

## Semantic Preference across Research Articles: A Corpus-Based Study of Adjectives in English

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**Abstract :** The goal of the present study is to investigate the semantic preference of the most frequent adjectives in research articles through a corpus-based analysis of texts published in journals in Applied Linguistics (AL). The corpus used in this study contains texts published in the period from 2014 to 2018 in the three journals: Language Learning and Technology; English for Academic Purposes, and TESOL Quaterly, totaling more than one million words. A corpus-based analysis was carried out on the corpus to identify the most frequent adjectives that co-occurred in the three journals. By observing the concordance lines of the adjectives and analyzing the words they associated with, the semantic preferences of each adjective were determined. Later, the AL corpus analysis was compared to the investigation of the same adjectives in a corpus of Chemistry. This second part of the study aimed to identify possible differences and similarities between the two corpora in relation to the use of the adjectives in research articles from both areas. The results show that there are some preferences which seem to be closely related not only to the academic genre of the texts but also to the specific domain of the discipline and, to a lesser extent, to the context of research in each journal. This research illustrates a possible contribution of Corpus Linguistics to explore the concept of semantic preference in more detail, considering the complex nature of the phenomenon.

**Keywords :** applied linguistics, corpus linguistics, chemistry, research article, semantic preference

**Conference Title :** ICCLS 2019 : International Conference on Corpus Linguistics and Semantics

**Conference Location :** Paris, France

**Conference Dates :** May 16-17, 2019