

Writing Skills for Academic Purposes

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Friday 13th September – Agenda

- Deconstruction of the genre (cont) & reflecting on different strategies
- An awareness of and an ability to use Corpus analysis tools
- Academic vs. discipline-specific vocabulary – creating a discipline-specific wordlist
- Practical application of genre analysis in the classroom
- An awareness of the strengths and weaknesses in current academic writing materials

Deconstruction of the genre – Cont

Before we begin...

- What strategies did we look at yesterday to deconstruct the genre?
- Which strategy/ies do you feel you will/could use in the future?

Deconstruction of the genre – Cont

We are now going to look at another strategy.

The materials you are going to examine look at one way to deconstruct essay introductions & conclusions.

Before we begin

- How do you teach these two areas of academic writing?
- Do your students struggle with this two areas? Why?

Discuss with your partner.

Deconstruction of the genre – Cont

Look at the materials that were created to deconstruct academic introductions and conclusions and comment on:

1. How they break the area down (the process)
 2. How they make the students consciously aware of what is expected in each case
- **Could you use this strategy with your students?
Do you think it would work?**

The Teaching-Learning Model: Stages 2 & 3

- Stage 2 = joint construction
- Can you think of any instances when students can work together to create a text? Do students get this opportunity? Could you give students this opportunity?
- Stage 3 = independent construction

Handy tools for students

- AWL highlighter - <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/alzsh3/acvocab/awlhightlighter.htm>
- Academic Phrasebank - <http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>
- Common error detector - <http://www2.elc.polyu.edu.hk/CILL/errordetector.htm>

5. An introduction to Corpus tools

Before we look at corpus tools, discuss the following questions with a partner.

- What is a corpus?
- Have you ever used one?
- Do you know of any which are used to better understand academic writing?

Online corpora

- British National Corpus - <http://corpus.byu.edu/bnc/>
- Corpus of contemporary American English - <http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/>
- British Academic Written English Corpus (BAWE) - <http://www.coventry.ac.uk/research/research-directory/art-design/british-academic-written-english-corpus-bawe/>

Creating your own

- Have you ever made your own corpus?
- What could be the advantages of making your own corpus?

An introduction to AntConc (i)

- What is AntConc? What can it be used for?
- What is a concordance?
 - A **Concordance** is a list of target words extracted from a given text, or set of texts, often presented in such a way as to indicate **the context in which the word is used**.
- Can you think of any ways in which concordance software programmes can help you analyse specific texts?

AntConc is a free software programme and can be accessed via the website:

<http://www.antlab.sci.waseda.ac.jp/software.html>

An introduction to AntConc (ii)

Task

- **You are now going to work with a number of texts to see how AntConc could help you in the classroom.**
- **Step 1:** Choose a number of texts (I would suggest 3-5). The texts can be from websites, they can be journal articles that the students read or student essays.
- **Step 2:** Save these texts as .txt (I will show you how to do this, if you are unsure).

An introduction to AntConc (ii)

- **Step 3:** Now follow the instructions on your handout!

An introduction to AntConc (iii)

So far, you have had a very brief introduction to AntConc. From what you have seen:

Discuss with a partner.

- How do you think you could use AntConc in the classroom? Or to make your own materials?
- Do you think you would introduce students to it? How could students use it?

6. Academic vs. discipline-specific vocabulary (i)

Re-cap on the AWL...

Discuss with a partner.

- What do you remember/know about the AWL?
- Do you use/refer to it in class? How?
- How important do you think it is for students to know it/know about it? Why?
- What are its advantages? What are its disadvantages?

AWL – Advantages

1. Words students need in wide range of academic texts
2. Free online sources available (PC & Smartphone):

- Flashcard maker

<http://orangeorapple.com/Flashcards/Default.aspx>

- Exercises

<http://www.englishvocabularyexercises.com/>

- Test maker

http://www.phonetain.com/Phonetain_Software/Products.htm

- AWL highlighter

<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/alzsh3/acvocab/awlhighlighter.htm>

AWL – Disadvantages

1. No focus on collocations (Durrant 2009)
2. Does not address discipline-specific vocabulary (Martinez et al 2009)

Practical suggestions (i)

- Problem: Does not address discipline-specific vocabulary

How can we overcome this problem?

Discuss with your partner.

- Solution: **Create a discipline – specific wordlist.**
- **What needed?**
 - Discipline-specific texts.
 - Concordance software programme e.g. Antconc (free), Sketch engine, Wordsmith Tools.
 - Time!

Practical suggestions (ii)

6 Steps

1. Save discipline-specific journal articles as .txt docs.
2. Open the txt docs in Antconc.
3. Click on create 'Word List'.
4. From most frequent words, make a list of discipline-specific vocab.

Rank	Freq	Word
1	1236	the
2	986	of
3	783	and
4	607	in
5	509	a
6	442	to
7	403	that
8	327	RNA
9	274	A
10	265	by

Practical suggestions (iii)

5. Run list through AWL Highlighter

<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/alzsh3/acvocab/awlhighlighter.htm>

RNA	target	PVY
gene	dsRNA	Drosophila
pro	protein	Ago2
RISC	ATP	methylation
silencing	stranded	duplex
cells	antisense	hairpin
mRNA	sequence	cyclin
siRNA	mM	
complex	interference	

Practical suggestions (iv)

Once at home, students can:

1. Write definition of key words
2. See how words work by accessing online tools e.g.
 - Word tree <http://wordtree.coventry.ac.uk/?BAWE>
 - BNC <http://corpus.byu.edu/bnc/>



Time to reflect

- What types of exercises could you create?
- How useful do you think creating a discipline-specific word list would be for your students?
- Often students find it difficult to remember new words. Can you think of different ways in which you can help your students remember the words?

7. Practical application of genre analysis in the classroom (i)

You are now going to carry out your own genre analysis of a set of texts of your choice.

Step 1:

- **Choose a set of texts** (between 3 and 5) of your choice (preferably ones that you could use with your students). All of the texts need to relate to the same genre and be on the same topic.
 - Or choose 3-5 journal articles which relate to a specific discipline and topic from Google Scholar: <http://scholar.google.co.uk/>
 - Alternatively, you could examine 3-5 newspaper articles from:
<http://www.theguardian.com/uk> (broadsheet)
<http://www.mirror.co.uk/> (tabloid) – if you want some fun!
- Again these need to be on the same topic.

7. Practical application of genre analysis in the classroom (ii)

Step 2:

- **Deconstruct the genre**

Having seen how genres are unpacked using different strategies, I would like you deconstruct your texts to find out their most salient features. Think about:

- Context
- Structure
- Language

- **Can you think of any other areas you can/should explore?**

7. Practical application of genre analysis in the classroom (iii)

Before you begin to deconstruct the genre:

- Discuss how you are going to work out the key features.
- Can you use any of the materials that have already been given to you?
- Can you use AntConc? How? For what?

Exercises for students

Deconstructing the genre

- Having deconstructed the genre yourself, can you think of any exercises you could create for your students to make them consciously aware of the salient features of your genre/text type?

Discuss with a partner.

Step 5: Reformulation

- Reformulation is one of the strategies you could use at the 'reconstruction' phase. Although reformulation is traditionally carried out with the reformulators being native speakers, today you are going to be the reformulators.
- You will be given a short text which has been written by an international student. **You are the reformulator.** As the reformulator, you should **read the guidelines** below and re-write the student text according to the guidelines.

8. An awareness of the strengths & weaknesses in current academic writing materials

Discuss with a partner.

- What types of materials do you use with your students? Why?
- Do you think the materials you use fully address the needs of your students?
- Do you feel they cover the main areas of academic writing in sufficient detail?
- When using an academic coursebook do you go through systematically or pick and choose the materials/units?
- How do the students feel about the materials?
- Do you ever write your own materials? Why? / Why not?

Criteria for reviewing material

Task 1

- Before reviewing materials, it is essential you establish **a set of criteria** which you can draw on to assess their suitability for your students.
- With a partner, discuss what you consider when choosing materials.
- Can you come up with your own criteria for your target group of learners? (**A good criteria usually includes 8 areas**).

Criteria for reviewing material

Often teachers consider the following areas:

- Stand-alone potential (can be used in an individual lesson)
- Transfer across levels
- Clarity of rubric
- Relevance of input to academic skills development
- Appropriacy of the approach
- How explicit is the account of language and skills + learning outcomes
- Relevance of tasks in relation to real-world tasks
- Teachability

Task 2

- Review three sets of materials/coursebooks completing the table below. You will be asked to present the materials/coursebook you felt was the most appropriate and the least appropriate.

Writing your own materials

Based on what we have seen and discussed today:

- Do you feel inspired to write your own materials?
- What would you need to consider?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of writing your own materials?
- What would you need to do if you wanted to get published?

This brings us to the end...

Course summary

The overall aims of the course were to help participants develop:

- an appreciation of key issues in the teaching of writing skills in an EAP environment
- a theoretical framework which will make possible the principled development of English for Academic writing programmes across a wide range of teaching and learning settings.
- the skills and tools needed to develop English for Academic Writing materials.



Thank you for attending!

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