

A Corpus-based Study: A Comparison between China and Abroad in Current Hot Topics of English Language Teaching within Abstracts of TESOL Conventions

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the current hot topics of English language teaching (ELT) between China and abroad using a corpus-based approach, with the research data taken from key words of 2775 abstracts within the 2021-2022 program books of International TESOL conferences and TESOL China assembly as four corpora, two of China and abroad in 2021 as well as two in 2022. It attempted to give significant proposals for future ELT research in China. A mixed methodology of (Quantitative +qualitative) was employed, one of which was AntConc software, for quantitative analysis on the data of high-frequency key words coded from each corpus. A qualitative analysis was subsequently conducted to analyze the potential reasons of major differences lie in Chinese and foreign hot topics of ELT. The study found major differences in terms of four aspects of hot topics of ELT between China and abroad: 1). Chinese academics mostly employed presentation as the primary teaching method, whereas foreign countries used a different variety of teaching methods, including online teaching tools, amount of teaching activities; 2). China stressed students' summary writing and public speaking skills when it came to the aspect of student cultivation. On the other hand, foreign nations helped students improve their academic and reflective writing skills; 3). In China, test and peer assessment were the crucial methods of teaching evaluation, while formative assessment was used as the pivotal role in foreign countries; 4). China focused on the construction of teachers' professional identities and strategy training in teacher development. Yet, foreign countries concentrated on teachers' professional development. Pedagogical implications are that future ELT research in China needs to draw on overseas experience for drilling in four aspects: teaching methods, student cultivation, teaching evaluation and teacher development.

Keywords: TESOL conventions, English language teaching, corpus-based approach, high-frequency key words

1. Introduction

Hines and Rutherford (1981) reviewed the 15th International TESOL conference and summarized five general themes related to English Language Teaching (ELT): the learner; the teacher; second language acquisition (SLA), bilingual education, and literature. Later on, the journal papers of International TESOL conventions were gradually gathered in each of the above-mentioned themes, in which a variety of issues were presented and discussed by English language researchers. Among them, teacher development and ELT methods were crucially addressed. As regards China, the TESOL Convention China Assembly was established in 2018. Since 2021, ELT has always been a field with numerous research conducted from different perspectives includes applying corpus-based ELT to analyze the disparities of ELT methods among different countries. In addition, Lemnitzer (2010) defined the corpus-based approach in a more clear and thorough way that corpus comprises not only key points of the definition in text, such as electronic documents, the written and spoken language, but also meta-information and annotation information of the text. Undoubtedly, the application of corpus offers a fresh viewpoint on language learning. Researchers and English language teachers currently are becoming increasingly interested in using corpus into ELT field because of its incomparable benefits and powerful integrated capacity. A large number of English language researchers in China tended to focus on the application of corpus-based approach for different fields of ELT such as lexical, grammar, and translation.

Wang (2012) demonstrated English lexical teaching applied with corpus-based approach like statistical analysis of word frequency in terms of the number of high-frequency words at different levels. By making well use of corpus in analyzing word collocations, ELT researchers were capable of visually applying the collocations of high-frequency words in a comparative way. Karin (2009) designed a teacher's survey that addressed issues such as the quality of current ELT materials, the authenticity of language education, and teacher's language competency. He added that corpus-based research might have a significant influence on pedagogical practice and genuinely made a difference after reviewing the selected results from the ELT teachers' survey where the corpus might supply to offer data. Besides, corpus-based approach could effectively assist with the creation of content and provided better instructional resources. Hou and Liu (2010) deployed an empirical corpus-based observational study for examining the discrepancies thoroughly on the English instructional behaviors and methods between Chinese and foreign teachers according to Instructional Behavior Evaluating Form (IBEF). The study found that the differences in China and abroad with respect to English instructional behaviors and methods outweighed the similarities. As a matter of fact, the differences in the social and cultural backgrounds led to the disparities of English language educational philosophy between China and abroad. Amid the pandemic situation of Covid-19 during 2021-2022, ELT research in China during the two years was more likely to be laid aside. Therefore, investigating the difference of the ELT research trending between China and abroad is the prerequisite.

The abstracts of program books Chinese and international TESOL conventions from 2021 and 2022 were selected to be compared and examined as seeking for the differences between Chinese and overseas ELT research. The study intended to offer the most referential values for future ELT in China based on a corpus-based comparison of those abstracts. Meanwhile, the corpus-based analysis of TESOL conventions in cross-cultural abstracts is similarly capable of assisting ELT academics, teachers, and researchers in realizing the current trend of ELT blueprint between China and abroad. In association with the purposes, the research questions will be as followings;

- (1) What were the current hot topics of English language teaching in China and abroad from 2021 to 2022?
- (2) Were there any differences between the current hot topics of English language teaching in China and abroad from 2021 to 2022? If so, what are they, respectively?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Corpus Research

The word "corpus" originated from Latin, which meant "body". It was defined in different ways. According to Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2019), "corpus" referred to a collection of all the writing of a particular kind or by a particular person. From the technical point of view, it also meant a large collection of written or spoken language that was used for studying the language. Yang (2002) and Wei (2009) believed that in modern society with the rapid development of computer and information technology, corpus was mainly a large-scale electronic text database that has been scientifically sampled and processed. It's well-known that corpus possessed computer-readable structures rather than a random accumulation. In addition, it should be of a certain size to guarantee its representativeness and the formalization of the collection in various types (He, 2019). The amount types of corpora are still increasing nowadays, and different corpora are used for different studies. According to various classification criteria, corpus was mainly sorted into the following categories based on the different purposes of the corpus: general corpus and specialized corpus; In terms of time, it could be divided into synchronic corpus and diachronic corpus; As for information channels, it could be sorted into written corpus and spoken corpus; In regard to language varieties, it could be classified into native speakers' corpus and learners' corpus; Finally, with respect to linguistics properties, it could also be classified into monolingual corpus, parallel (bilingual) corpus, and multilingual corpus (Liang & Lee, 2010). Corpus studies mainly adopted two research approaches. The first one was an extension of the ordinary empirical research approach. At first, researchers raised hypotheses based on previous linguistic research results, and then went to the corpus to test the hypotheses. However, the validity of the hypotheses proposed by the researchers depended on the data in the corpus. The other was more inductive: researchers made no assumptions before analyzing the corpus and then the conclusion are drawn by analyzing and categorizing the samples in the corpus (Baker, 1999). This approach absolutely emphasized the importance of corpus. Researchers needed to observe the linguistic phenomena in the corpus, and classified and generalized the data to form the final conclusions. These two approaches embodied both the hypothesis-testing research method and exploratory research method (Johns, 1986). Furthermore, corpus-based approach could also be classified into top-down approach and bottom-up approach. Top-down approach meant that researchers first raised a general idea and then verified the idea through massive data; bottom-up approach

showed that the conclusion of research was illustrated first, and then summarized from data (Sinclair, 2003). Sinclair (2003) reckoned that starting from the top, it was difficult to obtain a language statement that fitted the vastly different linguistic facts; while starting from the bottom, it similarly is not easy for researchers to formulate sufficiently general statements until the facts are often hidden in a large amount of data. The numerous data in corpus research required researchers to highly generalize and summarize. Without it, conclusions generally were often meaningless.

2.2 Corpus-Based Approach Research with High-Frequency Words

Researchers convinced that frequent occurring forms, meanings, and functions often revealed the core and typical essences of language use. Meanwhile, in-depth research could be following conducted by corpus-based approach analysis with high-frequency words as well as collocations (Wei, 2009). In addition, a variety of analytical software tools of corpus-based approach have been applied, such as Wordsmith, Sketch Engine, and AntConc. Generally, Wordsmith was one of the most established corpus toolkits, providing a variety of analytical functions like concordance, wordlists, statistics and keywords. Sketch Engine offered word sketches, thesaurus, and keywords, which could also be used for corpus creation and semantic analysis. AntConc was a corpus analysis toolkit, widely used in various platforms. Its major functions were analyzing wordlists, high-frequency key words and concordance. These corpora tools enabled to readily process the massive data so as to withdraw relevant and accurate data resource in research fields (John, 2004).

2.2.1 Corpus Linguistic Research with High-Frequency Words

Corpus linguistic research now has become a significant element in language research. Researchers found that corpus-based linguistic approach contributed a deal of benefits to the linguistic research field including studies of lexis, grammar, and discourse, etc. Jeane (2010) believed that it was hard to see how corpus linguistic researchers could learn much about lexis without using a corpus-based approach. And a consistent finding in corpus linguistic studies has been the extent to which words or phrases high frequently occur as parts of phraseologies, or to whether they have correlations in both collocations and structural aspects. According to Martin and Ronald (2010), the most obvious benefit of incorporating corpus linguistic resources into discourse analysis is the ability to analyze large numbers of tokens with any particular discourse types, which allowed the analyst to study typical discourse structures and messages within the local structures. On the other hand, corpus linguistic approach offers a distinctive way of locating linguistic features and making comparison among discourse types while highlighting the frequency in linguistic research field.

2.2.2 Corpus Literature Research with High-Frequency Words

Corpus literature research has been applied in the literature field as well, especially for the analysis of literary texts. Investigating the genres of literary works was an important aspect of corpus-based approach application to literature research, on which the literature researchers have focused at first. For instance, Leech (1997) built two special constructed corpora in order to demonstrate how the two could be applied to analyze the genres between the poetry and drama. The first corpus contained the poems from William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience*; and the second was composed of nearly 200,000 words of Hollywood blockbuster film scripts. The quantitative study of the genres also showed great impact on literature research that literature researchers have shown great interest in. Moreover, Hoover (2007) adopted a corpus-based literature approach to categorize novels with similar styles written by Henry James through analyzing similarities and differences of high-frequency words in his works. Its aiming was to investigate the literature development of Henry James' genres over time in their works. Given that, the identification of different writers' genres was precisely done through corpus-based literature approach analysis. Thus, comparative analysis on high-frequency words through corpora-based approaches could be integrally applied to investigate the styles and genres of individual literature works.

2.2.3 Studies on Corpus-Based Approach and ELT in China

Corpus-based English language teaching research was first introduced to China in 1998. Gradually, more and more linguistics and educators in China deftly applied the approach to the field of ELT, which included both theoretical research and empirical studies. Although the existence of corpus-based ELT studies in China was regarded as being relatively late, lots of achievements have been acquired until now. Liang (2005) discussed the current status of corpus-based approach development and feasibility in lexical teaching. He demonstrated that the corpus-based approach in lexical teaching should be updated as usual for building a cutting-edge teaching lexical corpus which had its own advantages. Wang (2012) demonstrated how corpus-based approach was applied in English lexical teaching. Like corpus could be used for statistical analysis of the range of English words and the number of high-frequency English words at different levels more precisely. By using corpus in teaching English

word collocations, learners were capable of visually learning the typical collocations of English words. Corpus-based approach was also used for teaching semantic prosody in order to better reveal the attitudinal connotations of a particular English word. Furthermore, Lin (2020) pointed out that the lack of effective contextualization was the biggest problem in English lexical teaching but corpus-based approach was one of the most effective ways to fill in the gap. After the initial learning of English vocabulary through exploratory teaching, the corpus-based approach was used to retrieve broader context, which helped teachers design efficient exercises for students to learn the target vocabulary in depth.

Wu (2010) expounded the function of corpus-based approach in English grammar teaching on four aspects. He pointed out that corpus-based approach provided authentic and vivid materials, and linked grammar with vocabulary. Corpus-based approach also provided comprehensive and reliable statistics on the frequent distribution in grammar while it highlighted new linguistic phenomena, which might eliminate many drawbacks of traditional grammar teaching like causing disconnections between grammar teaching and its impractical usage. Additionally, Yu (2015) explored the application of corpus-based approach to different levels of grammar teaching including the development and utilization of grammar teaching resources; the design of grammar teaching and practice activities; and the empirical study of grammar classroom teaching. He also posed that the application of corpus-based approach could eliminate most shortcomings of current ELT in China.

Teng and Liu (2006) analyzed the feasibility of applying corpus-based approach to teach writing and then further illustrated the detailed application. In order to better organize the teaching of writing, teachers built a corpus to collect writing materials based on its content, such as the most common vocabulary and sentence structures in a particular category. Students learned the frequent collocations and used the approach of the corpus itself to make their writings more idiomatic. Besides, Liu (2012) mentioned that the emergence of corpus was of great significance for college English writing teaching. He constructed a corpus-based college English writing teaching model on the campus network as a platform. Two classes of non-English majors in freshman year as two sub-corpus database of experimental class and control class were analyzed in the corpus. He found that it verified the high effectiveness of constructing a corpus-based college English writing teaching model through a one-year research observation.

2.2.4 Studies on Corpus-Based Approach and ELT in Abroad

After the invention of corpus-based approach, it was widely used in the dictionaries compiling and the grammatical description in America in 1970s. Later it was introduced to the field of English language teaching. Johns (1986) put forward the idea of Data-driven learning (DDL), which was a kind of “discovery learning” method based on corpus-approach. Students took their questions into corpus and found the answers themselves. He believed discovering facts about English language in real-life examples motivated students to learn and enabled them to remember what they have learned through their own efforts. Leech (1997) also claimed that the tasks of corpus-based approach that invited the students to study data-based real language on individual choices and gave the students realistic expectation of breaking new ground as a researcher. Susan (2000) focused on the application of corpus-based approach in English grammar teaching. She pointed out that the changes prompted by corpus-based approach in English grammar teaching had the potential to reform the traditional grammar teaching and became more effectively integrated with English vocabulary. The emphasis would shift from structural accuracy to alternative grammatical constructions. Sylviane (2012) considered as follow the value of spoken corpus-based approach in the ELT was well suited for observing repeated sequences and patterns in ELT. She has also discussed spoken corpus-based approach application in authenticity and classroom usability since they offered direct access to characteristics of speech that were often inadequately described in textbooks. Significantly, Jeanne (2007) stated that the massive collection of texts in the corpus has provided abundant information regarding both spoken and written English that was previously unavailable. She further used detailed examples to illustrate the functions of corpus-based approach in vocabulary teaching for obtaining words’ frequency, differences in speaking and writing, contexts, collocations, grammatical patterns and the use of vocabulary. Halliday (1992) focused on the use of corpus-based approach tools in higher education, specifically to the teaching of academic writing. She potentially discussed different challenges involved in using corpus-based approaches in teaching writing, such as drowning in data, interpreting the data and evaluating the patterns.

3. Data Sources and Methodology

3.1 Data Sources

The present study adopted a corpus-based approach. The data employed in the study were taken from four corpora: 2021 Corpus in China, 2021 Corpus in Abroad, 2022 Corpus in China, and 2022 Corpus in Abroad, in which the abstracts derived from 2021 / 2022 TESOL China Assembly and 2021 / 2022 International TESOL Conventions, respectively. There were a total of 2775 abstracts in the four corpora, written by 4361 writers in total, within 3,513 authors of International TESOL Convention program books from more than 90 countries, including the United States, Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, Italy, Korea, and Japan, etc. The average length of 2021 and 2022 corpora in China were 173 words and 154 words, respectively, 154 words and 148 words were the average length of 2021 and 2022 corpora abroad. This indicated that the abstracts were representatives enough to reflect the current hot topics of ELT in China and abroad. The details about the four corpora were shown in the following Table 1.

Table 1. Four Corpora in the Study

	Name of Corpus	Number of Abstracts	Total Words	Number of Authors	Number of Countries	Length Range	Average Length	Standard Length
1	2021 Corpus in China	414	41643	366	14	155-281	173	170-200
2	2022 Corpus In China	537	58245	482	14	116-221	154	130-170
3	2021 Corpus Abroad	819	63207	1564	72	134-187	154	150-160
4	2022 Corpus Abroad	1005	63506	1949	90	127-165	148	140-150
Total		2775	226601	4361	190	-	-	-

The text in Table 1 contained the abstracts that were imported into AntConc software was to make the quantitative analysis. And qualitative analysis as follow conducted the text for further analysis on potential reasons in behind.

3.2 Research Instrument

The researcher used AntConc as the corpus-based analytic instrument to analyze the whole data. AntConc was the powerful and compatible software with the preponderance of small memory requirement for multi-platforms. In addition, AntConc had the great advantages of being able to find the demanding information readily from a large corpus. It had an extensive set of text analytic tools including KWIC (Key Word in Context), concordance, search term distribution plot, original file view, word clusters or lexical bundles, word lists and high-frequency key word lists. This powerful software was utilized to do the quantitative analysis in this study.

3.3 Procedure

In order to answer the research questions, the mixed methodology was employed by combining (Quant +qual) analysis. In this study, the software of AntConc was conducted to carry out quantitative research through reading and analyzing the core ideas of each corpus for obtaining the statistical high-frequency key words in abstracts. The data collected from the 2021 and 2022 program books of TESOL conventions in China and abroad was categorized into four corpora. These corpora contained the main information regarding the article abstracts. The quantitative study of word frequency was then performed through these corpora, with the goal of obtaining high-frequency key words and collocations related with hot topics. Finally, the researcher thoroughly examined the corpus abstracts by qualitative analytic method, which analyzed the comparative differences of terminology and collocations of high –frequency key words in abstracts in order to determine the current hot topics of ELT hot topics between China and abroad. The results of the qualitative analysis are used to corroborate those of the quantitative analysis to draw accurate conclusions. The mixed methodology analytic findings laid the foundation for further ELT research in China.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Analysis of High-Frequency Key Words (2021 and 2022) in China and Abroad

High-frequency key words referred to key words that appeared more often in data. Word frequency analysis was a corpus-based approach that used the frequency of key words that explained or expressed the basic content to identify current hot topics and trends in linguistics. To make the analysis more accurate, a stop-word list was made. And these stop words consist of function and content key words that were regularly used in ELT. Function key words only played structural roles in the text. They didn't carry actual meanings, such as prepositions (in, of, to, etc.) and articles (a, an, the). Thus, they couldn't be counted as the high-frequency words. In addition, content key words like "teachers", "education", "English", "development" and "students" are commonly used in the field of ELT. Therefore, they were also included in the stop-word list. Concerning the volume of the corpus and the actual data of key wordlist obtained from AntConc, the top 20 key words based on the frequency were selected to be analyzed. And these 20 high-frequency key words within collocations generally represented the most typical trends or features of current ELT hot topics.

4.1.1 Analysis of High-Frequency Key Words (2021 and 2022) in China

The top 20 high-frequency key words from the abstracts of papers in the program books of 2021 Chinese TESOL Convention Assembly were listed in Table 2.

Table 2. High-Frequency Key Words (2021 China)

Ranking	Words	Frequency	Ranking	Words	Frequency
1	ability	240	11	activity(ies)	138
2	classroom	238	12	strategy(ies)	132
3	thinking	231	13	task(s)	129
4	evaluation	225	14	practice	123
5	curriculum	189	15	presentation	108
6	competence	174	16	data	105
7	assessment	168	17	cognitive	96
8	writing	162	18	online	93
9	test	159	19	speaking	92
10	reading	151	20	approach	84

These top 20 high-frequency key words were classified into 6 categories based on the characteristics of ELT: student cultivation; curriculum and textbook development; teaching evaluation; teaching research; teaching method. The words in each category were listed as Table 3 below.

Table 3. Classification of High-Frequency Key Words (2021 China)

Major Category	High-Frequency Key Words
Teaching Method	activity(ies); task(s); practice; presentation; online
Student Cultivation	ability; thinking; competence; reading; writing; strategy(ies); cognitive; speaking
Teaching Evaluation	evaluation; assessment; test
Curriculum and Textbook Development	curriculum
Teaching research	Classroom, data
Teacher Development	strategy(ies)

Then, the high-frequency key words (top 20) used in the abstracts of papers from the program book of 2022 Chinese TESOL Convention Assembly were shown in Table 4.

Table 4. High-Frequency Key Words (2022 China)

Ranking	Words	Frequency	Ranking	Words	Frequency
1	thinking	452	11	feedback	124
2	writing	358	12	training	120
3	classroom	268	13	reading	118
4	academic	204	14	strategy(ies)	114
5	task(s)	188	15	presentation	110
6	curriculum	164	16	assessment	107
7	competence	142	17	materials	102
8	data	140	18	practice	74
9	literacy	138	19	critical	72
10	cultural	134	20	professional	68

Similarly, these high-frequency key words in the corpus were analyzed and classified into 6 categories: student cultivation; curriculum and textbook development; teaching evaluation; teaching research; teaching method; teacher development in Table 5.

Table 5. Classification of High-Frequency Key Words (2022 China)

Major Category	High-Frequency Key Words
Teaching Method	tasks; presentation; practice
Student Cultivation	thinking; writing; academic; competence; literacy; cultural; reading; critical
Teaching Evaluation	teaching evaluation; feedback; assessment
Curriculum and Textbook Development	curriculum; materials
Teaching research	classroom, data
Teacher Development	strategy(ies); training; professional

Those categories have shown that the Chinese ELT field focused on “teaching methods”; “student cultivation”; “teaching evaluation”; “curriculum and textbook development”; “teaching research” and “teacher development” in 2021 and 2022. The detailed analysis of collocations within characteristics of these categories in abstracts has been posed in the following;

(1) Teaching Method in China

The teaching method referred to the principles and ways that teachers applied in their teaching process to help students’ learning. Choosing a suitable teaching method might yield twice the result with half the effort. Among the teaching methods, students’ activities and exercises were as follow emphasized because they were significant elements of teaching and learning. And key words like “activity”, “task”, “practice” and “presentation” all appeared frequently in Table 6.

Table 6. High-Frequency Key Words in Teaching Method (China)

Category	Words	Ranking	Frequency		Total Frequency	Number of Abstracts
			2021	2022		
Teaching Methods	task(s)	5	129	188	317	162
	presentation	13	108	110	218	104
	practice	15	123	74	197	87
	activity(ies)	17	138	48	186	66
	online	24	93	125	218	54
	approach	26	84	110	194	50

The word “task(s)” ranked the first: 317 times in 162 abstracts in Table 6. It has always shown up with the collocations in abstracts like task-based language teaching (TBLT). Task-based language teaching was established as a teaching method in 1990s as a result of the communicative language teaching (CLT) development. Since then, TBLT has received a large amount of attention. And Chinese ELT researchers particularly kept their eyes on the difficulties and effectiveness of implementing TBLT, which included the major issues that have been affecting TBLT implement in China. Different from traditional test-oriented teaching, TBLT aimed to help students show their knowledge and practical abilities through various tasks. Additionally, the high-frequency key word “approach” was also closely related to teaching methods at the last ranking, which confirmed the importance that Chinese ELT researchers attach to teaching methods.

As regards the characteristic of teaching methods, the word “presentation” was calculated by 218 times in 104 abstracts. It was the behavior of English language teachers to create situations through using gestures, objects and performances in order to guide students to understand and master English language knowledge. In this corpus, the importance of presentation was frequently studied. The main body of presentation in the English class was gradually changed from teacher-centered to student-centered. Activities and practice in English language teaching enabled to improve students’ learning initiatives and enthusiasm. In the classroom, teachers encouraged students to do various presentations to enhance their oral expression and public speaking skills, which also had a huge boost in cultivating students’ critical thinking.

“Online” of the word has shown the same frequency as the word “presentation”. Due to Covid-19 pandemic happened from 2019 in China, the remote education were boosting up. A majority of ELT researchers investigated into the online educational field. It indeed prompted the online ELT industry development.

The word “practice” has been popped up 197 times. It directly revealed the significance of “practice” in ELT. Both the noun and the verb forms of “practice” were included, which was often presented in collocations of abstracts like “teaching practice”, “the practice of-” and “practice-” (listening; reading; pronunciation; etc.). Among these studies, the idea of student-centered practice was frequently discussed in the corpus and then researchers indicated that the practice of teaching methodology should be modified according to the recent trend of student-oriented education in China.

“Activity (ies)” appears 186 times in 66 abstracts. Activities were basic and flexible methods that ELT teachers adopted extensively in their courses. And ELT teachers designed various language activities to motivate student’s English language learning. The goals of activities were multi-dimensional while the real subjects of activities should be students, which make the design of activities quite critical. It’s well-known that taking part in activities may arouse students’ interest not only to facilitate their English learning but to strengthen their memory about the language contents.

(2) Student Cultivation in China

The development of students was always the primary focus of education. And elevating students’ ability was one of the most important aims in ELT. Chinese researchers highlighted not only students’ language skills such as listening, writing, reading, and speaking, but students’ thinking ability. In addition to this, the focus of students’ cultural literacy, academic ability, and learning strategies has shown in Table 7.

Table 7. High-Frequency Key Words in Student Cultivation (China)

Category	Words	Ranking	Frequency		Total Frequency	Number of Abstracts
			2021	2022		
Student Cultivation	thinking	1	231	452	683	273
	writing	2	162	358	520	211
	competence	6	174	142	316	165
	reading	8	151	118	269	154
	ability	11	240	70	310	135
	academic	14	86	204	290	132
	literacy	18	84	138	222	99
	cultural	19	78	134	212	92
	cognitive	23	96	71	167	87
	speaking	25	92	70	162	82
critical	27	66	72	138	65	

Related to the characteristic of student cultivation, the word that was used most frequently in the corpus was “thinking”. The high frequency of 683 times in 273 abstracts made it a hot topic in Table 7. In ELT, the cultivation of thinking was of great importance. A lot of teachers and researchers have already realized its importance and they endeavored to cultivate students’ thinking in different ways. The statistics here also confirmed its significance. The word is mainly used in the collocations of abstracts like “thinking ability”; “critical thinking”; “associative thinking”; and “thinking qualities and thinking skills”. It implied the ELT researchers currently attached importance to “thinking” in a comprehensive way.

Certainly, researchers tended to use strategies to improve students’ English language skills like reading, listening, speaking and writing. “Writing” was an important factor to measure students’ English language ability. The 520 times existence of the word “writing” in 211 abstracts has demonstrated that the frequent collocations in abstracts of writing were like “academic writing”, “paper writing”, “online writing”, and “argumentative writing”. It implied that researchers in China emphasized on different types of writing, especially those for academic purpose.

Another word related to student cultivation was “competence”. This word was mentioned by 316 researchers in 165 abstracts. Since it was kept as in high-frequency key word, the high frequency of its existence has shown that the researchers have not only focused on the cultivation of students’ ability, but have also emphasized the quality or the degree of ability. And in most cases, the word followed the adjectives in collocation of abstracts like “pragmatic competence” and communicative and all-round competence”, which indicated that the main emphasis of relevant research was placed on the practical and comprehensive use of English language.

(3) Teaching Evaluation in China

Teaching evaluation was the analysis and assessment towards the quality of teaching performance including the evaluation of teachers’ teaching quality and students’ learning results. Teaching evaluation effectively discovered the major problems in the teaching process. The high-frequent existence of “assessment” and “evaluation” indicated that Chinese ELT researchers stressed more teaching assessment. Meanwhile, compared to previous abstracts in TESOL Conventions China Assembly, the key word “feedback” turned up in the 2021 and 2022 high-frequency key word list, which meant that teachers began to focus on feedback in teaching evaluation. Details have shown in Table 8.

Table 8. High-Frequency Key Words in Teaching Evaluation (China)

Category	Words	Ranking	Frequency		Total Frequency	Number of Abstracts
			2021	2022		
Teaching Evaluation	assessment	7	168	107	275	159
	evaluation	12	225	103	328	137
	test	16	159	65	224	96
	feedback	20	118	124	242	89

Researchers in TESOL conventions China Assembly utilized the word “assessment” for 275 times and “evaluation” for 328 times in the abstracts of their papers in Table 8. The high frequency of these two key words confirmed the status of assessment and evaluation in the ELT process. Generally, the “evaluation” in the collocations of abstracts contained “student development evaluation”, “teacher development evaluation” and “curriculum development evaluation”. And it’s widely acknowledged that a good evaluation system was sure to improve students’ language capability and to cultivate good learning habits.

The high- frequency use of the word “test” in the characteristic of teaching evaluation indicated the meaningfulness of “test” in Chinese ELT field. The usual collocations of the word in abstracts were “test-” like “test taking”; “test-oriented”; and “test performance”. Through analyzing the corpus, it was found that test-oriented education including “test taking” skills was only for examines which were associated with the typical college entrance examination (Gaokao) in China.

Another high-frequency key word was “feedback” in teaching evaluation. This reflected that ELT researchers paid more attention to the reflection on ELT through feedback in order to drive students to make progress. By analyzing “feedback” in the corpus, the collocations of the key word included “diagnostic evaluation feedback” and “peer feedback”. In China, English language teachers usually apply the diagnostic evaluation feedback mechanism to English vocabulary and grammar teaching, which helped teachers to assess students’ weaknesses. Based on this, online diagnostic evaluation system was currently developed to provide both teachers and students

with mutual feedback in the collocations of abstracts such as “diagnostic reports”, “follow-up suggestions” and “remedial exercises”.

(4) Curriculum and Textbook Development in China

The setting of curriculum and textbook development were linked with the Chinese ELT process. Good arrangements of curriculum and textbooks might benefit both teachers and students. The high-frequency key words of “curriculum” and “material” in the characteristic of curriculum and textbook development were collected in the program books of Chinese TESOL conventions China Assembly in Table 9.

Table 9. High-Frequency Key Words in Curriculum and Textbook Development (China)

Category	Words	Ranking	Frequency		Total Frequency	Number of Abstracts
			2021	2022		
Curriculum and Textbook development	curriculum	4	189	164	353	177
	materials	22	89	102	191	86

In Table 9, the word “curriculum” appeared 353 times in 177 abstracts. Chinese ELT curriculum required that teachers should utilize and develop teaching materials resources properly for providing beneficial and practical courses for students’ English language learning. In addition to the curriculum, teaching materials brought great concerns in 2022. The frequency (102 times) of the word “materials” was presented. A lot of researches have been conducted on the design and compilation of English teaching materials. It was found that there were two trends related to materials development. For one thing, the teaching materials in China were mostly test-oriented, and the materials development was closely integrated with the content of the textbook, which helped students prepare for the exam. Secondly, along with the development of science and technology, materials development has also changed from text-based materials to multimedia materials including graphics, music and short videos. Supported by digital technology, multimedia materials have provided English language learners with a wide range of opportunities with English environment.

(5) Teaching Research in China

Table 10. High-Frequency Key Words in Teaching Research (China)

Category	Words	Ranking	Frequency		Total Frequency	Number of Abstracts
			2021	2022		
Teaching Research	classroom	3	238	268	506	268
	data	10	105	140	245	136

In Table 10, almost 136 abstracts in program books frequently concentrated on the word “data” of the characteristic of teaching research, which could be seen for 245 times as high-frequency in those studies. Such high frequency demonstrated that Chinese ELT researchers tended to use data to analyze the research questions, especially for online corpus data analysis during the Covid-19 pandemic period. On the other hand, the analysis based on data was more objective and convincing. According to the context, relevant data were mainly able to be collected from interviews and questionnaires.

“Classroom” was mentioned 506 times in 268 abstracts. The high-frequency use of the word has shown that in China, classroom was a major place of ELT, which made the evaluation of classroom be discussed widely. In this corpus, it was found that two collocations in abstracts that were closely tied to the key word: “classroom observation” and “classroom discourse”. Classroom observation referred to the record and analysis of classroom condition through observation, which involved not only observations of teaching skills and students’ learning performance. Classroom discourse was that teachers used to adopt it to organize and conduct teaching process. According to the corpora, it was obvious that teachers used classroom discourse as an effective way to build their professional identity in order to strengthen students’ acceptance of teachers’ identities, which raised their enthusiasm in relationships towards English language learning.

(6) Teacher Development in China

Teacher development was regarded as a critical characteristic in English language teaching. It referred to the process of continuous development in terms of professional thinking, professional knowledge, and professional competence in ELT. High-frequency words related to teacher development in 2021 and 2022 program books were presented in Table 11.

Table 11. High-Frequency Key Words in Teacher Development (China)

Category	Words	Ranking	Frequency		Total Frequency	Number of Abstracts
			2021	2022		
Teacher Development	strategy(ies)	9	132	114	246	193
	training	21	45	120	165	95
	professional	28	57	68	125	49

The words “strategy” and its plural form “strategies” appeared 246 times in 193 abstracts. In abstracts, the collocation of “pedagogical strategy (ies)” was frequently mentioned. Teachers highlighted the efficient strategies psychologically and technically. The strategies promoted the integration of ELT and intercultural competence to meet the needs of globalization. Teachers equipped with the ability of using proper strategies could better shoulder the teaching mission in the new era.

Another word of “training” demonstrated its popularity as the high-frequency of 165 times in the 95 abstracts. ELT in China gradually shifted their focus to the teachers’ individual ability training. Through analyzing the collocations in abstracts related to the key word “training”, it was observed that the teacher training in China was emphasized as “the training of in-service teachers” and “the training of pre-service teachers”. Training in-service English teachers was an important way to improve the quality of ELT and their professional development. In terms of training pre-service English teachers, it mainly concentrated on how to teach English language well in class in spite of they were unfamiliar with pragmatic application of English language teaching. At present, China has made some achievements in the training of in-service English teachers, but some problems still existed. For example, some English teachers were passive to participate in training due to the heavy workload in schools.

4.1.2 Analysis of High-Frequency Key Words (2021 and 2022) in Abroad

The top 20 high-frequency key words from the abstracts of papers in the program books of 2021 International TESOL Convention were listed in Table 12.

Table 12. High-Frequency Key Words (2021 Abroad)

Ranking	Words	Frequency	Ranking	Words	Frequency
1	writing	316	11	strategy(ies)	99
2	classroom	250	12	speaking	95
3	reading	151	13	pronunciation	94
4	curriculum	147	14	video	91
5	intercultural	139	15	digital	85
6	training	133	16	literacy	84
7	tools	131	17	technology	79
8	online	115	18	effective	76
9	assessment	107	19	dialogue	73
10	materials	106	20	vocabulary	68

These high-frequency key words in 2021 were classified into 5 main categories based on the characteristics of ELT: “Teaching method”; “Student cultivation”; “Teaching evaluation”; “Teaching material”; and “Teacher development”. The high-frequency key words that belonged to each category were listed in Table 13.

Table 13. Classification of High-Frequency Key Words (2021 Abroad)

Major Category	High-Frequency Key Words
Teaching Method	classroom; tools; online; videos; digital; technology
Student Cultivation	writing; reading; intercultural; strategy(ies); speaking; pronunciation; literacy; dialogue; vocabulary
Teaching Evaluation	assessment; effective
Curriculum and Textbook Development	curriculum; materials
Teacher Development	training

The high-frequency key words (top 20) in the abstracts of 2022 International TESOL Convention were listed in Table 14.

Table 14. High-Frequency Key Words (2022 China)

Ranking	Words	Frequency	Ranking	Words	Frequency
1	Writing	245	11	online	82
2	Classroom	216	12	listening	81
3	Academic	207	13	tools	77
4	Reading	169	14	technology	75
5	intercultural	145	15	materials	70
6	Curriculum	107	16	presentation	66
7	Assessment	100	17	cultural	64
8	Critical	98	18	vocabulary	61
9	Strategies	93	19	effective	57
10	Literacy	92	20	training	55

These high-frequency key words in 2022 abstracts were similarly represented and classified into 5 main categories based on the characteristics of ELT in Table 15.

Table 15. Classification of High-Frequency Key Words (2022 Abroad)

Major Category	High-Frequency Key Words
Teaching Method	tools; online; presentation; technology
Student Cultivation	writing; reading; intercultural; strategy(ies); critical; academic; literacy; cultural; vocabulary; listening
Teaching Evaluation	assessment; effective, classroom
Curriculum and Textbook Development	curriculum; materials
Teacher Development	training

These categories in 2022 were illustrated that ELT researchers in abroad had also paid particular attention to: “teaching methods”, “student cultivation”, “teaching evaluation”, “curriculum and materials development” as well as “teacher development”. The detailed analysis of the collocations within the five main categories based on the characteristics of ELT was as follow shown;

(1) Teaching Method in Abroad

Most of their studies on teaching methods in abroad were about the use of teaching tools and information technology in Table 16.

Table 16. High-Frequency Key Words in Teaching Method (Abroad)

Category	Words	Ranking	Frequency		Total Frequency	Number of Abstracts
			2021	2022		
Teaching Method	classroom	2	250	216	466	278
	tools	6	131	77	208	126
	online	9	115	82	197	113
	technology	14	79	75	154	96
	video	20	91	45	136	58
	digital	21	85	66	151	52
	dialogue	23	73	56	129	47
presentation	24	45	66	111	41	

The key word “classroom” was high frequently presented by 466 times in 278 abstracts, which indicated the significance of classroom teaching in foreign ELT field. Through analyzing the collocations in abstracts, “flipped classroom” and “scaffolding teaching” were frequently used in abroad. Flipped classroom was about adjusting the time in and out of the classroom and transferring learning decisions from teachers to students. In foreign countries, students used to complete independent learning before class, and then English language teachers promoted their learning in class to get more useful information through practice. Scaffolding teaching referred to the decomposition of complex learning tasks in advance. Learners’ understanding was gradually led to in-depth. English language teachers abroad tried to introduce such the method into primary schools through adopting the six principles of scaffolding teaching: connection; culture; code cracking; community and collaboration as well as classroom interaction to support pupils’ literacy learning.

In terms of teaching tools, high-frequency key words like “tool”, “video” and “digital” were frequently mentioned in abstracts. The word “tool” appeared 208 times in 126 abstracts, which has shown that English language teachers in abroad have paid great attention to tools in ELT. According to the analysis of the relevant abstracts, the collocations in abstracts in terms of tools were “classroom teaching tool” and “corpus-based tool”, including “digital storytelling” and “digital tools”. English language teachers used digital storytelling as an effective teaching strategy to improve learners’ writing skills, such as using Green Screen, model reading, tasks, modeling techniques and digital instructions to help students improve their literacy. Meanwhile, they were also good at using digital tools to promote collaborative learning among students to encourage critical thinking, such as applying Google educational application, which usually promoted students’ collaborative writing activities.

The existence of the high-frequency key word “online” was up to 197 times in 113 abstracts, which proved that online teaching has become a global trend since Covid-19 pandemic in 2019. By reading and analyzing the corpus, the following collocations in abstracts about the key word were: “online courses”, “online communities” and “online portfolios”. The development of online courses abroad has made some achievements because of the increasing demand of foreign students for online courses since from 2021 to 2022. Meanwhile, English language teachers applied online English courses for Academic Purpose (EAP) and focused on the transition from offline EAP courses to online. In addition, online courses in abroad were also geared toward adults, emphasizing customizable progress courses and degrees. For students, online communities allowed English as Second Language (ESL) students to prepare for their future academic studies, which increased their participation in learning by producing and uploading online portfolios. As for English language teachers, an online community could bring them together for teacher professional development and resource sharing.

(2) Student Cultivation in Abroad

In terms of student cultivation, ELT teachers in abroad regularly concerned about the development of students' writing, reading, listening and speaking skills. Besides, the exercise of critical thinking was also recognized to cultivate students' language abilities in abroad as following Table 17.

Table 17. High-Frequency Key Words in Student Cultivation (Abroad)

Category	Words	Ranking	Frequency		Total Frequency	Number of Abstracts
			2021	2022		
Student Cultivation	writing	1	316	245	561	258
	reading	3	151	169	320	199
	intercultural	4	139	145	284	163
	academic	8	68	207	275	134
	strategy(ies)	10	99	93	192	128
	literacy	13	84	92	176	115
	critical	17	45	98	143	87
	speaking	18	95	110	205	79
	pronunciation	19	94	71	165	76
	listening	22	77	81	168	66
dialogue	23	73	80	163	61	
cultural	25	69	64	133	58	

The top frequency of the key word “writing” demonstrated its popularity. Writing was still the focus of English language teachers' attention abroad. The collocations in abstracts of “writing” in abroad were analyzed as “interest in writing” and “reflective writing”. In terms of teaching methods on writing, overseas researchers believed that promoting and cultivating students' overall academic accomplishment was reflective writing. As for academic writing, English teachers advocated applying effective grammatical structures to package the content. One basic packaging tool was nominalization, or summarizing complex concepts into simple ones.

The high-frequency key word “reading” was 320 times in 199 abstracts, which reflected that foreign ELT researchers stressed reading ability was the key to student cultivation. In recent years, studies on improving reading ability still emerged endlessly. “Reading fluency” and “scaffolding reading” often occurred in the collocations of the current abstracts in abroad. They recognized that interactive hierarchical reading methods with multiple story paths were also adopted to encourage students to read the article repeatedly to pursue different endings, which aimed to achieve the effect of reading fluency. Scaffolding reading had a repeatable sequence, which could be used with any short text for beginners to learn phonemic awareness, phonemic letters and monogram relationships. In addition, some ELT teachers provided students with syllabuses, cartoons, games and tools to enhance their reading interest and comprehension.

From high- frequency key word “intercultural”, researchers in abroad thought of the key word as putting the integration of intercultural awareness and English classrooms in the pivotal objective, which was committed to helping students aware in globalization. Through reading relevant collocations in abstracts, they were “intercultural rhetoric” and “intercultural communicative competence”. They took the teaching implementation of intercultural rhetoric principles in EAP or ESP writing and laid emphasis on the growth of students' intercultural communication ability.

(3) Teaching Evaluation in Abroad

Overseas ELT researchers analyzed not only teacher evaluation but its effectiveness. Thus, both “assessment” and “effective” were used as two key words in high frequency in Table 18.

Table 18. High-Frequency Key Words in Teaching Evaluation (Abroad)

Category	Words	Ranking	Frequency		Total Frequency	Number of Abstracts
			2021	2022		
Teaching Evaluation	assessment	7	107	100	207	112
	effective	15	76	57	133	78

The high-frequency key word “assessment” appeared 207 times in 112 abstracts, in which “effective” co-occurred with “assessment” by 133 times, signifying the importance of teaching evaluation. The collocations within in the high-frequency key word “assessment” in abstracts were: “assessment portfolio” and “formative assessment”. ELT Researchers in abroad believed that the traditional assessment (such as multiple-choice questions) could only measure the mastery of knowledge, whereas the real assessment should measure students’ ability of critical thinking when performing tasks in real life. In this regard, they put forward that students’ critical thinking might be suggested to be measured through the evaluation of their portfolios.

(4) Curriculum and Textbook Development in Abroad

Table 19. High-Frequency Key Words in Curriculum and Textbook Development (Abroad)

Category	Words	Ranking	Frequency		Total Frequency	Number of Abstracts
			2021	2022		
Curriculum and Textbook Development	curriculum	5	147	107	254	163
	materials	12	106	70	176	115

In Table 19, the key word “curriculum” is in the high- frequency appearance by 254 times in 163 abstracts. Through reading relevant abstracts, the collocations within the key word were: “situational curriculum” and “specialized curriculum”, which were frequently discussed. Overseas ELT researchers have proposed situational curriculum based on the goals and needs of ESL learners, which used to provide ESL learners with situation-related materials. Professional ELT curriculum based on professional knowledge and training was adopted as well.

(5) Teacher Development in Abroad

Table 20. High-Frequency Key Words in Teacher Development (Abroad)

Category	Words	Ranking	Frequency		Total Frequency	Number of Abstracts
			2021	2022		
Teacher Development	Training	11	133	155	288	127

Teacher training was pinpointed in abroad. In the program books of International TESOL Conventions, the word “training” appeared 288 times in 127 abstracts, to some extent, which demonstrated that overseas ELT were quite mature in the field of teacher training. The collocations of the key word “training” in abstracts as described: “teacher practice training” and “teacher professional development training”. The European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Language (EPOSTL) was the focus of ELT teachers’ reflection. EPOSTL, in the form of a portfolio, provided a tool for teachers to reflect through self-assessment and was widely used in language teacher training programs in Europe. Theory and practice were both connected through reflection and independent teacher training practice.

5. Results

5.1 Comparative Analysis of High-Frequency Key Words (2021 and 2022) in China and Abroad

By categorizing these high-frequency key words of the collocations within abstracts from 2021 to 2022 for further comparative study, ELT between China and abroad had some major differences in current hot topics related to four major categories: teaching methods, student cultivation, curriculum and textbook development, and teacher development. A qualitative analysis was subsequently conducted to analyze the potential reasons of major differences behind the Chinese and foreign hot topics of ELT.

5.1.1 Teaching Methods

In terms of teaching methods, the current hot topics in China and abroad had great differences. The differences of teaching method mainly laid in pedagogy, teaching activities and teaching tools. English language teachers in abroad were better at using flipped classroom, scaffolding teaching, and bottom-up teaching methods compared with English language teachers in China. Yet, presentation was widely used in Chinese ELT to improve students' overall English abilities. However, digital storytelling, modeling, music instruction and games were also the main types of classroom activities in abroad. One of the novel ones was storytelling, which was widely used in ELT in Europe and America. And its process provided a high-quality learning experience for students. Nowadays, it has become a popular activity in K-12 teaching abroad. Overseas English language teachers tended to use online teaching tools more, whereas the teaching tools applied by ELT teachers in China were relatively less. With smart phones and mobile devices playing a significant role in information exchange and delivery, mobile-assisted ELT has been commonly used in abroad. In addition, they tended to use online tools in the classroom, such as Google applications for Education.

5.1.2 Student Cultivation

With regard to writing skills, Chinese ELT researchers highlighted summary writing, while overseas ELT researchers aimed to enhance students' academic English writing and reflective writing. In China, English language teachers were concerned with developing students' abilities in summary writing. Due to National Educational Reform in China, Chinese College Entrance Examination added summary writing to English language test. To some extent, it implied the test-oriented feature of English language teaching in China. However, foreign countries focused on academic English writing. For ESL or EFL learners, a lot schools in abroad offered corresponding academic English writing courses, guiding students to capture academic trends, develop academic ideas and participate in international academic exchange activities. All of these reflected the student-centered approach with effective writing skills and strategies. Then, foreign countries took reflective writing to improve students' learning ability through critical thinking. Reflective writing examined how students apply what they have learned into practice.

5.1.3 Teaching Evaluation

There were some differences in teaching evaluation between China and foreign countries. China mainly conducted teaching evaluation through test and peer assessment. Chinese English language teachers used tests to promote and reinforce students' mastery of English language knowledge and skills, which reflected the test-oriented pedagogy in China. China has also placed emphasis on peer assessment in order to enhance students' awareness of self-directed learning on their literacy skills. However, in foreign countries, English language teachers signified assessment portfolio and formative assessment within teaching evaluation. Foreign countries have updated the traditional means of assessment into the forms of portfolios, which represented that ELT in abroad paid more attention to the cultivation of students' critical and independent thinking. Thereby, ELT researchers in foreign countries advocated formative assessment, which was a progressive form of assessment in the teaching and learning process. It integrated assessment into the classroom teaching process by using information about students' performance during learning activities as a basis for making timely adjustments to instruction.

5.1.4 Teacher Development

The building of teacher professional identity was also stressed in China, whereas teacher professional development was emphasized in abroad. As Chinese education came to a critical period of National Educational Reform, English language teachers in China were gradually changing their roles to adapt to the new educational environment by transforming identities correspondingly. The traditional teaching philosophy and methods of teachers have undergone fundamental changes under the new curriculum reform, leading to teachers' identity dilemma and becoming the urgent for them to need to reconstruct their self-identity. In foreign countries, there was a focus on the professional development of TESOL teachers where the Standards for the Preparation of Foreign Language Teachers (SPFLT) illustrated the professional standards that foreign language teachers have to meet in terms of curriculum knowledge and language skills. ELT in China enhanced teachers' thinking and teaching strategies. Since the focus of ELT reform in China was on developing students' high-level thinking skills, promoting teachers' thinking and teaching strategies have become necessary requirement. ELT in foreign countries obtained many achievements differently in teaching reflection, among which the typical and excellent one was The European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Language (EPOSTL), the overall purpose of which was to coordinate teacher development with teaching reflection across Europe. The use of portfolios has been a current trend in the cultivation of teaching reflection, typically in the pre-service and in-service teacher stages.

6. Conclusions

6.1 Major Findings

As a useful research method with distinctive features, corpus-based approach has been frequently applied by both Chinese and foreign researchers in ELT field. And some researchers compared and researched different ELT methods between China and abroad for promoting mutual-learning. The abstracts of Chinese and foreign TESOL conventions from 2021 to 2022 has been analyzed by corpus-based approach since TESOL convention was an important indicator of ELT research direction. Firstly, the abstracts of program books in Chinese and foreign TESOL conventions from 2021 to 2022 were quantitatively analyzed through AntConc, a corpus-based approach to obtain high-frequency key words in four corpora. Then, a detailed analysis of the high-frequency key words in each corpus was conducted to reveal the collocations within the different main categories related to hot topics of ELT between China and abroad, which gave Chinese English language researchers an in-depth understanding of the current ELT situation.

Some four different categories of the current hot topics in ELT were proved to be: teaching methods, student cultivation, teaching evaluation, and teacher development between China and abroad from 2021 to 2022. English language teachers in China adopted simple teaching methods that they were concerned about students' ability of public speaking like presentation. Meanwhile, they focused on students' competence of summary writing because the College Entrance Examination has taken it as a testing content. They used test as the main assessment tool, and too much attention has been paid to examination results. As for teacher development in China, it started late and valued both in the construction of teachers' professional identity and the study of teaching strategies. In contrast, English language teachers in foreign countries adopted a variety of teaching methods following with student-centered and also focused on the development of students' academic English skills. They mainly adopted formative assessment to evaluate students' comprehensive skills. Teacher development training abroad also placed emphasis on promoting teachers' professional development and their teaching reflection.

6.2 Limitations & Implications for Future ELT in China

Accordingly, the differences of current hot topics existed in Chinese and foreign English language teaching, and some limitation, pedagogical and practical implications for future ELT in China were illustrated. Accordingly, the limitation of the study is the research period, which only covers the two years (2021-2022) that brings out the limited results across the study. It would be more beneficial if the range of the comparative ELT research could extend more years.

Yet, for the pedagogical and practical implications, the teaching methods of ELT in China could be improved. In Chinese ELT classroom, most teachers taught English through grammar explanation and translation, which led to students' low learning motivation and class participation. Therefore, Chinese ELT teachers should improve their teaching methods and apply methods such as "flipped classroom", "scaffolding" and "bottom-up teaching" to the class and highlight student-centered roles. Moreover, the use of teaching tools was effective to increase students' participation in the classroom. With the popularity of mobile devices, China might build mobile-assisted English language learning mechanisms to expand the channels of teaching practice to online modes. At the same time, ELT teachers could use information technology to create authentic classroom situations to bring students a better learning experience in China. Secondly, various teaching activities should be adopted. In the teaching process, Chinese ELT teachers needed to improve teaching flexibility and take students' interest as the guide. They could draw on overseas ELT activities like digital storytelling and then took advantages of multimedia to create a lively and active teaching atmosphere as a way to make students highly participate in class. Thirdly, the cultivation of students' academic ability should be valued. Strengthening students' academic ability in ELT was an important way to cultivate excellent international talents who had strong bilingual ability and high professional academic literacy. For Chinese scholars, they should continuously improve the EAP curriculum, for enhancing the training of students' reflective writing and academic English reading and making the development of students' critical thinking skills and academic research skills. It helped to overcome the drawbacks of disconnecting between language and thinking for achieving rapid improvement of academic reading and writing skills. Fourthly, diverse test and evaluation systems ought to be taken into practice.

The well-prepared test and evaluation system could effectively stimulate and promote students' interest in English learning. The testing system should be continuously improved and diversified. The percentage of the final exam in the total grade could be properly evaluated by that how students were able to really participate in the group reports, class discussions, academic lectures, and language practice. Making some reference to overseas ELT experience in English teaching evaluation, such as assessment portfolios, we might incorporate

them into formative assessment to fully mobilize students' participation and learning motivation. Finally, the core of English education system should be shifted on teacher training. According to the experience of teacher development abroad, teacher reflection should also be included in Chinese ELT teacher training programs to bridge teaching theory and teaching practice through reflection.

In this sense, the suggestions are that China should carry out systematic, regular, and pragmatic teacher training blueprint. Exploring and investigating pre-service and in-service training characteristics for English language teachers in China based on the results of the study was conducive to update their teaching ideas and carried out the innovations in future ELT practices.

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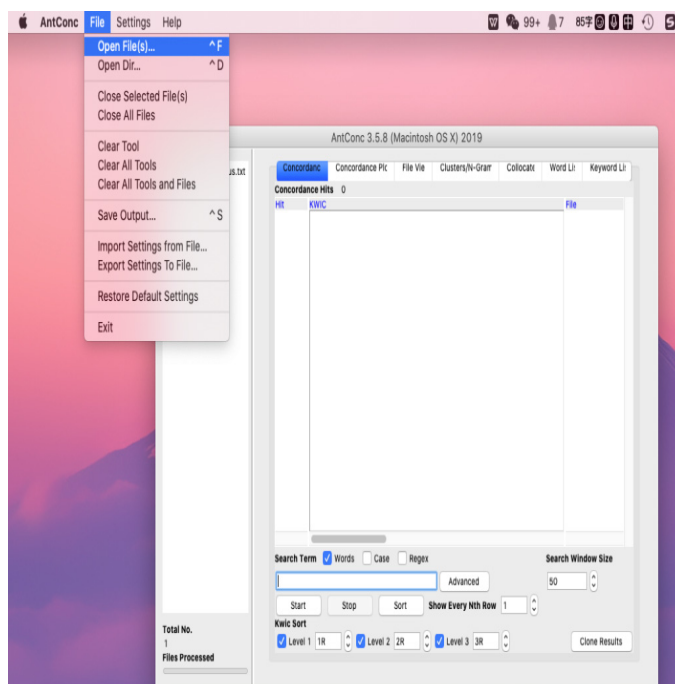
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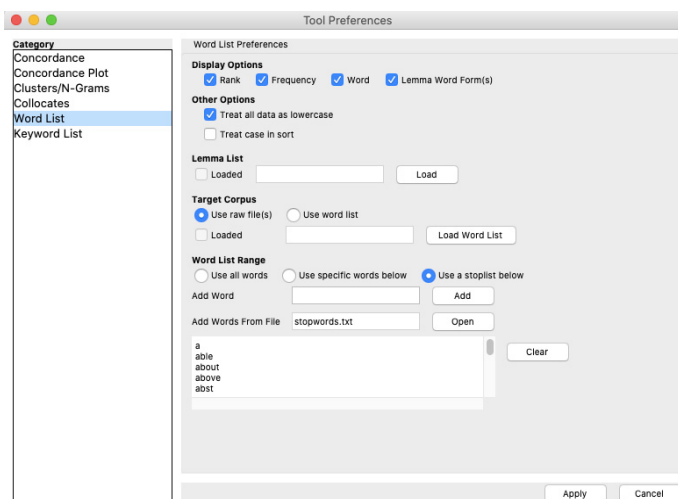
Appendix A

Procedures of Analysis with Software AntConc

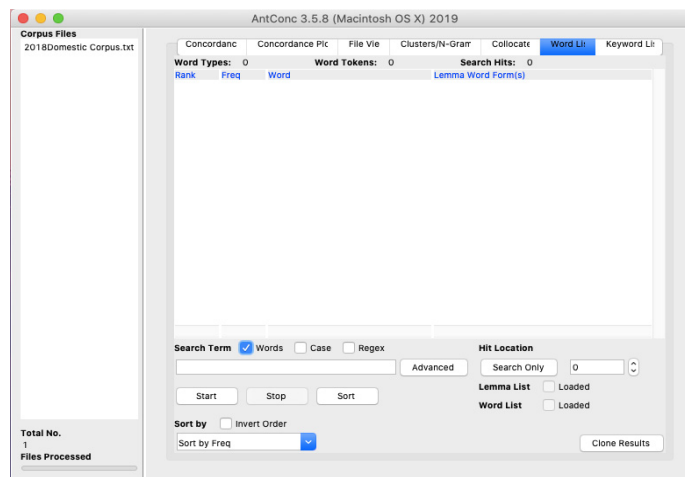
Step 1: Open software “AntConc” and add one of four corpora



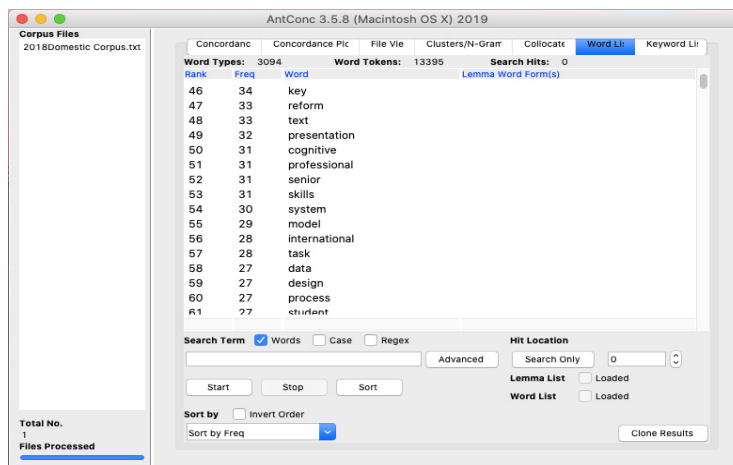
Step 2: Open “Tool Preference” and import the stop-word list



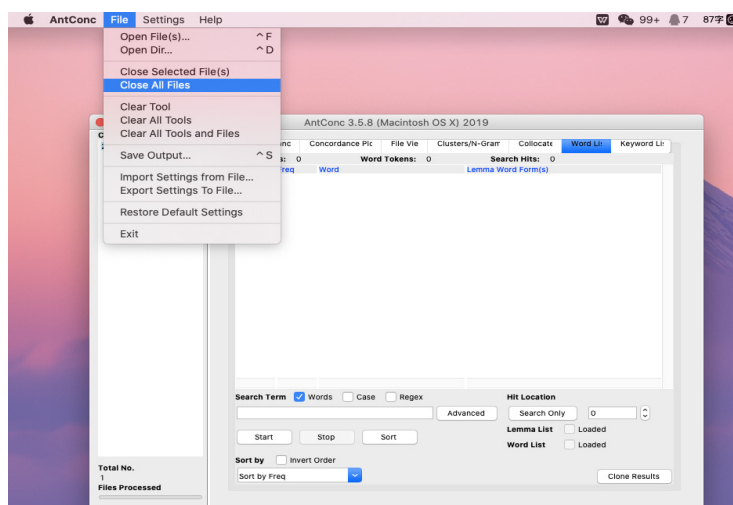
Step 3: Enter the interface and choose corpus setup to use the function of “Sort by Freq” as way of arrangement of wordlist.



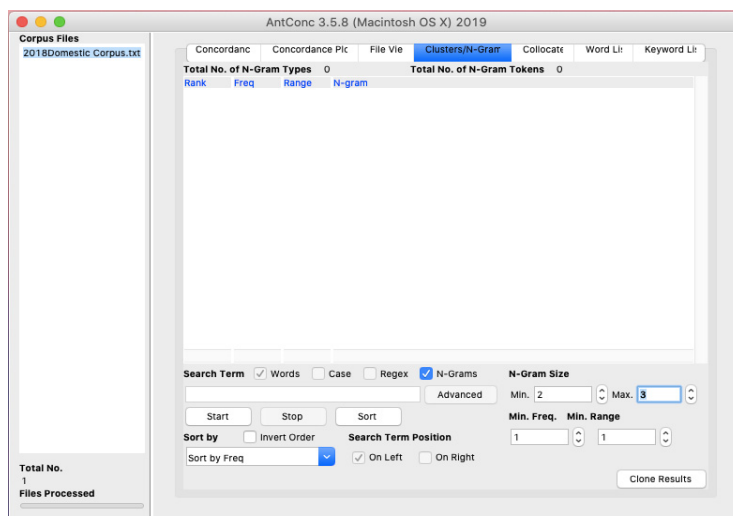
Step 4: Click “Wordlist” and get high-frequency key words.



Step 5: Click “Clear All Tools”



Step 6: Enter the interface of N-Gram and set “N-Gram Size” as 2-3 words.



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