The 'Other' English: Thoughts on EAP and Academic Writing

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The other English

In recent years members of university English departments have increasingly found themselves rubbing shoulders, and perhaps even sharing a corridor, with colleagues who have an altogether different take on English. While ostensibly focusing on the same object of study, conveniently collected under the label of 'English' and being essentially text-oriented, applied linguists and literature specialists inhabit different academic worlds. These 'others' operate nearer the social sciences end of the epistemological cline, working with more analytic and reductionist tools and less emphatically rejecting such ideas as universals, cumulative knowledge-making and the unmediated representation of the phenomenon under study. They have different conferences, different networks, different books on their shelves and posters on their walls. They are fascinated with the ordinary in everyday texts and finding mystery in the commonplace. In short, their attitudes, activities, cognitive styles and methodological practices are cheese to the chocolate of literary studies: existing as a separate estate with a distinctive sub-culture.

Applied linguists, in fact, have generally been seen as inhabiting the less glamorous, low rent neighbourhoods of the academy, and this is particularly true of those concerned with English for Academic Purposes, which is generally regarded as a hand-maiden to those 'proper' disciplines which are more directly engaged in the serious business of constructing knowledge or discovering truth. EAP, in fact, has come to be regarded as an almost mercantile activity and attracted to itself negatively evaluative concepts such as *pragmatic*, *cost-effective* and *functional*, untroubled by theoretical issues or questions of power as it merrily seeks to accommodate students to the faceless and impersonal prose of their disciplines.

I have doubtless over-stated my point here, and while the picture is probably familiar, I want to sketch how the reality is more complex. Certainly, efficiency-driven administrators have seized on EAP as a means of gaining Quality Assurance approval for student support regimes and as a way of attracting full-fee paying international students to compensate for shortfalls in government funding. Every self-respecting university now has a language centre of some kind and includes at least a few applied linguists among its members. But while EAP often tends to be a practical affair, focusing on local contexts and the needs of particular students, it is also a theoretically grounded and research informed enterprise.The communicative demands of the modern university, much like the modern workplace, involve far more than simply controlling linguistic error or polishing style. In fact, research, theory and experience provide evidence for the heightened, complex, and highly diversified nature of such demands.

Supported by an expanding range of publications and research journals, there is a growing awareness that students, including native English speakers from a diverse range of social and educational backgrounds, have to take on new roles and engage with knowledge in new ways when they enter university. They find that they need to write and read unfamiliar genres and participate in novel speech events which their previous experiences have not prepared them. EAP therefore aims at capturing thicker descriptions of the ways English is used in the academy, and increasingly includes non-native English speaking academics, eager to 'publish their best in the west', among its students. It therefore incorporates, and often goes beyond, immediate communicative contexts to understand the nature of disciplinary knowledge itself. Drawing on a range of interdisciplinary influences for its research methods and theoretical support, EAP has pushed itself to the forefront of innovative research and educational practice to provide insights into the structures and meanings of

English, into the demands placed by academic contexts on communicative behaviours, and into the pedagogic practices by which these behaviours can be developed.

EAP: Creativity and conformity

Perhaps the most persistent misconception about this 'other English' is that EAP is more concerned to show students how to follow conventions than to encourage them to be creative in research and writing terms. While creativity is often valorized in Eng Lit departments, writing in the disciplines is frequently looked down upon as simply an exercise is conformity as writers subordinate their individual personalities to the demands of efficiency and the rigid expectations of an unforgiving body of readers. 'Academic' writing is seen to be faceless and impersonal and tutors across the academy advise their students to efface all traces of themselves in their work so that it conforms to goals of impersonality and objectivity. Writing, however, can never be just about conveying 'content'. It is always about the representation of the self, and teachers of EAP, as much as those in literary studies, are encouraging learners to find their own voices to produce writing that is fresh and spontaneous. Academic writing is certainly not a creative act of self-discovery in most disciplines, but it does involve making rhetorical choices which best express the writer's sense of self and his or her engagement in a community.

Considering things from a social constructionist standpoint, writing is always a personal and socio-cultural act of identity whereby writers both signal their membership in a range of communities, as well as express their own creative presence. This social (or socio-rhetorical) dimension stands in contrast with conventionally individualist accounts of creativity, but is in line with a growing body of research which seeks a comprehensive framework that includes a social perspective (e.g. Candlin & Hyland, 1999). In other words, to understand the extent to which writers may be seen as independent creative beings, we have to go beyond mentalist representations of writers' inner feelings to incorporate all elements of the rhetorical situation of which audience is a significant part. Writing, and the writer, must be located within a social context if we wish to account for the interpersonal and social decisions that writers make (Hyland, 2000).

Clearly, leaving individuals to discover their creativity as they write is an illusory freedom in academic contexts. Students cannot be expected to discover appropriate forms and aspire to mimic disciplinary writing practices in the process of writing alone, as this deflects attention from language, presupposes a knowledge of the texts that possess cultural capital and neglects the possibilities of variation they offer. This is particularly true when these individuals lack access to established understandings of how to write and perhaps how to innovate acceptably in writing. Students outside the mainstream who are left to their own devices often find themselves in an invisible curriculum, denied access to the sources of understanding they need to succeed. What is acceptable in writing, and what is acceptably creative, is of course often considerably constrained in academic contexts, and familiarity with these constraints and possibilities is not a matter of simply topping up an existing knowledge of English, but of systematically acquiring a new literacy.

EAP, then, seeks to offer writers an explicit understanding of how texts in target genres and disciplinary contexts are structured and why they are written in the ways they are. It assumes that writing instruction will be more successful if students are aware of what target discourses look like, and while this reproductive element has attracted criticism, it nevertheless provides learners with the resources which will most effectively help them to mean. Most importantly it seeks to reveal writing as a social practice. What is considered good writing, appropriate engagement, convincing argument, effective persuasion, and creative expression does not depend on mastery of some universal 'English', but varies from one community context to the next. By focusing on the literacy practices students encounter at university, home, and school, EAP pedagogies help them to distinguish differences and provide them with a means of conceptualising their varied experiential frameworks. Highlighting variability

thus helps undermine a deficit view which sees writing difficulties as learner weaknesses and which misrepresents writing as a universal, naturalised and non-contestable way of participating in communities.

Academic writing as interaction

While critiques of academic writing, and of EAP itself, have emphasized the supposed suppression of 'voice' or 'identity' in students' writing, with implications for authorship and creativity (e.g. Ivanic, 1998), a social constructionist approach towards authorship and creativity is more intertextual and polyphonic. Following Bakhtin (1986), this offers a more integrated view of writing as engagement with both content and dialogue in rhetorical situations. Of crucial importance here is that academic writers, whether students or professional researchers, select their words to engage with others and to present their ideas in ways that make most sense to their readers.The acceptance and benevolence of an audience cannot be taken-for-granted in academic writing as claims or interpretations are always likely to contradict or challenge someone's research findings or cherished opinions. Readers must therefore be drawn in, influenced, and persuaded by a text that sees the world in similar ways to them, employing accepted resources for the purpose of sharing meanings in that context. In other words, academic writing is an interactive, as well as cognitive, project.

This view sees academics (and students) as not simply producing texts that plausibly represent social or natural realities. They are not just talking about garlic proteins, Wordsworth's early poems, or metal stress rates, but also as using language to acknowledge, construct and negotiate social relations. Writers seek to offer a credible representation of themselves and their work, situating themselves in their disciplines by claiming solidarity with readers, evaluating their material and acknowledging alternative views. In other words, controlling the level of personality in a text becomes central to building a convincing argument. Based on their previous experiences with texts, writers make decisions about how they should project themselves into their texts and predictions about how readers are likely to react to their arguments. They know what they are likely to find persuasive, where they will need help in interpreting the argument, what objections they are likely to raise, and so on. This process of audience evaluation therefore assists writers in constructing an effective line of reasoning and points to the ways language is related to specific cultural and institutional contexts (Hyland, 2005).

In other words, the ways writers present their topics, signal their allegiances, and stake their claims represent careful negotiations with, and considerations of, their colleagues.These interactions essentially involve 'positioning', or adopting a point of view in relation to both the issues discussed in the text and to others who hold points of view on those issues. In claiming a right to be heard, and to have their work taken seriously, writers must display a competence as disciplinary insiders and this competence is, at least in part, achieved through a writer-reader dialogue which situates both their research and themselves, establishing relationships between people, and between people and ideas. Irrespective of our fields, we seek to project a shared professional context by creating a recognisable social world through our rhetorical choices, balancing claims for the significance, originality and plausibility of our work against the convictions and expectations of our readers.

Briefly, these interactions are managed in two main ways. First, they expresses a textual 'voice' or community recognised personality or *stance*. This can be seen as an attitudinal dimension and includes features which refer to the ways writers present themselves and convey their judgements, opinions, and commitments. It is the ways that writers intrude to stamp their personal authority onto their arguments or step back and disguise their involvement. Second, writers relate to their readers with respect to the positions advanced in the text, or *engagement* (Hyland, 2005).This is an alignment dimension where writers acknowledge and connect to others, recognising the presence of their readers, pulling them along with their argument, focusing their attention, acknowledging their uncertainties, including them as discourse participants, and guiding them to interpretations.

A variety of linguistic resources such as citation practices, evaluative lexis, reporting verbs, *that*-constructions, questions, personal pronouns, and directives have been examined for the role they play in this persuasive endeavour. Representations of agency, for example, particularly the first person in subject position, are important signals of disciplinary variation, suggesting the writer's sense of how far evidence exists outside its construction by the writer. Similarly, hedges, which indicate the writer's decision to withhold complete commitment to a proposition, not only attest to the degree of precision or reliability a statement should carry but allow writers to open a discursive space which admits alternative voices and enables readers to dispute interpretations. Rhetorical decisions such as these vary enormously across disciplines and indicate how writers in different fields represent themselves, their work and their readers in different ways, with those in the humanities and social sciences taking far more explicitly involved and personal positions than those in the science and engineering fields.

This is not, however, to suggest that we are the rhetorical prisoners of our disciplines. This creation of an authorial persona is, at least in part, an act of personal choice, and the influence of individual personality, confidence, experience, and ideological preference are clearly important. The creative exploitation of conventions can have a dramatic impact, and Bhatia (2002), for instance, describes subtle ways in which genre insiders can 'manipulate' generic forms to combine their own writing purposes with those of institutional discourses. It may even be the case that a few famous writers (perhaps Heidegger, Sacks, Wittgenstein and Halliday among them) do not play this interactive game with their audiences. Less experienced writers, however, might fail to master such creative ways of writing, or might for other reasons not be authorised, by powerful readers, to adopt them.

However, writers do not act in a social vacuum and knowledge is not constructed outside particular communities of practice. Such communities exist in virtue of a shared set of assumptions and routines about how to collectively deal with and represent their experiences. The ways language is used on particular occasions is not wholly determined by these assumptions, but a disciplinary voice can only be achieved through a process of participating in such communities and connecting with these socially determined and approved beliefs and value positions. In this way, independent creativity is shaped by accountability to shared practices.

Some final remarks

This then is the context within which EAP operates. It is a theoretical and pedagogical imperative which urges us to explore English by researching academic texts, their contexts and their ideologies to understand how they are written, used and responded to as part of the wider social and intellectual culture of a particular group and historical period. Many EAP practitioners believe it is these discoursal practices, rather than disengaged theories or nebulously defined subject matter, that principally define what disciplines are. They result from the aggregate of individual writers' attempts to embed their writing in a particular social world which they reflect and conjure up through particular approved discourses. Looking at writing, and creativity, in this way therefore evokes a social milieu which influences the writer and activates specific responses to recurring tasks.

By way of an ending, I want to mention that it is critically important, throughout an academic curriculum and not just in EAP, to seek, specify and question explicit reasons for research and rhetorical practices that are being advocated and followed in the name of an academic education. There are certainly constraining forces on creativity in the conventional expectations of academic writing, but these are too often seen as arbitrary manifestations of power. In this regard, perhaps the 'other English' is not so 'other' after all and EAP and literary specialists may be closer than we originally thought. Both are seeking to develop in students sophisticated reading skills, an ability to place texts in their wider intellectual and historical contexts and to write utilizing critical processes while engaging with a specific audience.

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Text Purpose, Text Effects, Test Power
English for Specific Purposes

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I will start with six vignettes of activities that might be 'English for specific purposes'. First, a classroom in a Danish business school where a teacher from the English department is taking students of English through texts and diagrams about pumps in English, so that they can translate Danish pump producers' texts on the topic from Danish to English, or write publicity on pumps in English directly. Second, the living area of a farm house in a Nicaraguan nature reserve where a volunteer English teacher (a university lecturer on leave) is teaching tourist guides to express their knowledge of local birds in English. Third, an Italian vineyard where a member of the local university English department staff is analysing the rhetoric of vineyard publicity brochures and discussing it with the vineyard owners, with a view both to improving this publicity and publishing her research results for others to use (Poncini 2004). Fourth, an immigration office, also in Italy, where tired Italian welfare officials are interviewing exhausted African would-be immigrants, one side using uncertain European English, the other pidgin-influenced West African English, and a university lecturer is recording the interaction to analyse it and find ways of reducing misunderstanding (Guido 2004). Fifth, a classroom in a technical university in Thailand where students are studying computer-generated concordance entries for the word *solution* to gain an understanding of its grammar and phraseology in engineering texts, guided by the staff member who has developed the lists and tasks and will publish the method (Mudraya 2006). Finally, a well-furnished meeting room in a Finnish corporation where a university expert in negotiation studies is listening first to the Finns working out a negotiation strategy and then to the Finns and their British customers negotiating the terms of a deal. Later the expert will analyse her data following established models of negotiation, adapt the models to accommodate new findings, improve her teaching materials, and publish her results (Vuorela 2005).

The language in the vignettes differs widely in topic, style and medium. The 'texts' involved are both written and spoken, both monologic and interactive, and the English varies from a code for basic communication to a subtle rhetorical tool. (And of course communication uses multiple media which must all be managed for effective communication. Website design is probably more useful these days than commercial correspondence, and discussion of presentations is likely to be discussion of the interaction of speech and Powerpoint.) In every case, however, they involve empowerment (sometimes of already strong groups), the effects of global marketplaces for knowledge, goods and services, and the confrontation of linguistic and discourse-analytic expertise with expert subject knowledge. Except perhaps in the Danish case, the 'learners' know more about the subject than the 'teachers', but the 'teachers' know more about language and communication than the 'learners'. This confrontation – or in fact co-operation – is the essence of ESP and its fascination.

English for Specific Purposes is a special case of Language for Specific Purposes. The European Symposium on Languages for Specific Purposes has met every two years since 1979, most recently in Bergamo in 2005. Papers are given in several languages and are about texts in a wider range but they are predominantly in English, and concerned mainly with English, French, German, Spanish and Italian, although speakers have most of the mother tongues of Europe. The LSP symposium has been characterised by having many speakers of 'smaller' languages talking about and in 'larger' languages, in contrast to a conventional linguistics conference in which speakers of larger European languages talk about obscure smaller languages. This reflects the way LSP, like its component ESP, is involved with powerful texts that affect the real world.

The LSP Symposium reveals the diversity of approach and subject matter in European LSP studies, the only common thread being an interest in language in use in texts with specific practical purposes. Terminology studies are important in this forum, although they hardly figure in Anglo-American ESP studies. A strong German tradition, represented by many articles in the journal *Fachsprache,* has combined the traditions of *Wörter und Sachen* with those of a century and a half of teaching commercial and technical German to produce schools which use analysis of special-purpose language to illuminate the structure and thinking of specialisms (Baumann 2005). ESP as I describe it here has grown out of the teaching of commercial and technical English, and retains an orientation less to the thought-patterns encoded in language choices than to the purposes and effects of texts, as in the journals *English for Specific Purposes* and *Anglais de Specialité*. American traditions of study and teaching of business communication have also been influential, as shown in the annual conferences of the European chapter of the Association for Business Communication and ABC's journal *Journal of Business Communication*.

In one dimension 'specific purposes' can be divided by discipline or subject matter: English for Engineering, for Business, for Legal Purposes, for Military Purposes, for Medicine and any number of others. On another they are divided into English for Academic Purposes, described in this issue of the *Messenger* by Ken Hyland, and English for Professional/Vocational Purposes. Clearly English for Legal Purposes could be academic – how to read legal textbooks, how to write answers to Law exams – or professional – how to cross-examine, how to write a contract. A glance at *English for Specific Purposes* and *Anglais de Specialité* shows that a majority of publication is on activities and texts in educational or research contexts, with various business contexts the next most frequent area.

The distinction between academic and professional communication is not clear-cut, but it can mean that apparently similar communicative acts have radically different functions and conditions of production. There is not necessarily the amount of transfer one would hope for, for example, between the reports engineers write in training and those they write in practice, because the situations are different. The academic report will often be a one-off summative task, while the report will usually be embedded in a project structure and relate to a particular stage of that project, with intertextual connections, both paradigmatically to analogous reports and syntagmatically to other reports in the sequence. Furthermore, writer aims and reader-writer power relations are crucially different. The important audience for the student's reports is someone who has the right to assess them, and even if the writer's aim includes a sense of integrity and ownership which may lead to texts which deliberately deviate from meeting the assessor's known or presumed criteria, this aim is often largely to achieve the audience's approval. In professional writing, however, knowledge, power and skill may be distributed in any number of ways, and the intended action is likely to be complex, in terms both of norms and of purposes. The aims of an engineering report in a company may include leading a less expert but more powerful reader to understand the constraints on the project, securing approval for a particular course of action, or documenting a particular interpretation of the situation to ensure that potential blame is appropriately placed.

LSP is oriented to identifying the choices writers have to make in such contexts and providing learners with the tools to make appropriate choices. One important decision the producer of a text has to make concerns its discourse. I recently received (from Scandinavia) an acceptance for a routine conference paper abstract that referred to my 'outstanding paper'. My reaction was not to be flattered at this welcome recognition of my genius. Instead I seriously doubted the bona fides of the conference. It was obvious that everyone who submitted a successful abstract received this evaluation, and that therefore it was an instance of non-contrastive evaluation of the sort one world expect in estate-agent prose. When an

estate agent describes a house as attractive, it is not to be expected that another house for sale will be described as unattractive, so the word 'attractive' is more a feature of the diction than an evaluation. Non-contrastive evaluation is a feature of promotional discourse, and discussion of contributions to conferences is normally carried out a discourse without these features; the wrong choice had been made for the specific purpose. However, of course a specific purpose can come to require a new discourse over time, as Fairclough (1993) found when he applied for promotion within the university and found that this (promotional) purpose no longer required a modest academic discourse but a boastful promotional one.

Another decision that the writer of a text for any specific purpose has to make is about relation between the persona to be presented and the writer of the text. Jacobs (2006) describes teaching the skill of writing press releases, where the first thing to realize is that the release should be pre-formatted so that it can be inserted directly into a newspaper. Hence it must refer to the issuing body in the third person – not *we* but *the ABC company*. Similarly, in overtly promotional texts the persona is unreliable. Thus we read a curriculum vitae with the knowledge that the writer aims to present the best possible story and the writer has to bear in mind that this is the expected reading mode. But in many expert texts, such as consultants' reports, or government health warnings, we expect a reliable 'narrator', and the writer has to bear in mind this expectation and hedge accordingly.

Genre has been a popular category in ESP since the 1980s (Swales 2004), conceptualized as a particular configuration of speech acts conventionally used for a particular purpose, rather than as a particular type of subject matter as in literary studies. A key genre for the professional academic is the research article, and it has a highly standardized opening well-characterised by Dixon's article in Kingsley Amis' campus novel *Lucky Jim:*

> "In considering this strangely neglected topic," it began. This what neglected topic? This strangely what topic? This strangely neglected what? His thinking all this without having defiled and set fire to the typescript only made him appear to himself as more of a hypocrite and fool.

If you want your article accepted, you have to say that the topic is new but yet important, despite the self-hate this may engender. An ESP/EAP researcher will have found out the best way to do it in your discipline and an ESP/EAP teacher will teach you how to carry this out. On the other hand, of course, if you are writing a press release you have to structure it with a summary in the first sentence and progressively less important details as the text goes on, and you have to include some verbatim quotations, so that it conforms to the newspaper 'hot news' genre and saves the journalist the trouble of rewriting.

ESP studies also have to take account of the complexity of the notion 'purpose', and prepare students for it. You have probably received e-mails that begin something like

> Ref. Number: UN/028/756/833
>
> Batch Number: XK-77-59700-75
>
> Sir/Madam
>
> We are pleased to inform you of the result of the Lottery Winners International programs held on the 9th January, 2004. Your e-mail address attached to ticket number 94247656-443 with serial number 6917-477 drew lucky numbers 59-14-08-23-01-28 which consequently won in the 2nd category, you have therefore been approved for a lump sum pay out of US$ 500,000.00 (Five Hundred Thousand United States Dollars).

and others that begin something like

> Dear Sir/madam
>
> URGENT BUSINESS RELATIONSHIP
>
> I am Dr. Aret Williams, Director, project implementation with Eskom South Africa and a member of the Contract Tenders Board (CTB) of the above corporation. Your esteemed address was reliably introduced to me at the South Africa Chamber of Commerce and Industry in my search for a reliable individual company who can handle a strictly confidential transaction, which involves the transfer of a reasonable sum of money to a foreign account

You know that in fact the two letters have identical purposes – to cheat you out of as much as possible. But they have very different forms. The first follows the conventional formula for a good-news letter (main point first, for example), and is in reasonably idiomatic English sprinkled with confidence-inducing serial numbers. The second follows the formula for a sales letter by

first establishing the source's credentials and only later revealing the main point. It is in oddly non-native English with a mixture of bureaucratic and personal discourses. These forms are adopted because they are appropriate to the *ostensible* purpose of the e-mails: delivering good news from an established organisation and introducing a dubious but incredibly beneficial deal with an exotic partner respectively. So the press release has its form because it is ostensibly delivering hot news, and a dishonest government health warning has the form of an honest one, because its purpose is to elicit the same response. ESP writers have to distinguish between text purpose, which can be varied and private, and genre purpose, which is what determines text form. Genre purpose is institutionalised and has to be learned.

And then yes, oh dear, yes, ESP deals with cultural differences in communicative practices. ESP researchers and teachers have to confront them, perhaps especially in a world of lingua franca English replacing interpreters. Of course the Teutonic academic tradition is a bit different from the Anglo-Saxon. Of course Finns don't negotiate like Greeks, and of course both sides need to be aware of this. But one Finn doesn't negotiate like another Finn, and one Teutonic scholar does not write like another, either. Any attempt to pin down cultural differences starts to sound like crude stereotyping because it cannot take account of the variation within the groups compared, and this is an area in which ESP researchers and teachers have to tread more carefully than they sometimes do

ESP is an area of application, not a method of teaching or research. It uses the methods of other forms of linguistic investigation – ethnographic observation, discourse analysis (critical or otherwise), corpus and concordance techniques, lexical frequency counts, for example. In teaching it aims at providing metaknowledge of rhetoric and phraseology by means of interactive techniques, competence by engaged exposure to texts and interaction, and automaticity by means of contextualised practice, and so forth, like other enlightened communicative approaches (Villez 2001). It also borrows approaches from the teaching of the relevant subject, and ideally of course flows into it (Almagro Esteban and Pérez Cañado 2004) One thing that is exciting is that the teaching has to be based on research into the communication patterns of the target group, and existing research often has to be supplemented on the spot by the teacher. Another exciting aspect is that the teacher learns from the learners the whole time. They have subject and professional knowledge they want to use, and the ESP teacher's world is constantly enlightened by understanding a little of all these other worlds.

ESP teachers work in technical universities and business schools, in institutes for translators and communication, and of course in conventional English departments. But there are also many expert teachers in private language schools and directly employed by companies, and it is a challenge for academics to make sure that their deep contextualised knowledge of communicative practices and needs can be made available through channels of publication. Others need this expertise, and theorists need richer data for academic discussion from rhetoric to the ethnography of communication.

As mother tongue-teaching comes to understand the importance of manipulating the genres of power as well as expressing oneself, it starts to merge with the aims and materials of ESP. And, in fact maybe ESP as a branch of English studies could be absorbed by subject and professional-skills teaching. ESP instruction depends on a mis-match between the concepts and genre knowledge one has in the language of one's education and those one has in English. If David Graddol (2006) is right, and parallel-language education in English and the national language is becoming the norm, then everyone may acquire the English that goes with concepts and genres at the same time as the genres and concepts themselves and ESP may become a fully integrated part of subject education, and so cease to exist as an area of expertise for English teachers. But even in this rather extreme case, its research findings will not only make the task of teaching disciplinary and professional discourse much easier, but also illuminate text linguistics, pragmatics, and communication studies.

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Creating a Corpus for the Analysis of Identity Traits in English Specialised Discourse

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This paper describes the creation of a corpus of texts drawn from academic journals in various disciplinary contexts, carried out by CERLIS (Centro di Ricerca sui linguaggi specialistici), the centre operating at the University of Bergamo to promote research in the area of languages for specific purposes <http://www.unibg.it/cerlis>. Our investigation is part of a wider project[1] focusing on the specific textual, semantic and pragmatic features of specialised discourse in settings where local and disciplinary cultural identities are altered, integrated or redefined by international communication, which accordingly is also intercultural. Within such domains, the project seeks to investigate to what extent the cultural allegiance of (native or non-native) Anglophone discourse communities to their (linguistic, professional, social, national) reference group is affected by the use of English as a lingua franca of international communication.

The process of internationalisation of English offers a topical illustration of the interaction between linguistic and cultural factors in the construction of discourse, both within specialised domains and in wider contexts. This process is most evident in domains of use (e.g. academic, technical, scientific and legal communication) where the socialisation/textualisation of knowledge plays a crucial cohesive role. The investigation of specific genres (Swales 1990, 2004; Bhatia 1993, 2004; Berkenkotter & Huckin 1995; Gillaerts & Gotti 2005; Bhatia & Gotti 2006) and of their diachronic development is a source of valuable evidence as to the language-culture interface, which is also addressed in several ethnographic and socio-linguistic studies.

In the last two decades, the tension between globalising forces and local cultures has been analysed in academic (Mauranen 1993; Ventola & Mauranen 1996; Duszak 1997; Hyland 2000 Hyland & Bondi 2006), business (Ulijn & Murray 1995; Bargiela-Chiappini & Nickerson 1999; Bargiela-Chiappini & Gotti 2005), institutional (Martin & Christie 1997) and legal discourse (Bhatia *et al.* 2003) in inter- or multi-cultural settings. Early results from the research carried out by our group (Candlin & Gotti 2004a, 2004b; Cortese & Duszak 2005, Garzone & Sarangi forth.) indicate that the internationalisation which makes English the preferred choice of code is coupled with textual inconsistencies and ambiguities that advise against straightforward, simplified conclusions: the apparent dominance of 'Anglocentric' models in the domains and specialised discourses considered reveals specific adaptive attitudes and evidence of cultural resistance in the textual strategies that construct identity-shaping differences. On the basis of such premises, our project aims to improve the understanding of identity-forming features linked to 'local' or professional cultures, as communicated by contemporary English in various specialised domains among native and non-native speakers.

Identity traits in academic discourse

Within this wider research plan, the Bergamo Unit has chosen to investigate the relationship between socioculturally-oriented identity constructing factors and textual variation in academic discourse. The project takes into account the internationalisation of specialised discourse observed in English, not only in Anglophone countries but wherever institutional and professional settings evolve in a way that transcends the linguistic, cultural and conceptual standards of their local communities. In this sense, we can refer to a gradual 'globalisation' or 'hybridisation' of discursive practices first appearing in English-speaking environments but also affecting smaller languages (cf. Cortese & Riley 2002; Gotti *et al.* 2002), subject to standardising pressures in their semantic, textual, sociopragmatic and even lexico-grammatical construction.

For some scholars (cf. Canagarajah 2002; Kandiah 2005) the considerable success of English in the world of academic research poses a threat not only to the survival and productivity of other languages but also for researchers from non-English-speaking cultures, whose construction/perception of specialised discourse inevitably diverges from dominant Anglo-American model(s). In this sense, Mauranen (1993) claims that weaker academic discourses deserve attention and protection on a par with vanishing ecosystems, while Swales (1997) describes English as a tyrant in the field.

Apart from these value-judgements, relatively few studies are devoted to the impact of globalisation on language, as identities are becoming increasingly fluid and negotiable. Our Unit's contribution to the project moves in this direction, identifying cases of language variation linked to the encounter/collision of different cultural frameworks within English academic discourse. Our approach focuses on the macrostructural elements of linguistic variation, on the lexico-semantic development of disciplinary discourses, on their rhetorical-pragmatic strategies and on such textual phenomena as verbal modality and hedging. The purpose is to better understand how and to what extent language forms/functions correlate to the globalisation of discourse in academic communication.

One of the key factors of verbal behaviour is the affiliation of actors to one or more cultures (whether professional, ideological, or ethnic-geographic), which to a certain extent affect not only the language itself but also the community's thought and internal relationships. For this reason, our project also targets Italian vs. English texts and includes an analysis of interculturality in terms of conflict and the different 'positioning' of participants.

CADIS: A Corpus of Academic Discourse

As corpora constitute a remarkable tool for the study of discourse, a specific corpus (CADIS = Corpus of Academic Discourse) has been designed as the core and foundation of this project. Since this corpus is a vital element of our investigation and is expected to remain a major resource for years to come, in designing it we have taken into account a number of parameters (e.g. representativeness, sampling methods, balance) so as to make it compliant with international standards and best-practice guidelines.

In view of an in-depth analysis of variation in intercultural communication, our research unit has selected a range of texts produced by scholars and academic institutions in various parts of the world. To identify textual variants arising from the use of English as a first language, second language, or lingua franca of the scientific community, we have devised a corpus formed by English – and in part Italian – texts for academic communication. Besides including two alternative languages, CADIS represents four different disciplinary areas: Legal studies, Economics, Linguistics and Medicine. For each disciplinary area, four different textual genres were considered: abstracts, book reviews, editorials and research articles.

The English texts collected so far were taken from a total of 20 peer-reviewed journals (five per discipline) available by subscription through the University of Bergamo website. Because all of the journals selected have a high impact factor, we are confident that the content of our corpus is highly representative of each specialised community from which it originated. The same principle will be followed in the sampling of Italian academic texts, which will be selected from the most important journals available in each field.

Apart from representativeness, the structure of our corpus follows a criterion of balance, through an accurate proportioning of its parts. More specifically, 50 texts per genre were collected and classified within each disciplinary area, totalling 600 texts per discipline and 600 texts per genre. For each language group – native-speakers (NSs) and non-native speakers (NNSs) of English, and native speakers of Italian (ITA) – a total of 800 texts (200 per disciplinary area) will be included in the corpus. Furthermore, within the NS group, equal representation of different varieties (i.e. UK, US, Canadian, Australian English and New Zealand English) will be emphasised.

In order to be included in the corpus, a text must be homogeneous in size, with an average of 12,000 words. The selection of similar size samples is meant to simplify later contrastive research, although it is now widely believed that also texts of varying length can provide sound linguistic insights (Sinclair 2004). The samples collected in CADIS consist of entire documents rather than parts of texts, as the integrity and representativeness of complete genres is far more important than the difficulty of reconciling texts of different dimensions (Sinclair 2004).

The structural complexity of CADIS reflects its contrastive orientation: it is in fact designed to be internally comparable, so that our researchers will be able to analyse and contrast the chosen texts, not only by disciplinary area, genre, language and culture, but also historically. This is possible because the corpus covers a time frame of at least 25 years, from the early 1980s to the present day. In the first phase of the selection process, priority has been given to English texts published over the last 6 years, but when this phase is completed, earlier academic texts will also be selected and archived. When fully implemented CADIS will comprise 2,400 academic texts, reaching a total of about 2 million tokens (primarily from digital formats but if necessary also from print), selected and classified by disciplinary area, genre, language, author (i.e. NS/NNS), geographical provenance (US, UK, CAN, AUS, NZ), date of publication and source journal.

Relevant information on each text is stored in a separate Excel file, which forms a useful database for the whole corpus. This detailed description will enable researchers in our unit to analyze the most significant macro/microlinguistic variants in terms of identity, evaluation and interpretation in the light of recent linguistic scholarship. More specifically, the data will allow an in-depth analysis of the following aspects:

(a) genre and macrostructure, with their resulting lexico-grammatical realisations;

(b) speech acts expressing positive/negative evaluation, both exophoric and metatextual;

(c) the pragmatic, interpersonal plane of discourse (stance, hedging, politeness);

(d) evidence of popularisation and/or promotional discourse;

(e) the function of verbal and lexical modality;

(f) the degree of background knowledge required (content schemata);

(g) the correlation with such authorial variables as gender and academic standing.

Conclusion

Corpus linguistics offers powerful resources for the investigation of authentic discourse and the impact of this new research tool is deeply felt in many areas of language analysis. The full potential of corpora, however, is available only if material is assembled after careful design and construction: it is therefore important that the corpus should be built on sound methodological foundations and clear choices by the researchers involved. This is the approach taken in the planning and construction phase of CADIS. Of course, some changes may become necessary at a later stage, due to evolving needs and the availability of new data-processing tools, but we are confident that our work so far has laid the basis for a large, consistent corpus of academic discourse which it is hoped will prove a valuable resource for present and future research.

Note

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Clumsy English

Michael Hoey (Liverpool, UK)

When I arrived at the University of Liverpool, I was pretty pleased with myself, having just been appointed to the English Language chair there. When, therefore, the son of the woman whose house I was buying wrote to me to ask for help with his English, I was confident I would be able to assist. He was a native speaker in the army whose hopes for promotion were continually being dashed because of the inadequacy of his written English. What he needed from me was advice on how to improve his written style. To this end, he sent me a great deal of his writing, which I examined carefully – and I found I did not know how to help him. His style was undoubtedly awkward in places (though the army may have been being over hard), but I could not, at that stage, identify what it was he was doing wrong. Humbled by the realisation that I did not have the necessary linguistic tools to assist him, I set about working out exactly what does contribute to poor 'style' and how it can be helped. The point here is that the practical problem had exposed an area of ignorance which I am still filling. Although my awareness of this particular problem grew out of contact with a native speaker with difficulties, in my subsequent work on this topic I focused my attention primarily on the needs of the non-native.

There is an important stage in the development of a learner when the learner moves from being a user of the language for no other purpose than survival (or examination survival, which is not quite the same thing) to being a user of the language for an important purpose. That purpose might be career centred, e.g. English for tourism or business, or hobby centred, e.g. interacting on the internet, or education centred, i.e. English for Academic Purposes.

This transition is psychologically important, because it marks the point at which the English learnt is unlikely to get unlearnt. It is also linguistically important because for many it is the point when they become aware of the demands of using English in a particular domain. If they are learning English for tourism, they will learn that their English is not quite specific enough. If they are learning English to use it in chatrooms, they will discover that their English is too formal. If they are learning English for academic purposes, they will discover that their English is too informal. (The same is broadly true for native speakers when they move into a new and unfamiliar domain. The soldier who contacted me no doubt had more than adequate English for most purposes but his English failed to meet the linguistic demands of the army.)

It is at this juncture, this cross-over point from being a purposeless language learner to a learner with a mission, that two important features of English start to loom with greater importance – the organisation of discourses and the choice of appropriate vocabulary. The most common transition point for learners is that from general English to academic English and the texts I shall consider were both written at that particular transition.

What I am going to do is take a short piece of academic writing produced by a non-native Masters student and examine the problems she is having in making the transition from survival English to academic English. Taken from her draft Masters dissertation, it is, in many respects, a good piece of writing. It is clear for the most part and grammatical. But this is not native-speaker English and although the quality of her writing is clearly greatly better than much non-native writing, the dissertation was felt by the examiners (of whom I was not one) to be awkwardly written; the passage quoted below was marked out as an example of its awkwardness in this respect. The analysis that follows is intended to make the non-nativeness perceptible, though I should not be understood to mean that non-native English *has* to be turned into native English.

The dissertation from which the passage is drawn is, somewhat self-reflexively, on the topic of reading and writing skills, and the writer is about to address the reading and writing issues

involved in a particular advertisement (still more self-reflexively) offering help in writing! The writer has just finished describing the strategies involved in writing narratives.

I want to suggest that we can successively make the student's passage more closely approximate native-speaker English by passing it through a number of analytical stages. My claim is that these stages are best handled in the order I shall discuss them and that they can be used by teachers to improve their students' writing and, more importantly, by learners to improve their own writing; I shall offer some tentative evidence in support of the latter claim. I do not however claim that every 'improvement' I have made to the passage is indeed one; I would indeed be surprised if readers do not question some of my judgements.

Original version

The strategies for writing a narrative are different from the ones for ads. In ads, the reader is looking for specific information, so it has to be short and precise, but if the writer wants to convince the reader about something in an ad, it has to have enough information.

In the ad "Why not be a writer?" the purpose is to persuade a reader who hesitates and is very unsure about his/her abilities. Therefore the ad is needed to be written more profoundly to get into the reader's mind – convince the reader and satisfy him from different points of view, until the reader is convinced that it fits his/her needs.

Stage 1: Local text management problems

The first thing to note is that there are a number of flaws in the local management of the flow of the discourse. These are small textual mistakes that have little or no importance with regard to the overall development of the argument of the text. Thus, there is a singular pronominal reference *it* to plural *ads*. A similar problem occurs in the repetition of *in ads* by *in an ad*; the same ad(s) are apparently being talked about, so we would expect both expressions to be plural or else both singular and for the same reason we would expect the second instance to select *the* rather than *an*. These points arise out of a parallelism between the two halves of the sentence and this would point to a further textual oddity, in that the two prepositional phrases are differently placed in their respective clauses, one at the beginning, one much later in the clause.

Other textual management problems are uncertain command of gender-neutrality – *his/her – him – his/her*, and another parallelism that is undermarked, namely that between <u>to get</u> and <u>convince</u>, where one expect a further *to*, given the strict parallelism.

If the passage is adjusted to take account of these local text management problems, it reads as in version 2; changes are marked in italics.

Version 2

The strategies for writing a narrative are different from the ones for ads. The reader is looking for specific information *in an ad*, so it has to be short and precise, but if the writer wants to convince the reader about something in *the* ad, it has to have enough information.

In the ad "Why not be a writer?" the purpose is to persuade a reader who hesitates and is very unsure about his/her abilities. Therefore the ad is needed to be written more profoundly to get into the reader's mind – *to* convince the reader and satisfy *him/her* from different points of view, until the reader is convinced that it fits his/her needs.

Stage 2: Local lexical problems

There are a number of local lexical problems that do not in themselves damage the clarity of the passage but which instant reveal it to the work of a non-native in transition from survival to proficiency. The first is *ad*, which is too informal for academic writing. It is entirely appropriate in discussion but inappropriate in this context, where *advertisement* would be expected.

Less obviously, *convince the reader about something* is a rarer expression than the writer probably intended. I consulted a 100 million word corpus made up mainly of Guardian newspaper writing and supplemented by academic writing from the British National Corpus and found 238 instances of *convince [somebody] of [something]* and only 9 of *convince [somebody] about [something]*. So the most

natural expression would appear to be *convince the reader of something*.

Still more subtly, the phrase *have enough information* is not the most natural for use in the circumstances. Firstly, this expression is heavily associated with denial (*don't have enough information*) (11 instances out of 13 occurrences in my data), whereas the student's use is of course positive. Secondly, *have .. information* is biased towards occurring with postmodification (e.g. *have information about x*); 23% instances (57) in my data are not postmodified as opposed to 77% with postmodification (or deferred past participle) (187). The instance in this passage has no postmodification. Finally, there is an implicit receiver of the information in the example before us (*enough information for the reader*); *have information* is not however associated with receivers, *have* being a more static verb. In a sample of 200 instances of *have ... information*, there is an implied interaction in only 20% of cases. On the other hand *provide ... information*, which occurs with some expression of receiver of the message 59% of the time in a sample of 200 instances. It also turns out to be the case that *provide ... information* is less biased towards postmodification. Almost half of the instances (47%) (193) have no postmodification. There are only four instances of *provid* enough information* in my data but three of these are positive. There are however overall more occurrences of *provide ... information* (411 instances as opposed to 244 instances of *have ... information*, a figure all the more striking because *provide* is an altogether rarer word than *have*). All in all, it looks as if *provide enough information* would be more the more natural expression.

If *have* is too static a verb for the student's purposes, *hesitates* is arguably too active. *Hesitates* is almost always associated with action or speech. It is not used to describe attitudes, but *hesitant* is. It would therefore look as if *hesitant* or even *nervous* would be more appropriate in this passage. If *hesitates* is turned into *is hesitant*, we of course no longer need the *is* before *unsure*.

With the words *unsure about* we have a similar situation to that of *convince about*. Both *unsure about* and *unsure of* are quite common in my corpus; I have 95 instances of the former and 154 of the latter. So it would look on the face of it as if *unsure about* ought to be fine as a choice of wording.

But *unsure about* is associated with clauses, e.g. *unsure about why she left, unsure about going to the party*; almost one in three have this use. The proportion is much smaller for *unsure of* (less than one in four). More importantly, 74 of the 154 instances of *unsure of*, close to half, occur in the structure *unsure of his/her/my/your x* or *unsure of himself* etc.

On the other hand, only 10 of the 95 examples of *unsure about* – barely more than one in ten – occur in the structure *unsure about his/her/my/himself/herself* etc. Given the absence of a clause and the presence of a self-reflexive pronoun, it would seem that *unsure of* would be more natural.

My last suggested alteration to the student's local lexical choices is offered more tentatively because it could be thought to change the student's meaning somewhat. In my corpus there are 815 instances of *profoundly* and only one of them occurs with *wrote*. On the other hand *write carefully* occurs 20 times. Given that *profoundly* can mean 'seriously' and to take something seriously is to do it carefully, I suggest this change to make the passage collocationally more normal.

What all this points to (even if the last change is discounted) is that there is more to learning a word than knowing what it means and how to use it grammatically. Knowing a word means knowing its collocations, e.g. *convince* and *of*, and its colligations (the grammatical patterns a word favours), e.g. *unsure of* and possessive pronoun. Without these, a learner will sound subtly non-native and stilted, even though, in terms of grammar and meaning, s/he is doing nothing wrong.

So what can the student do about this? What can the teacher – who is unlikely to have access to a 100 million word corpus, still less have time to consult one every time a student sounds unnatural – do to help the student? I shall return

to these questions at the end of my paper. For the moment, I simply note that local lexical problems represent the second stage or layer of analysis of a student's writing.

Rewritten with the changes I have suggested the passage looks as in version 3; I have highlighted the new changes in bold:

Version 3

The strategies for writing a narrative are different from the ones for **advertisements**. The reader is looking for specific information *in an* ***advertisement***, so it has to be short and precise, but if the writer wants to convince the reader **of** something in *the* **advertisement**, it has to **provide** enough information.

In the **advertisement** "Why not be a writer?" the purpose is to persuade a reader who **is hesitant** and very unsure about his/her abilities. Therefore the **advertisement** is needed to be written more **carefully** to get into the reader's mind – *to* convince the reader and satisfy *him/her* from different points of view, until the reader is convinced that it fits his/her needs.

Stage 3: Larger textual problems

Apart from the change of *ads* to *advertisements*, none of the lexical changes described in the previous section are a direct result of the passage being an instance of academic writing. We need now to look at it as a piece of *academic* writing.

The first point that one might make is that the first sentence seems to presuppose that we already know about the strategies for writing advertisements; it also appears to provide *the strategies for writing a narrative* as Theme not just for the sentence but for the whole passage. A reversal of the two 'strategies' produces a thematically more consistent passage.

The second point to make is that academic texts typically make use of a range of patterns of organisation (Hoey, 1983, 2001). Perhaps the most common pattern, and certainly the best described, is the Problem-Solution pattern (briefly mentioned in my discussion of Winter's work), where a Problem is articulated, a Response described or suggested to it, and an Evaluation or Result provided; in the event of the Evaluation or Result being negative (unless it is irretrievably negative, like death), the pattern characteristically recycles until a Positive Evaluation or Result is arrived at. Other common patterns in academic writing are the Goal-Achievement pattern, where in place of a Problem a Goal is articulated, and the Gap in Knowledge-Filling pattern, where a lack of knowledge is identified and means suggested for supplying the lack, such as analysis or experimentation.

These patterns are a kind of contract between writer and reader, where the reader expects certain questions to be answered and the writer obliges by answering them; because the writer answers them, the reader is encouraged to expect them to be answered in future texts of the same type and therefore the writer obliges by again answering them. And in such a way the structure gets established.

Patterns interlock. So several patterns of questions may be answered at the same time, depending on which perspective you take. Thus in traditional tellings of Red Riding Hood, the wolf has a goal (to eat Red Riding Hood) and means of achieving the goal (impersonating her grandmother). This in turn represents a Problem for Red Riding Hood, unbeknown to her. The woodcutter's timely intervention represents a Response to Red Riding Hood's Problem and an irretrievably Negative Result for the wolf.

There are two sets of patterns in the passage under consideration. Firstly, there are two slightly conflicting Goal-Achievement patterns:

Goal for 'reader' (to find specific information)	Goal for 'writer' (to convince the reader)
↓	↓
Means a writer needs to use to achieve reader's Goal (has to be short and specific)	Means a writer needs to use to achieve his/her own Goal (has to have enough information)

Secondly, there are two interlocking patterns, one partly implicit, the other fully explicit:

Goal of writer (to persuade reader)		Goal of reader (to become writer)
↓	**BUT**	
		Problem for reader (hesitates & is unsure)
↓		
Means (to get into the reader's mind and and convince)	→	Response by writer to reader's Problem
↓		↓
Intended Positive Result for writer (the reader is convinced because it meets his/her needs)		Intended Positive Result for reader

So this writer makes use of the appropriate patterns of organisation for academic writing, which is one reason why it feels a reasonably successful piece of writing, despite the observations that I have been making on it. On the other hand, she does not make the patterns she uses as clear or explicit as she could. We can make the 'reader' pattern clearer by adding in front of *is hesitant* the phrase *wants to be a writer but*.

With these changes the passage now reads as in Version 4. Changes are marked by underlining.

Version 4

The strategies for writing **an advertisement** are different from the ones for *narratives*. The reader is looking for specific information *in an* ***advertisement***, so it has to be short and precise, but if the writer wants to convince the reader **of** something in *the* **advertisement**, it has to **provide** enough information.

In the **advertisement** "Why not be a writer?" the purpose is to persuade a reader who wants to be a writer but **is hesitant** and very unsure about his/her abilities. Therefore the **advertisement** is needed to be written more **carefully** to get into the reader's mind – *to* convince the reader and satisfy *him/her* from different points of view, until the reader is convinced that it fits his/her needs.

Stage 4: Lexical signal problems

So far I have written as if patterns were self-evident, yet I have also talked about one of the student's patterns as being implicit. What is the difference between an implicit pattern and an explicit pattern? How do academic readers and writers know that a particular pattern is being deployed? The answer, in academic writing, is that the patterns are signalled. When a lexical signal is used, the writer is saying 'Don't worry about what questions I am answering – I'll tell you.' Signals can be either local or global. Global signals tell the reader what pattern is being used; local signals tell the reader what local relation is being used, e.g. cause-consequence, contrast, time sequence.

Pang ChingFu (untitled research in progress) has shown that Chinese students tend to rely on a few signals rather than using the full range. Flowerdew (2003), working with Hong Kong students, found that her students used a suitable range but notes that they do not always get the signal right. So is this true of the author of the passage under inspection? Examination of her signals suggests that there is a reasonable range though there is a fairly heavy dependence on verb signals (*has to* (x2), *wants to* and *is needed*. Non-verb signals that the student uses are *strategies, purpose* and *needs*. With regard to Flowerdew's point about mishandling of signals, the student uses *has to* and *want to* appropriately but has problems with the other signals.

To begin with *the strategies for*, examination of my corpus suggests that only 1 in 20 cases of *strategies for* is used with *the*. It is usually used for generalisations. On the other hand, if *adopted* is added, the situation radically changes; every single instance of *the strategies adopted for* has the definite article.

Looking now at *is needed*, we find that it is mainly used in the structure *What is needed is*. So we could rewrite the student's sentence

What is needed is for the advertisement to be written more carefully etc. But this is a complex structure even for an advanced student, and it is not clear that the student intends the special focus that this structure brings. A simpler solution is to put the clause into the active voice: *the advertisement needs to be written more carefully…*

Looking now at *purpose*, this, like *strategies*, is almost naturally used but not quite. The meaning is clear but Flowerdew's observation is again borne out on closer examination. Concordance evidence shows that we like to specify whose purpose is being talked about. Out of 273 instances of *purpose is/was to*, 205 (i.e. almost exactly ¾ of cases) start with a possessive:

Their purpose was to…

The Government's purpose is to…

His purpose was to…

Given that the student is talking about two sets of purposes – those of the 'writer' and those of the 'reader' – the most natural strategy to adopt is to add *the advertiser's:*

The advertiser's purpose is to persuade…

Finally, in my corpus *fit(s) needs* occurs 12 times but *meet(s)/met needs* occurs 367 times. We can infer that the more common collocation is *meet needs.*

With these changes, we reach version 5. Changes are marked in capitals.

Version 5

The strategies ADOPTED for writing **advertisements** are different from the ones ADOPTED for a narrative. The reader is looking for specific information *in an **advertisement***, so it has to be short and precise, but if the writer wants to convince the reader **of** something in *the* **advertisement**, it has to **provide** enough information.

In the **advertisement** "Why not be a writer?" THE ADVERTISER'S purpose is to persuade a reader who wants to be a writer but **is hesitant** and very unsure about his/her abilities. Therefore the **advertisement** NEEDS to be written more **carefully** to get into the reader's mind – *to* convince the reader and satisfy *him/her* from different points of view, until the reader is convinced that it MEETS his/her needs.

Stage 5: Adjusting the cohesion.

One cannot make as many changes as I have here suggested without there being knock-on effects on the cohesion of the text. There were in any case problems in the original version. Here we have a chain of references to advertisements:

advertisements – an advertisement – it – the advertisement – it – the advertisement – the advertisement – it.

This would be clumsy enough if they were all co-referential, but in fact there are two additional difficulties. Firstly, the initial *advertisements* does not appear to be (but is) a direct antecedent for *an advertisement* because of the plurality of the former and the indefiniteness of the latter; secondly, the student does not intend (but might be thought by a careless reader to signal) co-reference between the first *it* and *the advertisement* that follows it. The solution to both difficulties, now that the passage has as its macro-Theme *the strategies adopted for writing advertisements*, is to delete *in an advertisement* and *in the advertisement* from the second sentence (because we know that this is the type of writing being discussed) and pluralise both pronouns to link back to the initial *advertisements*, thereby at the same time killing the link between these pronouns and the singular *the advertisement* that begins the next paragraph, i.e.:

The reader is looking for specific information, so they have to be short and precise, but if the writer wants to convince the reader of something, they have to provide enough information.

This leaves us with the final version of the passage, now given without any marks of changes:

Final Version

The strategies adopted for writing advertisements are different from the ones adopted for a narrative. The reader is looking for

specific information, so they have to be short and precise, but if the writer wants to convince the reader of something, they have to provide enough information.

In the advertisement "Why not be a writer?" the advertiser's purpose is to persuade a reader who wants to be a writer but is hesitant and very unsure about his/her abilities. Therefore the advertisement needs to be written more carefully to get into the reader's mind – to convince the reader and satisfy him/her from different points of view, until the reader is convinced that it meets his/her needs.

I would argue that we now have a much improved passage:

(1) The local textual problems have been sorted out.

(2) The collocations and colligations of the ordinary vocabulary have been improved.

(3) The structure has been clarified.

(4) The special signalling vocabulary has been improved to make the structure explicit.

(5) The cohesion has been clarified.

But it would be reasonable to think at this stage, if not 'so what?', at least 'so what has this to do with me?' It is all very well demonstrating that with the help of a large corpus and sophisticated software and the endless patience necessary to count examples of different kinds of use, it is possible to help a student writer. But for the average language learner making that psychologically important transition from survival English to purposeful use of language, this kind of help is not going to be available, and for the normal overworked, under-resourced teacher trying to help learners make that transition successfully, the kind of demonstration I have offered here may seem irrelevant.

There are two respects in which what I have been saying is not in fact irrelevant to the needs of the hard-pressed learner and teacher. In the first place, the lexical observations I have been making do not usually require a corpus to back them – a modern corpus-based advanced learners' dictionary will do almost as well. Of the lexical points I have made, all but one can be inferred from the relevant dictionary entries in the Macmillan English Dictionary; I assume a similar success rate would be found with other corpus-based dictionaries. In the second place, the stages I have described can be taught to learners and they can, communally, undertake an analysis of the kind offered here. Let me briefly provide anecdotal support for this claim.

As part of a course on the teaching of reading and writing, I first provided a group of eight students studying on either the University of Liverpool's MA in Applied Linguistics or its MA in TESOL with a demonstration of the way the stages discussed above might be applied to a piece of student writing, using the passage that I have used in this paper. All but one of the students were themselves non-native speakers. I then gave them another piece of student writing and asked them in two groups of four to carry out the same processes of analysis in the same order. They had access to the MED but not to a corpus. After each stage of analysis was complete, the two groups reported their suggested improvements, which were agreed by the whole group.

The passage I gave them was the following extract from an early draft of a Ph.D. chapter by a non-native English speaker. They were told that they could ask questions about the context and I had the larger typescript available to answer textual questions. They availed themselves of this option several times.

Original version

The course (English for the Emirates) boasts the explicit teaching of functions, and these functions present the main teaching components of the course. These are introduced at the rate of 1-2 per lesson, irrespective of the grammatical forms which accompany them. The learners are then expected to produce these functions without any communicative value, or fully understanding how they were formed, and so memorising the functions resulting in the loss of 'real world' value, and any use of authentic conversation.

You may agree with me that this is a less clear piece of writing than the previous example; in any case, I felt it provided sufficient opportunities for improvement to give my students something

to work on. The first stage was of course that of local text management problems, and they identified two of these. The first related to the plethora of commas in the final sentence. They recommended removing the first and last of these so as to indicate more effectively which pieces of information belonged together. Secondly, and perhaps more perceptively, they noted that *these* at the beginning of the second sentence could be understood as referring to *the main teaching components* as the last-mentioned plural nominal group. They therefore suggested changing *these* to *they*. I have indicated this change with italics in the revised version that follows.

Version 2 (after identifying Local Text Management Problems)

The course (English for the Emirates) boasts the explicit teaching of functions, and these functions present the main teaching components of the course. *They* are introduced at the rate of 1-2 per lesson, irrespective of the grammatical forms which accompany them. The learners are then expected to produce these functions without any communicative value or fully understanding how they were formed, and so memorising the functions resulting in the loss of 'real world' value and any use of authentic conversation.

They then considered local lexical problems with the help of the dictionary. In each case, they offered grounds for the change, but I omit these here, because the point I am hoping to make is that they found the different stages of analysis helpful tools in the development of redrafting skills.

The students' first change was to suggest replacing *boasts* with *boasts of*; their second change was to replace *accompany them* with *they have*. Then they suggested altering *the loss of* to *their having no* and *any use of* to *producing* (adding *no*, because of the disappearance of the noun head *loss*). With these changes incorporated, the passage now reads as in version 3 below; I have marked their changes in bold:

Version 3 (after identifying Local Lexical Problems)

The course (English for the Emirates) boasts **of** the explicit teaching of functions, and these functions present the main teaching components of the course. *They* are introduced at the rate of 1-2 per lesson, irrespective of the grammatical forms which **they have**. The learners are then expected to produce these functions without any communicative value or fully understanding how they were formed, and so memorising the functions resulting in **their having no** 'real world' value and **providing no** authentic conversation.

The third stage, larger textual problems, proved a fruitful one for the students. They noted that the text required the reader to make some large inferences about the significance of the second sentence. Their view was that the second sentence was intended as a criticism, although its neutral wording made this uncertain. It was uncertainty about this that made what followed hard to interpret. They therefore boldly recommended adding *The problem is that* at the beginning of the sentence and making explicit what they thought was intended, that 1-2 functions per lesson is too fast a rate of introduction in a syllabus. They also felt that the second half of the sentence, which implied another problem, should be given a separate status.

Incorporating these changes gives us version 4; I have indicated their changes by underlining.

Version 4 (after identifying Larger Textual Problems)

The course (English for the Emirates) boasts **of** the explicit teaching of functions, and these functions present the main teaching components of the course. <u>The problem is that</u> *they* are introduced at the rate of 1-2 per lesson, <u>which is too fast.</u> <u>Furthermore, this is done in a way</u> irrespective of the grammatical forms which **they have**. The learners are then expected to produce these functions without any communicative value or fully understanding how they were formed, and so memorising the functions resulting in **their having no** 'real world' value and **providing no** authentic conversation.

Finally the students were invited to consider the cohesion of the passage, and they immediately picked on the repetitions of *functions*, which appears four times in four sentences. In all but the first of the cases they chose to replace the nominal groups containing *functions* with pronouns. Two of them become *them*; in one case, the change is slightly more complex in that *and these functions* has become *which*. These changes result in the following 'final' version. As in my account of the first student's passage, I have at this stage removed all indications of changes, so that the passage can be read more normally. The only change of my own is the addition of a comma before *resulting* in the penultimate line:

'Final' version

The course (English for the Emirates) boasts of the explicit teaching of functions, which present the main teaching components of the course. The problem is that they are introduced at the rate of 1-2 per lesson, which is too fast. Furthermore, this is done in a way irrespective of the grammatical forms which they have. The learners are then expected to produce them without any communicative value or fully understanding how they were formed, and so memorising them, resulting in their having no 'real world' value and providing no authentic conversation.

I do not necessarily agree with all the changes. For example, I am not sure that the original writer necessarily meant that the Emirates course was boastful about the explicit teaching of functions (though that is not incompatible with her meaning). But I do think that the final version improves upon the original. That this improvement has been achieved in under an hour (with another hour spent outlining the approach) is, I think, a tribute to the students; it also suggests that research can indeed offer ELT something useful. For me, this was an instance where the cycle was the virtuous one shown in Figure 1. Even, however, if my solution to the problem of producing good academic writing is felt to be unattractive, this should not necessarily invalidate my argument, because the solution should always be applied by the ELT practitioner, not the researcher, and I fill the latter role most of the time, not the former.

I have tried to show in this paper that linguistic research benefits from the stimulation that comes from ELT (or other field of application). I have also tried to show, perhaps less convincingly, that ELT can benefit from linguistic research. I would like to conclude by saying that there is a need for an interactive site where ELT professionals can team up with active researchers to propose research topics of direct value to ELT, with a view to always publishing the results twice, once in a descriptive or applied linguistics journal and once in an ELT journal aimed squarely at teachers. The papers should always be co-authored and neither contributor should regard themselves as being, or be seen as, the junior partner. If a true dialogue can be established between ELT and linguistic research, and if real effort is put into sharing discoveries, there is no reason why they should not in twenty years time come to wonder how any linguist could ever formulate questions with such obvious answers as the ones in my title.

Note

This paper is a shortened and slightly adapted version of 'What has research got to offer ELT (and what has ELT to offer research)?' published in *Research in ELT: Proceedings of the International Conference* 9-11 April 2003, Bangkok: King Mongkut's University of Technology, Thonburi, pp. 48-67.

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