

# 'From doing to being: Process type as indication of purpose in academic business reports'

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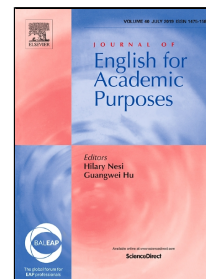
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*'From doing to being: Process type as indication of purpose in academic Business reports'*

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## INTRODUCTION

Halliday’s concepts of transitivity and register (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014) have been used in a wide variety of contexts to demonstrate differences in how writers express their ideas for different purposes and for different audiences. A central distinction in Halliday’s theory is the difference between expressing reality as a series of ‘happenings’ made up of material clauses and concrete participants (HMV *launched* 50 new products in 2012), and discourse which connects more abstract concepts through the use of relational processes (HMV’s 2012 product launch of 50 new products *was* successful). Halliday (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014: 710) describes this as a process of ‘reifying’ the discourse, with relational clauses and more abstract nominalised participants often found in professional, scientific and administrative discourse (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014: 262). This is also often seen as evidence of a more sophisticated and developed style of writing (Derewianka 2003; Donohue 2012; Liardet 2016).

This Researching EAP Practice paper examines how changes implemented to an assessed Business report assignment (Nathan 2010; 2013; Nesi & Gardner 2012: 188-201; Yeung 2007) on an EAP support module at a modern UK university resulted in differences in the register of student writing, going from ‘congruent’ writing dominated by concrete actors and material processes in the student writing in the original version of the business task, to more ‘metaphorical’ discourse containing a higher proportion of abstract participants and relational verbs in the second group of students’ response to the adapted assessment (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014: 707-712; Thompson 2014: 233-246).

Changes were made to the EAP coursework task in order to bring the assignment closer to the types of tasks that had been observed on one of the students’ core Business modules (*Cross-Cultural Management*). These changes were made to the EAP task in order to provide more specific, or ESAP (Hyland 2002), guidance to the student writers. It was hoped that this more focused support would help the students to understand and succeed in their main Business assignment tasks.

This paper focuses on the ‘Analysis’ or ‘Findings’ section of the student Business reports as this is the part of the task in which students describe and analyse the target company using appropriate processes and participants, to construe the ‘field’ (Eggins 2004; Halliday & Matthiessen 2014; Thompson 2014) of their findings, and in which a transitivity analysis is most revealing in terms of how the target company is represented. Changes in classroom input and the assessment task are presented, and a sample of ‘successful’ student writing (defined as writing which achieved a grade of over sixty percent) is compared across the two academic years (2016-2017 and 2017-2018), to show how making EAP tasks more similar to disciplinary assessments can result in differences in the register that student writers use to analyse the company as the object of study.

It should be noted at this point that this paper focuses on a single second-year module delivered to two different groups of students in two separate academic years (2016-2017 and 2017-2018). The focus here is on how the task and classroom input resulted in registerial differences in how two different groups of students described the target company, rather than on how individual students’ writing changed or developed.

## ACADEMIC WRITING FOR BUSINESS

The ‘case study’ (Nesi & Gardner 2012: 188) written genre is a very common form of assessment set on Business modules at UK universities. This genre has been defined as texts which ‘analyse an exemplar in order to demonstrate or develop an understanding of professional practice’ (Nesi & Gardner 2012: 189). Students also give advice or recommendations based on this analysis. In the context of academic writing for Business, the ‘exemplar’ is generally a company or organisation provided to the students in the form of a case study.

Student business reports have a ‘move structure’ (Swales 1990) based around the principal obligatory elements of an *orientation / introduction*; an *analysis* divided into sections, and *recommendations* (Nathan 2010; 2013). These sections are always divided up by headings and sub-headings and may often contain visual elements such as flow charts or tables. There may also be occasional optional sections such as a reflection, conclusion or a brief methodology (Nathan 2010; 2013).

Nesi and Gardner (2012: 191-194) identify a division in case study writing for Business between *company reports* and *organisation analyses* (a third less common genre of *single*

*issue* reports is not considered here). *Company reports* are characterised by role-playing elements in which students take on the identity of professional consultants writing to the ostensible audience of the company in the case study. These features include elements such as writing under a different identity or invented name, including business cards and addresses for the imagined consultancy, and addressing the whole report to the ‘board’ of the company. The focus of a *company report* is often to address an immediate problem or difficulty facing the business, and to give practical *recommendations* to enable the company to improve its current predicament.

In contrast, in *organisation analyses* the role-playing element is either absent or downplayed, with students’ writing directed at the ‘true audience’ of the business lecturer. The main aim of the student writer is to demonstrate their knowledge of key business theories and concepts. There is therefore an increased emphasis on the *analysis* section of the report in which students demonstrate their understanding of Business analytical models such as *PEST* (political, economic, social and technological factors external to the company) or *SWOT* (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) (Gardner 2012; Nesi & Gardner 2012: 191-194).

The nature of case studies provided to students may also partly explain this difference in emphasis between analysing and advising. In *organisation analyses* these case studies may be quite old, arguably reducing the rhetorical need to provide immediate advice. This also gives an indication of the purpose of *organisation analyses* as set by Business lecturers. Interviews which I have conducted with subject lecturers suggest that these academics are mainly interested in the strength of the students’ knowledge and familiarity with business theory, as opposed to providing immediate practical solutions.

These differences show us that whilst these written genres may appear similar in terms of their overall structure, that the purposes and audience of the two assessment types may in fact vary significantly. Table 1 below summarises some of these main differences.

**Table 1.** Overview of company reports and organisation analyses (see Gardner 2012 for a fuller discussion)

COMPANY REPORTS	ORGANISATION ANALYSES
Student writes as consultant	Student writes as student
Company as audience	Lecturer as audience
Practical focus	Theoretical focus

Emphasis on recommendations	Emphasis on analysis
Professional register	Academic register

## THE LOCAL ACADEMIC CONTEXT

This research took place in a large modern UK university, and is based on the assessment tasks set on a 2<sup>nd</sup> year EAP for Business module which supports international students studying for an International Business degree.

It is worth noting that this EAP module is embedded into the students' degree, is credit-bearing and sets its own assessments. This may be quite different to other contexts, in which EAP teams work with students on assignments already set on main subject modules, or to pre-sessional courses in which EAP teachers deliver classes to students from different academic disciplines. This also has an impact on the type of tasks that are designed by the EAP team, as there is a degree of freedom and discussion around the extent to which EAP tasks should exactly mirror subject assignments.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> year module which is the focus of this Researching EAP Practice paper is relatively new. It was established in the academic year 2016-2017, as an extension of a similar larger 3<sup>rd</sup> year EAP for Business module. The 2<sup>nd</sup> year module was designed to accommodate students on a '2+2' programme, in which students complete 2 years in their home institution as foundation and 1<sup>st</sup> year students, and then 2 years in the UK as 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year undergraduates. In the first year (2016-2017) of this new module student numbers were very small, with only 6 students enrolled. This grew slightly in the second year of this study (2017-2018) with 18 students in the January 2018 group.

As module leader of the new 2<sup>nd</sup> year programme, I made the decision to change the EAP case study assessed task for the January 2018 group so that it was more similar to the type of coursework that students complete on their main modules. The 2<sup>nd</sup> year students all concurrently complete a mandatory main subject module on 'Cross-Cultural Management', and I made changes to the teaching and learning in the EAP classes to link teaching and learning more closely to this module. The following section gives an indication of how classroom input and the assessment task changed over the two academic years (2016-2017 and 2017-2018) of this study.

In the first year (2016-2017) the case study coursework focused on the British company *HMV*. *HMV* is a long established feature of the British High Street and sells music CDs and vinyl along with computer games, DVDs and audio equipment. However, in recent years, as more and more music listeners switch to downloads and streaming it has fallen on hard times. This seemed to be an interesting company to analyse and advise. It was thought that it would also appeal to students, as young people traditionally represent *HMV*'s main target market.

The classroom material below shows how the assignment was presented in class in 2016-2017. Students were familiarised with the store, and were asked to discuss why these types of business are currently facing difficulties. A short news report was presented with questions, along with a graph showing the decline of physical music media versus downloading and streaming. Finally, a journalistic stimulus text (taken from *The Economist* 2013) was provided as the main 'case study'.

**Fig. 1.** Classroom material delivered in the year one version of the task.

At the end of the end of the class the assignment brief was set, as shown below.

**Fig. 2.** Assignment brief set in the original (2016-2017) version of the task

The classroom material and the assessment task show that in the original version of the task that the focus was on a company in immediate danger. Students were asked to identify practical problems in the analysis and provide advice to prevent the company from going out of business in their recommendations. These features seem to fulfil many of the criteria of a *company report* (Nesi & Gardner 2012: 191-194).

In the revised version of the task, changes were made to the assessment in order to bring the teaching and learning closer to the *organisation analyses* (Nesi & Gardner 2012: 191-194) that had been observed on the learners' main Cross-Cultural Management module. I felt that whilst the more practical *company report* type assessment set in 2016-2017 was useful and engaging, that students needed more practice in using the business theories and models that seemed to be so key to success on their Cross-Cultural subject module.



The classroom material below shows how the emphasis of the business report changed in the revised version of the assessment.

**Fig. 3.** Hofstede's 4 dimensions of culture. Given as classroom material in the revised 2017-2018 version of the task (Collinson et.al. 2012).

The extract in figure 3 above shows how Business theories and models were brought into the EAP classroom. In this activity students were asked to read a brief overview of a Business cultural theory that had been covered in their Cross-Cultural subject module. They were then asked to compare their findings with another student who had read about a different theory (see figure 4 below), an activity known as a 'jigsaw reading' in English Language Teaching.

**Fig. 4.** Classroom activity in revised 2017-2018 assessment. 'Jigsaw reading' based on cross-cultural theories.

Following this, students were asked to apply aspects of the models to various invented business situations. This task was designed to check whether students had understood the theories and how they could be applied to real-life problems. Some of these invented situations are given in figure 5 below.

**Fig. 5.** Application of theories to business situations. Classroom activity in 2017-2018.

The stimulus case study was then given in class (see figure 6) and the assignment brief was set (figure 7). The case study was taken from the students' core *International Business* textbook, as opposed to the journalistic source provided in year one. The situation in the textbook case study corresponds more closely to the cultural theories taught on the subject module, and is directly related to different aspects of cross-cultural difficulties faced by multi-national business operations. It should also be noted that the events in the textbook case study occurred over 20 years ago, which makes the situation less immediate and less readily amenable to providing immediate advice to solve a current predicament.

**Fig. 6.** *Pharmacia and UpJohn* case study. Stimulus text for adapted 2017-2018 assignment (Collinson et.al.2012)

Finally, the students were given the assignment brief for the business report (Figure 7). It can be seen that the main elements and organisation of the report remained unchanged from the original version of the task, but that students in the adapted assignment were instructed to engage with business theories and models in order to complete their analysis of specific cross-cultural difficulties outlined in the case study.

**Fig. 7.** Assignment brief set in the revised (2017-2018) version of the task.

## METHOD

Assessed student writing was investigated by an analysis of process and participant types in a sample of student writing across the two years of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year module (2016-2017 and 2017-2018). This paper only focuses on the *analysis* section of the reports as this is the section of the report in which student writers describe the company by selecting appropriate participants, processes and circumstances. These choices made by student writers constitute the ‘field’ of the discourse (Eggins 2004; Halliday & Matthiessen 2014; Thompson 2014). The purpose of my analysis was to establish how the register of student writing had changed in response to the linguistic demands of the revised task.

In order to compare the field of student analyses across the two versions of the report task, a sample of student writing was selected in the two academic years (2016-2017 and 2017-2018). The focus in this paper is on successful student writing, which has been defined in the BAWE corpus (Nesi & Gardner 2012) and here as undergraduate writing which received a mark of over sixty percent (a 2:1 or 1<sup>st</sup> class mark in the UK system). In the first occurrence of the module (2016-2017), only six students were enrolled on the module, and of these only three had achieved a mark of over sixty percent. In the second year of the module (2017-2018) three texts were selected as successful attempts, achieving a mark of over sixty percent. This provided a data set of equal size across the two versions of the task.

The composition of the sample texts are shown in table 2 below.

**Table 2.** Sample text composition. Original (2016-2017) and revised (2017-2018) assignment texts.

ORIGINAL	‘ANALYSIS’	CLAUSES	REVISED	‘ANALYSIS’	CLAUSES
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TASK	WORD COUNT		TASK	WORD COUNT	
Text 1	531	56	Text 4	637	66
Text 2	664	74	Text 5	542	53
Text 3	705	78	Text 6	638	66
TOTAL	1900	208	TOTAL	1817	185

In order to identify process and participant types, the analysis sections of the six texts were separated from the rest of the reports and main clauses were identified. After this had been completed verbal groups were assigned a process type according to Halliday's (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014) transitivity categories (see table 3 below). Nominal groups (subject and object in traditional grammars) were assigned a participant role<sup>1</sup>.

**Table 3.** Process type and participant roles (Eggins 2004; Halliday and Matthiessen 2014; Thompson 2014).

Process Type	Participant Role	Participant Role
Material	Actor	Goal / Scope
Relational (attributive / identifying)	Carrier / Token	Attribute / Value
Existential		Existent
Mental	Senser	Phenomenon
Verbal	Sayer	Verbiage
Behavioural	Behaver	Behaviour

An example of this process is shown in table 4 below. In this example the main clause has been classified as containing a verbal process with a *sayer* (*the director of economics*) and something that this person said (the *verbiage*). The embedded clauses in the verbiage have been pulled out and shown in italics, with the participants and processes within it re-analysed. In my results, all of these processes (main and embedded) have been counted and given equal weight.

**Table 4.** Example of process and participant analysis from the student samples.

Director of economics at Spotify	said	"Very few of HMV's customers only ever purchase music from HMV. Everyone knows and already uses an alternative".
<b>Sayer</b>	<b>Process:verbal</b>	<b>Verbiage</b>
<i>"Very few of</i>	<i>purchase</i>	<i>music</i>

<sup>1</sup> Thompson (2014 91-144) provides an excellent and very 'user-friendly' guide to conducting this kind of analysis.

<i>HMV's customers</i>		
<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process: material</b>	
<i>Everyone</i>	<i>knows</i>	
<b>Senser</b>	<b>Process: mental</b>	
	<i>uses</i>	<i>an alternative".</i>
	<b>Process: material</b>	<b>Goal</b>

The process types were then counted manually in each text and presented as a percentage of the total.

In order to give a fuller ideational profile of student writing it is also worthwhile to categorise participants in the discourse. In SFL terms participants are labelled in relation to their corresponding process type, so material processes have *actors* and *goals* or *scopes*, and mental processes have *sensors* or *phenomena*. However, it is also of interest to discover whether students are writing about real / concrete people or things (*The director of the company / HMV*) or whether they are focusing on abstract entities (*The share price; the power of buyers*). Within the abstract entities it is also of interest to identify whether students are writing about common-sense, everyday phenomena (the *media*) or more technical / specialized ideas (for example *power-distance*), and whether concrete participants are specific (*HMV, the company*) or generic (*shoppers, companies*).

This ‘technical’ or ‘common-sense’ distinction is a focus for many writers and researchers working in an SFL framework (see Eggins 2004: 107 for example) as it is a key element in building up the *field* of discourse. However, it is quite a difficult concept to operationalise as a researcher. The process is to some extent subjective, as some business terms may have an every-day *and* a technical meaning. For example, most people would probably have a working knowledge of a term such as *inflation*, but may not have the exact and precise understanding of a subject expert.

Table 5 below shows how participants were coded in the samples of student writing. Examples are also given to demonstrate and exemplify each category. In the results, all participants in the clauses have been counted and classified according to these four categories. ‘Subject’ (Actor, Senser, Carrier, Token) and ‘object’ (Goal, Phenomenon, Attribute, Value) participants have been counted equally in the results.

**Table 5.** Participant categories in the writing samples.

<b>CONCRETE - SPECIFIC</b>	HMV, Amazon; iTunes; YouTube; The Americans; The Italians
<b>CONCRETE – GENERIC</b>	Shoppers, Music listeners; managers
<i>ABSTRACT - GENERAL</i>	Share price, Sales, Piracy; customer service; decisions; obstacles
<i>ABSTRACT - TECHNICAL</i>	Customer buying behaviour; administration; non-substitutability; market influence; customer churn; power distance; uncertainty avoidance; masculinity; Trompenaar's seven dimensions of culture

Once process types and participants were coded they were counted manually and recorded. The results are presented as a percentage of the total clauses or participants to take account of the different word lengths between the texts.

## RESULTS

### PROCESS AND PARTICIPANT TYPE IN THE TWO TASKS

This section presents results which demonstrate differences in the register of student writing across the two versions of the assessment task.

**Table 6.** Process types in student writing in the original (2016-2017) and adapted task (2017-2018).

	<b>ORIGINAL TASK</b>	<b>(HMV) ADAPTED (PHARMACIA) TASK</b>
<b>Material</b>	138 (67%)	81 (44%)
<b>Relational: attributive</b>	37 (18%)	69 (37%)
<b>Relational: identifying</b>	6 (3%)	6 (3%)
<b>Existential</b>	5 (2%)	1 (1%)
<b>Verbal</b>	15 (7%)	15 (8%)
<b>Mental</b>	7 (3%)	13 (7%)
<b>Total clauses</b>	208	185

Table 6 shows that material processes dominated in student writing in response to the original HMV assignment, comprising nearly 70 per cent of all processes analysed. However, in the adapted 'Pharmacia' version of the task students used material processes much less frequently, at around 40 per cent of the total. The use of relational processes also constitutes a major difference in student writing in the two versions of the assignment. These processes were used in just over 20 per cent of clauses in the first version of the task ('HMV')

assignment), but were present in 40 per cent of clauses in the revised version ('Pharmacia' task).

Table 7 categorises participant types in the two versions of the Business report. These participants were matched to the four participant categories provided in table 5 in the Method section above. The first number in the table shows the total amount of participants that were matched to this category in the sample of texts. The second figure shows this as a percentage of the total participants identified in that version of the task. The two columns show how participant types varied in student writing across the two versions of the report task.

**Table 7.** Participant type by category in the two versions of the task

	<b>ORIGINAL (HMY) TASK PARTICIPANT TYPE</b>	<b>ADAPTED (PHARMACIA) TASK PARTICIPANT TYPE</b>
Concrete - specific	92 (27%)	112 (35%)
Concrete - generic	99 (29%)	39 (12%)
Abstract – general	134 (39%)	120 (37%)
Abstract technical -	18 (5%)	52 (16%)
Total participants identified	343	323

Table 7 shows that concrete actors remained important in the revised 'Pharmacia' assignment, reflecting the applied and practical nature of Business tasks, but that there was a lower proportion of generic actors. There was also an increase in more technical and subject-specific participants. Along with the difference in process type presented in table 6, these changes in participant resulted in a marked difference in the register (field) that student writers used to describe and analyse the company, as shown in the following examples.

The extracts below show typical student writing in response to the original HMY assignment brief. The extracts in figure 8 show that student writers in this version of the task often referred to concrete actors (*customers, people*) and their material actions (*choose, buy*).

**Fig. 8.** Sample student writing in the original HMY task.

The following examples from the adapted 'Pharmacia' version of the task show that concrete actors remained important, but that these were often given abstract attributes through the use of relational processes. Student writing in the second year task suggests a difference from describing what people or things *did*, towards what they *are* or *have*.

**Fig. 9.** Sample student writing in adapted Pharmacia task

These examples demonstrate that there was a notable difference in successful student writing in response to the two different types of task. In the original 'HMV' *company report* the student writers predominantly used concrete generic actors, such as '*consumers*' and material processes, such as '*buy*' or '*choose*' in a 'congruent' way (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014:709) to describe immediate real life activity relevant to the stimulus company (HMV). The focus of the writing was on activities and problems currently affecting the company, and the rhetorical purpose was to lead towards the practical advice offered to the business by the student writer.

In the adapted *organisation analysis* version of the assignment, students responded to the brief and classroom input by engaging with cultural theories to ascribe values to particular groups and to generalise about information provided in the case study. Student writers used a higher proportion of relational processes and a wider use of more abstract and technical participants to achieve these aims. This resulted in a more metaphorical and 'reified' (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014: 710) register used to analyse the company in the modified 'Pharmacia' version of the assessment task.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This short Researching EAP Practice paper has shown how attempts by EAP tutors to bring EAP tasks and assessment closer to disciplinary writing can result in student writing which is less concerned with the 'here and now' of material processes and concrete actors, towards discourse which categorises and evaluates more abstract participants through the use of relational processes (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014: 707-712). Halliday's theory of transitivity shows us that teaching and engaging with subject specific discourse is more than learning subject specific terminology, but that disciplinary discourse is encoded in the lexico-

grammar as student writers learn to express themselves less congruently and more metaphorically. This realization should be seen as an empowering one for EAP professionals, as they are well-placed as applied linguists to identify and explain these differences to their students.

Engagement with Halliday's theories can therefore help EAP tutors move away from a slightly fearful approach to subject specific discourse, towards one in which they are able to 'add value' in the language classroom. In the EAP for Business classroom teachers can draw students' attention towards *organisation analyses* which engage with relevant business theory through the use of relational processes and abstract participants as opposed to a more congruent use of material processes and concrete participants in *company reports* (Nesi & Gardner 2012: 191-194). Classroom activities could be developed to show how information can be 'packed' or 'unpacked' in business reports, and the effect that this has on the presentation of ideas in academic business discourse (Eggins 2004:99; Halliday & Matthiessen 2014: 709-731; Thompson 2014: 234-246).

This paper differs from other research into the use of material or relational processes in student writing, in that it has not presented abstract and relational writing as necessarily better or more advanced than more congruent discourse (Donohue 2012; Liardet 2013), but has instead suggested that it is a different kind of writing, in response to a different kind of task and classroom stimulus. Again, this can be seen as empowering for the EAP teacher, as it suggests that the material we present and the tasks we set have a real and tangible effect on the language choices of our students in achieving their disciplinary objectives.

The small sample size of the student writing has to be seen as a limitation of this short practice-based paper, and the results have to be seen as indicative of *possible* differences in student writing, which should be tested against a larger corpus of student writing. It is hoped that in the future I may be able to test some of these findings against a larger data set by using specific corpus annotation programmes such as the UAM tool.

The question of how 'real-world' (realised through material process types and concrete participants) or 'theoretical' (realised through relational processes and abstract participants) business reports should be gets to the heart of much of the research into academic writing for Business (Forman and Rymer 1999; Freedman et.al. 1994; Gruber 2004; Yeung 2007), and other applied subjects such as Engineering (Dannels 2000; Conrad 2018), Law (Maclean 2010) or Nursing (Parks 2001). Space has precluded a full discussion of these issues, but the



main thrust of this research into these applied disciplines suggests that writing in the academy is not practical enough and that students would like their tasks to be more practical and reflective of the real world. This paper should be seen as a slight counter to this argument, as it seems that engagement with theory and disciplinary concepts realised through relational clauses and abstract participants helps to engage and challenge students, and can mitigate against a simple description of events dominated by concrete participants and material processes. Halliday's ground-breaking theories (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014) provide a rigorous framework for EAP tutors to explain and exemplify these differences, and can be used by teachers to help our students succeed in expressing their ideas in the most appropriate way for the academic tasks they encounter in their studies.

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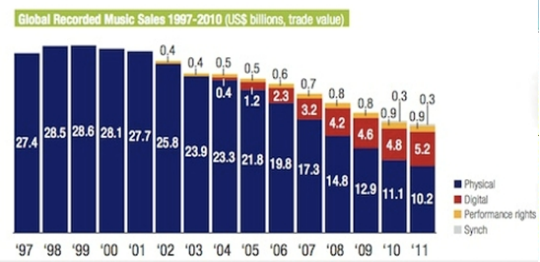
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Have you seen this shop in the UK?

What products do they sell?

Why are shops like this facing difficulties at the moment?



• <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rqefour5zqQ>

- HMV is about to go.....
- How long has HMV been in business? How many people does it employ?
- What are the possibilities for the store in the future?
- Is HMV the only High Street store to face difficulties?
- Which main competitors are mentioned?

## Don't stop the music

### The closure of a high-street retailer shakes a proud export industry

Jan 19th 2013 | *Economist*, the print edition

COUNTLESS teenagers have flipped through its racks of vinyl albums and CDs. But, after 91 years, the music seems to have ended for HMV, by far Britain's biggest brick-and-mortar music shop—or at least moved into an unpredictable coda, in a minor key.

**Fig. 1.** Classroom material delivered in the year one version of the task.

Imagine you are working as an independent business consultant and that you have been asked by the board of HMV to provide them with some advice.

Write a clear and detailed report of 1000-1200 words. The report must contain:

- 1) a title and contents page
- 2) all other main sections used in a business report, as discussed in class
- 3) an analysis of the problems faced
- 4) recommendations for action
- 5) a list of references

**Fig. 2.** Year One 'HMV' assignment brief

- 1 **Power distance** is the extent to which a culture accepts that power in organizations is distributed unequally. High power distance equates with steep organizational hierarchies, with more autocratic leadership and less employee participation in decision making (see Figure 5.2 for examples).
- 2 **Uncertainty avoidance** is the degree to which members of a society feel uncomfortable with risk and uncertainty. High uncertainty avoidance (Japan, Argentina, France) will be reflected in the high priority placed on rituals, routines, and procedures in organizations and society in general. Countries with low uncertainty avoidance (Denmark, UK, India, US) tend to emphasize flexibility and informality rather than bureaucracy.
- 3 **Individualism** is the extent to which people are supposed to take care of themselves and be emotionally independent from others (see Figure 5.2 for examples).
- 4 **Masculinity** is the value attributed to achievement, assertiveness, and material success (Japan, Mexico, Germany, UK) as opposed to the stereotypical feminine values of relationships, modesty, caring, and the quality of life (Sweden, Netherlands, Denmark), according to Hofstede.

**Fig. 3.** Hofstede's 4 dimensions of culture. Given as classroom material in year two (Collinson et.al. 2012)

- 1) How did the researcher get their information?
- 2) What were the main findings?
- 3) How are the dimensions measured?
- 4) Which countries are mentioned in the theory?
- 5) Do you agree with the representation of the different countries?

Now find someone from the other groups and compare the different theories

**Fig. 4.** Classroom activity in year two. 'Jigsaw reading' based on cross-cultural theories.

Situation	Aspect of theory / theories	Countries where this might happen or might be a problem
A successful saleswoman is given a 5% bonus, but the rest of her team is not.		
A senior manager asks you to come and play golf at a country hotel at the weekend. You had planned to spend the weekend with your family.		
One of your employees has asked for an extra 5 days holiday as it is his father's 80 <sup>th</sup> birthday.		

**Fig. 5.** Application of theories to business situations. Classroom activity in year two.

## ACTIVE LEARNING CASE



## Cultures clash as big pharma gets bigger

A series of international mergers has made Pfizer one of the largest pharmaceutical firms in the world. In the process the firm has had to incorporate, integrate, and adapt to a wide range of different national cultures as it has absorbed new acquisitions into its expanding organization. We start the story with the merger of two firms, Pharmacia AB of Sweden (with operations in Italy) and Upjohn Company of the United States, which went through a steep cultural learning curve over 20 years ago, before being acquired in turn by Pfizer.

tight budget control, and frequent staffing updates, which clashed with the Swedish organization style. Swedish managers would leave meetings disgruntled, having been overruled by US executives keen to push their vision of the merged company.

The Swedes' own ways of doing things had already clashed with the Italian style of management, following the takeover of Farmitalia (part of Montedison) by Pharmacia in 1993. Italians are used to a distinctive division between workers

Fig. 6. Pharmacia and UpJohn case study. Stimulus text for year two assignment (Collinson et.al.2012)

Imagine you are working as an independent business consultant and have been asked to write a report to give advice to the newly merged company. The report should focus on two areas:

- An analysis of the *cultural difficulties* facing the company (italics added)
- Recommendations on how to address these issues

Write a clear and detailed report of 1250 words. The report must contain:

- 1) a title and contents page
- 2) the main sections used in a business report, as discussed in class
- 3) an analysis of the main problems facing the company *using appropriate theories and models* (italics added)
- 4) recommendations for action which address the issues raised in (3)
- 5) a list of references

Fig. 7. Assignment brief set in year two.

Student 1) Very few HMV customers (**ACTOR – CONCRETE GENERIC**) today buy (**PR:MATERIAL**) music (**GOAL - ABSTRACT GENERAL**).

Student 2) People (**ACTOR – CONCRETE GENERIC**) can choose (**PR:MATERIAL**) the song which they like (**GOAL - CONCRETE SPECIFIC**).

Student 3) Most of them (**ACTOR – CONCRETE GENERIC**) will choose (**PR:MATERIAL**) Amazon, Apple or Spotify (**GOAL - CONCRETE SPECIFIC**).

**Fig. 8.** Sample student writing in year one HMV task.

- Student 1) The United States (*CARRIER: POSSESSOR: CONCRETE SPECIFIC*) has (*PR: RELATIONAL: ATTRIBUTIVE*) a higher masculinity score (*ATTRIBUTE: POSSESSED: ABSTRACT TECHNICAL*) of 91
- Student 2) The US (*IDENTIFIED: POSSESSOR: CONCRETE SPECIFIC*) is (*PR: RELATIONAL: IDENT.*) one of the most Universalist countries (*IDENTIFIER: ABSTRACT TECHNICAL*) in the world.
- Student 3) Italy (*CARRIER: CONCRETE SPECIFIC*) scored (*PR:RELATIONAL: ATTRIBUTIVE*) 50% (*ATTRIBUTE: ABSTRACT TECHNICAL*) in a power distance category.

**Fig. 9.** Sample student writing in year two Pharmacia task

Author Biography:

James is an EAP lecturer at Coventry University. He mainly teaches international students enrolled on Business degrees and he is currently studying for his PhD at The University of Birmingham, and is interested in systemic functional linguistic, genre analytic and corpus based approaches to the study of discourse in academic and professional contexts.