REVIEWS

Karpenko-Seccombe, T. (2020) *Academic Writing with Corpora. A Resource Book for Data-Driven Learning.* **Routledge. 162 pp.**

Corpus analysis has become a standard method in the research and teaching of academic writing. Tatyana Karpenko-Seccombe has developed a resource book with tutorials and exercises on learning academic writing with corpora that can be directly integrated in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses. The book is meant for students on "upper-intermediate and advanced levels" (p. xxv) from all scientific disciplines, but the idea of corpus-assisted academic writing can be useful for native speakers too. The resource book fills a gap in the generally empirical corpus literature with a highly practical contribution to the teaching of ESP.

The book opens with an introduction to the corpus tools Lextutor Concordancer, the British National Corpus (BNC), Sketch Engine for Language Learning (SkELL), and the Michigan Corpus of Upper-level Student Papers (MICUSP). Section 1 entitled *Observing and Using Language Patterns* shows how corpora can be used to learn about prepositions, grammar, lexico-grammatical patterns, connectors, and paraphrasing. Section 2, *Using Corpora to Write for Different Academic Purposes*, deals with expressing logical argumentation and stance in the contexts of comparison and contrast, causality, and problems and solutions. Section 3 continues with *Writing Research Papers with Corpora* following the common IMRAD structure – introduction, literature review, methodology, results, discussion, conclusion, and abstract. The book concludes with an answer key to the tasks, a glossary, recommendations for further reading, and an index.

Karpenko-Seccombe uses freely available user-friendly corpora and concordancers that can be accessed on the web and do not require download and installation. Both large (BNC) and specialized corpora (Academic Abstracts) are consulted. The tools are introduced in great detail with annotated screenshots. The impressive number of 162 illustrations in the book complements the accessible language in which the terms and tasks are explained. Each of the tools' functionalities is demonstrated with an illustration and a query task so that the readers can learn by doing. Their independent problem solution skills are built through tasks for creating queries for certain needs (e.g. "What search would you use if you need to look for adjectives used with the word *issue*" (p. 17)) and result interpretation (e.g. "Can you explain why the author uses these forms?" (p. 33)).

Section 1 on language patterns focuses on common problematic grammar and phrasing areas. It provides a useful demonstration of how to make better vocabulary choices by comparing registers and collocations. This is an effective way to develop a 'corpus instinct' in students whenever they have language questions. For example, students compare the distribution of the phrasal verb *set up* across the BNC-English domains and come to the conclusion that it is widespread in academic writing although phrasal verbs are generally more common in informal language (p. 164). This allows learners to approach words and phrases in their natural context of language variation across registers.

However, the book does not define its concept of "paraphrase" and proposes the use of derivatives, which may not be sufficient for indirect citations in an academic context. For instance, Section 1.6 suggests looking up *define* with a family search in Lextutor and using the derivatives (e.g. *definition*) for paraphrasing. Yet, examples of the results are *to be redefined*, *redefining*, and *redefinition* (p. 66), which can only be used as synonyms of *define* again. Overall, it may be more practical to consult a thesaurus for paraphrasing instead of using derivatives, especially in order to avoid plagiarism in indirect citations.

Section 2 focuses on writing purposes and functions. It leads the students through common phrases in the expression and critical evaluation of arguments and thesis statements. Working closely with concepts from Hyland (2016), it introduces the role of stance, hedges and boosters, evaluation, and self-reference in academic writing through examples of real use of metadiscourse markers (pp. 80-90). The book presents ways to express logical reasoning processes like inference, comparison, and contrast. It then relies on moves from Swales and Feak (1994: 59, see also 3rd ed. 2011) to compose a pattern of problem-solution by describing the situation, the problem, the solution, and the evaluation of this solution. These highly structured recommendations ease the students' introduction to scientific argumentation and its expression through language.

Section 3 directs students through writing papers and theses in the widespread IMRAD structure. Karpenko-Seccombe often refers to moves described in Feak and Swales (2011) and shifts from the macro-structure of the paper section moves to the micro-structure of the lexico-grammatical items which explicitly signal these moves (e.g. pp. 109-110). The subsections follow a similar workflow – they open with an introduction of the paper section and what its purpose is, choose a typical lexeme (e.g. *conclude* (p. 141)), look it up in a corpus, use it in a sentence, and categorize related words (e.g. adjectives collocating with *methodology*, which describe positive, negative, common, or new methods (p. 130)). Then, sentences for this section are provided by the author and students have to categorize their functions according to pre-defined categories (e.g. "Find

sentences in which the writers: link results to discussion, offer interpretation of the results, talk about limitations…" (p. 143)). Students also often need to define academic words such as *interpretation* (p. 144) and compare their own definitions and dictionary definitions to corpus results. After several queries, students need to write a section part on their own work. This workflow gradually prepares them for their own academic witing.

The answer key is a useful feature for independent practice with the book. In addition to the solutions, students receive explanations what to take from them and reminders about general caveats of using corpora, e.g. that "concordance search results show all the instances of usage, not just the 'correct' ones" (p. 176). Thus, students learn that they should pay attention to standardized frequency as well. However, there are some generalisations that are surprisingly concisely discussed given the otherwise detailed instructions. For instance, Lextutor verb queries are often in the *to*-infinitive (discussed below) and the answer key summarizes the results of *a rise of* and *the rise of* (p. 162) as:

a) *a rise of* when followed by numbers (*1%, 20 p*) shows the amount of an increase

b) *the rise of* when followed by abstract nouns (attitude, consciousness, tyranny, nationalism) means the growing importance of something (p. 162, accent in original)

This rule gives the impression that only these two combinations exist and that the meaning of the noun phrase depends on the definiteness of the article and on its use with numbers and abstract nouns. Articles do change the meaning in terms of definiteness and specificity (e.g. Ionin et al. 2004), but the noun is not restricted to these set phrases – there are contexts where it is appropriate to use *the rise of 20p* and *a rise of tyranny*. Students should not memorize these combinations as a rule but generally learn about articles and polysemy. Otherwise, they will only be able to use these set phrases and face issues with understanding the rules behind them and producing novel phrases. Nevertheless, the book does not focus extensively on grammar and such generalisations may suit its purposes.

In the supplemental part of the book, the glossary summarizes the main recurring terms. The further readings for teachers include standard names in corpus-based research and teaching with books and edited volumes (e.g. Randi Reppen, John Sinclair) as well as more specialised articles on MICUSP (Annelie Ädel, Ute Römer) and data-driven learning (Tim Jones). Finally, an index assists readers searching for particular language aspects and corpus functions.

The book succeeds in facilitating independent learning, as it includes an individual writing task after each guided corpus search subsection and allows students to apply the insights on academic language on their own discipline

and research topic. It follows established methodologies by Hyland (2016) and Swales and Feak (2011) and applies them in a practical manual to corpus-driven learning of academic writing on a micro (lexical) and macro (section) level.

The main approach is data-driven learning, which allows students to explore language through corpora on their own. The materials provide them search prompts and allow them to draw conclusions on the use and function of the words and phrases. Some of these phrases may prove less useful than others: for instance, in the collocations of *criticism* (p. 123), the neutral expressions *to voice criticism*, *to be open to criticism* (p. 123) are more common than the boosters *constant barrage of criticism*, *open the flood gates to the criticism* (p. 123). However, the readers, who have been trained to pay attention to relative frequencies, will surely notice this.

In the corpus introduction section and throughout the book, the three corpora are presented as if they could be used interchangeably. This could be criticised by a linguist for not considering the time of the corpus compilation and the structural and genre differences. Regarding structure, Lextutor is operated differently from the other corpora as it does not use wildcards and a part of speech (POS) specification like the BNC. Thus, it requires users to make sure that the query matches the intended POS, e.g. search *argue*, *argues*, *argued*, and *arguing* to get results for the verb (p. 80). They cannot look up *argue* with a family search because this would give results for the derivatives such as *argument* or *argumentative*. This becomes problematic for corpus comparison since verbs whose form is the same as another POS require a search of the infinitive, e.g. to *increase* (p. 40) or to *cause* (p. 45). The restricted query does not show many results of actual verb use and makes the relative frequency incomparable with that of the query *increase* VERB in the BNC. Nevertheless, this is not an issue of the book but of Lextutor.

Regarding genre, the academic English in the Academic General or BNC corpus (expert works) is arguably different from MICUSP (student works). In another publication, the author notes that students should be made aware that the language of academic publications is different from that of textbooks (Karpenko-Seccombe 2015: 20). This consideration is not stressed enough in the book, but it may also be unnecessarily complex for practical academic writing classes with students from different disciplines. From the use of SkELL, which includes cross-domain sources from e.g. Wikipedia, English Web 2013, and the BNC, it becomes clear that the book is broadly interested in the basics of "correct natural writing" (p. 57) in an academic context.

Karpenko-Seccombe provides a resource book for improving university students' grammar, vocabulary, and academic writing skills with awareness of

register and genre specificities. The language, structure, and price are accessible, and the e-book can be used by students for flipped or blended learning. The biggest advantage of the book is that the materials are ready to be directly applied or adapted in practical exercises where students are active explorers of academic English. Thus, they can draw their own data-based conclusions on the writing conventions represented in the corpora and can learn to monitor their own writing. I therefore recommend the book as a textbook for academic writing courses and for autonomous learners.

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Dontcheva-Navratilova, O., Adam, M., Povolná, R. and Vogel, R. (2020) *Persuasion in Specialised Discourses.* Palgrave Macmillan: Postdisciplinary Studies in Discourse. 354 pp.

Specialised discourses have attracted the attention of researchers since Swales (2004) developed his influential genre approach. This is well documented in the volumes edited by Connor and Upton (2004), Halmari and Virtanen (2004), Hyland and Bondi (2006), or Hyland and Wang (2019), to name just a few. Now we have a new book that places 'persuasion' in the centre of a detailed empirical analysis. Here, "persuasion is conceptualised as an inherently context-dependent and audience-oriented phenomenon which may be enhanced by various strategies and realised by a plethora of language means which vary and change across discourses, cultures and time" (p. v) and "understood as the strategic use of language for the expression of persuasive intent which aims at changing or strengthening the beliefs of others or affecting their behaviour in contemporary Anglophone and Czech specialised discourses" (p. vi). This is obviously an important concept in current discourse analysis and deserves critical exploration. The special approach in this volume is the combination of the modern metalanguage perspective with the traditional Aristotelian "three persuasive appeals – ethos, logos and pathos – in an attempt to explore the relationship between rhetorical function and language form and their dependence on contextual factors" (p. vi). This detailed qualitative and quantitative analysis also tries to "investigate whether this accommodation to Anglophone norms has affected the conventions of non-Anglophone specialised discourses" (p. vi).

The book starts with a detailed preface including the background to the study, a summary of individual chapters and the main research questions (p. vii):

1. What are the common denominators of persuasion across specialised discourses and linguacultural backgrounds?
2. What rhetorical strategies and linguistic means for conveying persuasion are specific to each of the selected genres of specialised discourses under scrutiny?
3. In what ways does the conveyance of persuasion differ in English and Czech specialised discourses?

The database for this thorough empirical study is the Corpus of English and Czech Specialised Discourses (CECSD), a specialised corpus of over 1 million words in 160 texts in English and 160 texts in Czech representing the four specialised discourses: academic (i.e. 30 linguistic and economic research articles), business (i.e. 60 corporate reports), religious (i.e. 50 sermons), and technical (i.e. 20 user manuals) (Table 1.1, p. 13 and Tables 2.2, p. 59 and

2.3, p. 60). The compilers noticed interesting differences in the genres chosen: research articles and user manuals in Czech are only half as long as those in English, but it is difficult to see that this should skew the results of this solid analysis. The differences in text length are neutralised since features are calculated per 100,000 words, as usual. The text selection is explained according to the well-established tradition in the corpus-linguistic literature. Thus, this project has a wider and more stratified basis than comparative projects.

Generally, "this book hopes to contribute to the extension of our knowledge of the correlation between rhetorical function and language form within the persuasive process in specialised discourses, as well as to indicate reasons for variation in the ways persuasive attempts are made across the Czech and Anglophone linguacultural backgrounds and academic, business, religious and technical specialised discourses" (p. viii), as the project leader writes in her preface.

Chapter 1 (by Olga Dontcheva-Navratilova) provides the general concepts and approaches. It is detailed and well written, so that even novices to the field can use the following specific analyses profitably.

Chapter 2 discusses details of the database and includes over 50 illustrative corpus examples of all the persuasive strategies related to the three components of Aristotelian appeal (ethos, pathos, and logos) in each of the genres in the database. The survey is completed by nice tables of situational characteristics of the four specialised discourses (Table 2.1, pp. 51-53) and persuasive strategies across the academic, business, religious, and technical discourses (Table 2.4, pp. 102-106).

Chapters 3 to 6 deal with the four specialised discourses investigated, each by a specialist author. All discourse-specific qualitative and quantitative studies richly illustrated by corpus examples and relative frequency lists of linguistic features.

Chapter 3 (by Olga Dontcheva-Navratilova) analyses research articles from economics and linguistics and finds the expected high frequency of features related to ethos, but also striking differences between English and Czech writers (Table 3.1 and Fig. 3.1, p. 129). All differences are convincingly explained, as in the following example:

> The use of hedges, boosters, appeals to shared knowledge, reader reference and textual act directives is more prominent in articles by Czech scholars, which seems to correlate with an orientation towards establishing communality and shared values and understandings with the reader. Self-mention forms seem to be governed by diverging disciplinary and cultural considerations, as their persuasive

potential is exploited more intensively by Anglophone economists, who tend to stress their role as active agents in the research process, and Czech linguists, who strive to engage with the reader by using the plural exclusive form marked by verbal endings. The use of the plural form combined with non-realisation of the pronominal subject may account for the belief that authorial presence in Czech academic discourse is suppressed (p. 153).

Chapter 4 (by Radek Vogel) scrutinises business communication and confirms previous studies on 'impression management' when he finds a "clear preference for positive evaluative lexis as well as self-mentions and engagement markers in the sub-corpus of letters to share-holders, whereas the positive lexis and other interactional resources are not so prominent in reviews. This suggests that ethos and pathos are preferred as persuasive appeals in more personally oriented sub-genres" (p. 191).

Chapter 5 (by Martin Adam) is special in this volume, not only because it analyses texts from the religious domain, i.e. sermons, but also because it focuses on humour in these texts. This is obviously a neglected and important aspect of persuasion, as the message conveyed in humorous narratives is more personal, more appealing and more readily accessible to the audience.

Chapter 6 (by Renata Povolná) investigates user manuals and finds, unsurprisingly, that generally "interactive and interactional resources, often in intricate combination within one sentence, enhance all three persuasive appeals" and this "clearly help[s] readers perform required actions and contribute to the effectiveness and persuasiveness of user manuals" (p. 258). In accordance with previous literature, "Anglophone writers use interactional resources (especially engagement markers, hedges and boosters) more prominently" as evidence for their "dialogic process of persuasion through strategies related to stance and engagement" (p. 258).

Chapter 7 on cross-cultural variation surprisingly focusses not only on language-specific features of English and Czech (e.g. the narrower range of highly frequent epistemicity and value markers in Czech), but also on Hofstede's controversial concepts of 'big' national cultures (e.g. in Hofstede et al. 2010), although a convincing broad cultural model had been developed in Chapter 1 without relying on Hofstede et al. (p. 7 and 9ff). One of the most interesting results of the book, the higher frequency of use of persuasive language in the Czech corpus, could also be explained by a more conscious non-native writing-style that foregrounds what is more implicit in conventional native writing. On this basis, the use of personal pronouns may also be explained functionally and it is not clear whether non-native discourse features will really be adapted to the

dominant native patterns, especially when they seem cognitively appropriate from a reader-specific processing perspective (cf. Schmied 2015). Processing needs are not prominent in the general discourse analyses, although they are mentioned in previous chapters (especially in technical discourses).

The final chapter 8 (by Olga Dontcheva-Navratilova again), provides an excellent summary and an even more stimulating outlook on further research. It tries to answer the three research questions and even to visualise the results, e.g. in the figure of persuasive appeals across the academic, business, religious and technical discourses (Fig. 8.1, p. 342). The project leader summarises that the "choice of persuasive language resources which Anglophone and Czech writers have at their disposal is constrained by the contextualised relationship between the writer and the audience, the culture-specific stylistic tradition and the possibilities afforded by the linguistic code in which the communication takes place" (p. 347) and provides an inspiring outlook pointing out that "the study of persuasion from a multidisciplinary and multimodal perspective is a particularly promising vista for future research" (p. 349).

To conclude, the book is not only an exemplary model for making publically funded work available (the project reported was supported by the Czech Science Foundation 2017-2019). Dontcheva-Navratilova et al. have managed to provide a convincing analysis that is interesting not only for discourse specialists but also for all in 'English for Specific Purposes', especially if they would like to analyse their own database, which is necessary to complement the project results reported here. The detailed references after each chapter provide comparative material for further studies. For this purpose, it would have been ideal to include a reference to the corpus in 'Sketch Engine' or a 'Czech National Repository'.

A special value of this volume is that it combines passages of a textbook and a research book. The thorough qualitative and quantitative analysis demonstrates impressively the wide range of tools available for conveying persuasion and documents the variation in two important dimensions of specialised discourses, (sub-)genre and native vs. non-native (here Czech) usages. The usefulness of the book as a textbook is also obvious from the 4-page index at the end, which clearly demonstrates the focus on context (like audience, reader reference) and purpose (like credibility), functions (like stance, hedge/booster) and the four disciplinary types of specialised discourse. In theory and in practice, this volume complements previous volumes and goes well beyond them.

Josef Schmied

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