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DOI <https://doi.org/10.24919/2308-4863/96-3-30>**Вікторія ПЕТРЕНКО,***orcid.org/0009-0001-6403-2082**старша викладачка кафедри філології та перекладу**Київського національного університету технологій та дизайну**(Київ, Україна) vikaupk@gmail.com*

ЛЕКСИЧНИЙ ВИБІР І ТОЧНІСТЬ У СУЧАСНІЙ АНГЛІЙСЬКІЙ МОВІ В НАВЧАННІ СТУДЕНТІВ НЕМОВНИХ СПЕЦІАЛЬНОСТЕЙ

Стаття присвячена аналізу проблеми лексичної точності та усвідомленого вибору слова в сучасній англійській мові у процесі навчання студентів немовних спеціальностей. Метою дослідження є виявлення чинників, що визначають точність використання лексичних одиниць в академічному та професійно орієнтованому англійському мовленні, а також окреслення методичних підходів, що сприяють формуванню точного й контекстно вмотивованого слововживання в курсах англійської мови для професійних цілей та в умовах англійського викладання фахових дисциплін. Акцент зроблено на розрізненні понять «знати слово» і «вміти обрати доречне слово» з урахуванням смислових відтінків, сполучуваності та стилістичної доцільності.

Дослідження поєднує загальнонаукові та спеціальні підходи. Застосовано аналіз і синтез праць із лексичної семантики, прагматики, прикладної лінгвістики та методики викладання англійської мови. Використано зіставний аналіз близьких за значенням лексичних одиниць, типових академічних колокацій і моделей, характерних для різних реєстрів мовлення. Також проведено контекстуальний і функціональний аналіз лексичних рішень у фрагментах студентських письмових робіт і усних виступів (короткі доповіді, презентації). Додатково застосовано узагальнення педагогічного досвіду, що дало змогу виокремити повторювані проблемні зони та описати дидактичні рішення, релевантні для груп з різним рівнем підготовки.

З'ясовано, що недостатня лексична точність у мовленні студентів немовних спеціальностей зумовлена не стільки браком словникового запасу, скільки обмеженим розумінням семантичних відтінків, стилістичних обмежень і реєстру, а також контекстуальних умов уживання слів. Виявлено типові помилки: підміна квазісинонімів; буквальний переклад і міжмовна інтерференція; нестійкі лексичні сполучення (дієслівно-іменникові та прикметниково-іменникові), що порушують норми академічного мовлення; надмірно узагальнені формулювання, які знижують інформативність і переконливість висловлювання. Обґрунтовано доцільність завдань, спрямованих на аналіз мікроконтексту, порівняння лексичних альтернатив, роботу з колокаціями, а також на формування «контрольного списку» рішень (*register, connotation, collocation*) під час редагування.

Зроблено висновок, що системне формування навичок точного слововживання є необхідною умовою підвищення якості академічної та професійної комунікації студентів немовних спеціальностей і підтримує їхню успішність у письмі, презентаціях та командній взаємодії. Запропоновані підходи можуть бути інтегровані в курси англійської мови для професійних цілей та англійського навчання фахових дисциплін, оскільки вони розвивають механізми прийняття лексичних рішень, а не лише запам'ятовування слів. Перспективою подальших досліджень є розроблення операційних критеріїв оцінювання лексичної точності та апробація інструментів формувального оцінювання в ЕМІ-групах. Запропоновані навчально-методичні рішення придатні для впровадження у курсах ESP та в умовах ЕМІ.

Ключові слова: лексична точність, семантичні нюанси, реєстр мовлення, академічна комунікація, англійська для професійних цілей, англійське викладання, міжмовна інтерференція.

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WORD CHOICE AND PRECISION IN MODERN ENGLISH FOR NON-LANGUAGE STUDENTS

The article examines lexical precision and deliberate word choice in modern English within the context of non-language university students' learning. The study aims to identify factors influencing accurate lexical use in academic and professional communication and to propose pedagogical approaches that enhance lexical decision-making in English for Specific Purposes courses and English-medium instruction across non-language disciplines. The paper emphasises the difference between knowing a word and choosing the right word in context, considering meaning nuance, collocational fit, and register.

The study combines general research procedures with applied linguistic analysis. It draws on analysis and synthesis of scholarship in lexical semantics, pragmatics, applied linguistics, and English language teaching methodology. A

contrastive approach is used to examine near-synonymous items, recurrent academic collocations, and patterns typical of different registers of communication. Additionally, the study employs contextual and functional analysis of lexical choices in selected fragments of student writing and short-spoken performances (brief reports and presentations). The analysis is further complemented by a synthesis of teaching experience, which helps identify common difficulty areas and describe classroom procedures suitable for mixed-ability groups.

The findings indicate that reduced lexical precision among non-language students is mainly due to a lack of awareness of semantic nuances, stylistic constraints, collocational preferences, and situational limitations on word use, rather than vocabulary size. Common errors include the incorrect use of near-synonyms, literal translation and cross-linguistic interference, unstable verb–noun and adjective–noun combinations that conflict with academic standards, and overgeneralised language that diminishes informational density and clarity of argument. The study confirms that instructional practices focusing on micro-context analysis, structured comparison of lexical options, collocation exercises, and the development of a straightforward editing checklist (register, connotation, collocation) that encourages students' self-correction are effective.

The study concludes that systematically developing precise word choice is vital for enhancing students' academic and professional communication, including writing, presenting, and collaborative interaction in English. The proposed approaches are applicable to ESP syllabi and EMI contexts in various non-language programmes because they bolster decision-making processes behind lexical selection rather than just vocabulary memorisation. Further research could focus on operational assessment criteria for lexical precision and on testing formative assessment tools that track incremental progress in EMI classrooms.

Key words: *lexical precision, semantic nuance, register awareness, academic communication, ESP instruction, EMI pedagogy, cross-linguistic interference.*

Problem statement. Within contemporary higher education, English serves as a working tool for learning and professional communication across non-language programmes, thereby raising practical pedagogical demands for the quality of students' academic discourse. This trend is especially evident in non-language programmes where students use English to complete discipline-specific tasks: describing procedures, reporting results, presenting projects, writing reflective notes, and working collaboratively in teams. In such contexts, lexical precision becomes a measurable quality of students' academic and professional communication and, therefore, a relevant target for instructional design in ESP courses and EMI-supported learning. (Karabay A., Durrani N., 2024)

For many learners, expanding vocabulary involves not only enlarging a word list and memorising dictionary definitions but also ensuring lexical accuracy within context. In academic and professional discourse, lexical precision is assessed based on appropriacy: a word must “fit” the micro-context, the communicative aim, and the conventions of academic style. Small lexical mismatches—such as overgeneral verbs, unstable collocations, near-synonym confusion, or items unsuitable for the register—can diminish clarity, distort claims, and undermine the strength of arguments. Crucially, these issues often persist even among students whose receptive vocabulary seems adequate for comprehension.

The novelty of this paper lies in treating lexical precision as a decision-making competence and translating this perspective into practical instructional procedures and classroom tools for non-language university groups. The article distinguishes between (a) recognising a word and (b) choosing a word that

is accurate, stylistically suitable, and conventional in academic usage. This approach allows the issue of imprecise word choice to be understood not as a “lack of vocabulary” but as limited awareness of semantic nuances, usage restrictions, and discourse conventions. The study combines applied linguistics insights with practical instructional strategies for non-language university groups, including contexts in which English is used for discipline-related learning (English for Specific Purposes and English-medium instruction).

The aim of the study is to identify key factors behind lexical imprecision in non-language students' academic communication and to substantiate teaching procedures and revision tools that can be implemented in ESP syllabi and EMI contexts across non-language programmes.

To achieve this, the study sets out the following research objectives:

(1) to identify recurring patterns of lexical imprecision in student writing and brief spoken academic performances; (2) to analyse the main sources of error related to near-synonym selection, collocation instability, register mismatch, and cross-linguistic interference;

(3) to justify pedagogical procedures that enhance lexical decision-making rather than vocabulary memorisation;

(4) to outline classroom tools, including an editing checklist, that support students' autonomous revision and gradual improvement.

Analysis of recent research and purpose of the study. The study adopts a qualitative applied-linguistic approach that combines contextual linguistic analysis with pedagogical generalisation. The empirical data are drawn from representative fragments of

non-language students' writing (short essays, report-style paragraphs, reflective assignments) and spoken production (short reports and presentation excerpts) produced in ESP courses and in contexts where discipline-related learning is supported through English.

The analytical procedure involves (a) contextual analysis of lexical choices within micro-contexts, emphasising semantic scope, pragmatic force, and register appropriateness; (b) contrastive analysis of near-synonymous alternatives and their distribution in academic discourse; (c) collocational analysis of recurrent verb–noun and adjective–noun patterns; and (d) functional interpretation of how lexical choices influence clarity, informational density, and argumentative strength.

Pedagogical generalisations based on recurring classroom observations are utilised to identify stable difficulty clusters and to develop procedures that remain practical under constraints typical of non-language programmes (mixed ability, limited contact hours, assessment pressures).

Applied linguistics research consistently describes vocabulary knowledge as multi-componential: lexical competence includes meaning, form, usage, collocation, and register. In this view, lexical precision depends on learners' ability to activate a suitable item for a specific discourse task and to avoid alternatives that introduce unintended meanings or inappropriate tone. Contemporary discussions of vocabulary learning emphasise the distinction between receptive and productive mastery and highlight the importance of understanding how words function in contexts, not just what they “mean” in isolation. (Hyland K., 2009: 11-12)

Research on academic discourse and vocabulary emphasises the significance of formulaic sequences and conventional collocations in crafting credible texts. Academic communication relies on stable patterns that support argumentation and organisation of information; therefore, collocational control becomes an essential indicator of writing quality. Simultaneously, studies of English-medium instruction highlight the cognitive demands placed on learners as they process disciplinary content whilst producing English. Under such pressure, students may revert to first-language transfer and literal translation, increasing the risk of near-synonym misuse and register drift. This combination of factors explains why lexical imprecision persists, even as general vocabulary knowledge advances. (Biber D., 1998: 10) (Schmitt N., Schmitt D., 2020)

The literature shows that instruction is more effective when it (a) raises awareness of semantic nuances and register, (b) provides structured comparisons of lexical choices, and (c) fosters collocational appropriateness through repeated use in meaningful tasks. The present study further advances this argument by focusing on “lexical decisions” during production and

revision and by offering a concise editing checklist to support self-correction. (Biber D., 1998: 11)

Discussion. Four recurring clusters of lexical imprecision can be identified in non-language student production.

(1) Near-synonym confusion. Learners often treat quasi-synonyms as interchangeable, especially when bilingual dictionaries provide multiple translation equivalents. In academic contexts, however, near-synonyms differ in semantic scope, connotation, and pragmatic impact. The result is wording that is grammatically correct but semantically misaligned with the intended meaning.

(2) Register mismatch. Informal items, vague intensifiers, and conversational patterns may appear in academic texts, undermining perceived credibility. Conversely, learners might overuse “high-sounding” words, which can distort meaning or sound unnatural.

(3) Collocation instability. Unstable verb–noun and adjective–noun combinations are common. While such combinations may not fully obstruct comprehension, they reduce fluency and violate academic standards.

(4) Cross-linguistic interference. Literal translation routines and native-language conceptual framing lead to calques, unnatural metaphors, and awkward prepositional patterns, especially under time pressure.

Instructions focused on lexical precision should regard word choice as a controlled sequence of decisions. Three procedures are particularly suitable for non-language programmes.

Micro-context analysis tasks require students to scrutinise a sentence-level environment and identify what needs to be expressed (e.g., process, cause, limitation, or evaluation), the expected register, and which collocations are conventional. For example, learners are asked to replace a vague verb (do, make, get) with a more precise alternative that accurately reflects the action and to justify their choice with a brief explanation that focuses on nuance and register. (Nation I.S.P., 2013: 125)

A structured comparison of lexical options helps students systematically distinguish between “close” items. An effective format includes: (a) a minimal pair of near synonyms; (b) two brief contexts; (c) a choice with reasoning. This approach goes beyond simply listing synonyms by linking each item to common contexts and collocations.

Collocation-focused work enhances stability. Instead of memorising extensive lists, students repeatedly practise common academic patterns relevant to their disciplines (e.g., draw a conclusion; pose a question; provide evidence; conduct an analysis; achieve an objective). Activities include gap-filling in short academic paragraphs, collocation matching, and sentence rewriting that retains meaning while improving collocational accuracy.

Throughout these procedures, the teacher's role is to demonstrate the reasoning behind lexical choices rather than to provide "correct words". Students gradually internalise the selection criteria and become more independent in their revision.

To facilitate autonomous improvement, the study suggests a compact editing checklist suitable for short assignments and presentation scripts. Students use the checklist during revision and write brief notes in the margin or after the paragraph.

Checklist (RCC):

R – Register: Is the word suitable for an academic or professional context? Does it sound too informal or overly formal for the genre?

C – Connotation/nuance: Does the word accurately convey the intended meaning? Does it introduce any unintended evaluation?

C – Collocation: Does the word naturally fit with neighbouring words (verb–noun, adjective–noun, preposition patterns)?

For formative assessment, lexical precision can be operationalised through criteria such as: (1) appropriacy of register in key statements; (2) stability of high-frequency academic collocations; (3) accurate use of near-synonyms in discipline-related contexts; (4) reduction of literal translation traces. These criteria allow for incremental tracking of progress with-

out penalising learners for experimenting with more advanced vocabulary.

Conclusions. The study demonstrates that developing lexical precision as an explicit instructional outcome improves the clarity and credibility of non-language students' academic writing and presentation performance, and it can be supported through feasible classroom procedures and an RCC editing checklist. Reduced accuracy in word choice is often caused not by limited vocabulary but by a lack of awareness of semantic nuances, register conditions, and collocational preferences, as well as by cross-linguistic interference during production pressure.

Viewing lexical precision as a decision-making skill allows the development of teaching methods that emphasise the processes behind lexical choice rather than solely vocabulary memorisation. Classroom activities centred on micro-context analysis, structured comparison of alternatives, and collocation-focused practice are practical within mixed-ability groups and align with ESP and EMI requirements. The suggested editing checklist (register, connotation, collocation) provides a useful tool for self-correction and promotes formative assessment.

Further research may focus on refining operational measures of lexical precision and piloting assessment tools that capture incremental progress in EMI classrooms across different non-language disciplines.

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