

MASARYK UNIVERSITY
Dept. of Foreign Languages

POSTGRADUATE ACADEMIC WRITING COURSE

SESSION 1

1. WELCOME

- Structure of the course

- Important dates

Aims:

- to present basic principles of academic writing in the context of postgraduate studies
- to practice and peer review writing (react to an expert review)
- to engage postgraduate students in discussion of issues in academic writing

2. INTRODUCTION

Work in pairs. Find a person you don't know and introduce yourselves to each other. Feel free to take notes as you will be asked to introduce that person (name; dept.; research area) to the whole group.

(John Morgan, 2007)

3. RESEARCH INTRODUCTION

Work in groups of three or four. Choose a topic that you are working on, or will be working on in the near future. It could be an essay, report or book review question. It could be the subject of your thesis. It could be an idea for a journal paper. Present an accessible description to somebody who is a non-specialist in your field.

Person 1: present topic

Persons 2 and 3: listen and take notes:

What organisational or language difficulties did each speaker face in making the presentation?

When you have done this, compare notes to allow each speaker to comment on the findings observed by each of the note takers.

Areas establishing a focus on your topic to be discussed:

Topic interests

What subject are you interested in?

Is it a new topic? -What do you have to say about it that could be considered 'new'?

Information and opinion

How much information do you have about the topic?

Have you formed a critical opinion on the subject that can be compared with other research in the same field?

Controversy

What controversies (if any) surround this topic? Should they be avoided and if so, why? If not, why not?

How do these issues compare with the questions on critical opinion?

If you are working from a new, specific, or controversial angle, have you considered other approaches to the issue?

(Adapted from John Morgan (2), 2007)

4. WHAT IS ACADEMIC WRITING?

Who?

(*Who is writing? Who is the audience?*)

What?

(*What is the writing about?*)

Why?

(*Why is the writing done?*)

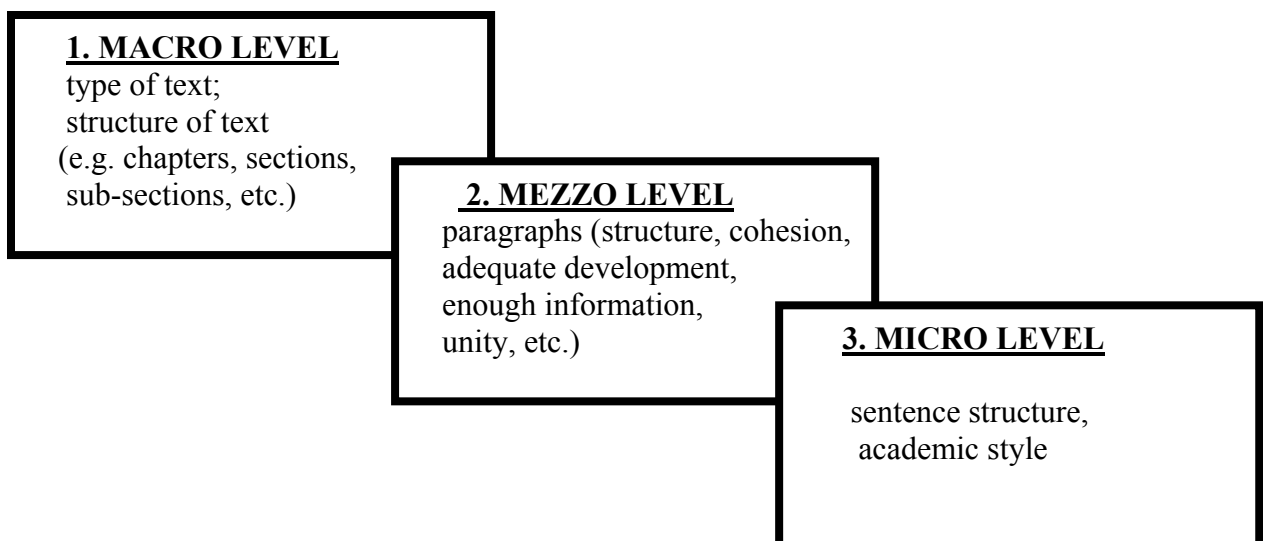
5. WHAT IS POSTGRADUATE ACADEMIC WRITING?

Try and find major differences between undergraduate and postgraduate academic writing.

6. ACADEMIC WRITING COMPLEXITY

Watch the academic writing sources publicity and note down as many aspects of academic writing as possible.

7. POSTGRADUATE ACADEMIC WRITING THEORY



(Adapted from Alison Brown, 2007)

8. STYLE

8.1.

Look at these three very different styles of saying the same thing and try to identify the academic style.

1. Beaut weather mate!
2. What a splendiferous day.
3. Evidence from the Bureau of Meteorology indicates that a temperature of approximately 25 degrees is expected.

(Adapted from Alison Brown, 2007)

8.2.

In the following examples, the same message is expressed in five different styles, from an extremely formal written style, to the very informal spoken one. Match the sentences with the adequate styles.

- a) Jargon, very formal.
- b) Written, formal, clear.
- c) Written style for the general public (scripted radio or TV news style).
- d) Formal spoken style (seminar, talk).
- e) Informal spoken style (discussion).
- f) Very informal spoken style (chat).

1. As the value of Sterling increased compared to other currencies, the government was forced to take tax measures to head off a rapid increase in consumer spending spurred on by cheaper imports.

2. And you see, Sterling got more and more valuable, so as a result, the government had to go round putting up taxes, you see, to stop everyone going out and splashing out, spending all their money on cheap imports.

3. Consequent to the appreciation in the exchange value of Sterling against other currencies, necessary fiscal measures were introduced by the government in order to reduce the likelihood of an import-led consumer spending surge.

4. As Sterling went up in value, the government had to put up taxes to stop consumers splashing out on too many cheap imports.

5. As Sterling's international value went up, the government had to take tax measures to head off a consumer spending boom spurred on by cheaper imports.

6. After the international value of Sterling rose, the government was obliged to take fiscal measures to reduce the likelihood of a surge in consumer spending led by cheaper imports.

(Adapted from: <http://website.lineone.net/~eshp/styles.htm>)

8.3.

Examine the following texts and identify any significant features. What kind of text does the extract come from and how does the language differ among the texts?

TEXT 1

Mr. Bennet was among the earliest of those who waited on Mr. Bingley. He had always intended to visit him, though to the last always assuring his wife that he should not go; and till the evening after the visit was paid she had no knowledge of it. It was then disclosed in the following manner. Observing his second daughter employed in trimming a hat, he suddenly addressed her with: "I hope Mr. Bingley will like it, Lizzy." "We are not in a way to know what Mr. Bingley likes," said her mother resentfully, "since we are not to visit."

TEXT 2

CAUTION - Never use cloth or paper products (paper towels, tissue paper, etc.) to clean the lenses. They will scratch the coating and decrease the resolving power of the lens. Use only **lens paper**.

- Switch the microscope to the lowest magnification or raise the objectives from the stage before inserting a slide. This will prevent the objective lens from being accidentally scratched by the slide.
- Place the slide to be viewed on the stage and center the specimen over the opening.
- Begin with either the scanning lens or the low power objective lens.
- Raise the stage (or lower the lens) all the way so that the slide is as close as possible to the objective lens.
- Use the coarse adjustment knob to slowly raise the lens from the stage while viewing the image. Fine focusing is not needed when using the lowest magnification (scanning or 4X objective). If you are using any of the other objectives, it will be necessary to use the fine focus after using the coarse focus.
- Adjust the condenser so that a sharp focus is produced. This step is important at the highest magnification (oil immersion or 1000X).
- Adjust the iris diaphragm. This will need readjustment after changing to a different magnification.

TEXT 3

The aim is to develop transferable communication skills in English through an interactive learning infrastructure. It will link academic and non-academic worlds, provide opportunities for training and retraining and reflect the needs of practice.

The programme objectives will be achieved by setting up and running virtual transnational (between Wales, Czech Republic, Spain, Bosnia and Turkey) and transversal (between academic and professional) study circles:

- by developing training and learning materials for academic and professional purposes;
- by making effective use of advanced technological resources for authentic communication tasks (videoconferencing, internet);
- by creating an internationally accessible virtual learning environment (through development and use of an open subject village web site and by matching the academic outcomes with the needs of prospective employees.

It will also create opportunities for further training and retraining in transnational communication for professionals, in practicing essential and desirable skills in interviews, providing space for the development of equal opportunities communication.

This project makes an original contribution to intercultural communication in English language teaching and also to national vocational training by introducing advanced technology that brings together people from professional working environments and the academic world. Effective use of advanced technology and acquisition of necessary skills can open doors to a united Europe and reduce obstacles to communication and cooperation in terms of geographical distance and work.

TEXT 4

This paper examines interaction in written text through the interplay between the notions of text averral and attribution (Sinclair, 1988). Text averral is evidenced in the unmarked parts of the text, where the utterances are assumed to be attributed to the author. Attribution, the counterpart of text averral, is the marked case where the sources of authority are clearly signalled.

It is hoped that this study will add to our knowledge about the characteristics of different types of text, and illuminate the way for students who find themselves lost amidst the echoes of the multiple voices they hear within the same text.

Text averral and attribution are basic notions for the organization of interaction in written text. The assumption is made that the author of a non-fictional artefact (Sinclair, 1986) avers every statement in his or her text so long as he/she does not attribute these statements to another source - whether that source is other or self. Averral is manifested in various ways in the text - negatively, through absence of attribution, and positively, through commenting, evaluating or metastructuring of the discourse. Attribution, on the other hand, is signalled in the text by a number of devices of which reporting is an obvious one.

TEXT 5

Stem cells trial for MS patients

Jane McSaley

A new treatment for multiple sclerosis (MS) is being pioneered near Bristol. Six patients at Frenchay Hospital are being injected with their own stem cells in the hope that they will repair damage to the brain.

Approximately 60,000 people in the UK suffer from MS, an incurable disease of the nervous system.

Prof Neil Scolding, of the Institute of Clinical Neurosciences, said: "We know stem cells are attracted into the brain, into these areas of damage."

He added that he hoped the stem cells would "help those areas to stop getting worse" and "repair damage".

'Lot of hope'

Liz Allison, an MS patient taking part in the trial, said: "I'm hoping there will be some improvement."

BBC health correspondent Matthew Hill said: "We've already seen stem cells used on cardiac patients but this is the first time a reputable organisation has tried it out on MS patients.

"There is a lot of hope riding on these trials but it is very early days yet."

He added that it was likely to be several months before any conclusions could be drawn regarding the treatment.

TEXT 6

Hi Paul,

I am finally back in the office after a gruelling week at the hospital. I am trying to catch-up on things so will talk to Alison today about VC this Wed. I am not sure which venue as Steve mentioned something about Room 2 not being available. I will try and let you know about what we have decided to do with the students - apart from the left over stuff do you think we will have time for more?

Cheers,
Kate

TEXT 7

About Amnesty International

As a movement of ordinary people from across the world standing up for humanity and human rights, our purpose is to protect individuals wherever justice, fairness, freedom and truth are denied.



[Find out more](#) | [vision and mission](#) | [history](#) | [governance](#) | [finances](#) | [jobs](#) | [volunteer](#)

(Adapted from: 1. Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*: <http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext98/pandp12.txt>; 2. www.sherline.com/2125Inst.htm + <http://faculty.clintoncc.suny.edu/faculty/Michael.Gregory/files/Bio%20101/Bio%20101%20Laboratory/Microscopy/Microscopy%20lab.htm>; 3. Katriňáková H. et al.: 2005: CJV Leonardo da Vinci project application, unpublished draft; 4. UEFAP: <http://www.uefap.com/writing/feature/intro.htm>; 5. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/bristol/7014813.stm>; 7. <http://www.amnesty.org.uk/content.asp?CategoryID=10010>)

8.4.

Consider the differences in approach between these four versions of the beginning of a story, Goldilocks and the Three Bears. Identify which is in a nursery style, which a journalistic style, which novelistic, and which academic.

1. Human beings have interfered with bears' natural habitat ever since Goldilocks was on the scene. Remember how she carried on while the three bears were out walking in the woods? They thought they could come back and find everything as they had left it, except that their porridge would be just the right temperature to eat. No such luck. There had been an uninvited visitor.

2. Once upon a time there were three bears. There was a daddy bear, a mummy bear and a baby bear. They all lived together in a little cottage in the woods. One day, mummy bear made some porridge for breakfast but it was too hot to eat. "Let's go out for a walk while it cools," Daddy Bear said. "Yes, let's," Baby Bear said. So the three bears went for a walk in the woods.

3. One lovely sunny morning, while Father, Mother and Baby Bear were having a stroll to give their porridge time to cool, a little girl called Goldilocks pushed open the unlocked door of their cottage in the woods.

4. "This porridge you've made is too hot." Daddy Bear said to Mummy Bear. "Why don't we go for a walk while it cools? It's a lovely sunny morning."
"Yes, let's," said Baby Bear. Mummy Bear agreed, so the three bears left their little cottage for a walk in the woods.

(Adapted from: <http://myweb.tiscali.co.uk/academicwriting/nursery2.html>)

8.5.

Good academic style is neither extremely formal and incomprehensible, nor too informal close to spoken language. In the following exercise, read three texts and choose the best “academic” one of them.

1. The move from a structuralist account in which capital is understood to structure social relations in relatively homologous ways to a view of hegemony in which power relations are subject to repetition, convergence, and rearticulation brought the question of temporality into the thinking of structure, and marked a shift from a form of althusserian theory that takes structural totalities as theoretical objects to one in which the insights into the contingent possibility of structure inaugurate a renewed conception of hegemony as bound up with the contingent sites and strategies of the rearticulation of power.

2. Sociobiologists are often accused of genetic determinism. Now if genetic determinism means that genes matter for behaviour, the thesis seems hard to reject. Dogs act differently from humans, and this is not just a matter of different environments. If, on the other hand, genetic determinism means that genes settle behaviour independently of environment, then it is biological nonsense. Genes programme organisms to reproduce, and reproductions will often require being responsive to features of the environment. What we can expect from genes is contingency plans: psychic mechanisms that respond to different environmental histories with different motivations. The sociobiologist's problem is to identify what these adaptive contingency plans are.

3. Well, I think the good point about London is that London is still a very tolerant and very relaxed place, and most people, I find, are very friendly. It's still a very fluid society if you go to America, you find a much more ghettoised society in terms of races, where you have middle class black ghettos and middle class white ghettos, whereas in this society you don't have that rigid, that rigid sort of ghettoised society, even in Brixton, which is supposed to be, you know, the black area in London you find, sort of middle class white people and black people living side by side, it's still a much more mixed and heterogeneous society than, than America. And it is in many ways in London an open and a tolerant society.

4.

Much has been learned from efforts to achieve the goals of the World Summit and the Jomtien Declaration in the past decade. Despite the sometimes disappointing numbers and achievements, much more is known about what works in education than was the case a decade ago. What were once innovative ideas and promising pilot projects have become desired reforms and national programmes, successful approaches to particular problems—such in girls, education and schooling for children in remote-areas—have been developed, documented and disseminated. These include e.g. specific ways to get more children into school; specific efforts to ensure that girls have full and equal access to basic education and are able to reach the same levels of achievement as boys; or comprehensive policies and programmes that enhance educational quality and promote gender sensitivity. Finally there are a lot as these or different kinds of benefits we can get it from education, but it depend on the nature of environments (school, family, community).

(Adapted from: 1. Judith Butler, 1997; 2. Goodin, R.E.; Pettit, P.: 1993, p. 600; 3. Harmer J, 1989; 4. Majed, Al-Ali; 2006)

8.6.1.

General Characteristics of Academic Writing: Discussion

Task: *Choose two of the statements below, brainstorm and note down your ideas:*

Researchers must always be objective.

Research is an act of discovery.

Writing in the first person – as I – in a dissertation is always a bad idea.

When I write a dissertation, I have to say something original.

Research mostly involves going to the library, collecting information from books and magazines, and putting it in your paper.

I am supposed to express my own opinions in a dissertation.

There is a big difference between facts and opinions.

Pretty much everything you read in textbooks is true.

There is a big difference between a fact in science and a fact in humanities.

When two experts disagree, one of them has to be wrong.

A story that does not have an ending is not a very good story.

8.6.2.

From what you have just read and discussed, what are the main features and characteristics of postgraduate academic writing?

8.7.

To know more about different cultural perspectives in academic style, you can watch the video: Peter Antes: Scientific Writing: English, French and German Compared http://profil.muni.cz/02_2006.php

8.7.1.

Listen to the first part of Peter Antes lecture and perform the following tasks:

a) Answer the questions below:

When he was a child, how did he think foreign people communicated with each other?

What is the reality?

b) Tick the options he mentions:

He studied at

- a German university
- a University in Frankfurt
- a University in Paris
- an English university

When writing a paper in a foreign language, you have to

- Repeat what you would say in your language
- Translate everything linguistically
- Change the frame of the paper according to the culture of the foreign language
- Ask a native speaker to proof-read your paper

c) Fill in the missing words:

The differences between the papers are not due to your _____ knowledge in terms of _____, words and _____ expressions but in terms of _____. To make the choice of a language is to _____.

8.7.2.

What does English scientific writing look like compared to French or German writing? Listen and explain.

9. THE POWER OF WORDS

9.1. Discussion questions

Why is vocabulary important?

In what ways can building and increasing your vocabulary improve your academic writing?

9.2. General academic words

Match the letter of the most appropriate definition with the following ten words from the Academic Word List.

1. ___ predominant
a. the most common b. the earliest variety c. the weakest
2. ___ phenomenon
a. a spectacular event b. something which occurs at a precise time
c. something that is observed to happen or exist
3. ___ whereas
a. in contrast b. similarly c. in another place
4. ___ dynamic
a. fuel-powered b. constantly changing and progressing
c. rigid, fixed to a spot
5. ___ paradigm
a. a rectangular shape b. contrasting theories of the same event
c. a model which explains an event
6. ___ hierarchical
a. passing information from generation to generation b. multi-layered
c. a system of ranking by importance
7. ___ arbitrary
a. without principles or plans b. judged by merit c. following pre-determined procedures
8. ___ parameter
a. a system of measurement b. defined limit c. variability
9. ___ commodity
a. a feature shared by two or more people b. something sold for money c. weakness
10. ___ infrastructure
a. animal skeleton b. public transport system c. the basic facilities of an organisation, society

(Adapted from Alison Brown, 2007)

AWL materials: <http://www.uefap.com/vocab/vocfram.htm>
<http://web.uvic.ca/%7Egluton/awl/>
<http://web.scc.losrios.edu/nuttalg/vocabularyresources>
<http://www.lex tutor.ca/>

9.3. Formal vs Informal Vocabulary

Identify the informal expressions in the following sentences. Rewrite the following sentences, replacing the informal expressions with a more formal equivalent.

1. Significantly, even at this late date, Lautrec was considered a bit conservative by his peers.
2. Later Florey got together with Paul Fildes in an experimental study of the use of curare to relieve the intractable muscular spasms which occur in fully developed infection with tetanus or lockjaw.
3. Simply making the effort to reclaim this wasted stuff for fertilizer would have a positive effect on greenhouse releases.
4. It is difficult to imagine exactly what is meant by saying that such a classification is natural as any collection of things could be classified in this way.
5. The radical restructuring of British politics after 1931 doesn't lie in the events of 13-28 August, but in the changing attitudes within the National Government.
6. The material amenities of life have gone up in Western society.
7. The press reflected the living culture of the people; it could influence opinion and reinforce existing attitudes but it did not come up with new forms of entertainment.
8. The aggregate of outstanding balances went up and down quite violently.
9. Dieters often feel that they should totally get rid of high-fat and high-sugar foods.
10. The solitary feeding of insectivores in forests was therefore put down to a foraging strategy involving the pursuit of cryptic and easily disturbed prey by singletons.

(Adapted from: UEFAP: <http://www.uefap.com/writing/feature/intro.htm>)

9.4. DICTIONARIES