

MUCH: The Malmö University-Chalmers Corpus of Academic Writing as a Process

Andreas ERIKSSON¹; Damian FINNEGAN², Asko KAUPPINEN²,
Maria WIKTORSSON², Anna WÄRNSBY²; Peter WITHERS³

¹Chalmers University of Technology, Gothenburg, Sweden

²Malmö University, Malmö, Sweden

³Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics, Nijmegen, The Netherlands

andreas.eriksson@chalmers.se; anna.warnsby@mah.se

This poster introduces a recently-launched corpus project which aims to compile and monitor various text drafts involved in the writing process of EFL students in higher education. The corpus material will consist of three drafts of undergraduate, master or PhD student texts. Additionally, the corpus will contain a collection of self-reflective papers. Papers will be collected from approximately 400 students per year over a three-year period. In addition to parts-of-speech tagging, the corpus will include peer comments between the first and second drafts and teacher comments between the second and third drafts, as well as annotations of information structure and rhetorical structures. Upon its completion, the corpus will consist of about 500,000 words, excluding the metadata and peer and teacher comments.

The corpus is primarily an academic writing research corpus, but also a pedagogic and linguistic corpus, and it is the combination of these perspectives that we would like to emphasise. One important aim of the project is to narrow the gap between writing pedagogy and the use of corpora for teaching and learning purposes. In writing pedagogy, the focus has been on issues such as writing as social action (Miller, 1984), feedback processes (Hyland & Hyland, 2006) and the development of academic literacy (Lea & Street, 1998; Lillis & Scott, 2007; Street 2004), whereas there has been a tendency in corpus-driven and corpus-based pedagogy to focus on linguistic aspects of language learning, such as vocabulary, grammar and phraseology. This tendency is, for instance, evidenced in Flowerdew's (2010) comprehensive overview of how corpora have been used in writing instruction. There are obviously notable exceptions to this somewhat sweeping description (see e.g. Charles, 2007; and Flowerdew, 2008). However, a lot more can be done to merge these two perspectives. We believe that a corpus containing drafts tagged for information structure, rhetorical structures, and linguistic structures as well as peer and teacher feedback is an important step in such a process.

In this poster, we will establish the rationale for the project by exemplifying how the corpus can be used for research purposes as well as teaching and learning purposes. We will show how the corpus can be employed in the study of: 1) peer and teacher comments; 2) thesis statements and how these are formed, located and realised in students' writing processes; and 3) linguistic structures, such as elements recurring in thesis statements.

References

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