Using multi-word units to take a stance in academic lectures

ABSTRACT

For years, word sequences which tend to co-occur have been studied under different terms, such as phraseology, chunks, n-grams and lexical bundles. Lexical bundles in the main are referred to as extended collocations which are used more frequently that we expect by chance. They are building blocks of discourse which have three main functions. Among them, stance expressions appear to be frequently used in academic discourse to reflect the speaker or writersø attitudes towards different propositions. With this idea in mind, the present study aims to portray the use of stance expressions in academic lectures to find out the discourse functions that the stance bundles serve. To this aim, the most frequent stance expressions in six English lectures taken from the British Academic Spoken English (BASE) corpus were studied and analyzed in order to see to what extent stance expressions are used and how English lecturers use them. Results revealed that lecturers deployed 62 different word combinations to carry out stance functions. Among the functions, attitudinal/modality stance bundles were found to be more used ó about twice as many as the epistemic stance bundles which was next in the hierarchy. Most of the stance expressions found in the corpus of the study were of personal rather than impersonal. The study of stance expressions in lectures delivered in English could provide insights into the significance of lexical bundles as building blocks of academic discourse in the context of their communicative functions.