Writing Skills for Academic Purposes

Masaryk University, Brno

Thursday 12th & Friday 13th September

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Thursday 12th September – Agenda

1. From IELTS to HE – bridging the gap

2. Current key issues in academic writing classrooms

3. The value of genre in academic writing

4. An introduction to genre analysis

Friday 13th September – Agenda

1. An awareness of and an ability to use Corpus analysis tools

2. Academic vs. discipline-specific vocabulary – creating a discipline-specific wordlist

3. Practical application of genre analysis in the classroom

4. An awareness of the strengths and weaknesses in current academic writing materials

1. From IELTS to HE – bridging the gap

International students often struggle during their first year of their undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

Discuss with a partner.

- Can you think of the <u>reasons</u> why?

1. From IELTS to HE (i)

Taken from FCE (Paper 3 - Part 1)

Look at the task and answer the questions:

- What is this task asking the candidate to do?
- What <u>skills/langauge</u> are needed to complete the task?

Your friend has seen this job advertisement and is planning to apply. You worked for the same company last year. Using the information in the advertisement and the notes you have made on it, tell your friend what the job was really like and give him or her any advice you think necessary.

FUNTIME YOUTH CAMP

requires helpers with English + one other language who are able to organise sporting, cultural or artistic activities for small groups of 8–12 year olds.

Excellent pay and conditions with plenty of free time for sightseeing.

A great chance to improve your English in an English-speaking country.

All travel expenses paid promptly.

One month contracts in July or August.

Hardly small – 25 in mine

More like pocket money!

Half day per week!

Not till November!

July busier – August better organised

Write **a letter** of between **120–180** words in an appropriate style on the next page. Do not write any addresses.

1. From IELTS to HE (iii)

Taken from FCE (Paper 3 - Part 2)

Look at the task and answer the questions:

- What is this task asking the candidate to do?
- What <u>skills/language</u> are needed to complete the task?

You see this notice in a magazine for learners of English, and decide to send in a story:

> We wish to publish a collection of stories from our readers, all with the title **The day that did most for my English**.
>
> If you have an interesting or amusing story which you would like to share with others, please send it to us as soon as possible.

Write your **story** for the magazine.

IELTS vocab vs. vocab needed at HE

Now, think about <u>the needs </u>of your students.

- Having looked at the entry tests (B2) for international students, would you say the skills/vocabulary that the students need for the IELTS or FCE exams is similar to what they use at HE?

Problems with the teaching of academic vocabulary

Discuss with a partner.

- Do you teach your students any academic vocabulary?
- What problems do you have when teaching it?
- Do you find it difficult to identify which words will be useful for your students?

Academic vocabulary can be described as either 'technical' or 'abstract' in nature. Technical academic vocabulary normally has a field specific meaning. It often needs to be defined and can be put in a taxonomic relationship with other terms in the same field e.g. *secondary school* – needs defining to distinguish it from other meanings of secondary (not as important), and is in a taxonomic relationship with *primary, higher* etc.

Abstract academic vocabulary can be described as referring to terms to do with meaning and thinking such as *idea, concept, theory;* or to non-specific concepts e.g. *problem*.

Parts of British higher education are pedagogically constrained by the marketisation that has accompanied its expansion

Most academic disciplines will have a mixture of both these kinds of vocabulary. While the technical vocabulary is intrinsic to the students' specific knowledge of their field, they will have to frame the technical vocab using the abstract vocab. Research has shown that acquisition of abstract academic vocabulary is a strong indicator of how well students learn subject specific content (Stahl & Nagy 2006; Marzano & Pickering 2005).

Discuss with a partner.

Think about the course of study your students will undertake at university.

- Do you think they will have more difficult with technical or abstract vocabulary?
- Do the resources you use focus more on one kind of academic vocabulary?
- How can you, as their teacher, make the students consciously aware of the technical vocabulary used in their discipline?

The **role** of universities in turning undergraduates into critical thinkers is being undermined by marketisation, **academics** have warned. Intellectual development is still a **priority** of the elite universities, says the paper in the **journal** Teaching in Higher Education. However, new universities' **links** to business **via** vocational courses and industry placements make them more likely to frame pedagogy purely in business terms, it adds. Rather than **transforming** their students into critical scholars, these **institutions** are simply producing "a more confident and content mass who remain a willing workforce". "Parts of British higher education are pedagogically **constrained** by the marketisation that has **accompanied** its **expansion,**" say Mike Molesworth, Elizabeth Nixon and Richard Scullion, the **authors** of the report and members of Bournemouth University's **Media** School.

Although the **sector** should critically reflect on the market **economy** beyond campus, the paper suggests that "the **emerging role**" of some **institutions** is to "fix in students an unquestioning acceptance of the **primacy** of **consumer** desires". The **authors** criticise the **emphasis** some universities place on industry placements, which they say **confirms** the view of a degree as a means to a **job.** They also point out that **institutions** offering vocational courses as a **route** into some industries are **reluctant** to bite the hand that feeds them. The **authors** argue that **institutions** that treat specialist knowledge as a **commodity** risk undermining themselves in a world in which knowledge is shared more openly. Critiquing facts is more important than **acquiring** them, the **academics** say. "If the value of facts is reduced and **complex** learning is unattractive, what is left to be sold is the passport of the degree certificate," the paper adds. "Marketised education is not even an effective preparation for the workplace because it may not provide the imaginative and critical graduates who are able to deal with **technological** and societal change, let alone instigate changes themselves." Higher education's commodification is being driven from the top, the **authors** say, pointing to Bournemouth's "Get a better **job,** get a masters" campaign as an example. Students themselves are playing ball, arriving at university with the desire for a 2:1 "framed **primarily** by its **subsequent** bargaining power in the **job** market", they add. The paper, says: "Tutors must critically reflect on their **role** in **maintaining** education as personal **transformation.**"

Words from the AWL are in bold

Introduction to the Academic Word List (AWL)

- <u>What</u> is it?
- <u>Why</u> is it important for students to know about it?
- <u>How</u> can it help students with their academic writing?

Academic Word List (AWL) (i)

- Compiled from corpus of 3.5 million words of written academic texts

- 570 word families (10% of total words in academic texts)

- Arranged into 10 sublists

- Reflect word frequency & range

(Coxhead 2000)

Academic Word List (AWL) (ii)

- Sublists

Sublist 1

Analysis	Approach	Area
Assessment	Assure	Authority

Sublist 5

Academic	Adjustment	Alter
Amendment	Aware	Capacity

Sublist 10

Adjacent	Albeit	Assembly
Collapse	Colleagues	Compiled

Academic Word List (AWL) (iii)

- Word families

analyse
  analysed
  analyser
  analysers
  analyses
  analysing
  analysis
  analyst
  analysts
  analytic
  analytical
  analytically
  analyze
  analyzed
  analyzes
  analyzing

symbol
  symbolic
  symbolically
  symbolise
  symbolises
  symbolised
  symbolising
  symbolism
  symbolize
  symbolized
  symbolizes
  symbolizing
  symbols

assemble
  assembled
  assembles
  assemblies
  assembling
  assembly

(Sublist 1)   (Sublist 5)   (Sublist 10)

AWL (iV)

The full AWL can be found at:

- http://www.englishvocabularyexercises.com/AWL/index.htm

- This website also offers students a number of exercises for each sublist/group.

AWL – Potential problem

Discuss with a partner.

Many coursebooks focus almost exclusively on words from the AWL.

- What are the problems or limitations of this?

Time to reflect

Discuss with a partner.

- From what we have looked at, how could you change or develop how you teach academic vocabulary?

2. Current key issues in academic writing classrooms

- What are some of the key issues that you have in your (academic writing) classrooms?

Discuss with a partner.

2. Current key issues in academic writing classrooms

Here are the most common key issues in classrooms in HE institutions throughout the UK:

- Students with different linguistic levels

- Learners studying different disciplines

- Class sizes

- Deciding which approach to academic writing to follow (different learning preferences)

Current key issues in academic writing classrooms (ii)

- How <u>can we</u> overcome these problems?
- What are the <u>current approaches</u> used to teach academic writing in your country?
- Can you name any other approaches which you have read about?
- Which approach do you use and why?

Discuss with a partner.

General EAP

- **Focus:** general linguistic & cognitive needs of non-native speakers (Benesch 2001, Leki & Carson 2004).

- **Aim:** what is taught & learnt helps ss with writing across the curriculum (Leki & Carson 1994).

- **Materials:** study skills.

- **Issue:** Pre-determined, non-discipline specific materials.

Academic Literacies

- **Focus:** diverse writing practices in HE (Lea & Street 1998).

- **Aim:** address literacy from cultural & social perspective and contemplate issue of identity & power relationships.

- **Materials:** Limited availability & time for preparation.

- **Issue:** No practical suggestions of integration (Wingate & Tribble 2012).

Writing in the Disciplines (WID)

- **Focus:** discipline-based writing instruction.

- **Aim:** writing embedded into degree programmes (Monroe 2003).

- **Materials:** authentic articles & text types.

- **Issues:** No in class time available.

Genre-based approaches

- **Focus:** Explore genres students are required to write. Awareness that variations exist in different contexts of writing.

- **Aim**: to provide a contextual framework.

- **Pedagogic approach**: Genre-informed pedagogic framework (Tribble & Wingate forthcoming).

- **Role of teacher:** guide & support the learners (Vygotskian scaffolding).

The Teaching – Learning Model
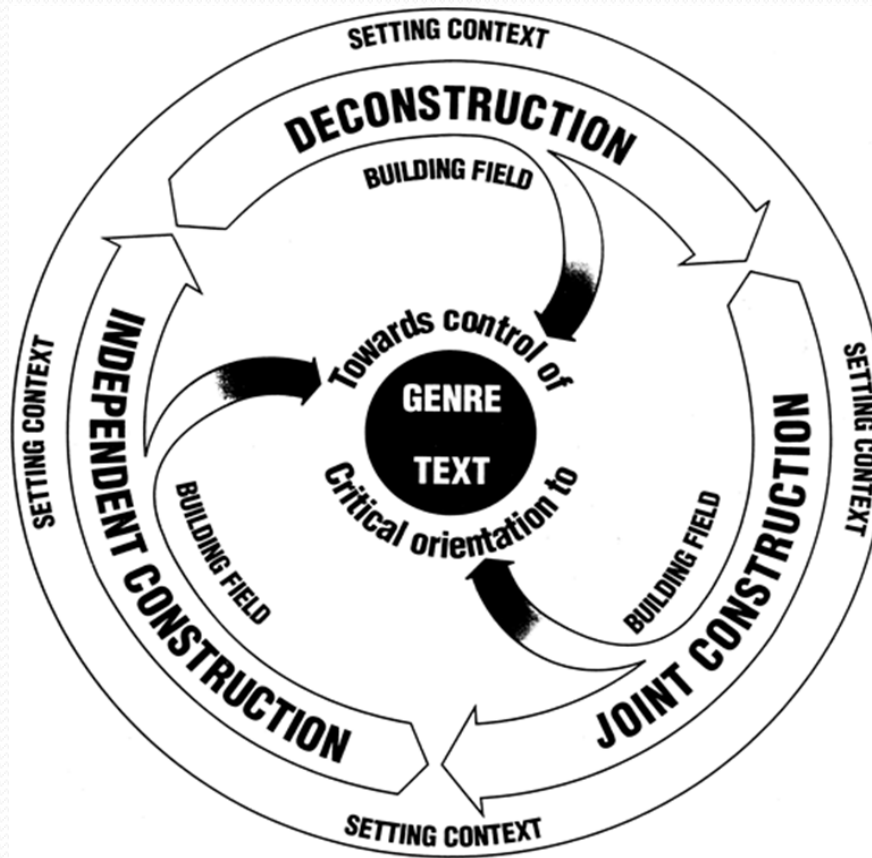
(Rothery and Stenglin 1994:8 cited in Martin 2000:19)

Approaches to academic writing

Discuss with a partner.

- Having learnt about a few of the current approaches being used in the UK, do you think any of these approaches would be suitable for your students?
- Which one/s and why?

3. The Value of Genre in academic writing

- What are the <u>main differences</u> between written and spoken language production?

Write a list of key features.

Lexical density (i)

What is a clause?

➢ a group of words that contains a subject and a verb, but which is usually only part of a sentence

What is a content word?

➢ a word to which an independent meaning can be assigned.

Lexical density (ii)

Text 1

- {C1} How much is too much?

- {C2} It's [1] important not to [2] drink too much in a [3] single [4] day.

- {C3} [5] Men should not [6] drink more than [7] 4 [8] units in any [9] one [10] day, and [11] {C3} drinking [12] 4 [13] units or more a [14] day every [15] day [16] increases the [17] risk of [18] harm.

- {C4} [19] Women should not [20] drink more than [21] 3 [22] units in a [23] day, and [24] {C3} drinking [25] 3 [26] units or more a [27] day every [28] day [29] increases the [30] risk of [31] harm.

- {C5} For more on [32] units [33] visit www.knowyourlimits.info

Lexical density (iii)

Text 2

{C1} [1] Historically, the [2] first [3] pension [4] scheme to [5] benefit [6] people over [7] 70 was [8] introduced in [9] Prussian, in [10] 1889. {C2} After [11] 19 [12] years, [13] Lloyd George [14] introduced it in [15] England. {C3} The [16] life [17] expectancy during these [18] periods was about [19] 45 and [20] 50 [21] years [22] respectively (Wells, 2005). {C4} [23] Nowadays, a [24] large [25] number of [26] elderly [27] people [28] rely on [29] retirement [30] pension to [31] live, {C5} what [32] increases the [33] government [34] expenses. {C6} Moreover, `In a [35] "no-change" [36] scenario [37] public [38] expenditure on [39] health would also [40] rise [41] steeply...` (Slater, 2008, 82). {C7} This [42] means that the [43] government is already [44] spending a lot of [45] money on the [46] health [47] sector. {C8} Therefore, [48] drastic [49] measures must be [50] taken [51] immediately, {C9} in [52] turn the [53] government could [54] honour their [55] responsibilities.

Lexical density (iv)

Time to reflect

- What do the lexical density scores tell you about the two texts?

- How could you use your findings to help students improve their written work?

Defining genre (i)

Discuss with a partner

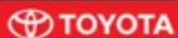- How do you define genre?

Defining genre (ii)

Discuss with a partner

- What is meant by a <u>discourse community</u>?
- How can the expert members recognise the purposes? (Can you think of what shapes a genre?)

Definition of discourse community:

- Groups that have goals or purposes, and use communication to achieve these goals (Swales 1990)

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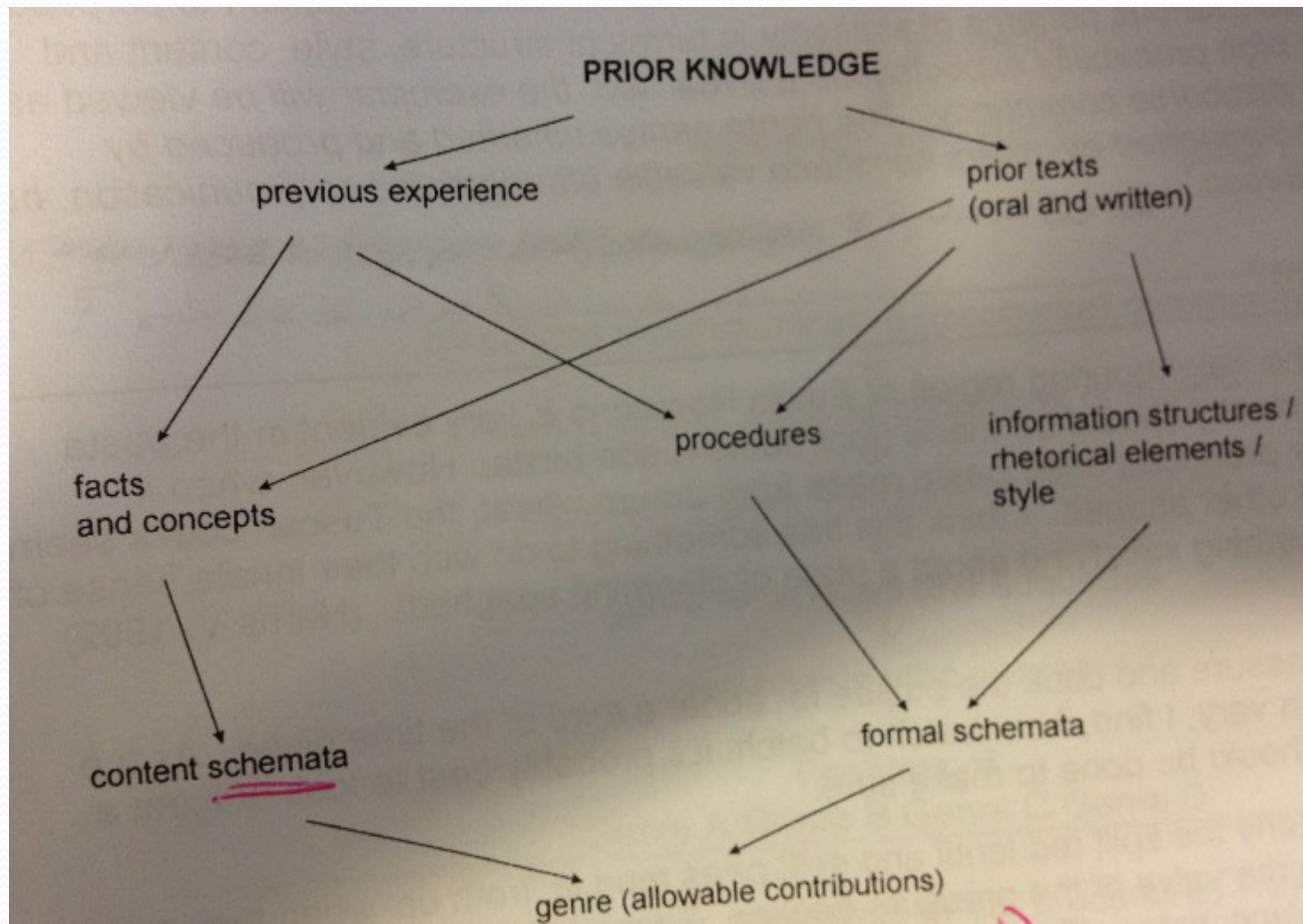**calle maestro josé garberí serrano - playa de san juan s/n** - ver mapa de la zona
barrio alicante golf
distrito playa de san juan-el cabo
alicante / alacant
03540, alicante

Defining genre (iii)

Schematic structure

Discuss with a partner.

- What do we mean by schematic knowledge?
- Think of some of the genres we have looked at so far, what schematic knowledge would you need to know to be an owner of the genre?

Defining genre (vi)

Time to reflect

- Having looked at Swales' definition of genre, how can it help you with teaching academic writing?

4. An introduction to genre analysis

A set of materials were made for a specific group of students. The materials included the following three strategies:

1. Contextual and linguistic analysis
2. Theme and rheme
3. Reformulation

Before we look at each strategy

- What do you know about these strategies? With a partner, discuss each one in turn.

Stage 1 - Deconstruction

1. Contextual analysis (Critical Review)

a) What is the **communicative purpose** of this text?

b) What is the **role of the writer** in this type of text?

c) What is the **role of the reader** in this type of text?

d) What **knowledge of other texts** may be required of writers and readers of this type of text?

(A number of questions taken from the materials for Session 4)

2. Structural analysis (Critical Review)

Before reading

1. What would you expect to find in a 'Future prospects' section?
2. How long should it be?
3. What tenses should be used?

Read the following sections and answer the following questions:

1. How are they structured?
2. Pick out their positive and negative aspects. How could they be improved?

(Extract taken from materials for Session 4)

3. Linguistic analysis (i)

- High-scoring texts + Antconc (Concordance software programme)

- **Focus on:** most frequent <u>linking words</u> + <u>3 word clusters</u>

Collective student response	Linguistic analysis
1. However	1. However
2. Although	2. therefore
3. Nevertheless	3. however
4. Moreover	4. Although
5. Therefore	5. although
	6. Therefore
	7. Thus
	8. Since
	9. Whilst
	10. Furthermore

3. Linguistic analysis (ii)

Hit	KWIC
1	ir policies, ensuring that although women could study medicine
2	had class implications, as although women were accepted by lyi
3	ng, 1888; 273). Therefore, although the readership of adventur
4	rowth was generally steady although it slowed during the 1550s
5	rlier periods was resumed, although Elizabethan growth rates w
6	lation History. Similarly, although I have not focused greatly
7	tly behavioural approach – although behaviour modification can
8	is not reliable or valid, although these two terms have alway
9	e quantitative definitions although still ensuring quality and
10	ording to some historians, although the quality was similar, t
11	nt's policies happen. Thus although the government made new po

4. Examine the <u>concordance lines</u> given to you by your teacher and answer the following question for the linking words you do not commonly use.

Linking Word	What is the linking word typically proceeded by?	What is the linking word typically followed by?
However	*N/A as linking word starts the sentence*	*Comma + subject pronoun (I, it, etc)*
therefore		
however		

(Extract taken from materials for Session 5)

4. Theme & rheme (i)

Why important?

➢ Common problem among non-native users (Bloor & Bloor 1992).

➢ Carefully distributed information enhances cohesion & coherence (Witt & Faigley 1981).

Focus: how information distributed.

Typically, '**given**' information is presented in the theme and '**new**' information in the rheme (Eggins 2004).

4. Theme & rheme (ii)

Rule 1: Often the theme of one sentence is the same as the theme of the next sentence (Eggins 2004).

Patients requesting cosmetic surgery are usually normal individuals, but with a heightened consciousness about their looks. A proportion of them may seek advice on what, to them, seems an unsatisfactory appearance. They deserve the same professional approach and empathy as patients seeking help for clinical disorders.

(Extract taken from Hoeyberghs 1999:514 & used in Session 6)

4. Theme & rheme (iii)

Rule 2: the rheme of one sentence becomes the theme of the next sentence (Eggins 2004).

Sagging eyebrows and forehead creases can be corrected through **keyhole incisions in the scalp**. **This approach** has become the standard for many surgeons...

(Extract taken from Hoeyberghs 1999: 514-515 & used in Session 6)

5. Reformulation (i)

- Mistake correction technique (Cohen 1983, Allwright et al 1988).

- Students reflect on their writing & 'notice the gap' between their current written output and that of a native speaker (Schmitt & Frota 1986).

5. Reformulation (ii)

Read both the original and the reformulated version and answer the questions.

Original version	Reformulated version
Some of the on-going methods are used to prevent the transmission of the mutant mitochondria; of these methods, the pre-implantation genetic diagnostic and the prenatal diagnostic tests, they are used to analyse cells obtained from the embryo but both techniques are inefficient in predicting the exact level of heteroplasmy in the whole embryo (Chiaratti *et al.*, 2011). With the use of maternal spindle transfer, the expected outcome is the delivery of off-springs that are genetically related to both of their parents, as	A number of methods are used to prevent the transmission of mitochondria. For example, the pre-implantation genetic diagnostic and the prenatal diagnostic test are used to analyse cells obtained from the embryo. Neither method, however, is able to predict the exact level of heteroplasmy in the embryo (Chiaratti et al 2011). By using the maternal spindle transfer, we can expect the delivery of off-springs that are genetically related to both of their parents.