DEVELOPING DOMAIN-SPECIFIC COLLOCATIONAL COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING THROUGH CORPUS-BASED PEDAGOGICAL TECHNOLOGIES

D.R. Pulatova
Associate Professor, Department of English Language, Uzbekistan State Pedagogical University named after Nizami
https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18720418

Abstract. *The development of domain-specific collocational competence has become a priority objective in English language teaching within higher education. Professional communication requires not only lexical knowledge but also the ability to combine words appropriately according to disciplinary norms and discourse conventions. This article examines the conceptual foundations of collocational competence, its structural components, and its methodological significance in the formation of professional communicative competence. The study synthesizes theoretical perspectives from Western and CIS linguodidactic traditions and analyzes corpus-based pedagogical technologies as an effective tool for enhancing collocational awareness and usage. Special attention is given to the role of authentic language data, lexical bundles, register variation, and Data-Driven Learning (DDL) approaches in professional language training. The findings indicate that systematic integration of corpus resources into English language instruction strengthens students' ability to recognize, interpret, and produce domain-specific collocations in both oral and written communication. The article concludes that corpus-based technologies provide an empirically grounded and pedagogically sustainable framework for developing professional discourse competence in higher education.*

Keywords: *collocational competence; domain-specific terminology; corpus-based pedagogy; professional communicative competence; lexical bundles; data-driven learning (DDL); English for Specific Purposes (ESP); higher education.*

In contemporary higher education, improving domain-specific terminology competence represents one of the central objectives of English language instruction. The conceptual significance of this competence is directly linked to students' preparedness for professional communication.[3] Effective professional discourse requires precision, terminological accuracy, and contextual appropriateness. Therefore, lexical competence must go beyond knowledge of isolated words and include the ability to combine them according to discipline-specific norms.[5]

Scholars emphasize that pedagogical technologies should not only transmit knowledge but also enhance learners' professional speech formation and motivation.[1] The integration of large-scale informational resources and students' experiential knowledge makes the learning process more efficient and practice-oriented.[12] Within this framework, communicative competence development is grounded in systematic acquisition of lexical and grammatical units and their automatization in speech.[10]

Knowledge of a word includes understanding its form, meaning, and usage. Linguodidactic research highlights that speech competence formation requires linking graphical and phonological

forms with semantic interpretation and socio-cultural appropriateness.[7] Importantly, vocabulary mastery also entails acquiring typical collocations reflected in corpus data and domain-specific terminological combinations.[6]

The term *collocation*, derived from the Latin *collocare* ("to place together"), refers to lexical units that co-occur with relative regularity and exhibit semantic interdependence.[2] From a lexical perspective, collocations consist of two or more words frequently used together. Although their semantic combinations may appear arbitrary, their usage is determined by professional discourse conventions and contextual constraints.[8]

For example, the adjective *heavy* demonstrates how meaning depends on collocational context: *heavy rain*, *heavy traffic*, *heavy smoker*. In each case, semantic interpretation shifts according to the collocational environment. Such examples illustrate the necessity of developing collocational awareness rather than relying solely on dictionary definitions.[12]

Researchers classify collocations into lexical and grammatical categories. Lexical collocations include combinations such as noun + noun, verb + noun, adjective + noun, or adverb + adjective. Grammatical collocations involve structures combining lexical items with prepositions (e.g., *increase in, keen on, sympathize with*). Other scholars propose spectrum-based classifications ranging from free combinations to fixed idiomatic expressions.[10]

Collocational competence is understood as the ability to recognize, interpret, and appropriately use lexical combinations in oral and written professional communication. It consists of three interrelated components:[7]

Recognition – identifying professional lexical combinations in written or spoken discourse;

Comprehension – understanding their contextual and semantic meaning;

Production – accurately and appropriately employing collocations in professional communication.

Mastery of these components ensures naturalness, fluency, and authenticity in speech production. Empirical studies indicate that learning lexical bundles and formulaic sequences enhances speech fluency and reduces unnatural constructions caused by interlanguage interference.[5]The distinction between native and non-native speakers often lies not in vocabulary size but in the ability to combine words correctly. Knowing numerous individual words does not automatically result in professional fluency; rather, it is the mastery of conventionalized lexical patterns that determines communicative effectiveness.[4]

Corpus-based pedagogical technologies offer an empirically grounded solution for improving collocational competence. By utilizing authentic corpora such as BNC and COCA, educators can expose students to real discourse patterns and discipline-specific lexical bundles.[3]

Data-Driven Learning (DDL) approaches enable learners to analyze concordance lines, observe frequent co-occurrences, and independently derive usage rules. This research-oriented method fosters analytical skills and enhances metalinguistic awareness.[7]

Moreover, corpus tools provide objective information regarding frequency, register distribution, and contextual variation of terminological units. They allow students to explore authentic examples such as:

vast territory instead of *big territory*
dense vegetation instead of *thick plants*
continental crust instead of literal translations

Such comparisons illustrate how corpus-based analysis supports semantic precision and professional accuracy.

Discussion

While some Western scholars emphasize creative generation of new lexical combinations, researchers within the CIS educational context highlight the practical importance of mastering existing conventional collocations, especially for learners without immersion opportunities. For most university students learning English in non-English-speaking environments, realistic goals involve memorization and correct application of established professional collocations.

The concept of "competence" is more appropriate than "awareness," as it encompasses both knowledge and practical application. Collocational competence therefore integrates cognitive understanding with communicative performance.[10]

Conclusion

Domain-specific collocational competence constitutes a crucial component of professional communicative competence in higher education. Its development requires systematic instruction, contextualized practice, and empirical exposure to authentic language use.[11]

Corpus-based pedagogical technologies provide an effective methodological framework for achieving this goal. By integrating authentic data, frequency analysis, register awareness, and learner autonomy, corpus approaches enhance students' ability to recognize, interpret, and produce professional lexical combinations accurately.[2]

Consequently, incorporating corpus resources into English language teaching not only improves lexical precision and fluency but also prepares future specialists for effective participation in professional discourse communities.

REFERENCES

1. Biber, D., Conrad, S., & Reppen, R. (1998). *Corpus linguistics: Investigating language structure and use*. Cambridge University Press.
2. Boulton, A., & Tyne, H. (2014). Corpus use in language learning: A meta-analysis. *ReCALL, 26*(2), 152–178. https://doi.org/10.1017/S095834401400005X
3. Flowerdew, L. (2012). *Corpora and language education*. Palgrave Macmillan.
4. Gilmore, A. (2007). Authentic materials and authenticity in foreign language learning. *Language Teaching, 40*(2), 97–118. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444807004144
5. Hill, J. (2000). Revising priorities: From grammatical failure to collocational success. In M. Lewis (Ed.), *Teaching collocation: Further developments in the lexical approach* (pp. 47–69). Language Teaching Publications.
6. Hunston, S. (2002). *Corpora in applied linguistics*. Cambridge University Press.
7. Johns, T. (1991). Should you be persuaded: Two examples of data-driven learning. *ELR Journal, 4*, 1–16.
8. Lewis, M. (1993). *The lexical approach: The state of ELT and a way forward*. Language Teaching Publications.
9. McEnery, T., & Hardie, A. (2012). *Corpus linguistics: Method, theory and practice*. Cambridge University Press.
10. Nation, I. S. P. (2001). *Learning vocabulary in another language*. Cambridge University Press.
11. Sinclair, J. (1991). *Corpus, concordance, collocation*. Oxford University Press.
12. Wray, A. (2002). *Formulaic language and the lexicon*. Cambridge University Press.