

Tracking student progress through hospitality management education: a linguistic analysis.

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Language is one of the primary methods of human communication and nowhere is this more relevant than in the hospitality and tourism industries. Successful interpersonal and communication skills are essential to the effective operation of such enterprises. The Cambridge, Limerick and Shannon (CLAS) corpus provides an extensive resource from which to examine the reality of hospitality discourse as it pertains to hospitality management education.

The CLAS corpus is a compilation of approximately one million words of spoken discourse recorded in 2008 in a third-level Irish educational setting, a Community of Practice (Wenger, 1998) with its own distinctive footprint. This corpus is the result of a collaborative project between Shannon College of Hotel Management (SCHM), Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick (MIC) and Cambridge University Press (CUP) and it captures the discourse of both the academics (experts) and students (novices) across the full range of modules. The corpus will provide data on hospitality discourse which can inform pedagogical methodologies and applications.

Using Wenger's theoretical framework of Community of Practice (*ibid.*) and Classroom Discourse Analysis (Walsh, 2006, 2011), through the lens of corpus linguistics, we offer two interpretations of how this unique empirical data can be exploited. This paper aims to demonstrate how the discourse establishes, develops and supports the SCHM community of practice and, in addition, by specifically examining student oral presentations across various modules and years, a heretofore under-examined method of academic assessment, we discover how students actually use the discourse.

We investigate the discourse for particular linguistic features and patterns, for example, the use of deixis which is the language used to orient one speaker vis-à-vis the listener(s), in particular pronoun usage. This data can be compared with corpus data from both the academic community (MICASE) and the corporate community (CANBEC). We also analyse a sub-corpus of student oral presentations in terms of cohesion, information packaging and the different grammatical patterns used by native and non-native speakers.

This paper aims to provide a snapshot of the discourse located in the Irish hospitality education sector, demonstrating some of its unique linguistic features and offering suggestions as to how to interpret the data in terms of real and effective communication. This paper also aims to inform the industry about these results so as to disseminate the knowledge gained from this project and to assist the industry practitioners in understanding some effective communication strategies for dealing with clients, to ensure a true, heartfelt "céad mile fáilte".

Keywords: Hospitality education; discourse; corpus linguistics; community of practice; classroom discourse analysis; student presentations.