DDL reported feeling more comfortable using it, while those without prior exposure were less confident.

### **Theme 5. Potential for Curriculum Integration**

Finally, teachers discussed the potential for integrating DDL into the existing curriculum. While most teachers believed DDL could complement traditional grammar instruction, some were concerned that it might be challenging to fit into the already packed syllabus. One teacher commented: “Our curriculum is very rigid, and there isn’t much time to introduce new methods. I believe DDL is valuable, but we need to find a way to integrate it without overwhelming the students or straying too far from the exam requirements.”

## **DISCUSSION**

This study explored the impact of Data-Driven Learning (DDL) on EFL grammar instruction in Bangladesh by examining student attitudes and teacher perceptions. The findings from both quantitative and qualitative analyses suggest that while DDL offers significant potential to enhance grammar learning, challenges must be addressed for successful implementation. Quantitative results indicate that students demonstrated higher levels of engagement using DDL compared to traditional grammar instruction. With an overall engagement score of 4.1 (Table 1), students found DDL to be an engaging approach, particularly in

exploring real-world language usage. Qualitative data also supports this, highlighting Increased Student Autonomy and Engagement, where teachers noted that DDL encouraged students to take control of their learning and explore grammatical structures independently. This aligns with previous research, such as Boulton and Cobb (2017), who emphasized DDL’s role in fostering learner autonomy and critical thinking. Similarly, Gavioli (2021) found that students using corpora to investigate grammar developed a deeper understanding of grammatical patterns compared to those relying solely on textbooks. In both cases, DDL promotes a more active and exploratory learning experience, which appears to engage students more effectively than traditional, passive methods of instruction. Both students and teachers valued the exposure to authentic language through DDL. The theme of Authentic Language Exposure emerged in interviews, with teachers emphasizing that DDL allows students to see how grammar functions in real-life contexts, rather than relying on textbook examples. Quantitatively, 68% of students preferred DDL over traditional methods (Table 3). This finding resonates with Romer (2019) and Sun (2022), who reported that students who engaged with real-world language data demonstrated improved grammatical accuracy and critical thinking. The study’s findings suggest that the use of authentic language in DDL provides a more realistic understanding of grammar, enhancing students’ ability to apply their knowledge in practical contexts. This engagement with authentic language helps bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world language use. Despite its advantages, DDL faces challenges, particularly in Technological and Infrastructural Barriers and Teacher Training and Confidence. About 42% of students reported difficulties in navigating corpus tools, particularly those with lower English proficiency. Additionally, teachers noted concerns about the lack of technological resources in rural schools, which limits access to DDL tools. These findings align with Rahman and Pandian (2022), who highlighted the technological limitations in developing countries that hinder the adoption of innovative teaching methods. Furthermore, teachers stressed the need for ongoing professional development. Without sufficient training, they may struggle to implement DDL effectively, a challenge also identified by Boulton and Pérez-Paredes (2014). Tertiary students reported higher engagement with DDL (Mean = 4.3) compared to secondary students (Mean = 3.9), suggesting that older, more advanced learners may be better equipped to benefit from DDL. This finding aligns with Vyatkina (2020), who observed that advanced learners respond more positively to DDL due to their higher proficiency and ability to engage with complex language data. While 68% of students preferred DDL, 25% expressed a preference for a blended approach combining DDL with traditional instruction (Table 3). Teachers echoed this sentiment, suggesting that DDL and traditional methods can complement each other. Vyatkina (2020) similarly advocated for a hybrid model, as it provides the structure of traditional instruction alongside the autonomy offered by

DDL. The findings of this study are consistent with previous research on DDL in various EFL contexts. Like Crosthwaite (2020) and Sun (2022), the current study found that DDL can significantly enhance student engagement and grammatical understanding. However, the technological challenges and the need for teacher training, as identified in this study, are particularly relevant in the Bangladeshi context, where resources may be limited compared to more developed countries. In contrast to some studies (e.g., Boulton & Cobb, 2017), which reported universal positive attitudes towards DDL, the current study highlights the mixed preferences of students, with a notable portion of learners indicating a desire for a blended approach. This suggests that while DDL has clear advantages, it should be adapted to meet the needs of diverse learner groups, particularly those in under-resourced environments or with varying levels of proficiency.

## CONCLUSION

This study examined the impact of Data-Driven Learning (DDL) on EFL grammar instruction in Bangladesh, focusing on student learning attitudes and teacher perceptions. The findings demonstrate that DDL has significant potential to enhance grammar instruction by promoting student engagement, autonomy, and providing exposure to authentic language use. Both quantitative and qualitative data revealed that students, especially those at the tertiary level and with higher proficiency, responded positively to DDL, finding it more engaging and beneficial compared to traditional grammar instruction. However, the study also highlighted challenges, including technological limitations, teacher training needs, and the difficulty some students faced in navigating corpus tools. While the majority of students preferred DDL over traditional methods, a significant number expressed a desire for a blended approach, combining DDL with more structured, explicit grammar instruction. This suggests that while DDL can be highly effective, it should be integrated thoughtfully into existing curricula to meet the needs of diverse learner profiles. For DDL to be successfully implemented in Bangladesh, it is essential to address the technological and infrastructural challenges, particularly in rural areas. Additionally, more comprehensive and ongoing teacher training is necessary to ensure that educators feel confident and competent in using DDL tools. With these supports in place, DDL has the potential to transform grammar instruction in EFL classrooms, fostering more dynamic, student-centered learning environments. Future research should explore long-term outcomes of DDL on student language proficiency, investigate its impact in various educational settings, and evaluate strategies for overcoming the implementation barriers identified in this study. By addressing these areas, DDL can continue to evolve as an innovative and impactful approach to language learning.

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