
ENHANCING SELF-DIRECTED LANGUAGE LEARNING THROUGH CORPUS LINGUISTICS:

THE PROACTIVE ENGAGEMENT OF THE LEARNER

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A PROPOSAL WORK FOR SELF-DIRECTED LANGUAGE LEARNING AT UNIVERSITY OF PAVIA

- This work has been created in association with the Language Centre at the University of Pavia.
- As the output of an internship within the framework of a more complex project, it has as its specific focus the improvement of self-directed language learning.
- It represents in fact a proposal to enhance the service provided to international students as far as Italian language learning is concerned.

WHO IS THE SELF-DIRECTED LEARNER?

- Establishing DDL advantages for self-directed learners implies knowing the needs of this kind of learner:
 - Need for directives and learning tips: not every self-directed learner has a linguistics or acquisitional theoretical background.
 - Need for motivation: the most important reason for proactive engagement to be constantly stimulated.
 - Need for deeper knowledge: the learner has to realize which kind of learning process he or she is going through.

WHO IS THE SELF-DIRECTED LEARNER?

- The absence of the teacher requires the mandatory arousal of self-regulating skills: getting at least something done in one day (mini-goals strategy).
- Personalization of the learning environment: the creation of a PLE (Stevens & Shield 2010) to improve the out-of-class experience.
- Reflection on one's productions.

WHY IS CORPUS LINGUISTICS A POSSIBILITY?

- New user-friendly interfaces provide an upgraded learning experience, as they enable students to make their own choices as autonomous users.
- The possibility to investigate and compare challenging grammatical rules with real productions.
- A greater sense of realness is linked to a greater sense of effectiveness: data from NS as a benchmark for the target language.

WHY IS CORPUS LINGUISTICS A POSSIBILITY?

- Giving the learner the possibility to encounter and get used to the target language avoids them to deal with the pressure and the stress of a real interactive communicating context.
- The use of corpora also gives the possibility to elude the entangling schemes of textbooks, granting a closer contact with the actual language productions.

WHAT CORPUS-BASED LINGUISTIC RESEARCH WILL TEACH

- An improved integration of grammar and lexicon: both multiword and simple queries allowed.
- A register specific distinction of language usage for higher proficiency level (see Conrad, 2000).
- A greater emphasis to the appropriate pragmatic conditions of use for alternative grammatical constructions.

WHAT CORPUS-BASED LINGUISTIC RESEARCH WILL TEACH

- «(corpus) [...] approaches are commensurable with, and be scaffolded into more familiar approaches that focus on learning through meaningful language use and the development of critical thinking and autonomous learning skills». (Reinhardt, 2010)
- The great potential of corpus linguistics in SLA is that it can function as the base for both a Bottom-Up and a Top-Down learning process.

WHAT CORPUS-BASED LINGUISTIC RESEARCH WILL TEACH

- Both Conrad and Reinhardt agree on the need to integrate (not revolution) the DDL with the pre-existent language learning strategies.
- Self-made CIA (Contrastive interlanguage analysis): the self-directed learner can compare his own productions with the ones reported in the NS corpus.
- Social component of language (Ushioda, 2009): the learner has to see himself as a potential user.

CONCERNS IN THE USE OF CORPUS LINGUISTICS

- *«Corpus linguistics will also have more influence on L2 teaching if corpus informed materials, corpus analysis tools, and well-designed corpora are simply more numerous, accessible and user friendly, and preferably web-based.» (Reinhardt, 2010)*
- An example from Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff et al. 2004):
[lemma= "stare"][]{0,3}[tag="VER.*" & lemma=".*ndo"]

CONCERNS IN THE USE OF CORPUS LINGUISTICS

- This type of research would be confusing for a self-directed learner and, above all, it would threaten the learner's motivation.
- How can we provide the right stimulus to the learner, so that they can go through a fruitful individual learning experience?
- An improved tool is needed to allow learners to know what advantages they can take from this kind of study.

WHAT IS SKELL: USE AND ADVANTAGES

- Basing on Sketch Engine work group, **SkELL** is a specific tool made up to enhance language learning through corpus linguistics.
- In 2018, this tool (originally conceived to support English learners) has been enlarged with some additional components for the Italian, German, Russian and Czech language.

WHAT IS SKELL: USE AND ADVANTAGES

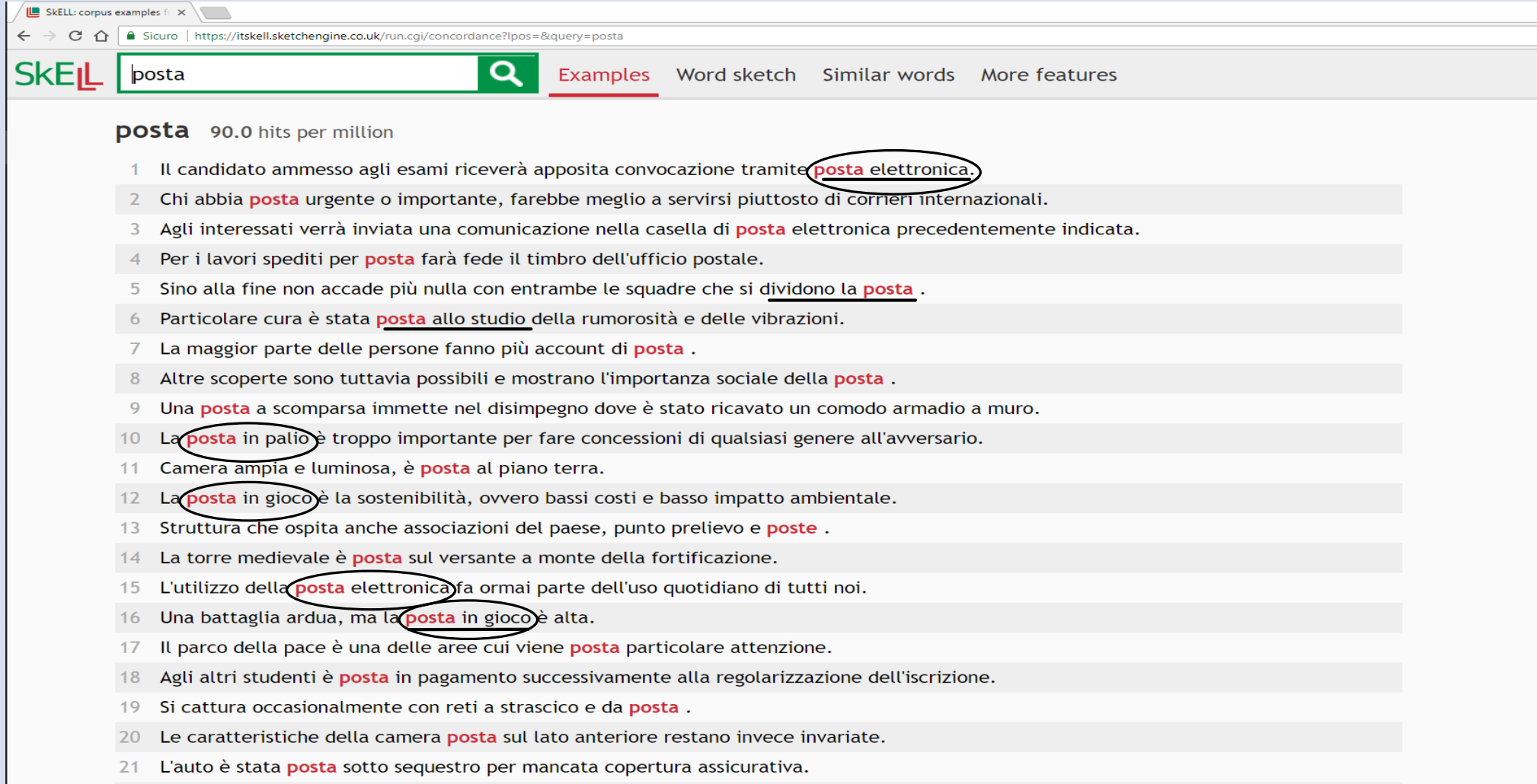
- Word search: mono- and multiword search, possibility to get directly in touch with the actual language use.
- Word sketch: collocations and fixed expressions, further to commonly associated modifiers and prepositions.
- Similar words (Word cloud): a ready-made conceptual map with the most frequently related lexicon.

ITSKELL & DESKELL AS ADDITIONAL COMPONENTS

- The Italian corpus for SkELL (itSkELL) is an Italian corpus made up of texts collected from the Internet. The texts come from the itTenTen corpus 2016 according to the choice of Egon W. Stemle from Eurac Research. The corpus was specially built up in order to provide the best sentence examples.
- The German corpus for SkELL (deSkELL) is a German corpus made up of texts collected from the Internet. The texts come from the deTenTen corpus 2013 according to the choice of Egon W. Stemle from Eurac Research. The corpus was specially built up in order to provide the best sentence examples.

ITSKELL & DESKELL AS ADDITIONAL COMPONENTS

Word search: analysing behavioural data.



The screenshot displays the SkELL web interface. At the top, the browser address bar shows the URL <https://itskell.sketchengine.co.uk/run.cgi/concordance?lpos=&query=posta>. The SkELL logo is on the left, and a search bar contains the word "posta". To the right of the search bar are links for "Examples", "Word sketch", "Similar words", and "More features".

Below the search bar, the results for "posta" are shown, indicating "90.0 hits per million". A list of 21 concordance lines follows, with the word "posta" highlighted in red in each line. Several instances of "posta" are circled in black:

- Line 1: "posta elettronica."
- Line 10: "posta in palio"
- Line 12: "posta in gioco"
- Line 15: "posta elettronica"
- Line 16: "posta in gioco"

The concordance lines are as follows:

- 1 Il candidato ammesso agli esami riceverà apposita convocazione tramite **posta** elettronica.
- 2 Chi abbia **posta** urgente o importante, farebbe meglio a servirsi piuttosto di corrieri internazionali.
- 3 Agli interessati verrà inviata una comunicazione nella casella di **posta** elettronica precedentemente indicata.
- 4 Per i lavori spediti per **posta** farà fede il timbro dell'ufficio postale.
- 5 Sino alla fine non accade più nulla con entrambe le squadre che si dividono la **posta** .
- 6 Particolare cura è stata **posta** allo studio della rumorosità e delle vibrazioni.
- 7 La maggior parte delle persone fanno più account di **posta** .
- 8 Altre scoperte sono tuttavia possibili e mostrano l'importanza sociale della **posta** .
- 9 Una **posta** a scomparsa immette nel disimpegno dove è stato ricavato un comodo armadio a muro.
- 10 La **posta** in palio è troppo importante per fare concessioni di qualsiasi genere all'avversario.
- 11 Camera ampia e luminosa, è **posta** al piano terra.
- 12 La **posta** in gioco è la sostenibilità, ovvero bassi costi e basso impatto ambientale.
- 13 Struttura che ospita anche associazioni del paese, punto prelievo e **poste** .
- 14 La torre medievale è **posta** sul versante a monte della fortificazione.
- 15 L'utilizzo della **posta** elettronica fa ormai parte dell'uso quotidiano di tutti noi.
- 16 Una battaglia ardua, ma la **posta** in gioco è alta.
- 17 Il parco della pace è una delle aree cui viene **posta** particolare attenzione.
- 18 Agli altri studenti è **posta** in pagamento successivamente alla regolarizzazione dell'iscrizione.
- 19 Si cattura occasionalmente con reti a strascico e da **posta** .
- 20 Le caratteristiche della camera **posta** sul lato anteriore restano invece invariate.
- 21 L'auto è stata **posta** sotto sequestro per mancata copertura assicurativa.

ITSKELL & DESKELL AS ADDITIONAL COMPONENTS

Word sketch: collocations and fixed expressions.

SKELL: corpus examples f X

← → ↻ ↗ [Sicuro](#) | <https://itskell.sketchengine.co.uk/run.cgi/wordsketch?lpos=&query=posta>

SKELL 🔍 Examples Word sketch Similar words More features

posta noun Context

verbs with "posta" as object

certificare domandare alzare raccomandare controllare andare dividere conquistare scaricare inviare consultare gestire indicare leggere consegnare

modifiers of "posta"

elettronico ordinario mezzo prioritario raccomandato indesiderato italiano problematico intero celere cartaceo tradizionale aereo pneumatico normale

"posta" and/or ...

fax corriere banca e-mail posta farmacia calendario mail indirizzo supermercato telefono contatto web numero servizio

pronominal possessors of "posta"

tuo vostro proprio mio nostro

prepositional phrases with nouns

→ "posta" in "posta" a "posta" al "posta" all' "posta" di "posta" sulla "posta" su "posta" sul "posta" nel "posta" del "posta" della "posta" alla "posta" sotto "posta" per "posta" con

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Similar words (Word cloud): conceptual map of lexicon.

[illegible]

ITSKELL & DESKELL AS ADDITIONAL COMPONENTS

- These functions are cross-linguistically relevant too: the possibility of getting in touch with the actual NS productions gives some raw data to reflect on, no matter what the target language is.
- For this reason, we can take a look to the SkELL extension for German language, that has some specific features that can be investigated thanks to basic distributional insights.
- What can you notice in the following example?

ITSKELL & DESKELL AS ADDITIONAL COMPONENTS

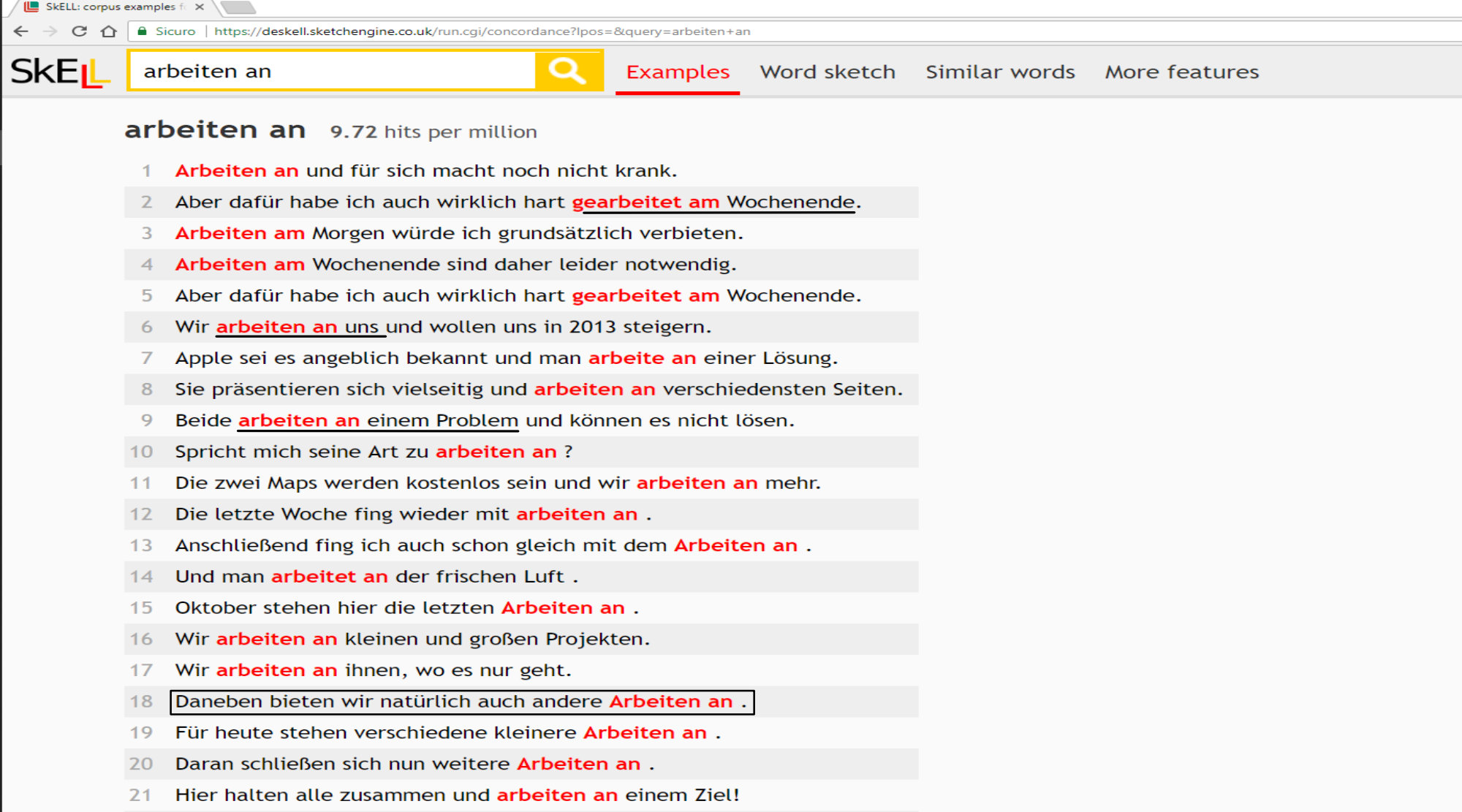
Word search: example from German.

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <https://deskell.sketchengine.co.uk/run.cgi/concordance?lpos=&query=hängen+von>. The page title is "SkELL: corpus examples". The search bar contains "hängen von" and the results are displayed under the "Examples" tab. The search results show 7.95 hits per million. The examples are listed as follows:

- 1 Es **hängt von** jedem von uns ab.
- 2 Wie stark jedoch, **hängt von** jedem einzelnen ab!
- 3 Sehr viel **hängt von** der Kommunikation ab.
- 4 Andere jedoch **hängen von** der Lebensweise ab.
- 5 Was genau angezeigt wird **hängt von** dem Modell ab.
- 6 Zu viel **hängt von** jeder Entscheidung ab.
- 7 Und dies **hängt von** zwei entscheidenden Faktoren ab.
- 8 Alles **hängt von** ausgewogenen gesetzlichen Vorgaben ab.
- 9 Ob wir etwas oder jemanden mögen **hängt von** vielen Faktoren ab.
- 10 Der Erfolg **hängt von** jeder und jedem von uns ab.
- 11 Wo du tätig wirst **hängt von** deinen Interessen ab.
- 12 Doch das **hängt von** der persönlichen Disziplin eines jeden einzelnen ab.
- 13 Dies **hängt von** der jeweiligen Hochschule ab.
- 14 Nun das **hängt von** ein paar Voraussetzungen ab.
- 15 Wie oft geschliffen wird **hängt von** der Belastung ab.
- 16 Wie viel verbaut wird **hängt vom** Hersteller ab.
- 17 Viel **hängt von** den beteiligten Personen ab.
- 18 Dies **hängt von** der jeweiligen Route ab.
- 19 Wieviel das dann ausmacht **hängt von** den genauen Werten ab.
- 20 Wie gut oder schlecht **hängt von** vielen Faktoren ab.
- 21 Also, das eine **hängt vom** anderen ab.

ITSKELL & DESKELL AS ADDITIONAL COMPONENTS

Pattern construction with “Verben mit Präpositionen”



The screenshot displays the SkELL web interface. At the top, the browser address bar shows the URL <https://deskell.sketchengine.co.uk/run.cgi/concordance?lpos=&query=arbeiten+an>. The SkELL logo is on the left, and a search bar contains the text "arbeiten an". To the right of the search bar are links for "Examples", "Word sketch", "Similar words", and "More features". Below the search bar, the results for "arbeiten an" are shown, indicating "9.72 hits per million". A list of 21 example sentences follows, with the phrase "arbeiten an" highlighted in red in each sentence. The 18th sentence, "Daneben bieten wir natürlich auch andere Arbeiten an .", is enclosed in a black rectangular box.

arbeiten an 9.72 hits per million

- 1 **Arbeiten an** und für sich macht noch nicht krank.
- 2 Aber dafür habe ich auch wirklich hart **gearbeitet am** Wochenende.
- 3 **Arbeiten am** Morgen würde ich grundsätzlich verbieten.
- 4 **Arbeiten am** Wochenende sind daher leider notwendig.
- 5 Aber dafür habe ich auch wirklich hart **gearbeitet am** Wochenende.
- 6 Wir **arbeiten an uns** und wollen uns in 2013 steigern.
- 7 Apple sei es angeblich bekannt und man **arbeite an** einer Lösung.
- 8 Sie präsentieren sich vielseitig und **arbeiten an** verschiedensten Seiten.
- 9 Beide **arbeiten an** einem Problem und können es nicht lösen.
- 10 Spricht mich seine Art zu **arbeiten an** ?
- 11 Die zwei Maps werden kostenlos sein und wir **arbeiten an** mehr.
- 12 Die letzte Woche fing wieder mit **arbeiten an** .
- 13 Anschließend fing ich auch schon gleich mit dem **Arbeiten an** .
- 14 Und man **arbeitet an** der frischen Luft .
- 15 Oktober stehen hier die letzten **Arbeiten an** .
- 16 Wir **arbeiten an** kleinen und großen Projekten.
- 17 Wir **arbeiten an** ihnen, wo es nur geht.
- 18 Daneben bieten wir natürlich auch andere **Arbeiten an** .
- 19 Für heute stehen verschiedene kleinere **Arbeiten an** .
- 20 Daran schließen sich nun weitere **Arbeiten an** .
- 21 Hier halten alle zusammen und **arbeiten an** einem Ziel!

ITSKELL & DESKELL AS ADDITIONAL COMPONENTS

- It is evident that the SkELL extension for German also supports those other functions we have observed for Italian too.
- Since German has cases, Word sketch is conceived in a slightly different way: dividing words by the case they take when in collocation with the one we have looked for.
- Simultaneously, the tool also provides us the list of the prepositions, cases, adverbs and modifiers in collocation with the word we looked for.

ITSKELL & DESKELL AS ADDITIONAL COMPONENTS

deSkELL: Word sketch (I) and pattern construction

The screenshot shows the deSkELL web interface for the word "arbeiten". The interface is organized into several sections, each with a title and a list of related words or phrases. A yellow box highlights the "Context" button, and a black arrow points to the "arbeiten" in past participle button.

arbeiten verb **Context**

Constructions

- "arbeiten" in present indicative
- "arbeiten" in infinitive
- "arbeiten" in 3rd person singular
- "arbeiten" in 3rd person plural
- "arbeiten" in past participle
- "arbeiten" in 1st person singular
- "arbeiten" in past indicative
- "arbeiten" in 1st person plural
- "arbeiten" in present subjunctive

modifiers of "arbeiten"

- zusammen
- zusammen
- mit
- derzeit
- weiter
- ausschließlich
- gerne
- dort
- über
- bereits
- zurzeit
- gern
- gerade
- viel
- weiterhin

nouns with "arbeiten" as genitive object

- Beschäftigte
- Studium
- Firma
- Weiter
- Projekt
- Arbeitnehmer
- Elternzeit
- Erwerbstätige
- Ausbildung
- Unternehmen
- Universität
- Schuljahr
- V.
- Kunde
- Klasse

dative objects of "arbeiten"

- Projekt
- Beruf
- Studium
- Lösung
- Team
- Firma
- Bedingung
- Unternehmen
- Verbesserung
- Umsetzung
- Methode
- System
- Bereich
- Betrieb
- Jugendliche

accusative objects of "arbeiten"

- Vollzeit
- Stunde
- Hand
- Jahr
- Teilzeit
- Woche
- Monat
- Tag
- Nacht
- Weile
- Firma
- Spaß
- Wochenstunde
- Zeit
- Schicht

subjects of "arbeiten"

- Mitarbeiter
- Team
- Mensch
- Unternehmen
- Schüler
- Frau
- Beschäftigte
- Firma
- Vater
- Entwickler
- Mutter
- Gruppe
- Künstler
- Mitglied
- Mann

prepositions of "arbeiten"

- seit
- als
- mit
- an
- in
- nach
- für
- unter
- bei
- ohne
- bis
- auf
- zu
- während
- u.

modal verbs with "arbeiten"

- müssen
- wollen
- mögen
- dürfen
- sollen
- können

ITSKELL & DESKELL AS ADDITIONAL COMPONENTS

deSkELL: Word sketch (2) and pattern construction

The screenshot displays the deSkELL web interface for the German verb "arbeiten". The browser address bar shows the URL <https://deskell.sketchengine.co.uk/run.cgi/wordsketch?lpos=&query=arbeiten>. The interface is organized into several sections, each with a title and a list of word sketches in rounded rectangular buttons.

- modal verbs with "arbeiten"**
 - müssen
 - wollen
 - mögen
 - dürfen
 - sollen
 - können
- prepositional objects in dative**
 - "arbeiten" in + dative
 - "arbeiten" mit + dative
 - "arbeiten" an + dative
 - "arbeiten" seit + dative
 - "arbeiten" zu + dative
 - "arbeiten" nach + dative
 - "arbeiten" auf + dative
 - "arbeiten" bei + dative
 - "arbeiten" von + dative
 - "arbeiten" unter + dative
 - "arbeiten" aus + dative
 - "arbeiten" bis + dative
 - "arbeiten" vor + dative
 - "arbeiten" neben + dative
 - "arbeiten" z. + dative
- prepositional objects in genitive**
 - "arbeiten" während + genitive
 - "arbeiten" mit + genitive
 - "arbeiten" in + genitive
- prepositional objects in accusative**
 - "arbeiten" für + accusative
 - "arbeiten" als + accusative
 - "arbeiten" in + accusative
 - "arbeiten" auf + accusative
 - "arbeiten" über + accusative
 - "arbeiten" an + accusative
 - "arbeiten" ohne + accusative
 - "arbeiten" um + accusative
 - "arbeiten" pro + accusative
 - "arbeiten" gegen + accusative
 - "arbeiten" unter + accusative
 - "arbeiten" bis + accusative
 - "arbeiten" durch + accusative

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CORPUS LINGUISTICS: HOW TO?

- Those functions represent the ground our proposal is based on: if correctly used, they make the learner an active part of his own learning process.
- Nonetheless, it takes time to get acquainted with this type of data and to use them fruitfully: a specific document will be provided to the self-directed learners.
- This document will not only present the tool, but also it will make them aware of its potentialities.

CORPUS LINGUISTICS: HOW TO?

- We will present the functions that SkELL supports, aiming to introduce this corpus-based tool as an additional instrument for language learning.
- This will contribute to the formation of the linguistic awareness of the self-directed learner as far as the target language is concerned.
- The link to SkELL and the explanatory document will be preferably presented in association with other most commonly known instruments on the website of the linguistic centre at Pavia University, <http://cla.unipv.it/EN/>, as an additional section.

CORPUS LINGUISTICS: HOW TO?

- Our proposal of a «proactive» engagement stems from what previously discussed about the self-directed learner: we want to respect the essential need of the self-directed learner to feel as the actual maker of the learning process.
- For this reason, we suggest that self-directed learners make a correct use of the corpus-based tools, constantly keeping records of their evolving awareness.
- By doing so, it will be easier to make comparisons and evaluations of the strengths and of the weaknesses that have to be fixed.

CONCLUSIONS

- Corpus linguistics offers a great variety of data and consequently of potential stimulus for self-directed learners.
- The real challenge will be understanding how to integrate correctly those stimuluses in a self-directed language learning process.
- The proposal of a proactive engagement of the self-directed learners, aims at making them acknowledge that language learning is a faceted life-long experience.

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THANK YOU

