

Corpus tools for an Academic Writing course: a case study

Nicole Keng (University of Vaasa, Finland)

This study reports on an academic writing course in which the use of corpus tools was embedded. The tools used are AntConc (Anthony, 2014) and Sketch Engine (Kilgarrieff et al, 2014). The students' reactions to this type of learning experience are discussed to show that using corpus tools can profitably be embedded in the course design in a Finnish university context.

It is well known that students from the Nordic countries have fairly good proficiency in languages, particularly in English. At the university level, the emphasis in English teaching is increasingly on academic skills. Although many university students are fluent and proficient users of English, their level of English is not as strong on the academic register as might be expected (Henriksen and Danelund, 2015). In a longitudinal, corpus-based study of Swedish students' academic writing, Shaw (2004) found that style and vocabulary development were areas in which students benefited from additional training. The main aim of the academic writing course in Finnish universities has been to assist students in writing their thesis by providing feedback from the teachers instead of training students how to create, adapt and fine-tune their own texts, through the analysis of expert-written texts. This study aims to find out how to utilize the above-named tools in a discovery-based approach to support the students' writing process.

I will describe the stages of this study, including teaching students how to use corpus tools. Examples of students' writing portfolios which describe how students use corpus tools in class and in self-study and their reflections about the course will be shown. Feedback questionnaires will be employed in this study to collect quantitative results showing what functions are favoured by the students.

References

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