UTILIZING CORPORA IN TEACHING ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES (EAP): A POST COVID-19 ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This article explores the utilization of corpora in teaching English for Academic Purposes in the post-COVID-19 era. The central argument is that corpora, large collections of written and spoken texts, offer valuable insights into language use patterns, which can inform pedagogical practices and enhance language proficiency. By analysing the integration of corpora into EAP instruction, this article aims to provide strategies to navigate the evolving landscape of language teaching in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The review of literature covers corpus approaches in addressing the linguistic needs of EAP learners; the role of corpus-based activities in promoting learner autonomy and critical thinking skills in EAP instruction; and the impact of corpus-based tools on writing skills development among EAP learners. Issues that emerged from the discussion of literature are discussed in conceptual perspective in the discussion section. The study concludes by addressing the implications of using corpora in teaching EAP. Thus, its position is that integrating corpus-based activities and materials into EAP teaching offers numerous benefits for both educators and learners. Therefore, by incorporating authentic language data into instructional materials, educators can provide learners with exposure to real-world language use in academic contexts, thereby enhancing their language proficiency and academic skills.

Keywords: corpora, English for Academic Purpose, utilization, language teaching

1.0 Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected the global education system. Consequently, educators are forced to adapt to remote and hybrid learning environments. In teaching English for Academic Purposes (henceforth EAP), the challenges posed by the pandemic have prompted a re-evaluation of teaching methodologies and resources. This paper explores the utilization of corpora in teaching EAP in the post-COVID-19 era. Corpora, large collections of written and spoken texts, offer valuable insights into language use patterns, which can inform pedagogical practices and enhance language proficiency. By analysing the integration of corpora in EAP instruction, this research aims to provide strategies to navigate the evolving landscape of language teaching in the aftermath of the pandemic.

The article begins with a succinct articulation of the use of corpus in teaching English. It then presents the problem that underpins the study. The review of literature covers corpus approaches in addressing the linguistic needs of EAP learners, the role of corpus-based activities in promoting learner autonomy and critical thinking skills in EAP instruction, and the impact of corpus-based tools on writing skills development among EAP learners. Issues that emerged from the discussion of literature are discussed in a conceptual perspective in the discussion section. The study concludes by addressing the implications of using corpora in teaching EAP.

2.0 Background of Corpus Use in Teaching English

The use of corpora in teaching English has a rich history that dates back several decades. The earliest efforts to compile and analyse linguistic corpora can be traced back to the mid-20th century, with pioneering studies such as the Brown Corpus and the Lancaster-Oslo/Bergen Corpus (Francis & Kucera, 1964). These seminal projects laid the groundwork for subsequent developments in corpus linguistics and paved the way for the integration of corpora into language teaching and learning practices.

In the field of English language teaching (ELT), the use of corpora gained momentum in the late 20th century, driven by advancements in computer technology and the growing accessibility of digital text corpora. Educators and researchers began to recognize the relevance of corpora in language analysis, vocabulary learning, and pedagogical materials development. One of the landmark initiatives in corpus-based language teaching was the creation of the British National Corpus (BNC) in the early 1990s (Leech et al., 1994). The BNC, a large-scale corpus containing a diverse range of written and spoken texts from various sources, provided educators with a wealth of authentic language data for language analysis and pedagogical purposes. Subsequent developments, such as the creation of specialized learner corpora and the emergence of user-friendly corpus analysis tools further expanded the possibilities for integrating corpora into English language teaching.

Today, corpus-based approaches have become an integral part of English language teaching methodologies, with educators leveraging corpora to enhance vocabulary instruction, grammar teaching, reading comprehension, writing skills development, and language assessment (Tavassoli, 2023). As technology continues to evolve and linguistic corpora become more sophisticated and accessible, the role of corpora in teaching English is expected to continue to grow, offering educators new insights and opportunities for enhancing language learning outcomes.

3.0 The Problem

The shift to remote and online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic has posed significant challenges in teaching EAP. Traditional classroom-based approaches, which often rely heavily on face-to-face interaction and teacher-led instruction, no longer suffice in meeting the diverse linguistic needs of students in virtual settings (Tavassoli, 2023). The absence of physical classroom environments and direct interaction with peers and instructors can hinder students' language acquisition and academic skills development. Research has shown that face-to-face interaction plays a crucial role in language learning, facilitation of communication, negotiation of meaning, and social interaction (Ellis, Dumas, and Forbes, 2020). However, the transition to remote learning has limited opportunities for spontaneous interaction and collaboration, potentially affecting students' language proficiency and engagement in academic tasks.

Moreover, the digital divide exacerbates disparities in access to technology and internet connectivity, further marginalizing students from underprivileged backgrounds. Students who lack access to reliable internet connections or technological devices may face barriers in

participating fully in online EAP courses, limiting their opportunities for academic success (Yuan, 2018). Therefore, there is a need for educators to explore innovative methods and resources that can address the unique challenges posed by remote learning environments. By incorporating technology-mediated approaches, such as the use of digital tools and online resources, educators can create interactive and engaging learning experiences that foster language acquisition and academic skills development in virtual settings.

4.0 Literature Review

As shall be noted in the discussions below, previous research has highlighted the benefits of using corpora in language teaching and learning. Corpora provide learners with authentic examples of language use in academic contexts, enabling them to develop a deeper understanding of disciplinary discourse conventions and vocabulary. Moreover, corpus-based activities can promote learner autonomy and critical thinking skills by encouraging students to explore language patterns and make informed linguistic choices. Some of the studies presented below have also demonstrated the efficacy of corpus-based tools, such as concordances and word frequency lists, in supporting vocabulary acquisition and writing skills development among EAP learners.

4.1 Evaluating the efficacy of corpus-based approaches in addressing the linguistic needs of EAP learners

Corpora have garnered increasing recognition as invaluable assets in catering to the linguistic requirements of EAP learners. As noted by Biber (1993) and Higgins et al., (2015), corpora serve as repositories of genuine instances of language use within academic contexts, thereby facilitating the development of a more profound comprehension of disciplinary discourse conventions and specialized vocabulary among learners. Consistent with the foregoing, Conrad (2000), Flowerdew (2009), and Cushing (2017) provide empirical proof that exposure to authentic academic texts through corpora significantly augments learners' abilities to comprehend and produce academic discourse effectively. Also, Kennedy and Miceli (2001), and Higgins et al. (2015) identified corpus-based activities as effective tools for fostering language awareness and accuracy among EAP learners. The point, therefore, is that over the years the use of corpora in teaching EAP has been known among researchers and educators.

Furthermore, corpus-based approaches offer a solution to the diverse linguistic needs of EAP learners, especially in the evolving educational landscape in the post-COVID-19. By immersing learners in authentic academic language use, corpora bridge the gap between theory and practice, providing learners with real-world examples to contextualize their learning (Boulton, 2012). Through the analysis of corpus data, learners gain insight into disciplinary discourse, enabling them to navigate academic texts with greater confidence and proficiency (Meunier, 2011). Moreover, corpus-based activities encourage active engagement with language data, prompting learners to critically evaluate and reflect on their linguistic choices.

The efficacy of corpus-based approaches in addressing the linguistic needs of EAP learners extends beyond the confines of the traditional classroom setting. In the context of remote and online learning environments, where face-to-face interaction is limited, corpora

serve as invaluable resources for promoting autonomous learning and self-directed inquiry (Chitez, 2023). Learners can access corpora remotely, allowing them to explore language patterns and structures at their own pace and convenience. This flexibility empowers learners to take ownership of their language learning journey, fostering a sense of autonomy and self-efficacy.

4.2 Exploring the role of corpus-based activities in promoting learner autonomy and critical thinking skills in EAP instruction

Both Kennedy and Miceli (2001), and Cobb and Boulton (2015) contend that the utilization of corpus data encourages learners to delve into language patterns autonomously, thereby nurturing self-reliance and metacognitive awareness regarding their language learning processes. Echoing this sentiment, Boulton (2016) posits that corpus-based activities serve as catalysts for critical thinking by empowering learners to scrutinize language data, discern patterns, and make informed linguistic choices. Through active engagement with corpus data, EAP learners cultivate analytical prowess and problem-solving abilities that are indispensable for academic excellence.

The incorporation of corpus-based activities into EAP instruction holds particular significance in the post-COVID-19 educational landscape. In an era characterized by remote and online learning modalities, where physical interaction is becoming highly limited, corpus-based activities assume even greater importance in promoting learner autonomy (Chitez, 2023). Learners, irrespective of geographical constraints, can access corpus resources remotely, thereby assuming greater control over their learning trajectories (Frankenberg-Garcia, 2022). This decentralized approach empowers learners to navigate language data independently, fostering a sense of ownership and self-determination in their language learning endeavours.

Moreover, corpus-based activities serve as conduits for nurturing critical thinking skills essential for academic success. By engaging with authentic language data, learners are encouraged to analyse, interpret, and evaluate linguistic patterns, thereby honing their cognitive abilities (Bunting, 2013). The process of discerning patterns and making informed linguistic choices fosters a deeper understanding of disciplinary discourse conventions and enhances learners' ability to communicate effectively in academic contexts (Frankenberg-Garcia, 2022). Consequently, corpus-based activities not only equip EAP learners with the requisite language skills but also cultivate their capacity for critical inquiry and intellectual engagement.

4.3 Assessing the impact of corpus-based tools on vocabulary acquisition and writing skills development among EAP learners

Corpus-based tools, including concordances and word frequency lists, have emerged as indispensable aids in facilitating vocabulary acquisition and fostering writing skills development among EAP learners. Yılmaz and Soruç (2015) underscore the efficacy of concordances in empowering learners to delve into lexical patterns and collocations within authentic academic texts. By utilizing concordances, learners gain valuable insight into the contextual usage of words and phrases, thereby enhancing their understanding of academic

discourse conventions. Similarly, Kartal and Yangineksi (2018) posit that word frequency lists offer learners a strategic approach to vocabulary acquisition by identifying the most prevalent words and phrases in academic discourse. This targeted approach enables learners to prioritize their vocabulary learning efforts, focusing on high-frequency terms essential for effective communication in academic contexts.

Corpus-based tools play an important role in enhancing writing skills by facilitating targeted vocabulary instruction and promoting language accuracy (Yoon, 2008). Crosthwaite and Cheung (2019) further highlight the practical utility of corpus-based tools in guiding learners through the writing process, from brainstorming ideas to revising drafts. By accessing corpus data, learners can identify appropriate vocabulary choices and linguistic structures, thereby enhancing the clarity and coherence of their written compositions. Furthermore, corpus-based tools enable learners to evaluate their language use against authentic academic models, fostering a deeper understanding of disciplinary discourse conventions and stylistic norms.

Additionally, the integration of corpus-based tools into post-COVID-19 EAP instruction holds immense potential for supporting vocabulary acquisition. In an era marked by remote and online learning modalities, corpus-based tools offer learners unprecedented access to authentic language data and resources. Learners can engage with corpus data remotely, allowing them to explore language patterns and structures at their own pace and convenience. This decentralized approach empowers learners to take ownership of their vocabulary acquisition, thereby fostering a sense of autonomy and self-efficacy in their language learning endeavours (Rasikawati, 2019).

Thus far, this discussion highlights the significance of utilizing corpora in teaching EAP in the post-COVID-19 era. Corpus-based approaches offer effective means of addressing the linguistic needs of EAP learners, promoting learner autonomy and critical thinking skills, and supporting vocabulary acquisition and writing skills development. By integrating corpus-based activities and tools into EAP instruction, educators can enhance the quality and relevance of language learning experiences in the evolving educational landscape.

5.0 Discussion

Incorporating corpora into EAP instruction manifests through diverse methodologies, including corpus-based language analysis, corpus-informed materials design, and learner corpus analysis. Through corpus-based language analysis, learners engage in dissecting language patterns and structures within genuine academic texts, thereby augmenting their comprehension and language awareness (Conrad, 2000). This method provides learners with first-hand exposure to authentic language use. Biber (1993) opines that such incorporation facilitates a deeper understanding of disciplinary discourse conventions and specialized vocabulary.

Corpus-informed materials design entails the curation and adaptation of texts sourced from corpora to develop instructional materials tailored to learners' linguistic needs and academic interests (Kennedy & Miceli, 2001). By aligning instructional content with learners'

proficiency levels and subject matter preferences, educators can enhance engagement and relevance in EAP instruction. Learner corpus analysis, on the contrary, empowers educators to identify recurrent errors and areas of improvement among EAP learners through the examination of learner-generated texts (Granger, 2009). This analytical process informs targeted instruction and feedback, enabling educators to address learners' specific language learning needs effectively.

The integration of corpora into EAP instruction, presents a promising avenue for enhancing language learning outcomes. However, a critical examination of the literature and theoretical underpinnings reveals both strengths and limitations of this approach. Studies by Hinkel (2006), Nation (2001), and Scott (1999) highlight the practical utility of corpus-based tools, such as concordances and word frequency lists, in promoting language proficiency among EAP learners. For example, the theoretical framework of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) aligns well with the principles underlying corpus-based approaches. CLT emphasizes the importance of meaningful interaction and authentic language use in the learning process.

However, a closer analysis reveals several challenges and considerations associated with the integration of corpora into EAP instruction. Foremost, while corpora offer valuable insight into language use patterns, their effectiveness in addressing the diverse linguistic needs of EAP learners may vary depending on factors such as learner proficiency levels, disciplinary backgrounds, and cultural contexts. Moreover, the reliance on corpus-based activities may limit opportunities for spontaneous interaction and communicative practice, potentially hindering the development of oral proficiency skills among EAP learners.

Despite the afore-mentioned challenges, the integration of corpora into EAP instruction holds significant promise for enhancing language learning outcome in post-COVID-19 educational environment. By combining insight from corpus linguistics with the principles of other language teaching techniques, educators can design innovative and effective instructional materials and activities that cater for the diverse linguistic needs of EAP learners. Moreover, ongoing research and professional development efforts can further enhance educators' understanding on how best to integrate corpora into EAP instruction to maximize their pedagogical impact.

Whereas the integration of corpora into EAP instruction presents both opportunities and challenges, it represents a valuable approach for promoting language proficiency and academic skills development among learners. By critically examining existing literature, educators can make informed decisions about how to integrate corpora into their teaching practices to meet the evolving needs of EAP learners in the post-COVID-19 educational environment.

6.0 Implications in Teaching EAP

The integration of corpora into teaching EAP carries significant implications for pedagogy and curriculum development. Firstly, educators must undergo training and familiarize themselves with corpus linguistics principles and tools to effectively integrate

corpora into their instructional practices (Geluso and Hirch 2019). Professional development programs and workshops can serve as platforms for educators to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to harness the potential of corpora in EAP teaching. And secondly, collaboration with language researchers and corpus developers is essential to facilitate access to specialized corpora and resources tailored to the needs of EAP learners (Granger, 2009). By establishing partnerships with experts in corpus linguistics, educators can gain insight into the latest developments in the field and access cutting-edge tools and methodologies for corpus analysis.

Integrating corpus-based activities and materials into EAP teaching offers numerous benefits for both educators and learners. By incorporating authentic language data into instructional materials, educators can provide learners with exposure to real-world language use in academic contexts, thereby enhancing their language proficiency and academic skills (Nation, 2001). Moreover, corpus-based activities promote learner autonomy and critical thinking skills by encouraging students to explore language patterns independently and make informed linguistic choices (Pym, 2001).

7.0 Conclusion

The integration of corpora in teaching EAP represents a promising avenue for addressing the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, it advances language education in academic contexts. By leveraging the insights provided by corpora, educators can design more engaging and effective instructional materials, promote learner autonomy, and foster students' academic language proficiency. Moving forward, further research is needed to explore the impact of corpus-based approaches on student learning outcomes and to identify best practices for integrating corpora into EAP instruction. Ultimately, by embracing innovative pedagogical strategies informed by corpus linguistics principles, educators can empower EAP learners to succeed in academic settings and beyond.

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