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## Using corpora as authentic materials in the language learning classroom

**Abstract.** *The implementation of corpus linguistics (CL) to language teaching began in the late 1980s and early 1990s. A corpus-based approach to language teaching is becoming an important component in language learning classrooms. This article aims to discuss the role and effectiveness of corpora as a great methodological tool, to reveal the potential of corpus instruments, and to describe the ways of integrating corpora in teaching grammar and vocabulary as authentic material. Several examples are given about how corpus material can be used for different learning activities in the classroom and possible problems that a teacher may face are considered. This article defines the importance of learning a foreign language with the use of authentic materials and familiarizes readers with several methods of application corpora in the language learning environment. Finally, the survey questionnaire was conducted among teachers of various institutions in order to identify their awareness about corpus education. Results suggest that this questionnaire may be used to presume the future prospects for the application of the Corpus-based Method in Language Learning and Teaching.*

**Key words:** *corpora, corpus linguistics, authentic materials, collocational competence*

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### Introduction

Life in the age of high technology has not only changed our lifestyle, but also our habits and behavior. These changes have not bypassed linguistics either. Corpus linguistics cannot be called a new linguistic resource. The concept itself appeared in the late 1960s in the USA and Western Europe. In Latin, the correct plural of the corpus is corpora. According to Tony

McEnery and Andrew Hardie, corpus linguistics is the study of language data on a large scale – the computer-aided analysis of very extensive collections of transcribed utterances or written texts [1, p.21]. Corpora became known in 1987 among English language teachers with the advent of COBUILD also known as Collins Corpus, which was the impetus for the creation of the Bank of English. This was the first generation of dictionaries that included the language used by

native speakers, examples were not from books, the language which native speakers speak and write every day. At the time of commencement of the COBUILD project in 1980 believed that the use of corpora in teaching would improve accuracy and comprehensiveness, would speed up the process of lexicography because of clear description [2, 15-36 p.].

One of the main problems in learning any foreign language is the use of artificially created materials. Many textbooks are replete with artificial examples, while grammatical and stylistic descriptions are based more on the intuition of their compilers or secondary sources. In other words, inauthentic materials, in the form of Workbooks and Student's books, are written specifically for those who study a foreign language as a non-native language. They are introduced into the educational process to consolidate a particular grammatical topic of lexical material.

Teachers of the English language in the comprehensive schools use the same textbook every year, where almost all the vocabulary and texts were created specifically for students of a certain level. Especially, in Kazakhstani comprehensive schools where Student's books and Workbooks are never renewed. The language is a caravan that does not stop and continues to travel and develop. Over time, the language evolves, the style of speech changes, the pronunciation of certain words, enriches and descends from one another.

At the present stage of development of education, we can see a noticeable increase in interest in learning English, which has influenced and raised the bar for teachers of foreign languages. English teachers need to form communicative competence, which includes sub-competencies such as linguistic, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence. The basis for communication is the presence of general knowledge, which must be mastered by a «cultural-linguistic» personality for successful communication in situations of intercultural communication. This is the meaning of using authentic materials in foreign language lessons. K.S. Krichevskaya defines authentic materials as

materials created by native speakers for native speakers. Literary, folklore, pictorial, musical works, and objects of reality, such as clothing, furniture, dishes, and their illustrative images [3, p.117]. According to J. Harmer, traditionally authentic it is considered to be a text that was not initially adapted for educational purposes, a text is written for native speakers of that language [4, p.198].

Leading scholars in the area of corpus linguistics view the corpus as a collection of authentic language, written or spoken, that has been compiled for a specific purpose. Corpus consists of authentic, naturally occurring large-scale electronic data that can be used to retrieve many natural language examples. Sinclair determines the corpus as a collection of naturally occurring language text, chosen to characterize a state or variety of a language [5, 3-4 p.]. In the past 10-15 years, researchers of foreign language teaching methods have used extensive text corpora to assess the realities of the language in its natural state. The corpus primarily provides a living example to learners of what people are saying and offers the opportunity to deal with those sentences that they will meet in a real situation of communication in a foreign language.

### Research methodology

This article uses the questionnaire method in order to determine the awareness of teachers, mainly in secondary schools, about Corpus linguistics and Corpus-based Method in Language Learning and Teaching. Information has been obtained from individuals through the use of survey questions. The research data include comments, views and opinions. The questionnaire consisted of free-response and multiple-choice questions categories. About 70 teachers of different ages, gender, work experience who work in different institutions and private tutors took part in the survey. Participation in the survey was positioned as anonymous, therefore, it is not possible to correlate the answers of teachers of specific institutions. Teachers were asked to answer 6 questions of a standardized questionnaire. The questions were Open-Ended

and Closed-Ended in Russian and Kazakh languages. If the respondents found it difficult to answer or refused to answer, such data were not taken into account in the analysis.

### **Literature review**

The corpus is primarily not only plentiful examples of authentic materials. According to Barlow (2002), three realms in which corpora can be applied to teaching are syllabus design, materials development, and classroom activities [6]. It includes the compilation of textbooks based on corpora, generates exercises and student activities, analyzes the usage of words, etc. For instance, these can be exercises for error detection, exercises for choosing the correct alternative, composed of an error from the corpus and the correct option, exercises to correct mistakes made by students, exercises to fill in the gaps, etc. [7].

Bybee (2010) has determined grammar as the cognitive organization of one's experience with language while Ellis (2019) has recently defined language as the quintessence of distributed cognition [8, 31-33 p.]. Correct grammar is not only correct speech but also an indicator of competence and attention to detail. Avoiding grammatical errors is the key to being fluent and confident in English. Nowadays, corpora of written and spoken texts are also used in teaching grammar. The use of the corpus is based on the rules and patterns of the actual use of certain grammatical constructs.

In 1999, Western grammarians and methodologists implemented a new method of grammar research. The Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English is the result of a 7-year large-scale project. The authors (D. Biber, Stig Johansson, Geoffrey Leech, Susan Conrad, and Edward Finegan) propose a large balanced corpus of oral and written speech of British and American - from the spoken language to the language of scientific texts (40 million words and 37,000 texts)[9, 132-133 p.]. In this corpus, the teacher can find more than 3000 examples, which include not only standard but also dialects of real English that are used by native speakers. Grammatical structures,

descriptions, and explanations can be found in the form of diagrams. In 2002, a short version of the Longman Student Grammar of Speaking and Written English was released for "students and researchers" along with a study guide called the Longman Student Grammar of Spell and Written English Workbook for teachers. Traditional grammar uses a prescriptive approach, while this corpus is more about functional grammar where grammar is more descriptive. The formation of grammatical skills can be organized by using two methods: deductive and inductive. Corpora of texts are an invaluable resource of real examples that can be used for certain lexical and grammatical units. The deductive method contributes to a faster passage of the educational material, the first stage is familiarization, the second stage is training. The inductive method is time-consuming and learners formulate rules based on examples. Students find grammatical structures in the text, then they create the rules. Further analysis and explanation take place with the help of a teacher and implementation of practical tasks.

It would not be wrong to say that all modern English dictionaries are corpus-based. In the late 19th century, flashcards with authentic examples were used to compile the famous Oxford English Dictionary. As a result, The Oxford English Corpus (OEC), the largest corpus of its kind, with nearly 2.5 million words implemented. By the end of the twentieth century, lexis became a central part of language learning and displaced grammar.

Expressive and receptive lexical skills are distinguished in the formation of learners' lexical skills. Expressive skills mean correct word usage and word formation in oral and written speech, while receptive skills involve recognition and understanding by listening and reading. According to L.V. Scherba student's native language can only be expelled from the audience [10, 25-75 p.]. Learners mentally choose the equivalent in their native language. Phrasal verbs and phraseological units are remembered longer when non-native speakers use an accurate translation into their native language. Nevertheless, the cultural characteristics of the

language lead to misunderstandings when it comes to direct translation. In this case, corpus examples help to clarify the use of a particular word in the context.

The concept of «collocational competence» which was first described by J. Hill is very important in the usage of new words. After all, the meaning of words is determined by their contextual milieu. Collocations are phrases, holistic units in terms of semantics, and terms of syntax. M. McCarthy interprets collocations as «marriage contract between words» - and indicates that this union can be stronger between certain words [10, 25-75 p.]. For clarity, let's take the verbs to make and do. We say make a cup of tea but do your homework. It should be emphasized that the incorrect use of a collocate leads to an obstacle to the correct perception of the meaning of what was said. It is called broken collocation. In written and spoken language, collocations can be described as statical and characterized by the predictable occurrence of words. Thus, they are defined in corpus linguistics as statically stable word combinations.

Lexical chunks are referred to as collocations, but they are mostly content words. For instance, by the way, at the end of the day, on the other hand, a lot of, at the moment, you know, you see, I mean, etc. They are characterized as ready-made words stored in memory for the efficient and economical expression of an idea. Chunks are widespread in everyday language that some scholars believe that in the process of learning a foreign language, they can damage traditional grammar. However, the speaker has a set of different ready-made phrases that serve as a more natural expression of his or her opinion. The presence of such phrases will save non-native speakers from the inevitable grammatical errors. Moreover, instead of finding individual words, we can learn the entire chunk which makes your speech more accurate and fluent. Therein lies the full potential of Corpora. Analysis of vocabulary based on corpora determines the lexical function of words and reveals their contextual use and defines the collocational behavior of a word. The usage of corpora for education can be divided into two types: the soft version and the hard version.

First, the teacher prepares all the materials and organizes the learning process. In the second one, students have access to a computer or mobile device, and students are taught under the guidance of a teacher or use corpus facilities without guidance. Teachers can create exercises that include examples from authentic materials or give assignments such as find verbs, phrasal verbs, or expressions containing verbs that combine with the noun, find combinations with similar/opposite meaning, collocations of the noun job, work out the meaning of the missing word. etc. [11, 1-37 p.].

An important consideration in learning a foreign language is the expansion of the learner's existing knowledge through reading. Reading acts as an active independent cognitive process. One of the main purposes of the text corpus is to show how certain words function in a large material. In other words, the corpora contain written and oral texts, in a variety of genres and styles, from Bell-Letters to Colloquial style. Both in foreign and domestic methods there exists a classification of types of reading in the methodology of teaching a foreign language. The most recognized modern techniques are Scanning and Skimming, Extensive and Intensive reading, Jigsaw reading, Prepared and Unprepared reading, Narrow reading (when you use the same author), Silent reading, and reading aloud. The teacher's preliminary work when using texts from the corpus includes determination of the size of texts and paragraphs, adaptation and editing the texts to the appropriate level that includes unknown grammatical structures, difficult vocabulary, and demonstration of the text as an example.

Leading linguists not only in Kazakhstan, but also in the world Suleimenova E.D. notes: The creation of national corpora of the basic state languages has been elevated in the leading countries of the world to the rank of important historical, cultural, and political events of our time [12]. In May 2012, with the support of the rector G. Mutanov, in the Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, at the Faculty of Philology and World Languages under the guidance of the head of the department G.B. Madiyeva began

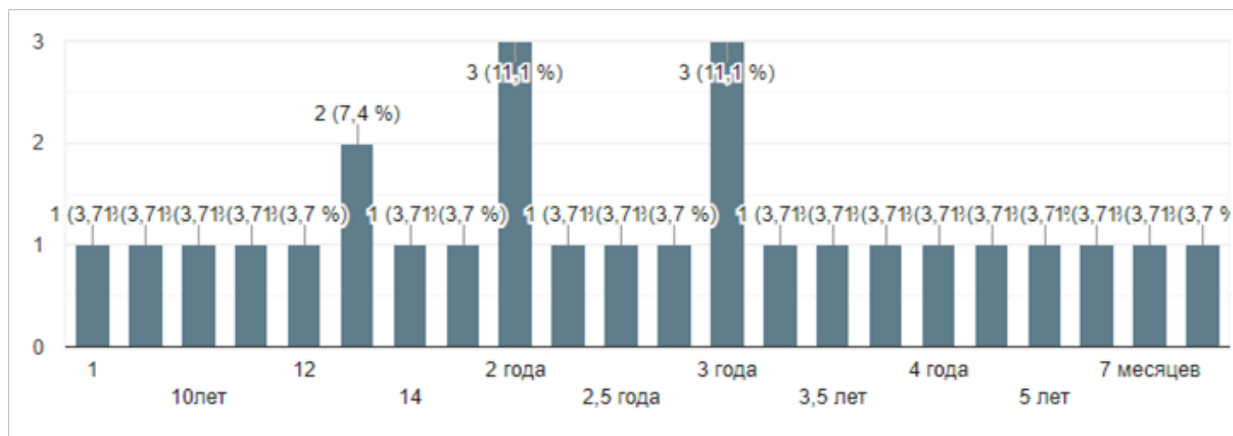


Figure 1a. Work experience

work on the Almaty Corpus of the Kazakh Language (NCKL). In this corpus, you can find most of the word forms, lexico-morphological analyses with English translation equivalents. It is an indisputable fact that globalization has not bypassed the Kazakh language either. Accordingly, the vocabulary of the Kazakh language is actively replenished with neologisms at the expense of the English Language. This corpus would be a good tool for teachers of the Kazakh language and for foreigners who study Kazakh as a foreign language.

Based on the analysis, we can formulate the following conclusion: The use of the corpus in teaching allows you to move from the traditional, normative prescriptive method, where everything goes with a recommendation and implementation rules, to a descriptive method

where domain naturalistic observation. The role of the teachers changes and they are not a source of ready-made knowledge but simply a facilitator of the process. Opportunities for teachers are not limited to the number of authentic materials, they can independently create a corpus with adapted texts using special software training. Corpus technologies allow learners to create their corpus of educational texts, with the help of which they can track their progress.

In terms of application, there are remain some difficulties. Corpus is a large collection of texts therefore it can easily generate too many results. Meunier highlights, corpus results can be ‘messy’, ambiguous, or misleading [13, p.49]. Firstly, corpora are not suitable for beginners level. Since all material consists of the natural use of the language. All texts and examples

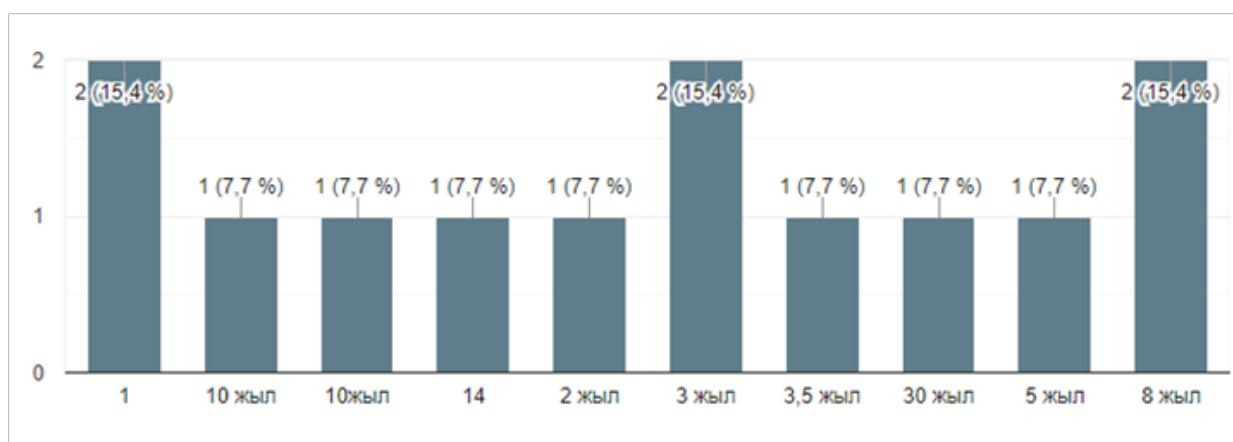


Figure 1b. Work experience

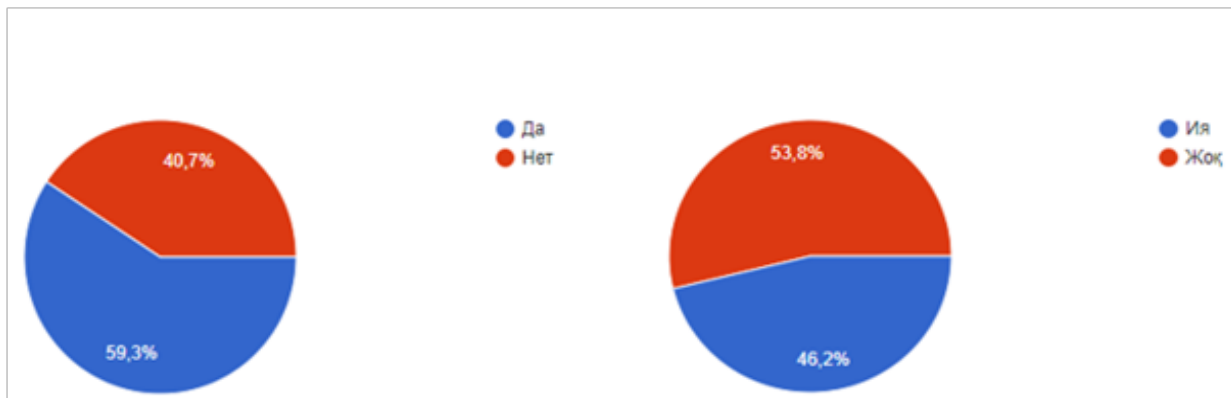


Figure 2a

Figure 2b

are not adapted and complex enough even for the B1 level. Secondly, the teacher must be competent enough not only in his profession but also possess corpus technologies. The use of corpora in teaching requires careful study and the average high school teacher will not be able to immediately start using it in his or her teaching methodology. Finally, time-consuming and if it's necessary, you need to simplify the tasks, if it is work with grammar or vocabulary, you need to develop and adapt.

### Results and discussions

Having provided a couple of examples of past and present pedagogical corpora use, in order to find out the future of corpus education in Kazakhstan, a survey was conducted among teachers.

The aim of the survey: To define the awareness of teachers, mainly in secondary schools, about Corpus linguistics and Corpus-based Method in Language Learning and Teaching.

Research objectives: To determine the meaning of corpus linguistics and corpus-based approach; Assessment of awareness of Electronic language corpora;

The object of study: Teachers of English, Russian and Kazakh Language

Research method: Questionnaire

Since the 1980s corpora have been evolving, corpus tools come in many different shapes, and language teachers worldwide still have been introducing new methods and approaches of its usage [14, 21-28 p.]. To identify the difference of awareness of corpora between senior teachers and junior teachers in the questionnaire an item about work experience was added. The distribution of responses to the question is shown in Figure 1a, b. According to two tables in Figures 1a, b we can conclude that teachers of different categories and different ages with work experience from half a year to 30 years have participated. As the survey results have shown, it was revealed that junior teachers are more familiar with corpus linguistics than senior teachers.

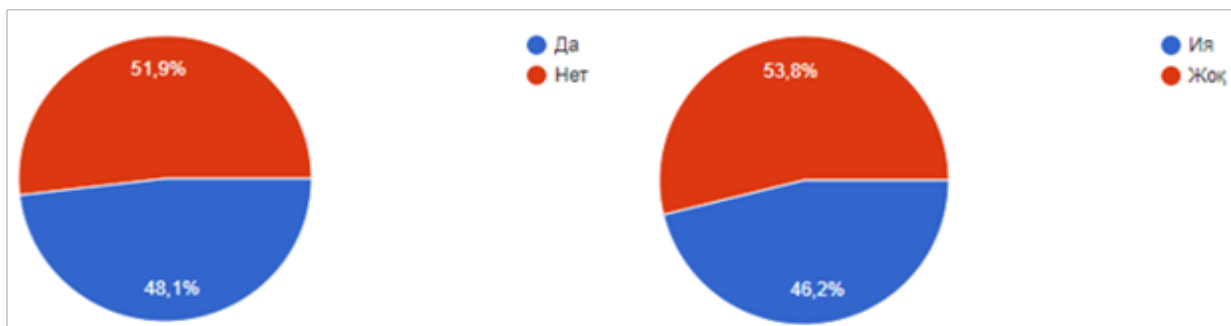


Figure 3a

Figure 3b

Closed-ended questions are intended to determine how much the respondents are familiar with the term Corpus linguistics, Corpus-based approach to language teaching, and Electronic language corpora. On a question: «Have you ever heard about Corpus linguistics and Corpus-based approach to language teaching?» 59.3% answered positively, 40.7% negatively (Figure 2 a), positively 40.2%, negatively 53.8% (Figure 2 b). More than half of the survey participants, namely the English language teachers answered «yes», while the Kazakh and Russian language teachers answered «no».

To the question: «Have you ever heard about Electronic language corpora?» 48.1% answered positively, 51.9% negatively (Figure 3 a), positively 46.2%, negatively 53.8% (Figure 3 b).

In Fig. 3 a, b you can see the changes in a reply. The resulting diagram shows that the majority of respondents (less than 50%) had difficulties with the term «Electronic corpora». To the open-ended question respondents are supposed to define the «Corpus linguistics» and «Corpus-based approach to language teaching». Respondents could describe, give a short answer, or skip if it is difficult. Nevertheless, respondents in most cases wrote mainly such answers:

- I do not know;
- I have heard, but I don't know what it is;
- A collection of written and spoken texts;
- Compilation of dictionaries;
- Corpus linguistics is a branch of linguistics that deals with the development, creation, and use of test corpora;

Thus, the survey data can be summarized as follows: The survey showed that many English teachers, namely secondary school teachers, are familiar with the concept of corpus linguistics and the corpus-based approach to language teaching. This study also included a question about work experience (Figure 1a, b) which helped to determine that senior teachers have difficulties with modern teaching approaches, as corpora require computer competencies. At the same time, the resulting diagram (Fig. 3 a, b) shows that the majority of respondents have never used corpora in teaching practice, as they had problems with the concept of corpora. An increased percentage

of respondents (Fig. 2 a) should be noted, which helped to establish that teachers in Kazakhstan are familiar with the corpus-based approach to language teaching. Corpus-based approaches are most common in Asia and Europe. One of the most famous corpora is the International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE) where you can find essays by students of the advanced language level (Sylviane Granger 2003) [15, p.538]. This corpus is an illustrative example of the effectiveness of material developments in the corpus-based approach to language teaching. The role and place of the corpora in Kazakhstan are by no means idle since it is still in discussions, seminars, articles, and dissertations only. However, acquaintance with the results of domestic and foreign corpus studies, assessment of their theoretical and practical work shows its results. Taking into account the requirements of the time, one cannot fail to notice that corpora in our country are becoming a new high-quality apparatus for learning languages that meets the needs of modern society.

## Conclusion

In this article, an attempt has been made to cover as much ground as possible. The article provides a brief overview of the use of corpora for the formation of grammatical and lexical skills, possible tasks, methods, and approaches that can be used to support teachers and learners who learn a foreign language as non-native speakers. Corpora can be useful primarily for researchers, linguists, programmers, and editors. We live in a globalized world characterized by a high degree of information content. Hence, the corpus format in learning a foreign language is a new powerful tool that is constantly updated and supplemented compared to conventional textbooks. The main idea is not to replace traditional education and approaches but in using corpora as a welcome addition. Accordingly, corpus-based teaching is a good opportunity to choose a relevant vocabulary, it expands the methods of classroom work, and is characterized as a powerful tool for methodological planning.

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### **Шетел тілін оқыту сабақтарында корпустарды аутентикалық материал ретінде қолдану**

**Андатпа.** Корпус лингвистикасын тілдерді оқытуға енгізу 1980 жылдардың аяғы мен 1990 жылдардың басында басталды. Тілдерді оқытудың корпусқа негізделген тәсілі шет тілін оқыту сыныптарында маңызды компонентке айналуға. Мақаланың мақсаты корпусстың рөлі мен тиімділігін әдістемелік құрал ретінде талқылау, корпус құралдарының әлеуетін ашу, грамматика мен лексиканы оқытуда корпусты аутентикалық материал ретінде интеграциялау тәсілдерін сипаттау. Корпус материалын сыныпта қалай қолдануға болатындығы және мұғалімде туындауы мүмкін мәселелер туралы бірнеше мысалдар келтірілген. Бұл мақала шетел тілін үйренуде аутентикалық материалдарды қолданудың маңыздылығын және оқырмандарды тілді оқыту ортасында корпустарды қолданудың бірнеше әдістерімен таныстырады. Сонымен қатар, әртүрлі мекемелердің оқытушылары арасында олардың корпус білімі туралы ха-



бардарлығын анықтау мақсатында сауалнама жүргізілді. Сауалнама нәтижелері шет тілдерін оқытуда корпусқа негізделген әдісті қолданудың болашақ перспективаларын болжау үшін пайдалануға болатындығын көрсетеді.

**Кілт сөздер:** корпус, корпусдық лингвистика, аутентикалық материалдар, коллокациялық құзыреттілік.

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### **Использование корпусов в качестве аутентичных материалов на уроках иностранного языка**

**Аннотация:** Внедрение корпусной лингвистики в преподавание языков началось в конце 1980-х и начале 1990-х годов. В статье рассматривается корпусный подход в преподавании языка, который становится важным компонентом языковых учебных заведений. Целью данной статьи является обсуждение роли и эффективности корпусов как методологического инструмента, раскрыть потенциал корпусных инструментов и описать способы интеграции корпусов при обучении грамматике и лексике в качестве аутентичного материала. Приводится ряд примеров того, как материал корпуса может быть использован для различных учебных деятельностей в классе, и рассматриваются возможные проблемы, с которыми может столкнуться учитель. Данная статья определяет важность изучения иностранного языка с использованием аутентичных материалов и знакомит читателей с несколькими методами применения корпусов в языковой среде. В итоге, среди учителей различных учебных заведений был проведен анкетный опрос с целью выявления их осведомленности о корпусном преподавании. В результате определено, что данный опрос можно использовать для предположения будущих перспектив применения корпусного метода в изучении иностранных языков.

**Ключевые слова:** корпус, корпусная лингвистика, аутентичные материалы, коллокационная компетенция.

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