TEACHING ACADEMIC READING WITH AN APP

Christine Copy (UPPA)

Hortènsia Curell (UAB)

StratApp

- KA 2 (Erasmus +)

- **2016-1-ES01-KA203-025164.** *Gamifying Academic English Skills in Higher Education: Reading Academic English App (StratApp)*

- Aim: improve the English academic reading skills of university students

- December 2016 – September 2019

2016-1-ES01-KA203-025164. Gamifying Academic English Skills in
Higher Education: Reading Academic English App (StratApp)

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StratApp

- **Partners:**
  - Universitat Rovira i Virgili (URV)
  - Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB)
  - Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour (UPPA)
  - Wyzsza Szola Lingwistyczna (WSL)
  - Amistad ScP
  - Consorci de Serveis Universitaris de Catalunya (CSUC)

Phases of the project

1. Identification of reading skills and strategies

2. **Pedagogical design of the app**

3. Elaboration of the teacher's manual and online guide book

4. Development of the app for Android

5. Creation of the app Content Management System (CSM) and exploitation database

Lexical cohesion

- Repetition

- Synonyms

- Near synonyms

- Superordinates

- General words

- **Exercise**
  - **Which words in the text refer to the word *XXX*? Highlight them.**

Identification of antecedent of pronouns and demonstratives

- **Exercise**
  - A pronoun or demonstrative is highlighted.
  - **What is the antecedent of the highlighted word?**

Distinguish main ideas from supporting detail

- **Exercises**
  a) Matching exercises between ideas and detail (chunks from text).

  Match the each paragraph to the corresponding idea.

  b) Multiple choice questions.

  For each paragraph, which of these sentences best summarizes it?

  c) Identification of main ideas.

  Highlight all the sentences that express the main ideas of the text.
  [Once the sentences have all been identified, there will be a message making explicit where these sentences are located in the text (typically at the beginning of paragraphs).]

Identification of rhetorical patterns

- Comparison and contrast
- Cause and effect
- Chronological order
- Classification
- Process
- Definition

- **Exercise**
  - **Highlight the connectors that signal comparison or classification, etc.?**

Identification of heavy NPs

- **Exercises**
  a) Identifying whole NPs.
     Highlight the subject of this verb.
  b) Identifying the heads of NPs.
     Highlight the most important word in the NP.
  c) Multiple choice questions
     i. **Which of the following can replace the highlighted part?**
     ii. **Which of the following mean the same as the highlighted part?**

Identification of genre & register features

- The relevance of genre and register parameters has been acknowledged for text descriptions & teaching grammar:
  - Biber&Conrad (2001, 2009, 2012)
    - **Register**: a tool to identify and predict specific grammatical features
    - Identifying **register markers** & **grammatical routines** (vs other registers, *ie* register variation) as a way to improve teaching of lexico-grammatical features in the target language.
    - Importance of **patterns of co-occurrences** and **alternation patterns** for groups of linguistic features.

Relevant parameter to enhance reading comprehension?

- Present situation:
  - **Poor performance** of first-year undergraduate students in reading comprehension.
  - Prevents students from improving the language skills: previous research has proven that **knowledge of rhetorical organisation and conventions** of texts are crucial in L2 reading comprehension. (Fernández Toledo, Piedad. 2005)

Relevant parameter to enhance reading comprehension?

- Genre & register parameters hardly taken into account in **secondary school**.
  - Mostly **literature** & **informative** texts: specific linguistics features that do not fit the patterns of academic texts: restrains reading comprehension, such as:
    - topic-focus
    - passive / active orientation
    - etc

Academic texts on education: some specific features to focus on

- **Syntax**: basically **coordination**, a few **relative clauses** and some **reported speech**.
  - The role of an official language is today best illustrated by English, **which** now has some kind of special status in over seventy countries.
  - After the thirteenth century the process accelerated **and** the language of the Rom was transformed, sometimes profoundly.
  - She also **points out that** dogs may be a special case in responding to human language.

Academic texts on education: some specific features to focus on

- **Heavy NPs** and **indefinite subjects**.
  - **Retrospectives and predictions** were written in the same vein.
  - a language can be made a priority in **a country's foreign-language teaching system.**
- Use of **modal verbs**, basically epistemic modality.
  - Rico **may** be an exceptionally bright and studious dog, admits Fischer.
  - Surfing the web **can** expose them to a vast amount of knowledge.

Academic texts on education: some specific features to focus on

- **Parentheticals**
  - Nowadays, in spite of the common origin of the language, speakers of the Danubian, the western Balkan, the Finnish, the Italian, the Sinto or the British Romani dialects –**and this list is by no means exhaustive**–find it hard to understand one another.
- Many **subjects** are **inanimate**, but not all of them (animate subjects tend have a certain degree of **genericity**).
  - These kinds of statement seem so obvious that most **people** would give them hardly a second thought.

Academic texts on education: some specific features to focus on

- Extensive use of **passive forms**
  - However, no language has ever **been spoken** by a mother-tongue majority.

Methodology

- **Corpus-based** research
  - A **progression** from B1-B2
  - **Text samples** from press articles and from specialized papers
  - **Editing** them to emphasize the **genre and register features** if needed in order to target specific skills and knowledge

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Thank you!