Research in Progress

BAAL/CUP seminars 2009

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Academic Language Corpora and Education (ALCE)

The Moray House School of Education, The University of Edinburgh, UK; 7–8 May 2009

The seminar, organised by Joan Cutting and Bróna Murphy, aimed

- to bring together researchers involved in both emergent and established academic corpora (written and spoken) as well as linguists, lecturers and teachers researching in education, be it language teaching, language-teacher training or continuing professional development in language awareness, all of whom may be new to corpora and its applications;
- to explore the possibilities of working together with researchers in speech recognition and synthesis, and other specialists in technological innovation;
- to provide an opportunity to disseminate the latest developments in academic language corpora.

The seminar strengthened links between institutions and created networks for researchers to explore ways that corpora can help to study general classroom practice and be used as part of language classroom teaching. It attracted 30 participants from universities in the Czech Republic, the Republic of Ireland, Italy, Japan, Switzerland and the UK; there were two plenary papers and 14 individual papers.

Mike McCarthy's (University of Nottingham) plenary, entitled 'Turn, turn, turn again', looked at the distribution of turn-openers in native English speaker and non-native English speaker data, comparing casual conversation with academic seminar, small-group talk and examination data.

Hilary Nesi's (Coventry University) plenary explained that The British Academic Written English Corpus (BAWE) designers created a finite list of 13 genre families, within which the genres shared an educational purpose and key components, across levels, domains and disciplines.

Kirsten Ackermann (Pearson plc) introduced the Pearson International Corpus of Academic English (PICAE), which contains 77% written and 23% spoken text, covering American, Australian, British, Canadian and New Zealand English. Courses based on PICAE could give students a tool for directed- and self-learning, and enable comparisons between their own writing and features of registers and genres.

Joan Cutting and Bróna Murphy (The University of Edinburgh) spoke about the new Edinburgh Academic Spoken English Corpus (EDASE), which aims to consist of academic

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workshops and supervision tutorials, lectures, conferences and symposia, meetings and casual conversations. EDASE could guide continuing professional development of lecturers in good practices.

Jane Evison (University of Nottingham) explored the ways in which the podcasters in the TESOL Talk from Nottingham Corpus (TTFN) create, maintain and develop their own identities, and that of the podcasts.

Liam Murray, Elaine Riordan and Fiona Farr (University of Limerick) analysed spoken data from student teachers' discussions, and written data from student essays, blogs and online discussions, and found evidence of reflection using lexical and grammatical stance markers, level of contribution, task performance, and affective engagement.

Stergiani Kostopoulou (Trinity College Dublin) talked about the elaboration of curriculum and materials informed by the analysis of a corpus of the most commonly used textbooks for English, Geography, History, Home Economics, Mathematics, Chemistry, Biology and Physics in Irish schools, using WordSmith Tools.

Pei-Chun Liu (Lancaster University) examined ways that the rhetorical actions in dissertation literature reviews can be defined, based on a corpus of 30 Master's dissertations in three academic disciplines. This study should help teachers of English for academic purposes (EAP) prepare their students to write academic genres and also teachers in the subject areas to be aware of their students' difficulties.

Tony Lynch (The University of Edinburgh) said that, as an EAP teacher, he compiled a corpus of native and non-native recordings in speaking tasks that parallel those done by the learners in their EAP classroom. The corpus was very useful as a device for encouraging learners' noticing.

Markéta Malá (Charles University in Prague) told us about participial adverbials in the spoken academic monologue, such as 'what do you END UP GETTING?', 'you END UP GETTING cells that frequently metastasize' that perform expressions of stance, organise discourse and have a referential function.

David Oakey (University of Birmingham) suggested a distinction between isolexical comparisons, in which subcorpora containing a similar number of tokens are compared, and isotextual comparisons, in which subcorpora containing a similar number of texts are compared. He showed that isotextual comparisons reveal more than the isolexical about the discourse functions of lexical bundles in research articles.

Aisling O'Boyle (Queen's University Belfast) discussed her corpus of audio recordings of small-group teaching contexts from a university setting taken from a range of subject areas, which was used in an initial teacher-education programme to raise awareness about language variation and language use in context, in a continuing professional development programme in the subject area of TESOL.

Anne O'Keeffe (Mary Immaculate College in Limerick) and Steve Walsh (Newcastle University) evaluated approaches to studying corpora of classroom interaction: conversation analysis, interaction analysis, discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics. They assessed the various approaches and looked at the ways in which understandings can differ according to which approach is adopted.

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Tomoko Watanabe (The University of Edinburgh) dealt with a quantitative analysis of English vague language forms used by Japanese learners of English in a speaking test, and studied the frequency of each form at various speaking proficiency levels.

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Connecting Discourses: Academic and Professional Worlds

Centre for Applied Linguistics, University of Warwick, UK; 15–16 May 2009

The overall co-ordinators of this seminar were Steve Mann and Sue Wharton. C. K. Jung was web co-ordinator, and the supporting committee was made up of Tilly Harrison, Duncan Hunter, Stefanie Stadler, Fei Chuang and Tim Kelly. Approximately 27 people attended, from institutions in Austria, Hong Kong, New Zealand and the UK.

The objectives of the seminar were to engage in cross-disciplinary discussion on the following issues:

- written and spoken communication in professional contexts
- professional identity in communication events
- studies of professional genres via work-based learning
- the integration of professional genres into academic contexts
- the role of universities in professional communication training
- the teaching of transferable discourse skills in universities
- what discourse analytic tools are useful for studying communication events in different disciplines and professional settings
- accounts of successful collaboration between academic and professional institutions in the area of professional communication.

In the field of Applied Linguistics there has been renewed international interest in professional communication and in the analysis of texts produced in institutional contexts. Many professionally orientated programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels are designed to prepare students for professional practice (e.g. business, engineering, medicine and teaching). This seminar asked questions about the relationship between the discourse produced and used in professional settings and discourses produced in university settings.

The recently established Professional and Academic Discourse (PAD) Research Group at University of Warwick is particularly interested in understanding the situated nature of written

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