

Corpus Linguistics and Language Teaching. New Approaches in ESL/EFL Teaching and Learning

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Lingüística de Corpus

Outline

1. ESP & Writing for publication in a global context
2. ESP: main features of specialised discourses
3. Corpus Linguistics as a methodological tool for ESP teaching. What can a corpus do?
4. Applications of corpora in ESP teaching/learning
5. Resources for ESP Teaching
6. Presentation of *SciE-Lex*
7. Conclusions

ESP & Writing for publication in a global context

So as to **gain access to a discourse community** and **acceptance within it**, one must become familiar with the “**game strategies**” (Etherington 2008) that govern scientific writing



- a) **better knowledge/command of the scientific discourse**
- b) **improvement of one's scientific production in English**
- c) **THUS, better chance to publish one's results internationally and gain recognition among community experts**

The nature of specialised discourses

- “*highly stereotypical in nature*” (Gledhill, 2000:116).
- **Prefab** expressions, prototypical of a given discourse.
- Some **predictable features**:
 - The use of **abstract nouns**
 - The use of **passives**
 - The **lack of pronouns**

The nature of specialised discourses

- **Fixed article** structure that varies from field to field/ journal to journal. Some examples:

Generic scientific article	Articles in the fields of chemistry and molecular biology	Articles in the fields of engineering , computer science and physics
Abstract	Abstract	Abstract/Summary (optional)
Introduction	Introduction	Introduction
Methods	Results (very detailed section)	Body (theory, methods, results and discussion)
Results	Discussion	Conclusions
Discussion	Methods (Procedure/Experimental)	

English for Specific Purposes (ESP): main features of specialised discourses

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The nature of specialised discourses

- Approaches to studying scientific language:
 - (1) *The Discourse Approach*
 - (2) *The Corpus Approach*

The Discourse approach (COMPETENCE)

- Observations of language are made using relatively **small amounts of text**
- The observations tend to be about **discrete(isolated) elements of language**

The Corpus Approach (PERFORMANCE)

- Advent of corpus linguistics has presented a **more rigorous approach to the study of language.**
 - The investigation of large amounts of **authentic language**
 - The recognition of language as occurring in chunks rather than individual units (**phraseological approach**)
 - The ability to search for patterns of language through these chunks: longer phrases/structures with passives; abstract nouns in combination with other linguistic elements; pronoun use in longer stretches of text (**lexicogrammatical approach**)

The nature of ESP writing

Writing an ESP article is unique:

- Audience
- Purpose
- Structure

How is it different from other types of writing?

- Engaging with literature
- Justifying methodology
- Commenting on findings

How is it different from other types of writing?

Text A: extract from RA

Halliday and Hasan (1976: 274–284) first identified a class of ‘general nouns’, and showed that they allow the writer to introduce ‘an interpersonal element into the meaning’ (276). **Winter** (1982: 185–186) distinguished a wider category of ‘unspecific nouns’, while **Ivanic** (1991) examined what she called ‘carrier nouns’.

Text B: extract from thesis

Halliday and Hasan (1976: 274–284) first drew attention to what they called a class of ‘general nouns’, a small set which includes nouns such as ‘question’ and ‘idea’ as well as ‘person’ and ‘thing’. They indicate that, although ‘very similar to a reference item’ (1976: 275), a ‘general noun’ differs significantly from a pronoun in that it allows the possibility ‘of introducing an interpersonal element into the meaning’ (1976: 276) and they give examples such as ‘idiot, fool, devil, dear’. **Winter** (1982: 185–6) widens the scope of the category when he distinguishes what he calls ‘unspecific nouns’, which are those that ‘require obligatory lexical realisation’ (1982: 185); however he is more concerned with their role in the clause. Than with the opportunity for interpersonal comment they offer. **Ivanic** (1991) distinguishes nouns that have both open- and closed-system features and uses the term ‘carrier nouns’ for the category she proposes. She also points out that these nouns can ‘carry commentary on the portion of discourse they refer to’ (1991: 93); however she restricts her discussion to the evaluative opportunity presented by modification of the noun, without discussing the possible stance function of the noun itself.

How is it different from other types of writing?

Text A: Extract from article

A comparison of the collocates listed in the entries for the selected items in the three collocational dictionaries showed that there is a considerable lack of agreement in the content of the three dictionaries. The results of the comparison showed that, for instance, only 3% of the total number of collocates listed appear in all three dictionaries, and that more than 80% appear in only one of the three dictionaries. This lack of agreement in content would seem to result from differences in what each of the dictionaries regards as a collocation. The BBI, for example, includes large numbers of grammatical collocations (e.g. *concerned about*, *blockade against*, *angry at*) in its entries, whereas both the OCD and the DSC concentrate more on lexical collocations.

Extract from thesis:

A comparison of the collocates listed in the entries for the selected items in the three collocational dictionaries shows that there is a considerable lack of agreement in the content of the three dictionaries. The results of the comparison show that, for example, on average, only 3% of the total number of collocates listed appear in all three dictionaries, and that more than 80% appear in only one of the three dictionaries. This lack of agreement in content would seem to result from differences in what each of the dictionaries regards as a collocation. The BBI, for example, includes eight different types of grammatical collocations (e.g. *concerned about*, *blockade against*, *angry at*), whereas neither the OCD nor the DSC include any types of grammatical collocations in their content. ***It is interesting to note that there is more agreement in the collocates which have been included in the entries for the selected items in the three learners' dictionaries than in the collocational dictionaries. This may result from the fact that all three learners' dictionaries have concentrated more on lexical collocations.***

What and to whom are we teaching ESP?

Audience: undergrads/postgraduate/MA/PhD students?
Practitioners?

Purpose: improve their written and oral competence in English

Getting familiar with the “**game strategies**” in ESP

a) **Enhanced ESP competence**



b) Good chance to **get one's results published** in an **international setting** and thus **gain recognition** among peers (**community experts**)