



Corpus software in EFL teaching: Examination of Language Exposure

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Abstract: High-quality language education in technical universities requires its interdisciplinary relation to the content of highly specialised subjects corresponding to the training programmes aimed at instructing the future specialists. Educational materials in a foreign language are highly productive if they emphasise the terminology and professional vocabulary authentic to the current state of the scientific field. The aim of the study presented in the article was to assess the validity of the lexical material delivered in the course "English for Business Communication", to determine the selection criteria for this vocabulary as well as the methods for its assimilation and practical application. Methodology and research methods. The applied corpus software enabled to obtain quantitative indicators of the distribution of foreign-language business vocabulary in the given training course. The lexical material being currently offered to students and the professional thesaurus identified via linguistic databases was compared with the use of comparative analysis and synthesis. The lexical units (terms, set expressions), which are



the most active in the business sphere, were identified on the basis of its frequency. The authors established the correlation between them and educational vocabulary, both from the perspective of its integration into the course without block concentration throughout the course of university training, and from the perspective of the variety of methods used to practice this vocabulary. It is concluded that the applied educational material needs to be substantially adjusted. The vocabulary does not completely reflect the realities of the business communication sphere and the distribution of active vocational vocabulary regulated by methodological guidelines does not entirely contribute to its strong assimilation

Keywords: Teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), corpus software, vocabulary acquisition, word frequency and variety, methods, education matter, exams, communication

Аннотация: Для качественного языкового образования в технических вузах требуется соблюдение междисциплинарных связей между ним и содержанием узкоспециализированных предметов, соответствующих направлениям подготовки будущих специалистов. Весьма продуктивны учебные материалы на осваиваемом студентами иностранном языке, акцентирующие терминологический аппарат и профессиональную лексику, аутентичные современному состоянию научной области. Цель изложенного в статье исследования заключалась в оценке валидности лексического материала, представленного в курсе «Деловой иностранный язык», определении критериев отбора этой лексики, методов ее усвоения и практического применения. Использованное в ходе работы корпусное программное обеспечение позволило получить количественные показатели распределения иноязычной деловой лексики в рассматриваемом учебном курсе. Сопоставление предлагаемого обучающимся в настоящий момент лексического материала и выявленного при



помощи лингвистических баз данных профессионального тезауруса производилось методами сравнительного анализа и синтеза. По критерию частотности употребления выявлен наиболее активный в деловой сфере пласт лексических единиц (терминов, понятий, устойчивых словосочетаний). Установлено соотношение между ними и учебной лексикой как с позиции ее встраивания в курс без блочного сосредоточения на всем протяжении вузовской подготовки, так и с точки зрения разнообразия форм работы с данной лексикой. Сделан вывод о том, что используемый учебный материал нуждается в существенной корректировке.

Ключевые слова: методика обучения иностранному языку, корпусные исследования, корпусное программное обеспечение, содержание обучения, лексика сосредоточения, деловой сфере

Annotatsiya: Texnik oliv o'quv yurtlarida yuqori sifatli til ta'limi uning bo'lajak mutaxassislarini o'qitishga qaratilgan o'quv dasturlariga mos keladigan yuqori ixtisoslashtirilgan fanlar mazmuni bilan fanlararo aloqadorligini talab qiladi. Chet tilidagi o'quv materiallari, agar ular ilmiy sohaning hozirgi holatiga mos keladigan terminologiya va kasbiy lug'atga urg'u bersa, yuqori mahsuldarlikka ega bo'ladi. Maqolada taqdim etilgan tadqiqotning maqsadi "Ishbilarmonlik uchun ingliz tili" kursida berilgan leksik materialning to'g'riliqini baholash, ushbu lug'atni tanlash mezonlarini, shuningdek, uni o'zlashtirish va amaliy qo'llash usullarini aniqlash edi. Metodologiya va tadqiqot usullari. Amaliy korpus dasturiy ta'minoti ushbu o'quv kursida chet tilidagi biznes lug'atini taqsimlashning miqdoriy ko'rsatkichlarini olish imkonini berdi. Talabalarga hozirda taqdim etilayotgan leksik material va lingvistik ma'lumotlar bazalari orqali aniqlangan kasbiy tezaurus qiyosiy tahlil va sintezdan foydalanish bilan solishtirildi. Ishbilarmonlik sohasida eng faol bo'lgan leksik birliklar (terminlar, to'plamlar) uning chastotasi asosida aniqlandi. Mualliflar ular va ta'lim lug'ati o'rtasidagi o'zaro bog'liqlikni, uni universitetda o'qitish davomida blokirovka



qilmasdan kursga integratsiyalashuvi nuqtai nazaridan ham, ushbu lug'atni mashq qilishda ishlatiladigan turli xil usullar nuqtai nazaridan ham aniqladilar. Qo'llaniladigan o'quv materialini tubdan o'zgartirish kerak degan xulosaga keldi. Lug'at ishbilarmonlik aloqasi sohasidagi voqelikni to'liq aks ettirmaydi va uslubiy ko'rsatmalar bilan tartibga solingan faol kasbiy lug'atning taqsimlanishi uning kuchli o'zlashtirilishiga to'liq yordam bermaydi.

Kalit so'zlar: Ingliz tilini chet tili sifatida o'rgatish (EFL), korpus dasturiy ta'minoti, so'z boyligini o'zlashtirish, so'z chastotasi va xilma-xilligi, lug'at, metodlar, qo'llanmalar, ta'lim sohasi.

Introduction. The ability to communicate effectively in a foreign language is the main objective of its learners, and thus, the key to successful foreign language vocabulary acquisition has over time been a challenging area to study for many researchers. Foreign language vocabulary acquisition has been addressed much basing on reading, listening, interaction, as well as creating form-meaning links game-based practices etc. In addition, numerous investigations have demonstrated research outcomes on other concepts contributing to foreign language vocabulary acquisition. These are studies on the contextual informativeness of words, frequency of occurrence and vocabulary size, vocabulary demands and vocabulary learning opportunities, narrow reading, quality of input and quality of output etc. However, lexical competence is currently acknowledged by many vocabulary specialists to be a core component of communicative competence. A considerable amount of publications on foreign language vocabulary acquisition is focused on the effect of vocabulary repetition. The idea is to enrich the learning material with keyword repetitions, which makes them more learnable. However, it is stated that this is not the only principle to be cove-red. One more factor favoring foreign language vocabulary acquisition is the type of context, while according to Mondria J. A “inferring the meaning of a word from its context endows the retention of the word under consideration”. The idea



was supported by the study carried out by Angela Joe, who investigated that "embedding words in rich, instructive contexts" coupled with noticing and frequent meetings contribute to better opportunities for vocabulary learning. It was also found that repeating items frequently ensured them being picked up. In addition, it was revealed that encountering new words in multiple contexts resulted in a deeper, more transferrable knowledge of words than the usual strategy of studying short definitions. In spite of the fact that the core principle of the concept about the frequency of occurrence is that the more encounters with a word in the input the more likely that the meaning of the word will be acquired there is still no common agreement on the exact number of encounters that is pivotal for effective vocabulary acquisition. As it was stated in, even using similar learning criteria, the estimated range of the words encounters is from. Moreover, in addition to word frequency, it is necessary to consider the variety and range of the lexis to be acquired. In other words, the target lexis has to occur frequently, in different word forms constructed through affixation, suffixation, etc., and it has to be spaced properly with no concentration in a single chapter of course materials but distributed across all chapters and appearing in different contexts. Against this background, the current study aims to critically assess the pedagogical materials for "English for Business Communication" class taught at TPU by evaluating the resourcefulness of the material with regards to new lexis acquisition.

Result. Primarily, the study focuses on examining a key wordlist which learners are supposed to acquire by the end of the course. It is worth stating that this key word list was compiled and developed by the EFL (English as a foreign language) instructors in such a way, that the words were picked up from the corpus (class materials) intuitively and relying, in a sufficient degree, on subjective assessment of a teacher, with no special principle to follow, which, in its turn, might have cast a shadow over this list validity.

The target audience is the second-year undergraduates majoring in Computer Engineering, who study English for Business Communication course. The average level of



their English language proficiency according to the Common European Framework of Language is predominately A2, B1 and B2, though, to a lesser extent. The object of the study is the key vocabulary list compiled by TPU EFL instructors for being applied in the process of Business Communication course teaching. Computer programmers are excellent instruments for non-native English speaking teachers working in a non-language environment as they enable to review and create informative, comprehensible course materials relevant to learners' professional interests and specialization. With this regard, corpus software tools were utilized in the course of the study to make the material more appropriate and fruitful for the learners. Specifically, Ant-Word Profile and Complete Lexical Tutor: Vocab-profile were used to examine the vocabulary distribution, namely, its repetition, range, and variety.

Discussion. The choice of Ant-Word-Profile program was conditioned by several reasons: firstly, it can process a text in Unicode, which allows using multilingual texts (some Russian language incorporations might have been in the original texts), secondly, it provides the opportunity to easily add and delete the word lists needed, and even to compare two word lists with each other, thirdly, it also enables uploading large files for analysis, and it is a freeware tool as well. This program was applied to receive data on the frequency and range of the vocabulary under investigation. Vocab-profile is another corpus software tool that performs lexical text analysis by dividing the words of a text into four categories with regards to frequency: (1) the most frequent 1,000 words of English, (2) the second most frequent thousand words of English, i. e. 1,001 to 2,000, (3) the academic words of English (the AWL, 550 words that are frequent in academic texts across subjects), and (4) the remainder which are not found in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd categories. It breaks texts down by word frequencies indicating a variety of words (headword and its derivatives). Therefore, the abovementioned software implementation is aimed to ascertain what sort of



vocabulary a corpus is represented by and whether it provides adequate exposure to a business English domain.

The corpus was compiled on the basis of published materials on various Business topics (commercial textbooks: Market Leader, Business Vocabulary in Use, Insights into Business, Benchmark, etc.), in addition to both written (magazines, journals, newspapers, business correspondence), and spoken (e. g. recordings of meetings, negotiations and phone calls, videos of briefings, daily stand-up meetings, etc.) texts used in real business contexts. Even though published textbooks and internet resources on Business English are easily available nowadays, the majority of the EFL teachers are witnessing the necessity to develop teaching materials by themselves. It is caused by several reasons, one of which is the intention to meet the requirements of the syllabus, which comprises 6 modules, a number of progress and achievement tests, project works, case studies, Webquests, LMS courses activities, etc. The syllabus aims to develop foreign communicative competence in Business sphere. This will favor the learners' further professional activity due to the development of their cognitive and research skills, professional outlook broadening, etc.

In addition, teacher-created materials help individual the educational process taking into account the prominent nature of Russians while the learners' origin and citizenship influence their background knowledge in languages. Specifically, not many people in Russia speak English fluently since the vast majority of foreigners living in this multicultural country speak Russian and there are not many opportunities for Russian students to interact with native English speakers on a regular basis. Thus, the objective to improve the level of English proficiency obliges the language instructors to refer to students' background knowledge, find optimal ways to provide learners with maximum input during rather small amount of class hours allocated for the discipline.

Conclusion. The primary purpose of this study was to examine the pedagogical materials developed by the language instructors for the Business English course and to find



out whether the material portrays the language that the learners need to master in order to communicate successfully in the field of business. In the course of experimental studies, it has been revealed that course materials contain diverse vocabulary from the academic domain together with general English lexis. Concerning the matter of material potential in terms of business vocabulary frequency, variety and range, roughly 40% of words from the Business English WL1, which EFL teachers compiled for their learners as the target vocabulary lists, appear to be frequent in the corpus and contribute to learning opportunities enhancement. Additionally, the range analysis showed that about half of these frequently appearing words are equally spaced in the corpus. On the other hand, the correlation between the business English WL1 (compiled by the EFL instructor) and the business English WL2 (basic business wordlist) is relatively small, specifically, about 27.48%, which indicates that the course materials are noticeably lacking in real-life business vocabulary. Therefore, we can make the following conclusions:

WL1 should be customised by excluding easily recognisable words of Latin origin and augmented with business terms selected from the WL2;

pedagogical materials need to include texts of varying vocabulary types and provide opportunities for increased repetition of business terms in various word-forms; supplementary course materials from the authentic resources should be applied with the objective to immerse the learners in the environment of Business English.

Future work will be focused on devising the text specification in order to assess the difficulty level of authentic business texts and to provide additional recommendations on how the corpus software can be adapted for vocabulary examination, classroom use and courses design as well.



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