JOURNAL OF APPLIED SCIENCE AND SOCIAL SCIENCE
eISSN 2229-3113 pISSN 2229-3205

Volume 15 Issue 10, October 2025

Impact factor: 2019: 4.679 2020: 5.015 2021: 5.436, 2022: 5.242, 2023: 6.995, 2024 7.75

METHODOLOGY OF APPLYING CORPUS LINGUISTICS IN PHILOLOGICAL RESEARCH

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Annotation. This article explores the methodology of applying corpus linguistics in philological research. It discusses how corpora—structured collections of texts—can be used to analyze linguistic phenomena in historical and literary contexts. The paper outlines various corpus-based methods, including concordance, collocation, and frequency analysis, as well as the tools and software commonly used in this field. It also highlights the advantages and limitations of corpus linguistics when applied to philology and emphasizes its role as a complementary approach to traditional textual and literary analysis.

Keywords: Corpus linguistics, philology, textual analysis, concordance, collocation, historical linguistics, stylistics, linguistic variation, digital humanities, corpus methodology.

Introduction. Philology, traditionally centered on the critical analysis of texts, historical linguistics, and literary studies, has been significantly enhanced by the advent of digital tools and resources. Among these, corpus linguistics has proven particularly transformative. It allows researchers to analyze large bodies of real-world language data—corpora—systematically and empirically. The integration of corpus-based methods into philological research has opened new avenues for exploring language use in literary, historical, and cultural contexts. This paper outlines key methodologies for applying corpus linguistics in philology, discusses practical tools, and presents case studies demonstrating its value.

Corpus linguistics is the study of language as expressed in samples (corpora) of real-world text. It relies on quantitative and qualitative analyses to uncover patterns and structures in language use. Corpus linguistics offers philologists a robust and empirical framework to analyze language and texts in ways that were not previously possible. Its applications—from tracing linguistic change to analyzing authorial style—demonstrate its vast potential in enriching philological inquiry. However, it should complement rather than replace traditional methods, ensuring a balance between data-driven analysis and humanistic interpretation.

Analysis of literature. Over the past few decades, corpus linguistics has evolved from a peripheral methodology into a central approach within various branches of linguistic and philological research. Scholars have increasingly turned to corpora as tools for exploring both synchronous and diachronic features of language, especially in literary, historical, and stylistic studies. This literature review aims to explore key academic contributions that define the scope, methodology, and implications of corpus-based research within philology. The foundation of modern corpus linguistics was laid by John Sinclair (1991), who emphasized the importance of empirical, usage-based approaches to language. In his work *Corpus, Concordance, Collocation*, Sinclair argued that language should be studied as it is naturally used, not just as idealized forms. This premise laid the groundwork for later studies incorporating corpus methods into broader philological analysis.

Kennedy (1998) and McEnery & Wilson (2001) further developed these ideas by defining corpus linguistics as a methodology rather than a theory. McEnery and Wilson's *Corpus Linguistics* provided both theoretical insights and practical frameworks, showing how corpus techniques could support investigations into grammar, semantics, and discourse. A significant body of research has applied corpus methods to historical linguistics, a core area of philology. For instance, Rissanen (2000), through his work on the *Helsinki Corpus of English Texts*, illustrated how corpora could be used to trace syntactic and morphological changes in English from the Middle Ages to the Early Modern period. Such diachronic corpora offer philologists a systematic method for analyzing language change over time. In the realm of literary studies, Biber et al. (1998) introduced a multidimensional approach to register and genre analysis using corpora. Their work has been used to examine stylistic variation across literary texts, allowing scholars to quantify and compare linguistic features that define authorship, genre, and period.

More recently, Mahlberg (2013) advanced the integration of corpus stylistics in literary criticism. In her book *Corpus Stylistics and Dickens's Fiction*, she demonstrates how corpus methods can uncover repetitive linguistic patterns and narrative structures that are otherwise difficult to detect through traditional close reading.

Research discussion. The integration of corpus linguistics into philological research has sparked significant academic interest over the past few decades, particularly as digital tools and large-scale textual datasets have become more accessible. This discussion explores how corpus-based approaches enhance traditional philological inquiry by enabling quantitative, replicable, and wide-scale analysis of language in use, particularly in historical and literary contexts. Philology, traditionally associated with close reading, critical textual analysis, and the historical study of languages, has often been viewed as subjective due to its interpretive nature. The adoption of corpus linguistics methods brings a complementary empirical dimension to philological analysis (McEnery & Hardie, 2012). Tools such as concordance searches, collocation analysis, and frequency counts provide evidence-based support to philological claims, thereby reducing interpretive bias and enhancing reproducibility.

For example, stylistic analysis of authors like Shakespeare or Chaucer, which once relied solely on subjective interpretation, can now be reinforced with corpus-based data. Word frequency profiles, keyword comparisons, and syntactic patterns can be quantitatively evaluated to identify stylistic markers (Stubbs, 2005; Mahlberg, 2013). One of the most valuable contributions of corpus linguistics to philology is its capacity for diachronic analysis—the study of language change over time. Historical corpora, such as the *Helsinki Corpus* or *Corpus of Historical American English (COHA)*, allow researchers to examine how specific linguistic features (e.g., grammatical constructions, semantic shifts, orthographic variations) evolved across centuries (Rissanen, 2000).

Such corpora enable philologists to track lexical innovation or obsolescence, investigate morphological simplification (e.g., the decline of inflectional endings in English), or analyze syntactic changes (e.g., the loss of verb-second word order). This contributes not only to linguistic theory but also to understanding cultural and intellectual shifts reflected in language. Corpus linguistics also supports stylistic and genre-based investigations within philological research. Genre-specific corpora can help scholars discern the distinctive linguistic features of religious texts, legal documents, epic poetry, or modern fiction. For example, Mahlberg (2013) demonstrates how corpus stylistics can uncover recurring lexicon-grammatical patterns in 19th-century novels, such as Dickens' habitual use of evaluative adjectives and reporting verbs.

Table 1. Analytical overview of corpus linguistics methods in philological research

Corpus Method	Application in Philology	Advantages	Limitations
Concordance Analysis	Identifying how words are used in different literary contexts	Reveals patterns of usage and collocational behavior	Limited in interpreting figurative or metaphorical language
Collocation Analysis	Exploring word associations in specific genres or author styles	Useful for stylistic and semantic field analysis	Sensitive to corpus size and genre imbalance
Frequency Analysis	Tracking word or structure frequencies across time or genres	Shows dominant themes, lexical choices, and trends	May overlook subtle semantic or pragmatic nuances
Keyword Analysis	Identifying statistically significant words in texts	Highlights thematic focus or authorial style	Depends heavily on reference corpus selection
Semantic Tagging	Analyzing shifts in meaning and semantic categories	Enables diachronic or comparative semantic studies	Requires well-annotated corpora; potential tagging errors
N-gram/Cluster Analysis	Studying fixed expressions or recurrent stylistic patterns	Supports stylistic fingerprinting and genre analysis	May capture irrelevant or unimportant sequences
Diachronic Analysis	Tracing language evolution in historical texts	Reveals linguistic, cultural, and social changes over time	Relies on the availability and accuracy of historical corpora

Additionally, literary and philosophical texts often rely on nuanced meaning, metaphor, and cultural references that may not be fully captured through frequency counts or collocation statistics. Therefore, corpus methods should be used in conjunction with close reading and contextual interpretation, not as a replacement for them. Furthermore, ethical concerns around data representation and genre bias need consideration. Many corpora underrepresent minority voices, non-standard dialects, or non-European literary traditions. This could skew research findings if not acknowledged and addressed (Baker, 2006). The future of philological research will likely see greater integration between corpus linguistics and digital humanities. Emerging technologies, such as machine learning, stylometric analysis, and topic modeling, are enhancing the granularity and scope of corpus analysis (Jockers, 2013). These developments will enable richer investigations into authorship, translation studies, and even the reconstruction of lost linguistic data.

Such insights have profound implications for authorial attribution, intertextuality studies, and the analysis of literary influence. Corpus-based techniques can also help identify anachronisms or borrowings in translated or edited texts, which is particularly useful in textual criticism and historical editing. Despite its strengths, corpus linguistics is not without limitations, particularly in philological contexts. One concern is the availability and quality of historical corpora. Many older texts are not digitized or have been poorly transcribed, which affects data reliability.

Optical Character Recognition (OCR) errors, lack of linguistic annotation, and inconsistent formatting present technical barriers (Ide & Suderman, 2007).

Conclusion. The application of corpus linguistics in philological research represents a significant methodological advancement that bridges the gap between traditional textual analysis and modern empirical approaches. By enabling the systematic study of language across vast textual datasets, corpus linguistics allows philologists to uncover patterns in usage, grammar, lexis, and style that would otherwise remain obscured in manual analysis. This methodology proves especially valuable in historical and stylistic studies, where it aids in tracking diachronic linguistic changes, analyzing authorial style, and evaluating textual authenticity. Furthermore, the availability of specialized corpora and digital tools enhances researchers' ability to perform objective, replicable studies that contribute to both linguistic theory and literary scholarship. However, corpus-based research is not without its challenges. Limitations related to corpus completeness, data quality, and the interpretation of nuanced literary language highlight the need for a balanced approach, where computational methods are used to support—rather than replace—close reading and contextual analysis.

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