



**MASARYK UNIVERSITY**  
**Language Centre**



## 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. WHAT IS ACADEMIC WRITING?

<u>Who?</u> <i>Who is writing?</i> <i>Who is the audience?</i>	<u>What?</u> <i>What is the writing about?</i>	<u>Why?</u> <i>Why is the writing done?</i>

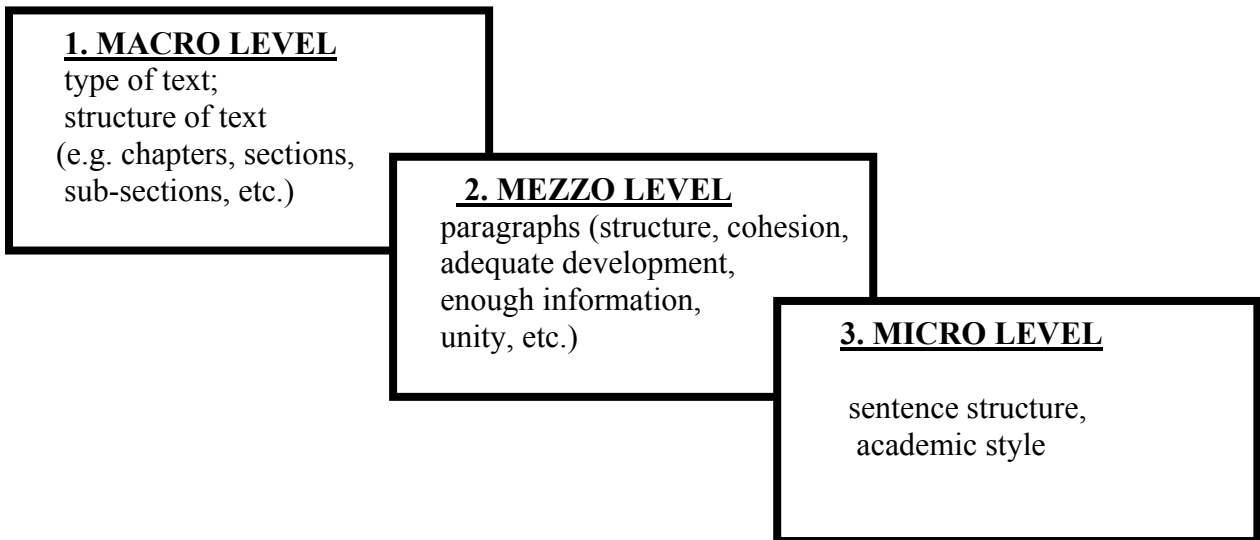
## 4. WHAT IS POSTGRADUATE ACADEMIC WRITING?

Find major differences between undergraduate and postgraduate academic writing.

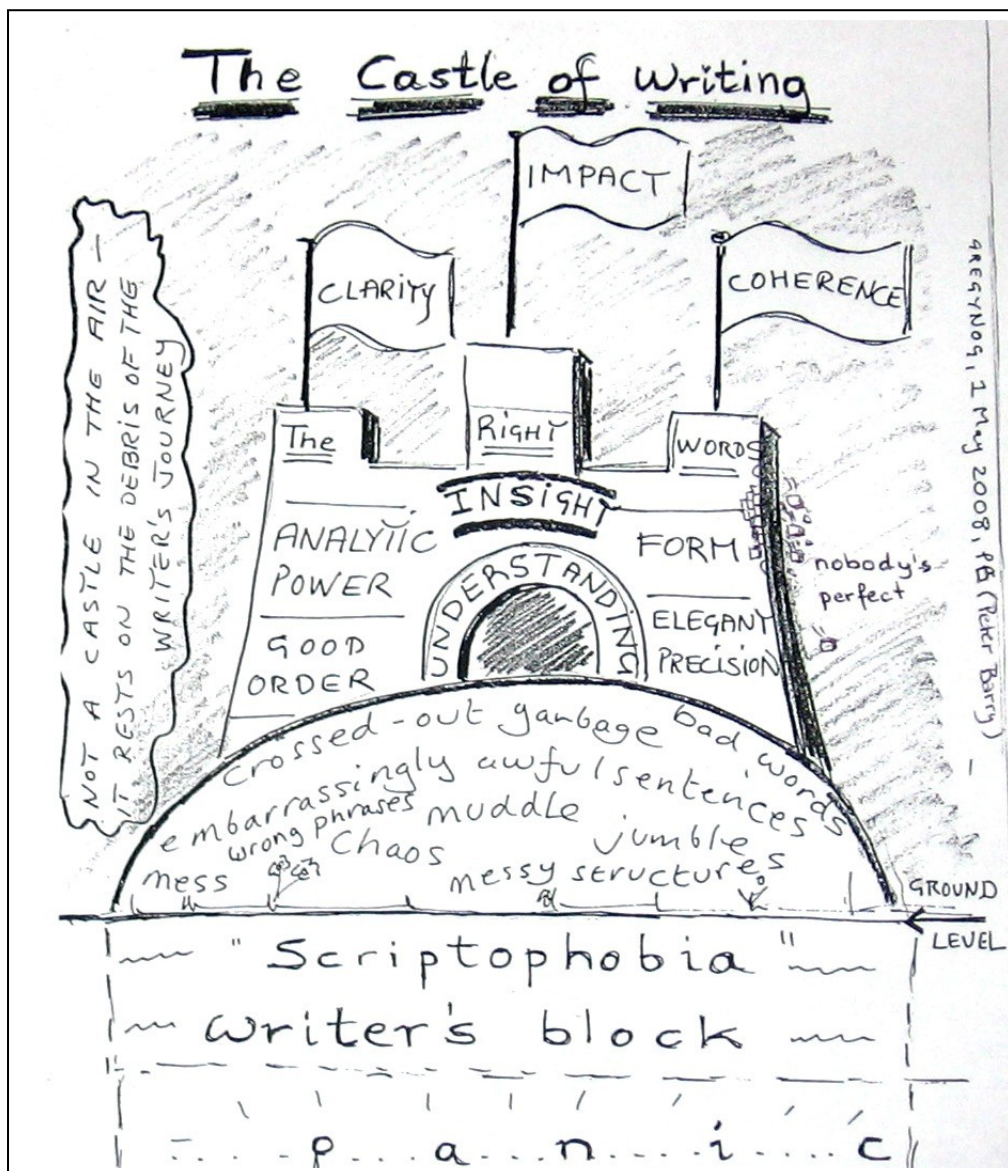
## 5. ACADEMIC WRITING COMPLEXITY

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

## 6. POSTGRADUATE ACADEMIC WRITING THEORY



(Adapted from Alison Brown, 2007)



## **7. STYLE**

### **7.1.**

*Look at these four very different styles of saying the same thing and identify the academic style.*

- a) It rained cats and dogs yesterday, didn't it?
- b) What a downpour last night!
- c) The UK Meteorology Office monitored a heavy rainfall with the rate of precipitation reading 46 millimetres per hour on 24th March 2011 in North Cumbria.
- d) She was standing there in the storm waiting for deafening thunder to come, feeling the water cooling the air and thinking of how heavy the drops of water must be so that they could fall down from the dark clouds and make her feel refreshed and so light that she could fly, and make her full of energy, make her appreciate the eternal life it delivers, when finally she realised this precipitation was indeed a friend, her only true friend.

(Adapted from Štěpánek, deHaaff, Hradilová, 2011)

### **7.2.**

*In the following examples, the same message is expressed in six 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>)

### 7.3.

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

“Ladies and gentlemen ...” the hostess had announced to a full house of American University in Paris, “Our guest tonight needs no introduction. He is the author of numerous books: *The Symbology of Secret Sects*, *The Art of the Illuminati*, *The Lost Language of Ideograms*, and when I say he wrote the book on *Religious Iconology*, I mean that quite literally. Many of you use his textbooks in class” The students in the crowd nodded enthusiastically.  
“I had planned to introduce him tonight by sharing his impressive curriculum vitae. However, ...” She glanced playfully at Langdon, who was seated onstage. “An audience member has just handed me a far more, shall we say ...*intriguing* introduction.”

#### 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

Relationship occurs through dialogue (Smith, 2000, p. 6; Buber, 1947, p. 24) a primary means by which authentic responses are constituted (de Feijter, 2007, p. 55). Put another way, dialogue supports the establishment of 'genuine relationships' (Kramer, 2001, p.65), offering possibilities transcending agreement and enabling greater understanding (Ibid., p.66, quoting Eck, 1993, p.19). As such, dialogue is a key component of Christian fellowship: we cannot give up talking (Astley, 2004, p.14). How might we begin talking, though? Does technology have a role in supporting and encouraging dialogue activities among church-goers? This investigation seeks to offer one insightful response through investigating experiences of supporting dialogue by means of certain available technologies. Participation flows from a culture which encourages engagement in beneficial educational, cultural and political opportunities, engagement which emerging communication technologies have been noted potentially to resource (Jenkins, 2006, p. 3). The contrary view that participation is governed by technology rather than culture is not adopted in this investigation which seeks to discover some influences of technology on continuing cultural practices of participating through dialogue about issues of faith.

#### 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. brown,2003, www.sherline.com/2125Inst.htm + <http://faculty.clintoncc.suny.edu/faculty/Michael.Gregory/files/Bio%20101/Bio%20101%20Laboratory/Microscopy/Microscopy%20lab.htm>; 3. Katrňáková H. et al.: 2005: CJV Leonardo da Vinci project application, unpublished draft; 4. Barclay, 2009; 5. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/bristol/7014813.stm>; 7. [www.amnesty.org.uk/content.asp?CategoryID=10010](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/content.asp?CategoryID=10010))

#### 7.4.

*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 warm sunny morning, while Father, Mother and Baby Bear were having a stroll to give their porridge time to cool, a young 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>)

## 7.5.

*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)



## 7.6. 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.

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

## 7.8.

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](http://profil.muni.cz/02_2006.php)

### 7.8.1.

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 \_\_\_\_\_.

### 7.8.2.

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

## **8. THE POWER OF WORDS**

### **8.1. Discussion questions**

Why is vocabulary important?

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

### **8.2. 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:** <https://vjs.muni.cz/student/> (Useful links, Vocabulary)

### 8.3. 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>)

### 8.4. DICTIONARIES

Watch the extract from Erin Mc Kean's talk on dictionaries (<http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/view/id/161>). Then work in pairs. Discuss your experience with different dictionaries and their use with each other. Then present the ideas you would like to share with the others to the whole group.

## 9. TITLE

### 9.1.

Watch the video (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KGJYYGIAZpU>) and discuss what are the most important characteristics of titles from an academic perspective.

### 9.2.

Decide which titles could be of high quality from an academic perspective and which could not. Explain your opinion.

1. Gender Issues in Reproductive Health and Promoting Male Responsibility
2. Early Prediction of Response to Chemotherapy and Survival in Malignant Pleural Mesothelioma Using a Novel Semiautomated 3-Dimensional Volume-Based Analysis of Serial  $^{18}\text{F}$ -FDG PET Scans
3. Shells
4. Pretty Feet Hit the Street
5. The Impact of Herbivory on Plants in Different Resource Conditions: A Meta-Analysis
6. A Study of Moral Relativism and Moral Objectivity
7. Diffusion on a curved surface coupled to diffusion in the volume: Application to cell biology
8. The Effect of Institutional Culture on Change Strategies in Higher Education: Universal Principles or Culturally Responsive Concepts?
9. This is a research on Female Tragic Hero in English Renaissance Drama.
10. Study on Parallel Translations of Passages from the Seventh Chapter of: *On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite into Old Church Slavonic and Church Slavonic
11. Direct Discrimination, Indirect Discrimination and Autonomy
12. How Do We Introduce the Next Generation of Radiotracers into Clinical Practice?
13. Cold War to Cold Peace: Explaining U.S.-French Competition in Francophone Africa
14. Statistics for ESC in AO, PO and IO
15. Why The Axioms and Theorems of Arithmetic are not Legal Norms

### 9.3.

Create your own title for your PhD work / academic article / presentation. Discuss the suggestions with the whole group.

## **10. SENTENCE**

### **10.1.**

*Read the following sentences and decide which of them could be appropriate for an academic text.*

1. Such excellent feedback from the visiting auditor.
2. Throughout the cold war, the Baltic States, recognising the futility of asserting their independence against the overwhelming strength of the Red Army, stoically remained parts of the Soviet Union, which needed to use their ports as naval and military bases to protect the littoral between Kaliningrad and Leningrad.
3. Gerald began -- but was interrupted by a piercing whistle which cost him ten percent of his hearing permanently, as it did everyone else in a ten-mile radius of the eruption, not that it mattered much because for them "permanently" meant the next ten minutes or so until buried by searing lava or suffocated by choking ash -- to pee.

(Adapted from: 3. Jim Gleeson (2007))

### **10.2. Sentence definitions and characteristics**

*Read the comments below and discuss them.*

▶ A sentence can be defined as “the largest structural unit normally treated in grammar. The sentence is notoriously difficult to define; numerous definitions have been offered and found wanting. The classical definition, that a sentence expresses a complete thought, dates from the first treatise on grammar... This traditional notion definition, however, only solves the problem by transferring it: how does one define a complete thought?”

▶ Every sentence in academic writing should be included for a specific reason and should connect with the sentences around it and the overall topic. Each sentence should make logical and grammatical sense and be expressed in an appropriate style.

▶ There is no right or wrong method for sentence combining as long as you punctuate correctly; create logical, understandable sentences; and do not write fragments. No one method of sentence combining is better than another, but do not use the same method for combining all your sentences. The objective is to achieve variety.

(Adapted from: McArthur, T.1992, p.918; Alison Brown, 2007; Williams, V.; Blake, C.D.:1992, p.353.)

### 10.3. Degree of formality

Read the sentence triplets below and discuss which of the examples are suitable for an academic text from the perspective of formality.

1.

- a) The president was obliged to return earlier than planned due to poor weather conditions.
- b) The inclement climatic conditions obliged the President to return earlier than scheduled.
- c) The president had to go back sooner than he'd planned because the weather was so bad.

2.

- a) Essential measures should be undertaken at the earliest opportunity.
- b) You should do whatever you have to as soon as you can.
- c) One should undertake any necessary measures at the earliest opportunity.

3.

- a) Before they discovered America, Europeans didn't eat potatoes.
- b) Prior to the discovery of America, potatoes were not consumed in Europe.
- c) Before America was discovered, potatoes were not eaten in Europe.

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

### 10.4. Degrees of certainty

Which of the sentences below can be appropriate for academic writing and why?

- a) Recent research suggests that a majority of people prefer email to traditional letter-writing as a mode of communication.
- b) According to the recent research people prefer email to traditional letter-writing as a mode of communication.
- c) The traditional view that women need to spend more time at home and that this detracts them from their active time commitment to politics is true in CEE countries.
- d) The traditional view that women need to spend more time at home and that this detracts them from their active time commitment to politics seem to be true in CEE countries.
- e) The leachant dissolves the lead and tin content in exactly the same ratio as the solder, leaving the copper content of the boards intact.
- f) The leachant tends to dissolve the lead and tin content in exactly the same ratio as the solder, leaving, apparently, the copper content of the boards intact.

► ► ► **tend/s to, appear/s to/that, indicate/s that, suggest/s that, the majority of, there is a tendency for, probable, seem/s that, the evidence suggests that, it is widely accepted, apparently, seemingly, presumably, etc.**

(Adapted from Alison Brown, 2007; Mahlab 1994; Soós, G., Zentai, V.:2005:p92; <http://www.azom.com/details.asp?ArticleID=1767>)



## 10.5. Degrees of personality

Which of the sentences below can be appropriate for academic writing and why?

a) Always begin negatively, a former teacher once instructed me. Tell your readers what you are not going to do; it will relieve their minds, and they will be more inclined to accept what seems a modest project. So I will begin this plea for tolerance with a couple of negative distinctions.

b) One should always begin negatively, some teachers used to instruct students. Readers should be informed about what the author is not going to do; it will relieve their minds, and they will be more inclined to accept what seems a modest project. So this plea for tolerance will begin with a couple of negative distinctions.

c) Based on the most recent progress in nanophotonics, controlling light by way of photonic crystals, plasmonics, and left-handed (meta-) materials is no more just an exciting theoretical approach, but real practice. It is expected that optical metamaterials, when combined appropriately with light emitters, will make optics in a non-distant future compatible with an integrated system technology, supporting the long-sought development of fully integrated optical circuits comparable to the development of micro- and nanoelectronics.

d) We found that the most recent progress in nanophotonics, controlling light by way of photonic crystals, plasmonics, and left-handed (meta-) materials is no more just an exciting theoretical approach, but real practice. I expect that optical metamaterials, when combined appropriately with light emitters, will make optics in a non-distant future compatible with an integrated system technology, supporting the long-sought development of fully integrated optical circuits comparable to the development of micro- and nanoelectronics.

► The third person voice (*it, they, he, she, the authors, researchers*) distances the self from the work and appears more objective than the first person *I, we* or second person *you*.

► Overuse of "I/ we" in papers can seem overly subjective & trying to avoid offering proofs.

► Expected modesty.

► Whatever is included in a piece of academic writing that is not attributed to someone else, is assumed to be the author's.

(Adapted from Alison Brown, 2007; Waltzer, M.:1997,p.8; <http://www.iop.org/EJ/abstract/1367-2630/8/9/E04> )

## 10.6. Hedging

### Classification of Hedges

Hedge Class	Function
<p><b>Shields</b></p> <p>Devices that take responsibility for the claim made away from the author. They function as a tool protecting the author from any criticism. The writer aims at not being on record with regard to the propositions expressed in the text.</p>	<p><b>Responsibility shifting</b></p> <p>Devices which suggest that in case there is another interpretation of the propositions made, the criticism should be aimed at somebody else. The person or people accountable for the claim are known or can be found.</p> <p>e.g. ...([1], [2], [3],)..., ...it is shown in [3]..., Romanowska found..., ...we refer reader to [3, 4]..., ...see [10]...</p>
	<p><b>Speaking facts</b></p> <p>The author indicates lack of other interpretation. The writer shields his claims through stating "the commonly accepted" view.</p> <p>e.g. <i>Definition 1...</i>, <i>A map is...</i>, ...is defined to be..., ...space is said to be...</p>
<p><b>Mitigators</b></p> <p>The author admits his/her responsibility for the claims made. The writer takes stance while using mitigators, but decides to weaken his propositions for various reasons.</p>	<p><b>Approximation</b></p> <p>Referring vaguely to the quality or quantity of something.</p> <p>e.g. ...some..., ...more..., <i>Several</i>, ...similar...</p>
	<p><b>Possibility</b></p> <p>Referring to things that may happen or be the case.</p> <p>e.g. ...may..., ...can..., ...possible...</p>
	<p><b>Understatement</b></p> <p>Devices used in order to downgrade the claims and express modesty which is generally expected from authors of scientific articles. By using these devices, they lessen the importance and the validity of their claims.</p> <p>e.g. ...notions..., ...concept...</p>
	<p><b>Admitting incompleteness</b></p> <p>The author expresses that some facts might have been omitted or that there might be other possibilities that have not been covered by the research article scope.</p> <p>e.g. ...briefly..., ...however,...</p>

Decide on the type of hedges:

Example 1:

Structure of the Introduction	Text of the Introduction	Hedge Function
Making a topic generalization	<i>Usual Banach space methods show that a norm one functional in the predual <math>N^*</math> of a <math>JBW^*</math>-subtriple <math>N</math> of a <math>JBW^*</math>-triple <math>M</math> has extensions in <math>M^*</math> approximating to one without guaranteeing attainment.</i>	
Claiming centrality	<i>Uniqueness of norm preserving extensions in this context</i>	
Reviewing previous research	<i>has been extensively studied in [4-6] with deep results.</i>	
Announcing present research	<i>The purpose of this paper is <b>to address</b> the question</i>	
Continuing a tradition	<i>raised in [18, p. 102] (see also [17, §4]) of the existence of norm preserving extensions from <math>N^*</math> to <math>M^*</math> and to settle it affirmatively.</i>	
Announcing present research	<b>Briefly,</b>	
Definitions	<p><b>a <math>JBW^*</math>-triple is a complex Banach space <math>M</math> with a predual and with a continuous ternary product <math>(a, b, c) \rightarrow \{abc\}</math> conjugate linear in <math>b</math>, symmetric bilinear in <math>a</math> and <math>c</math>, and satisfying <math>\{ab\{xyz\}\} = \{\{abx\}yz\} + \{xy\{abz\}\} - \{x\{bay\}z\}</math> such that <math>\ \{aaa\}\  = \ a\ ^3</math> and <math>a \rightarrow \{aax\}</math> is an hermitian operator with positive spectrum.</b></p> <p><b>We recall that the predual <math>M^*</math> of a <math>JBW^*</math>-triple <math>M</math> is unique [2, 10] and that for a tripotent <math>u</math> (that is, <math>u = \{uuu\}</math>) in <math>M</math> the Pierce-2 projection <math>P_2(u)</math> on <math>M</math> given by <math>P_2(u)(x) = \{u\{uxu\}u\}</math> is weak* continuous, contractive and that <math>P_2(u)(M)</math> is a <math>JBW^*</math>-algebra with identity <math>u</math> and with Jordan product and involution given by <math>x \circ y = \{xuy\}</math> and <math>x\# = \{uxu\}</math>. <b>General references for <math>JBW^*</math>-triples and their preduals are [7, 10-12]. We refer to [9] via [3] for the theory of <math>JBW^*</math>-algebras.</b> Bunce (2001)</b></p>	
<u>Example 2</u>		
Recommendation for further research	<p>1. This paper <b>suggests a more general</b> problem. Let <math>A</math> be a variety of algebras, <math>A = \langle A; \mu \rangle</math>, of type <math>\langle 3 \rangle</math>, say; other types <b>will suggest similar</b> problems. Consider the class of all two-sorted algebras, <math>\underline{A} = \langle A, A; \tau \rangle</math>, obtained by doubling the carriers of all the algebras in <math>A</math>, as was done in (2.1). When is this class of doublets a variety? And how are its subdirectly irreducible members and identities related to those of <math>A</math>?</p>	
Extension of the topic	<p>2. In closing, <b>we may have lost sight</b> of the original phenomenon that inspired this paper: the nice correspondence between distributive lattices and median algebras. <b>In a sense we were sidetracked by the allure</b> of distributive multiseuilattices as two-sorted algebras. But what if we ask for the analog of distributive lattices with respect to pseudomedian algebras? Since Theorem 6.1 tells us that each pseudomedian algebra is realizable in some algebra of <math>M</math> with only two actions <math>i</math> and <math>j</math> needed - <math>\mu = \Delta(i, j)</math> - we need only rewrite the axioms for <math>M</math> to define a new variety with two binary operations <math>i</math> and <math>j</math>. <b>There appear to be six</b> subdirectly irreducibles. (Knoebel &amp; Meletiou 1999)</p>	

## 10.7. Passive and active voice

Which of the sentences below can be appropriate for academic writing and why?

- a) We wanted to understand how penicillin affects growth of bacteria. To do this, we grew bacteria in the presence of varying concentrations of penicillin. We learned that penicillin inhibits growth of bacteria.
- b) The growth of bacteria was studied. Bacteria were grown in the presence of varying concentrations of penicillin. It was learned that bacterial growth is inhibited by penicillin.
- c) One sample was dissolved prior to thermal treatment. At 30 min. intervals, samples were withdrawn and dissolved in carrier solutions, and the temperature of the bath was increased by approx. 5°C.
- d) We dissolved one sample prior to thermal treatment. At 30 min. intervals, we withdrew samples and dissolved them in carrier solutions, and we increased the temperature of the bath by approx. 5°C.

- ▶ The passive voice emphasises the action over the person doing the action (the actor). It is a very useful technique when the actor is not important to the event.
- ▶ **Warning: You should only use the passive voice when you really need to; overuse tends to produce dull writing; particularly in conjunction with nominalization it can contribute to writing sounding very formal and losing clarity!**
- ▶ To know more about, read: Lilita Rodman: The passive in technical and scientific writing; <http://www.camlang.com/tsp001.cfm>

(Adapted from Alison Brown, 2007; Bonte and Martin, 1481-82 in Rodman, L. <http://www.camlang.com/tsp001.cfm>)

## 10.8. Contractions (shortened forms)

Which of the sentences below can be appropriate for academic writing and why?

- a) It's no less important to understand that conversation, so far as it concerns the idea of trusteeship, is principally an European affair: African and Asian voices don't become audible in any substantial way until the onset of decolonisation.
- b) It is no less important to understand that conversation, so far as it concerns the idea of trusteeship, is principally an European affair: African and Asian voices do not become audible in any substantial way until the onset of decolonisation.
- c) As Salman Rushdie, who became the first Western writer to become the victim of a *fatwa*, said: "It's ridiculous – isn't it? –to have to say, but I *am* a human being, unjustly accused, unjustly embubbled. Or is it I who am being ridiculous, as I call out from my bubble, *I'm still trapped here, folks; somebody, please, get me out?*"
- d) As Salman Rushdie, who became the first Western writer to become the victim of a *fatwa*, said: "It is ridiculous – is it not? –to have to say, but I *am* a human being, unjustly accused, unjustly embubbled. Or is it I who am being ridiculous, as I call out from my bubble, *I am still trapped here, folks; somebody, please, get me out?*"

(Adapted from Alison Brown, 2007; Bain, W: 2003, p.11; Rushdie. S. in MacArthur, B.: 1999, p. 484)

### 10.9. Nominalization (noun forms)

Which of the sentences below can be appropriate for academic writing and why?

- a) Comprehension is aided by repetition.
- b) You can understand something better if it is repeated.
- c) Germany invaded Poland in 1939 and that was the immediate cause of the World War II breaking out.
- d) Germany's invasion of Poland in 1939 was the immediate cause of the outbreak of the World War II.
- e) The company's original conclusion that the establishment of increased flexibility in attendance hours has resulted in a decrease in absenteeism, was endorsed in the most recent analysis.
- f) In a recent analysis the company confirmed its earlier conclusion that greater flexibility in attendance hours for workers reduces absentee rates.

- ▶ Academic writing usually has more noun structures than verb structures.
- ▶ The noun forms are useful in condensing text and when the focus is on conditions or results rather than actions.
- ▶ **Warning: too much nominalization can make your writing very dense, unnecessarily complex and tedious to read. You have to strike a balance here!**

(Adapted from Alison Brown, 2007)

### 10.10. More tips:

#### Formal forms of quantity with positive verbs

**No vs Not any** The analysis did not yield any new results **vs** The analysis yielded no new results

**Few vs Not many** There do not seem to be many viable solutions to this problem  
**vs** There seem to be few viable solutions to this problem

**Much vs a lot of** Much research has been conducted into global warming

#### Conciseness - clichés, redundant words and colloquialisms

▶ Use the most straightforward term and reduce unnecessary words, e.g. *with a high degree of certainty vs certain; advance planning vs planning* (all planning is in advance).

▶ Jacob (1998) says that the test is not 100% reliable. **vs** Jacob (1998) concedes that the test is not 100% reliable. (E.g. *describe, contend, examine, state, disagree, observe, assert, support, claim, dispute, suggest, purport, persuade, dismiss, refute, propose, concur, recommend, object, contradict*)  
For more, see the appendix.

▶ The paper was *pretty awful*. **vs** The paper was *poorly researched*.

▶ The idea that primary sequence alone determines tertiary structure in protein folding can be *an idea that not everyone agrees with*. **vs** The idea that primary sequence alone determines tertiary structure in protein folding can be *a controversial one*.

**Note: Although you should be aware of these characteristics, it's probably not a good idea to try to completely change your writing style when you first sit down to write a draft of an article or thesis. If you try to remember everything, you may sit for hours trying to perfect the first sentence. Instead, write however you feel comfortable writing, but learn to develop your editing skills, paying attention to the above mentioned characteristics.**

(Adapted from Alison Brown, 2007)

### On the use of active and passive

Table 1

Percentages of voice per section in the processes of three types of sciences in 21 research articles.

	Introduction		Method		Results		Discussion	
	A	P	A	P	A	P	A	P
<b>Physical sciences</b>	63,0	37,0	26,0	74,0	72,0	28,0	71,0	29,0
<b>Biological sciences</b>	74,0	26,0	38,0	61,0	68,0	32,0	79,0	21,0
<b>Social sciences</b>	84,0	16,0	46,0	54,0	77,0	23,0	85,0	15,0

A=active, P=passive

Source: I.A.Martinez/English for Specific Purposes 20 (2001) 227-247

### On self-mention in the articles

Table 2

Frequency of self-mention forms per discipline (Ø per 10,000 words).

Discipline	Total	Citation	I	Me	My	We	Us	Our	Other
<b>Physics</b>	64,6	8,7	0,0	0,1	0,0	39,3	0,6	14,4	1,4
<b>Marketing</b>	61,3	6,9	1,6	0,0	0,7	31,0	1,1	18,9	0,6
<b>Biology</b>	56,2	22,6	0,0	0,1	0,1	24,0	1,1	7,2	0,7
<b>Philosophy</b>	52,7	3,1	35,6	2,5	7,7	1,4	0,2	0,6	0,0
<b>Applied ling.</b>	51,8	9,1	36,1	3,0	9,7	25,4	2,8	14,5	0,2
<b>Sociology</b>	47,1	6,8	12,7	1,0	2,0	15,3	0,7	7,6	0,2
<b>Electronic eng.</b>	44,4	10,7	0,0	0,0	0,0	23,3	0,4	8,6	0,5
<b>Mechanical eng.</b>	17,8	9,6	0,0	0,0	0,0	5,5	0,0	1,4	0,4
<b>Overall</b>	50,5	8,3	11,2	0,8	2,4	17,8	0,8	8,3	1,1

Source: K. Hyland/English for Specific Purposes 20 (2001) 207-226

### On grammar in scientific articles

Table 3

Most frequent words (pharmaceutical corpus).

Rank	Title	Abstract	Introduction	Methods	Results	Discussion
1	of	but	been	were	no	that
2	for	these	has	was	in	be
3	on	of	have	at	did	may
4	and	there	is	then	not	is
5	in	in	such	for	had	our
6	-	was	can	each	after	in
7	-	that	it	and	there	not
8	-	did	we	from	the	this
9	-	w ho	of	after	when	we
10	-	both	to	with	all	have

Source: C.Gledhill/English for Specific Purposes 19 (2000) 115-135

**10.11.**

*Here is a paragraph that should be written in a more academic tone. Read it through and underline the parts that need to be rewritten and suggest possible improvements.*

Given the general knowledge of the health risks of smoking, it's no wonder that heaps of smokers have tried at some time in their lives to quit. However, in most cases, their attempts are unsuccessful. People begin smoking, often when they're adolescents, for lots of reasons, including the example of parents and pressure from peers. If others in one's group of friends are starting to smoke, it can be hard to resist going along with the crowd. Once people start smoking, they're likely to get hooked. The addiction to smoking is partly physiological; smokers become used to the effects of nicotine and experience painful withdrawal symptoms when they give it up. In addition, people become psychologically dependent on smoking as a way of reducing anxiety and coping with particular situations.

(Adapted from Alison Brown, 2007)