

## Corpora, phraseology and academic discourse

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If there is one major finding of modern corpus linguistic research over the past 40 years, it is probably that language is highly patterned. To a high degree, language is made up of fixed or semi-fixed units, and the co-selection of language items can be predicted on the basis of research findings in the areas of collocation and phraseology (see e.g. Sinclair 1991, 2004; Sinclair, Jones and Daley 1970/2004; Granger and Meunier 2008).

With reference to the seminal work of John Sinclair and other researchers in the field, this paper aims to emphasize the importance of phraseology in linguistic analysis. It will introduce a few corpus tools which enable researchers to carry out phraseological explorations of a selected text type or genre. The paper will thus demonstrate how corpora and corpus analytic techniques can provide insights into the patterned nature of language and highlight core meaningful units.

Since it is well known that there is a great deal of variation across registers (see, e.g., Biber 1988, Biber et al. 1999) and that meanings are expressed in different ways in different text types, it is suggested that the focus of our phraseological explorations be on subsets of language, or “restricted languages” in Firth’s 1956/1968 sense. In the corpus analyses I will focus on the restricted languages of academic speech and academic writing in different settings. I will discuss selected results from case studies that investigate (1) which phraseological items are most commonly used in different types of academic discourse, (2) how these items contribute to creating meanings in the discourse, and (3) how these items tend to be distributed across texts, hence highlighting instances of textual colligation (Hoey 2005). I believe that the findings may have important implications both for linguistic description and pedagogical practice.

## References

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