

EAP in the North

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The Language of Academic English

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Preliminaries

- Writing a 10 page Academic Grammar supplement for Collins, August 2010
- How did the project come about?
- Who was involved?
- What was the context?

Our approach to EAP provision

- Skills based syllabus
- Focus on discourse and lexis
- Limited formal grammar instruction
- Grammar issues addressed ad hoc via feedback

The 'problem'

- Inaccurate & apparently meaningless prose
- Academic word salad
- Sentence grammar appears to collapse



Our response

- Surrender! – “Stop trying to sound ‘academic’!”
- Hasty retreat! – Go back to basics, e.g. EFL grammar-focussed material
- Build a better defensive wall – tighten up entry requirements

The real problem

- Limited understanding of academic grammar among:
 - students
 - teachers
 - course designers
- EAP grammar = the ‘missing resource’?

TEAP competency framework

3. Academic Discourse

‘An EAP teacher will have a high level of systemic language knowledge including knowledge of discourse analysis.’

This includes:

‘Knowledge and understanding of grammar and syntax at the level of phrase, clause and sentence’

Limitations

- Page length
- Time/resources
- Style/approach
- Corpus

Finding a model

- Needs analysis based on
 - Experience,
 - Other books ('Profile', 'Oxford EAP'),
 - Other people (everyone writes a grammar!)
- Links to Hallidayan approach
 - Used by Cobuild
 - 'Discourse orientation' already found in text level EAP descriptions
 - Gap is at the level of sentence structure
 - Bring Halliday down to sentence level?

3 sentence functions in institutional discourse

- ideational
 - be clear about what you want to say
- textual
 - connect and sequence your message
- Interpersonal...
 - establish your relationship with the reader appropriately.

Publisher feedback on style

- ‘You’ is appropriate, interspersed with the passive and the occasional mention of ‘the writer’.
- The style is too academic...needs to hold the reader’s hand a little more and avoid nominalisation (i.e the use of lots of abstract nouns to express entire ideas that could be paraphrased in a clause)
- ‘Stick your neck out where possible since this is a pedagogic grammar’

Applying that model to sentence structures

- Being clear about what you want to say: noun and verb phrases

60% NPs in academic English have a modifier

- c.25% - premodifier;
- c.20% postmodifier;
- c.12% both (Moore 2012).

The Noun Phrase

- *Nominalization:*
- *The noun phrase (1) pre-modifying noun phrases:*
- *The noun phrase (2) post modifying noun phrases:*
- *Reducing the relative clause:*
- *Non-defining relative clauses*

The Verb Phrase

- *The present simple*
- *The present perfect*
- *The past simple*
- *Will*
- *Linking verbs*

Ordering & connecting your message

- *Using grammatical structures and vocabulary to signpost your intention*
- *Referring back and referring forward*
- *Providing connectors to hold sections together*

The style of your message

- *Distancing*
- *Reporting*
- *Expressing degrees of certainty*

What next?

- Teachers? PS Induction
- Students? WAC