EAP in the North University of Glasgow, February 8th 2013

The Language of Academic English

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Preliminaries

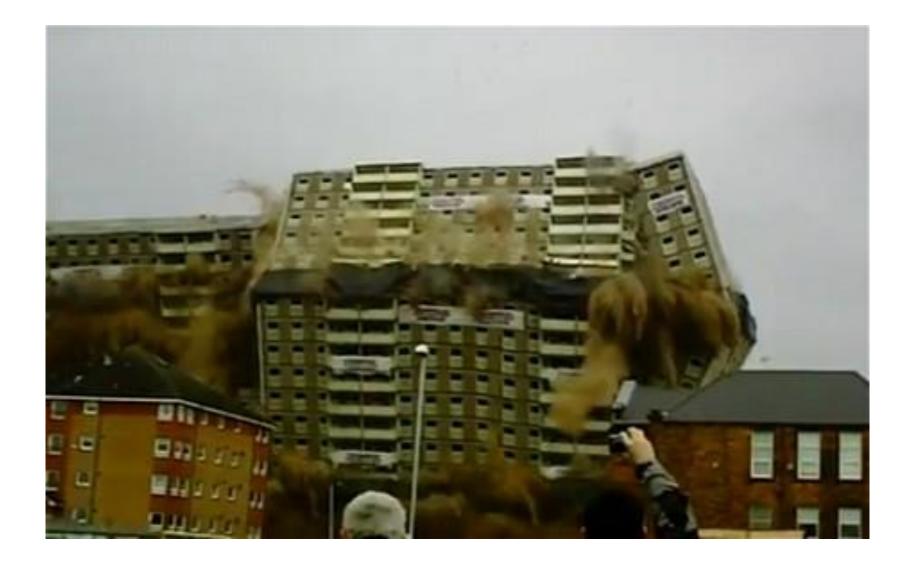
- Writing a 10 page Academic Grammar supplement for Collins, August 2010
- How did the project come about?
- Who was involved?
- What was the context?

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:
 - \circ students
 - \circ teachers
 - \circ course designers

• EAP grammar = the 'missing resource'?

TEAP competency framework3. 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', 'Ox ford 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
- textual

• Interpersonal...

- be clear about what you want to say
- connect and sequence your message
- 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 ia 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