



BALEAP Conference 2017

***Launch, toolkit, lifesaver:*
the use of metaphors by students
and staff to conceptualise the role
of formulaic phrases**

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How important are formulaic phrases to academic writing?

- ‘it is impossible to perform at a level acceptable to native users ... without controlling an appropriate range of multiword units’ (Cowie, 1992: 10)
- ‘important building blocks of coherent discourse’ (Hyland, 2008: 8)
- Use of formulaic phrases reduces processing effort for the reader (Wray, 2002)

Pedagogic responses

- equip learners with an awareness of the nature of a typical native speaker's language production 'both in speech and in writing' (Howarth, 1998:186).
- adopt an explicit instructional approach (Jones and Haywood, 2004; Al Hassan & Wood, 2015; Peters & Pauwels, 2015).
- encourage and equip novice writers to be able to identify useful formulaic phrases in the texts they are reading and to recycle these in their own writing (Swales & Feak, 2004).
- provide writers with a list of commonly-used formulaic sequences for reference and incorporation into their own writing. (Simpson-Vlach & Ellis, 2010; Fox & Tigchelaar, 2015)

Aims of this study:

- Explore the views of student writers who use a list of academic phrases, and the views of staff supporting student writers
- Analyse the metaphors they used to describe this process

Why study the metaphors?

- ‘So many of the concepts that are important to us are either abstract or not clearly delineated... We need to get a grasp on them by means of other concepts we understand in clearer terms’ (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003: 115).

How important are metaphors to our thinking?

- ‘Metaphors structure the way we think and the way we act, and our systems of knowledge and belief, in a pervasive and fundamental way... metaphors are not just superficial stylistic adornments of discourse’ (Fairclough, 1992:194)

Our data collection method

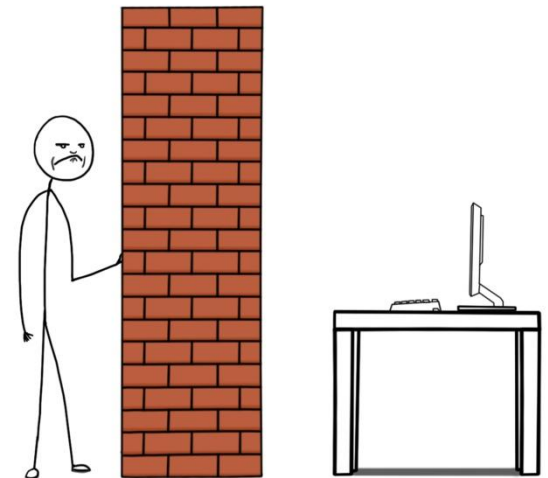
- Google survey attached to Academic Phrasebank (AP)
- 2,571 respondents to date
- Respondents = students (UG, PG, PhD) and staff (learning advisors, EAP lecturers, lecturers of other subjects), NS/NNS, based in the UK and many countries overseas
- 796 answered open question about how AP had helped them
- 100 (approx) used metaphors
- Follow-up interviews with 8 respondents

Our analysis

- Manual identifying of metaphors in open question responses to survey and interviews
- Confirming metaphor through checking against METALUDE database (Goatly, 2002)
- Interpretation of metaphor based on Goatly (root analogy, literal and metaphorical meaning) and our understanding of the context of respondent
- Grouping of metaphors based on academic writing process

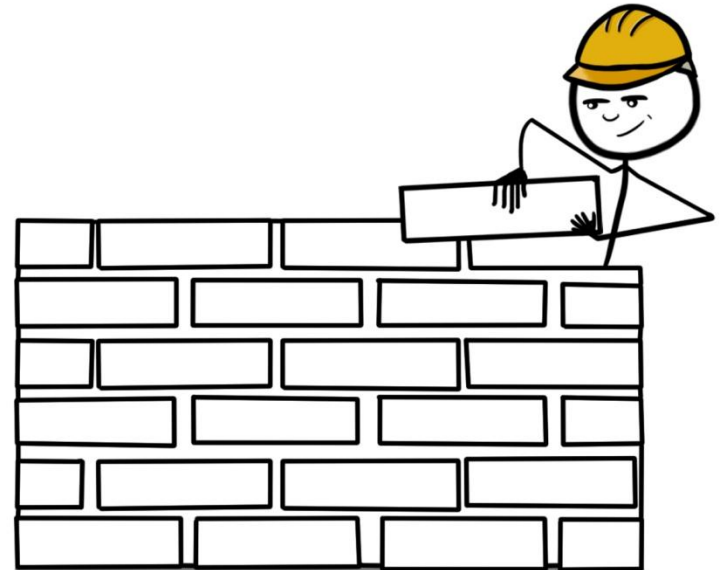
DIFFICULTY IS OBSTACLE

- I find that it helps with motivation when I am writing - If I feel stuck, or if I'm having **writers' block**, reading through the Phrasebank gives ideas of how to move on to the next part of my writing. (PG student, Social Sciences LI English)



ARGUMENT IS BUILDING

- AP helps to give them a starting point, and **build** that framework and the groundwork which is really important (EAP lecturer based in Malaysia, LI English)



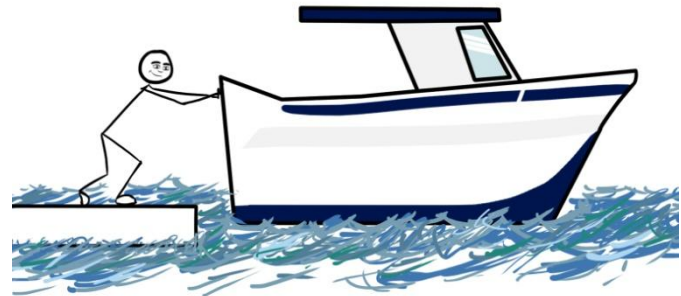
COMMUNICATION IS FLOW

- It has allowed fresh ideas on structuring my essay to let it **flow** easier and connect key themes while not repeating my writing throughout. (UG student, Medicine, LI English)



ACTIVITY IS BOAT TRAVEL

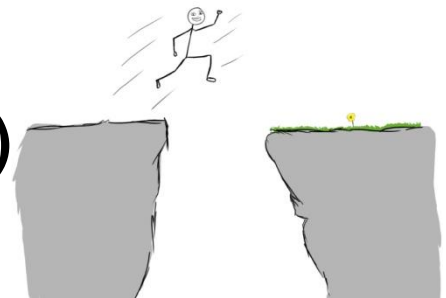
- They are **like a launch**. It is as if you are an artist with a blank canvas...Once you have started with the words moving along the line, the continuation is much, much easier (Dyslexic support advisor, Education, UK, LI English)



SUCCESS/CONTINUATION IS DISTANCE

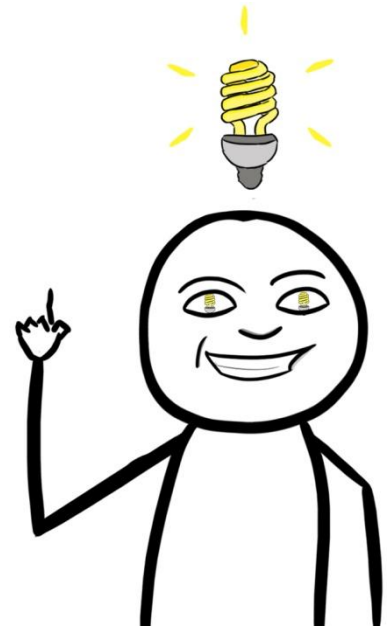
- I came across this structure for writing and it made the world of difference. I think it helped me order the disordered, as it were. It put a structure on everything. It gave it a logic, so it was easier to read. It gave a discipline to my writing. My writing improved in **leaps and bounds, leaps and bounds**. I think before, I tried to put across things that were far too complicated in a far too unstructured way, it just read like a mess

(PhD student, Education, LI English)



HAPPINESS/HOPE IS LIGHT

- Out of all the resources that I use, students' eyes always **light up** when I show them the AP. (Learning support advisor, Social Sciences, LI English)



VERBAL COMMUNICATION IS TRANSACTION

- When they see how they could phrase it, sometimes **the penny drops**, they get a sense of 'oh right, that's the sort of thing I should be saying'. In their feedback, sometimes the markers will say things like 'more discussion is needed' but the students are not sure what that would really look like, so I think it can help them pin a more abstract concept onto something more specific (Learning advisor, Education, LI English, UK)



INFLUENCE/CONTROL IS LEAD/GUIDE

- I think it certainly does help with ideas because there are examples, like 'the argument is not valid because x'... it might even help them **steer** the content of an entire paragraph at times in a certain way. (Learning advisor, Education, USA LI German)



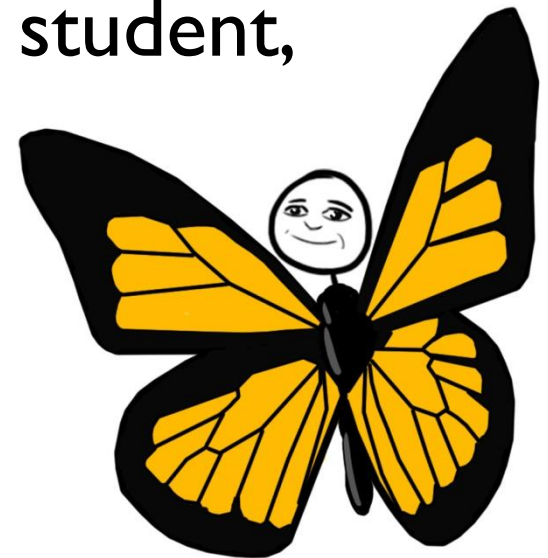
ORGANISATION/SYSTEM IS MACHINE

- Phrasebank has de-shrouded the mechanics of academic language formulae. Prior to phrasebank no one had explained the strategy of having phrases on a page to contribute to the structure of a paragraph. It also demystified the concept of academic rigour and gave me practical **tools** to approach structuring critical arguments quickly and efficiently. (PG student, Social Sciences, LI English)



QUALITY IS SHAPE/SIZE

- Phrasebank has **transformed** my life. It has given me confidence in my academic writing, which accumulated into gaining confidence in other areas of my academic work such as presentations and therefore in myself as a person (PG student, Education, other LI)



Metaphor groups

Unblocking

- Writer's block
- Stuck
- Flow

Constructing

- Build
- Tool
- Framework

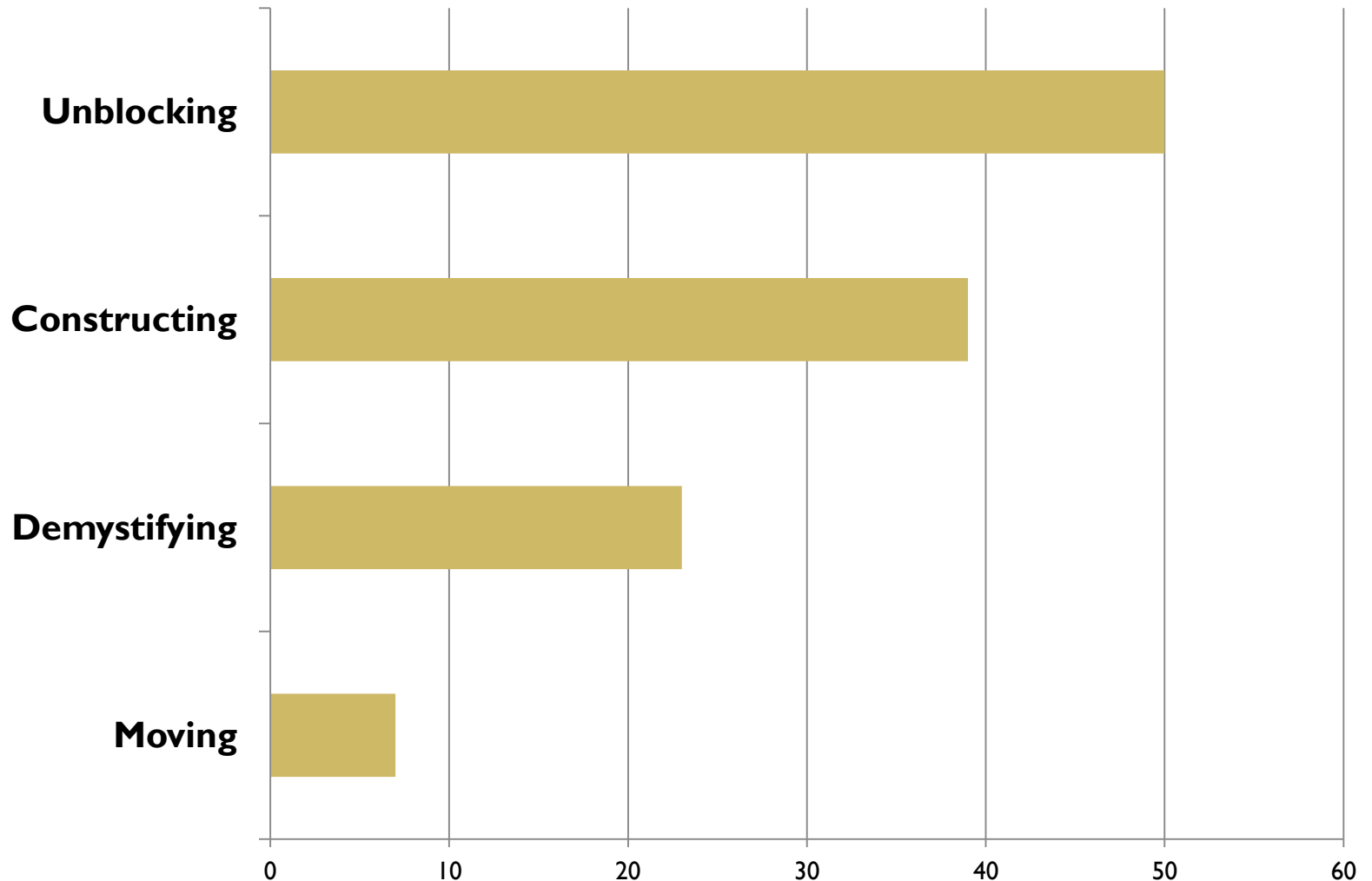
Moving

- Steer
- Launch
- Leaps and bounds

Demystifying

- Light
- Transform
- The penny drops

Instances metaphors were used by category



Metaphor groups and the writing process

Unblocking

- Getting started, articulating, gaining confidence, avoiding repetition

Moving

- Being productive and creative, focusing on continuous writing, connecting to rhetorical moves, establishing a direction

Constructing

- Organising, following a given structure, CARS model (Swales, 1981)

Demystifying

- Understanding how to write, coping

Conclusion

- A well-structured set of formulaic phrases can help student writers
- Attention needed to phraseology in academic writing courses
- Metaphors give insights into the kinds of problems student writers face
- Metaphors can be used to inform teaching of academic writing

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