

**CORPUS-BASED TEACHING OF ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES (ESP) TO
PSYCHOLOGY STUDENTS: DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL VOCABULARY AND
ACADEMIC COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

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Abstract: The rapid globalization of higher education and scientific communication has significantly increased the importance of English language proficiency among psychology students. As future professionals, psychology students are expected to read academic literature, participate in international conferences, publish research findings, and communicate effectively within multicultural professional environments. Traditional English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses often rely on textbooks and teacher-centered instruction, which may not adequately expose learners to authentic disciplinary language. Corpus-based language teaching has emerged as an innovative pedagogical approach that allows learners to investigate real language use through electronic collections of authentic texts. This study explores the effectiveness of corpus-based instruction in ESP courses designed for psychology students. Using a specialized psychology corpus consisting of journal articles, textbooks, and professional reports, students engaged in concordance analysis, frequency searches, collocation identification, and data-driven learning activities. The findings indicate that corpus-based teaching significantly enhances students' understanding of psychological terminology, academic writing competence, and professional communication skills. Moreover, learners demonstrated increased autonomy and critical thinking through the exploration of authentic language patterns. The study concludes that corpus-based pedagogy provides a valuable framework for ESP instruction in psychology and contributes to the development of discipline-specific communicative competence.

Keywords: Corpus linguistics, ESP, psychology students, corpus-based teaching, academic vocabulary, concordance analysis, collocations, professional communication, English language teaching.

Psixologiya talabalari uchun ingliz tilini maxsus maqsadlarda (ESP) korpusga asoslangan o'qitish: professional lug'at va akademik muloqot ko'nikmalarini rivojlantirish

Annotatsiya

Oliy ta'limning xalqaro miqyosda rivojlanishi va ilmiy hamkorlikning kengayishi natijasida psixologiya yo'nalishi talabalarining ingliz tilini mukammal egallashi muhim ahamiyat kasb etmoqda. Zamonaviy psixologlar xalqaro ilmiy maqolalarni o'qishlari, konferensiyalarda qatnashishlari va ilmiy tadqiqot natijalarini ingliz tilida taqdim etishlari talab etiladi. An'anaviy ESP kurslari ko'pincha darsliklarga asoslangan bo'lib, talabalarni haqiqiy kasbiy til bilan yetarlicha tanishtirmaydi. Korpusga asoslangan ta'lim esa autentik matnlar bazasi orqali tilni real qo'llanish holatlarida o'rganish imkoniyatini yaratadi. Ushbu tadqiqot psixologiya talabalari uchun ESP kurslarida korpusga asoslangan o'qitishning samaradorligini o'rganadi. Tadqiqot davomida talabalar psixologiyaga oid ilmiy maqolalar, darsliklar va professional hisobotlardan tuzilgan maxsus korpus bilan ishladilar. Konkordans tahlili, kollokatsiyalarni aniqlash va chastota tahlillari orqali talabalar kasbiy terminologiyani chuqurroq o'zlashtirdilar. Natijalar korpusga asoslangan yondashuv akademik yozuv, kasbiy kommunikatsiya va mustaqil o'rganish ko'nikmalarini sezilarli darajada rivojlantirishini ko'rsatdi.

Kalit so'zlar: Korpus lingvistikasi, ESP, psixologiya talabalari, korpusga asoslangan ta'lim, akademik lug'at, konkordans tahlili, kollokatsiyalar, kasbiy muloqot.

Корпусно-ориентированное обучение английскому языку для специальных целей студентов-психологов: развитие профессиональной лексики и навыков академической коммуникации

Аннотаци: Глобализация высшего образования и международного научного сотрудничества значительно повысили роль английского языка в подготовке будущих психологов. Студенты-психологи должны владеть навыками чтения научных публикаций, участия в международных конференциях и представления результатов исследований на английском языке. Традиционные курсы ESP часто ограничиваются учебными материалами и не всегда отражают особенности реального профессионального общения. Корпусно-ориентированное обучение предоставляет студентам доступ к аутентичным текстам и позволяет изучать язык в его естественном использовании. В данном исследовании рассматривается эффективность применения корпусного подхода в обучении английскому языку студентов-психологов. В качестве учебного материала использовался специализированный корпус, включающий научные статьи, учебники и профессиональные отчёты по психологии. Результаты показали, что использование корпусных технологий способствует развитию профессиональной терминологии, академического письма и коммуникативной компетенции студентов.

Ключевые слова: Корпусная лингвистика, ESP, студенты-психологи, корпусное обучение, академическая лексика, конкорданс-анализ, коллокации, профессиональная коммуникация.

Introduction

In the twenty-first century, English has become the dominant language of science, research, and international communication. Psychology, as a rapidly developing scientific discipline, relies heavily on English-language publications, international collaboration, and global academic exchange. Consequently, psychology students require not only general English proficiency but also specialized linguistic competence that enables them to understand professional terminology, analyze scientific literature, and communicate effectively within academic and professional settings.

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has emerged as a response to these needs by focusing on language instruction tailored to specific disciplines and professions. Unlike General English courses, ESP programs aim to develop the vocabulary, discourse structures, and communicative practices relevant to a particular field. For psychology students, this includes understanding terms such as “cognitive behavior,” “psychological assessment,” “mental health intervention,” “working memory,” and “experimental design.”

Despite the growing importance of ESP, traditional instructional methods often rely on textbook-based materials and teacher explanations. Such approaches may fail to provide learners with authentic examples of how language is used in real professional contexts. Corpus linguistics offers an alternative approach by allowing students to explore large collections of authentic texts and discover language patterns independently.

A corpus can be defined as an electronically stored collection of authentic texts that can be analyzed using specialized software. Through corpus tools, learners can investigate frequency patterns, collocations, concordances, and discourse structures. These features enable students to understand not only the meaning of words but also their contextual usage.

For example, when psychology students search the term “depression” in a corpus, they may discover frequent combinations such as “major depression,” “depressive symptoms,” “clinical depression,” and “depression treatment.” Such discoveries help learners develop a more nuanced understanding of professional language than traditional vocabulary memorization.

The present study examines how corpus-based instruction can support ESP learning among psychology students. Specifically, it investigates the impact of corpus activities on vocabulary acquisition, academic writing, and professional communication skills.

Literature Review

Corpus-based language teaching originates from the broader field of corpus linguistics. One of the most influential scholars in this area is John Sinclair (1991), who argued that language should be studied through authentic examples rather than isolated grammatical rules. Sinclair introduced concordance analysis as a means of examining language patterns in real contexts.

Tim Johns (1991) further developed the concept of Data-Driven Learning (DDL), emphasizing that students should become language researchers who discover linguistic patterns independently. According to Johns, corpus tools transform learners from passive recipients of information into active investigators of language use.

Hunston (2002) highlighted the pedagogical value of corpora in language education. She argued that corpus analysis provides reliable evidence about frequency, collocation, and phraseology, enabling learners to develop more accurate linguistic competence.

Biber, Conrad, and Reppen (1998) demonstrated that corpus-based approaches improve students' understanding of genre-specific language. Their research showed that learners exposed to authentic corpus data develop stronger awareness of disciplinary discourse conventions.

Within ESP education, Flowerdew (2015) emphasized the importance of corpus-based materials for teaching professional communication. He noted that specialized corpora provide learners with authentic examples of terminology and rhetorical structures used within specific academic fields.

Research on corpus-based ESP instruction has reported positive outcomes across disciplines including medicine, engineering, business, and psychology. Studies indicate improvements in vocabulary acquisition, academic writing, learner autonomy, and critical thinking skills.

For psychology students specifically, corpus analysis facilitates the acquisition of discipline-specific terminology. Students can observe how concepts such as "cognitive load," "social anxiety," "behavioral therapy," and "emotional regulation" are used in authentic contexts. This exposure contributes to deeper conceptual understanding and more effective professional communication.

Methods

The study employed a mixed-method research design involving quantitative and qualitative data collection. Forty undergraduate psychology students participated in an eight-week ESP course incorporating corpus-based learning activities.

A specialized psychology corpus containing approximately 500,000 words was compiled from peer-reviewed journal articles, psychology textbooks, conference papers, and professional reports.

Students completed weekly activities involving concordance searches, collocation analysis, frequency investigations, and academic writing tasks using AntConc software.

Examples included analyzing the word "anxiety" and identifying frequent collocations such as "social anxiety," "anxiety disorder," "anxiety symptoms," and "anxiety treatment." Students also examined concordance lines to understand grammatical and semantic patterns.

Pre-tests and post-tests were administered to measure vocabulary growth and writing performance.

Results

The findings revealed substantial improvements in students' ESP competence. Vocabulary test scores increased by approximately 22 percent between pre-test and post-test measurements. Students demonstrated greater familiarity with discipline-specific terminology and more accurate usage of academic phrases.

Writing assessments showed notable improvements in lexical sophistication and collocational accuracy. Learners increasingly used authentic psychological expressions rather than simplified general-language alternatives.

For example, instead of writing "stress affects people," students produced corpus-informed expressions such as "chronic stress negatively influences psychological well-being" and "high stress levels were associated with decreased cognitive performance."

Student feedback indicated high levels of motivation and engagement. Many participants reported that corpus tools helped them understand how psychologists actually communicate in academic contexts.

Discussion

The results support previous findings by Sinclair, Johns, Hunston, and Flowerdew regarding the pedagogical effectiveness of corpus-based learning. Exposure to authentic psychological discourse enabled students to acquire vocabulary in meaningful contexts and develop greater awareness of disciplinary language conventions.

One of the most significant advantages observed was the development of learner autonomy. Students became active participants in the learning process, independently investigating language patterns and drawing conclusions from corpus evidence. This aligns with Data-Driven Learning principles and contemporary learner-centered approaches.

Furthermore, corpus activities improved students' academic writing by providing authentic models of professional communication. Through repeated exposure to disciplinary collocations and phraseology, learners developed more natural and accurate writing styles.

The findings also suggest that corpus-based instruction contributes to critical thinking skills. Students analyzed language data, compared examples, identified patterns, and formulated linguistic generalizations. Such analytical processes parallel many of the cognitive skills required in psychological research itself.

Overall, corpus-based ESP instruction represents an effective and innovative approach for preparing psychology students to participate successfully in academic and professional communities where English serves as the primary medium of communication.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that corpus-based teaching significantly enhances ESP learning among psychology students. By engaging with authentic language data, students develop stronger vocabulary knowledge, improved academic writing skills, and greater confidence in professional communication. The integration of corpus linguistics into ESP curricula offers valuable opportunities for learner autonomy, critical thinking, and discipline-specific language development. Future research should investigate long-term effects of corpus-based instruction and explore the integration of larger specialized corpora in psychology education.

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