

ACADEMIC ENGLISH VERBS ACROSS FIVE DISCIPLINES IN SOCIAL AND HUMANITIES: EVIDENCE FROM CORPUS

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ABSTRACT

Corpus provides a significant amount of data that can be utilised to retrieve actual language use, especially for teaching English for academic purposes. Accordingly, exploring academic English verbs (AEVs) across five disciplines, i.e., tourism, business, linguistics, management, and cultural studies, is essential. Further, it is also crucial to compare AEVs against Coxhead's Academic Word List (AWL). A personalised corpus was built from 100 Scopus-indexed paper abstracts to achieve these objectives. Subsequently, the AntConc software was employed to retrieve AEVs. The study discovered that the top 50 AEVs varied across five disciplines and had similarities and differences, representing the characteristics and uniqueness of each field of study. The AEVs generated from the established corpus also appeared in Coxhead's AWL. Consequently, the findings generated by this study are worth teaching, especially to EFL students, to robust the richness of verbs for academic purposes. Consequently, pedagogical implications are also described further in this study.

Keywords: academic article abstracts, academic English verbs, corpus linguistics, English for academic purposes

INTRODUCTION

English hold a crucial role as the language of publications (Flowerdew & Li, 2009; Gnutzmann & Rabe, 2014; Mauranen et al., 2010); considering multiple factors, such as the language's ability to provide sense of professionalism, the language reaches broader audiences in the academic community from different language backgrounds, and the language has received the the language of the academic, leading to the practice of writing using English become standard practices in the researchers community (Curry & Lillis, 2004; Hamid, 2006; Petersen & Shaw, 2002; Schluer, 2014). Academic English is distinct from basic or general English (Granger & Larsson, 2021; Muñoz, 2015).

Academic writing is characterised by a formal and meticulous tone, encouraging

writers to structure precisely (Bennett, 2009; Hundt & Mair, 1999; Hyland & Jiang, 2017). It creates challenges, especially for novice authors and writers, who find writing academic content in English overwhelming. Moreover, achieving success in academic writing requires a comprehensive understanding of the systematic structures and grammatical patterns in English (Ma & Qian, 2020; Su et al., 2021; Su & Zhang, 2020). Therefore, this study discusses the crucial aspects of English internal grammar structure, such as verbs, which in this study will be referred to as academic English verbs (AEV).

Verbs are parts of speeches that convey actions, occurrences, and the state of beings. The existing literature describes that AEV facilitates the development of English for academic purposes (EAP), such as fostering the comprehension of verb meanings and how to organise these verbs in sentences (Deng et al., 2022a). AEV functioned to report in academic functions in a citation, which establishes the authorial stances (Thompson & Yiyun, 1991) and citation styles; for example, papers in humanities primarily utilise the present tense and social science; meanwhile, papers in social science employ past or present perfect tense (Winkler & Metherell, 2010). Subsequently, the empirical study shows that journal article abstracts published by Elsevier comprise present simple, present progressive, present perfect, past simple, and past perfect (Kwary, Kirana, et al., 2017).

Considering the significance of AEV, the present study aims to formulate an academic word list specialised in social and humanities fields of study. To achieve this objective, the corpus is viewed as an appropriate tool to obtain the AEV. Scholars defined a corpus as an extensive electronic database stored in a computer comprising written and spoken texts from various genres, representing the language variety (Biber, 2011; Lindquist, 2009; McEnery & Hardie, 2008). Consequently, a corpus facilitates an advantageous empirical approach for analysing the patterns of language use (Biber, 2011).

Moreover, when discussing verbs, the existing literature also reveals that corpus was evidential in identifying the changes that occurred in verbs (Rudanko, 2005). Besides, another study shows that corpus can identify changes in phrasal verbs in Australian English (Collins & Yao, 2014) and intransitive verbs in British and American English (Rudanko, 2005). Thus, the corpus is a suitable tool for formulating an academic word list for this study. This study is expected to bring additional insight into AEVs that can be retrieved from extensive data, especially after comparing the result with Coxhead's AWL (Coxhead, 2000), which is categorised into 10 sublists depending on how frequent

they are. Subsequently, sublist 1 indicates the most frequent word families, followed by sublist 2 as the next most frequent word families, and sublist 10 signifies the least frequent.

Therefore, two research questions are proposed in this study: 1) what are AEV produced in social and humanities journal RA abstracts and 2) what AEV in social and humanities RA abstracts are present in Coxhead's AWL?

METHODS

In order to address the research questions, steps were taken in this study. The first is building a personalised corpus from academic paper abstracts across five disciplines from the social and humanities fields of study. The selection was based on the existing literature, which indicated that social and humanities were more extensive regarding word counts than other fields of study (Kwary, 2019; Kwary, Ratri, et al., 2017). Since the corpus relies on big data, social and humanities papers could be a rich source for exploring AEVs. Second, the academic paper abstracts were taken from highly reputable international journals (see Appendix 1), with 20 academic paper abstracts from each journal; thus, the total was 100 academic paper abstracts.

Third, these data underwent part of speech tagging using The Constituent Likelihood Automatic Word-tagging System (CLAWS) Tagger (UCREL Lancaster University, n.d.-b). This process was required to ensure the accuracy of retrieving AEVs from the corpus. The tagger claimed 96.97% accuracy and an error rate of only 1.5% with 3.3% ambiguities (UCREL Lancaster University, n.d.-a). Further, UCREL CLAWS7 Tagset (C7) were employed to annotate the data (UCREL Lancaster University, n.d.-b) in this study since it is the latest standard of data tagset.

Fourth, the output texts from Free CLAWS Tagger were inputted into a software called AntConc (Anthony, 2022). Initially, the text was required to be converted to plain text (TXT) format to retrieve AEVs. However, in this study, the texts were in portable document format (PDF) since the software allowed the format. The fifth step was retrieving the AEVs by typing 'VV', the C7 annotation used to obtain verbs from the tagged texts. The findings of the generated AEVs are illustrated in Figure 1. The findings of the generated AEVs is illustrated in Figure 1.

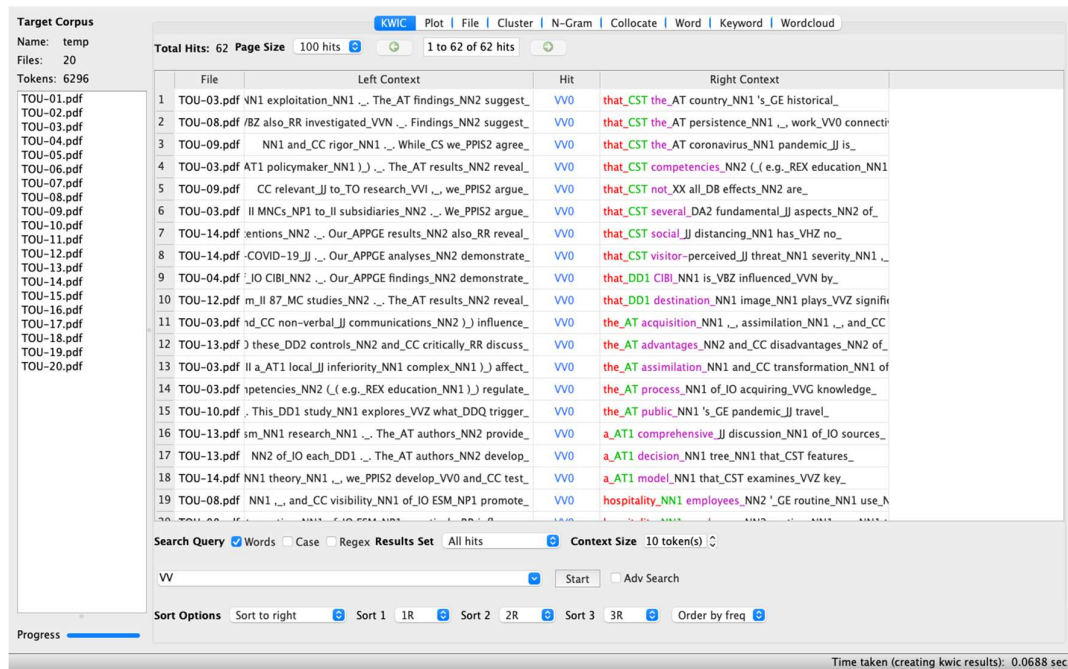


Figure 1. The Example Retrieving Academic English Verbs from AntConc

Subsequently, the sixth step was that after generating the texts, selection was still required to ensure the selected AEVs were suitable to address the objectives of this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 illustrates the selection of the AEVs across disciplines retrieved from the customised corpus.

Table 1. Top 50 Academic English Verbs in Social Sciences and Humanities

Field of Studies				
Tourism	Business	Linguistics	Management	Cultural Studies
suggest	argue	show	illustrate	highlight
agree	suggest	reveal	discuss	intensify
reveal	posit	argue	examine	stress
argue	demonstrate	suggest	review	transverse
demonstrate	show	indicate	signal	study
influence	suggest	fulfil	highlight	present
discuss	confirm	balance	differentiate	form
affect	find	examine	consider	shape
regulate	identify	introduce	examine	include
trigger	conduct	reflect	introduce	show
provide	hypothesize	keep	review	suggest
develop	act	facilitate	apply	argue

test	manage	discuss	document	orient
promote	test	seek	find	complicate
look	investigate	contribute	show	inhabit
raise	end	constitute	hope	attempt
find	moderate	bring	argue	come
structure	improve	analyse	contribute	utilize
hinder	endeavor	explore	bring	produce
appear	attempt	conclude	appear	propose
hope	contribute	begin	purport	remain
work	provide	deal	point	reflect
conclude	behave	provide	identify	focus
identify	think	present	propose	lead
make	delineate	receive	integrate	allow
research	shed	come	offer	enable
think	offer	function	undertake	reshape
call	discuss	understand	highlight	arise
stem	approach	gain	study	draw
demand	help	compete	explore	benefit
interact	go	use	constrain	explore
need	valorize	accomplish	achieve	redescribe
show	represent	set	study	inquire
depend	conclude	form	know	go
drive	cover	interplay	make	penetrate
impose	advocate	occur	explain	underpin
sell	outline	negotiate	bring	state
design	pose	adopt	elicit	bring
expect	choose	work	construct	examine
enhance	create	recall	uncover	delve

When compared with Coxhead's AWL, the existing AEV retrieved across disciplines that also made an appearance in AWL are depicted in Table 2.

Table 2. Academic English Verbs in Coxhead's Academic Word List

Academic Disciplines	AEVs in Personalised Corpus and AWL
Tourism	reveal 6, demonstrate 3, affect 2, regulate 2, trigger 9, promote 4, structure 1, conclude 2, identify 1, research 1, interact 3, impose 4, design 2, enhance 6
Business	demonstrate 3, confirm 7, identify 1, conduct 2, investigate 4, contribute 3, approach 1, conclude 2, advocate 7, pose 10, create 1
Linguistics	reveal 6, indicate 1, facilitate 5, seek 2, contribute 3, constitute 1, analyse 1, conclude 2, function 1, occur 1
Management	illustrate 3, highlight 8, differentiate 7, document 3, contribute 3, identify 1, integrate 4, undertake 4, highlight 8, constrain 3, achieve 2, construct 2
Cultural Studies	highlight 8, stress 4, orient 5, utilize 6, focus 2, enable 5, benefit 1

The demand for conducting and publishing academic writing in English (Flowerdew & Li, 2009; Gnutzmann & Rabe, 2014; Mauranen et al., 2010; Römer, 2009) has become unnegotiable for professional reasons (Curry & Lillis, 2004; Hamid, 2006; Petersen & Shaw, 2002; Schluer, 2014). It is also a critical step towards success in academic writing, which is recognising the formal properties of the language, encompassing grammatical rules such as EAV. EAV plays a crucial role in creating academic papers, forming the cornerstone for crafting appropriate and meaningful sentences (Deng et al., 2022b). The present study shows that the EAV across five disciplines are varied yet sometimes have similar word lists, indicating that these EAV could be different but also could be the same across disciplines. Thus, it is assumed that EAV in social humanities are rich, varied, similar and dissimilar.

Furthermore, the literature mentions that academic writing is characterised by a formal and meticulous tone, encouraging writers to structure precisely (Bennett, 2009; Hundt & Mair, 1999; Hyland & Jiang, 2017). While this could be challenging, especially for novice authors, it could fill the gaps in the existing studies by providing insights regarding EAV. The information on EAV from this study from tourism, business, linguistics, management, and cultural studies demonstrates accurate type of verbs to help foster the comprehension of verb meanings and how to organise these verbs in sentences (Deng et al., 2022a), establishes the authorial stances (Thompson & Yiyun, 1991), citation styles that match requirement in social science (Winkler & Metherell, 2010), and observe the EAV that utilised in high reputable journal such as Elsevier (Kwary, Kirana, et al., 2017). Theoretically, the present study is expected to improve the literature with similar interest regarding EAP, especially in social and humanities contexts. The study is also expected to contribute to implementing EAP academic writing papers among L1 and L2 advanced and novice authors. Accordingly, the present study is paramount to be implemented in academic writing classes when academic writing teachers, instructors, or professors utilise the EAV produced in this study to prepare teaching materials, especially verbs.

Furthermore, three practical implications are offered to EFL students in higher education, EAP instructors, academics, and scholars. First, with a good understanding of EAV in a highly reputable journal, scholars in universities presently competing for world-class university status could get insight into what verb is used to improve their writing. Accordingly, a betterment in academic writing will be achieved. Second, EAP instructors and lecturers can use AEV compilation for the advantages of their teaching materials to help students comprehend types of AEVs that could be used for academic writing.

Consequently, EFL students can select suitable AEVs depending on their discipline in the context of social and humanities. Third, academics and scholars could also use these studies' findings to identify or compare the AEV that existed in the five academic disciplines.

CONCLUSION

AEVs are crucial in enhancing the success of comprehending and writing academic papers. The present study retrieves the AEVs from Scopus-indexed academic paper abstracts, resulting in new insight into the existing literature, especially regarding EAP. The study reveals that AEVs utilised across five academic disciplines varied yet simultaneously had similarities and differences. Further, it is revealed that the data contained distinctive characteristics of the respective academic discipline. Moreover, when compared against Coxhead's AWL, several AEVs across five academic disciplines found in this study appeared from the highest frequency, indicated by 1, to the lowest frequency, indicated by 10. In addition, it can be concluded that AEVs from this study completed Coxhead's AWL to the extent of adding several new word lists unavailable from the AWL.

Nevertheless, regardless of the theoretical and practical contributions and significance, this study also contains limitations that must be conveyed in future empirical studies. First, although the study was conducted across five disciplines, they came from social and humanities, which is soft science. Thus, the findings do not apply AEVs in other academic disciplines from hard science, such as physics, chemistry, biology, etc. Accordingly, the generalisation is not applicable. However, there is an opportunity for future researchers to conduct a comparative study between AEVs and both sciences. Second, the present study solely intended to explore AEVs from the abstract sections. Consequently, there is also an opportunity to investigate AEVs in other parts of the body of academic papers. Third, the present study employed a personalised corpus with 100 Scopus-indexed academic paper abstracts. Subsequently, the following study can exploit the data from large corpora, i.e., the British National Corpus (BNC) and Contemporary of Contemporary American English (COCA).

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Appendix 1.

List of Journal Names

Academic Disciplines	Journal Sources	Publishers
Tourism	Tourism Management	Elsevier
Business	Journal of Business Research	Elsevier
Linguistics	Applied Linguistics	Oxford University Press
Management	Academy of Management Journal	Academy of Management
Cultural Studies	Cultural Studies	Taylor & Francis