

## **Corpus Linguistics and English for Specific Purposes**

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The compilation of specialised corpora for both research and practice in ESP (English for Specific Purposes) has become a burgeoning area over the last few years. In this presentation I first provide a definition of specialised corpora and explain how such corpora differ from more general-purpose corpora. Parameters for compiling specialised corpora will be presented. I then briefly outline the value of using specialised corpora for examining academic and professional language.

The main part of my presentation will focus on two issues: bottom-up vs. top-down approaches for analysis and also the interpretation of corpus data. Reference will be made to key studies in the field of ESP written discourse investigating language from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives. Most studies in ESP commence with a frequency, keyword or n-gram list. This bottom-up approach contrasts with a more top-down discourse approach, as advocated by some researcher-practitioners. However, in reality, many studies can be seen as mediating both top-down and bottom-up approaches. As regards the interpretation of corpus data, contextual features can be of significance. Sometimes these can be gleaned from the co-textual environment; in other instances, though, it may be necessary to consult specialist informants in the field for an in-depth understanding of particular discursive practices to arrive at an interpretation of the data. Moreover, interpretation of data, in the case where a particular lexico-grammatical choice is made in preference to others, can be elucidated through various comparative-contrastive approaches such as differences in speech and writing. All these points have implications for ESP pedagogy, also briefly discussed.

I conclude the presentation by mapping out three areas which are attracting increasing attention, namely cross-cultural and cross-linguistic aspects of communication, interdisciplinarity in the academy, and the use of digital media and resources, especially in the sciences, to encourage more open access and data-sharing of corpora. These new media are giving rise to new genres, new disciplinary discourses and new communicative practices. Future endeavours will no doubt ensure the field of corpus-based ESP continues to evolve.

### **References**

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