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Coding and Diagram provided by Sky Schermer

**INTRODUCTION**

Corpus linguistics makes use of large collections of texts to scientifically study the language used in texts and speech. Using corpus linguistics we are exploring the difference between novice and professional academic writers. This project is a continuation from a pilot study conducted in the Summer of 2014. Our aims were to complete a full corpus of novice academic writing in order to study the dynamics of novice academic writing and compare it to linguistic features commonly found in professional academic writing.

**PILOT STUDY**

**Corpus Specs**
- 200 papers tagged
- From WRIT 114 and 116
- 93% tagger accuracy
- Manual removal of citations, quotations, writer’s memos and other extraneous items
- Plaintext data output

Results and Speculations
- Low usage of hedges and downtoners in student writing despite higher usage in Professional Academic Writing according to research
- Higher usage of 2nd and 2nd person pronouns in WRIT 114 papers
- Based on data, speculations of transfer from secondary writing education and assumed formality constraints

**BACKGROUND RESEARCH**

**LINGUISTICS**

Academic Style vs News Style
- Passive Voice Frequency: Academic > News
- Nominalization Frequency: Academic > News
- Past Tense Frequency: Academic > News
- Linking Adverbial Frequency: Academic > News

News writing was used primarily to disperse large amounts of information while academic writing was more often used to analyze relationships between concepts.1

**WRITING EDUCATION**

Student writers advised to:
- Avoid passive voice in formal and academic writing
- Use verbs when possible as opposed to nominalizations
- Use present tense when writing in a formal or academic register
- Use linking adverbials in order to create smooth transitions
- Use prepositional phrases or subordinating conjunctions to describe time and place information

Information provided by Mary Gillis through conducted interviews and listed sources2

**CURRENT CORPUS**

**CORPUS SPECS**
- 1,395 Blugold Seminar Rhetorical Analysis Papers tagged
- Penn Treebank Project tagging conventions
- WRIT 114, 116, 118, and 120 utilized
- Automatic Removal of Citations, Quotations, Writer’s Memos and other extraneous items with detailed log of changes
- Microsoft excel file data output

**RESULTS AND SPECULATIONS**

**RESULTS**
- Student passive voice usage reflected that of professional news registers
- Student tense usage landed in between professional news and professional academic registers
- Student nominalization usage reflected professional news registers
- Student linking adverbial usage reflected professional academic registers, but focused on limited additive adverbials (i.e. also, so)
- Little to no significant difference between course levels

**SPECULATIONS**

Overall, students seem to write in a fashion that more resembles professional news writing, suggesting a higher exposure or value given to these writings and advice more consistent with this register. This also may indicate writing that is additive in nature rather than delve into deeper causal analysis. However it seems they are following educational expectations whether or not it conforms to features found in professional academic writing.

**ANALYSIS METHODS**

- Tagging of Brown Professional News Writing and Academic Writing Corpora through the same program as student corpus
- Comparison of student writing samples to academic and news corpora
- Analysis also split by WRIT level
- Features analyzed include: Nominalizations, Verb Tense, Passive Voice, Linking Adverbials (including type), Type-token ratio (Lexical Diversity), Noun Modifiers, Total Words, Total Sentences, Word and Sentence Length

**FUTURE QUESTIONS**

- Can different subtypes of linking adverbials show differences in analysis (i.e. additive vs. causal)?
- Do high-school students fully understand passive voice?
- Do students explicitly follow academic writing advice or internalize rules from educational examples?

**REFERENCES AND NOTES**

2 The Blugold Guide by Watson and Manning; The Purdue Online Writing Lab, ReadWriteThing.org; Pinterest.com; A Writer’s Reference by Hacker and Sommers