

## **ACADEMIC SKILLS COURSE, DXJ AKD2, lesson 1, 22 February 2016**

**Task 1: Consider the following points, discuss them with a colleague.**

1. Which skill (reading, listening, writing, speaking) do you find most/least important?
2. Which of the four skills do you consider most important for your PhD studies?
3. Do you like writing?
4. How important is writing for your professional life? What genres are you expected to write?
5. What is your experience in writing in English?
6. What skills are necessary to write well? Can they be learnt?
7. Describe the character of the research article you are working on at the moment. In what stage are you?
8. Have you published a research article? On what topic?
9. What is the biggest challenge regarding writing for you?
10. Characterize yourself as a writer – what do you consider to be your strengths and weaknesses?

**Task 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.

**Task 3: Analyse the sample of a paper / academic writing you consider standard in your field in terms of style. What makes the language formal? How does it differ from less formal forms of language? Discuss with your colleagues.**

- features characteristic of academic language

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**Task 4: Consider the formality of the following sentences. How can they be made more formal?**

1. With women especially, there is a lot of social pressure to conform to a certain physical shape.
2. Significantly, even at this late date, Lautrec was considered a bit conservative by his peers.
3. It focused on a subject that a lot of the bourgeois and upper-class exhibition-going public regarded as anti-social and anti-establishment.
4. Later Smith got together with Paul Fildes in an experimental study of the use of viral marketing among young, middle-aged and old people.
5. We'll tell you how you got on in the test in a couple of weeks.
6. Therefore after six months the dieter is behaving according to all twenty-six goals and she has achieved a big reduction in sugar intake.
7. Modern houses have so many labour-saving things that it is difficult for the person at home to have adequate exercise by doing chores, cooking, and looking after a family.
8. Making the effort to reclaim this wasted stuff for fertilizer would have a positive effect on greenhouse releases.
9. 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.
10. Unfortunately, as there are so many possible explanations, the correct one is the most difficult to find out.
11. These exercises can easily be incorporated into an exercise routine, with each exercise done again a number of times.
12. Fleming did well in isolating a streptococcus from the cerebrospinal fluid of the patient.
13. Effective planning prevents such hazards, but only if a social organisation makes sure that all potential target individuals are acquainted with the procedure.

**Task 5: Complete the following table with either formal or informal equivalent of the expression.**

formal	informal
	seem
	climb
	help
cease	
commence	
	use
decrease	
demonstrate	
depart	
	want

formal	informal
enquire	
	end
	tell
obtain	
preserve	
reject	
	free
	mend
require	
	live

formal	informal
	understanding
deficiency	
opportunity	
perspiration	
	house
	sight
amiable	
	whole
energetic	
fortunate	

formal	informal
	childish
	wrong
inferior	
inexpensive	
	dim
insane	
	laid back
responsible	
	enough
	empty

**Task 6: Use more formal alternatives to the words in bold. Make any necessary grammatical changes.**

1. The book is **mainly** concerned with the problem of policing the internet.
2. **Almost** every school in the country has reported problems with the new system.
3. The work of the Institute is not **only** devoted to cancer research.
4. **Basically**, we believe we have demonstrated a significant link between the two events.
5. We **tried** to find a new way of understanding the data.
6. The study is a **really good** example of the way sociologists collect their data.
7. The reaction is **typical** of the way large corporations keep control of their markets.
8. **There's no way** London can be compared to Sydney as a place to live and work.

**Task 7: Read the letter written in an informal style. Rewrite it to make it suitable for the academic context.**

You remember that paper you sent to our editorial group? Well, we had to reject it, because we don't think it's very good. But if you don't agree and still want to get it published, you will have to redo it considering the changes that we have offered.

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**SPEAKING – the importance of small talk and presenting oneself/ one’s research**

**Task 8: Share your experience of presenting with your colleague. Discuss the following.**

1. Have you ever delivered a presentation? What was it about? Was it successful? How did you know the audience had liked it?
2. What’s the best presentation you have ever heard? Why did you like it?
3. What is the most challenging aspect of giving a presentation? What seems to be easy about it?
4. How can you stop being nervous when giving a presentation? How can you learn to be a good presenter?
5. What do you think of PowerPoint? Are you good at using it? What about Prezi? (<http://prezi.com/>)
6. Have you heard about TED Talks? (<http://www.ted.com/>)
7. What is the purpose of small talk? How important is it in academia / business? What does it involve?

**Task 9:** You are attending an international conference. For the day the sessions are over and now you are at an **informal** networking dinner with the other participants. Start separate conversations with two colleagues, beginning with the small talk and introducing yourself. After you have made acquaintances, present your current academic position and engagement in research and your institution in about **1 minute**.

**Task 10:** Write a follow-up email to one of the participants in the social evening that you have had an opportunity to speak to and express your wish to stay in touch while mentioning the reason why it could be beneficial. Use an appropriate degree of formality of the language.

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**Useful links to follow/use in academic context:**

- <http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>
- <http://corpus.byu.edu/bnc/>
- <http://wordtree.coventry.ac.uk/?BAWE>
- <http://www.wordandphrase.info/>

**Key:**

Task 2:

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. **(written style for the general public discourse, scripted radio or TV news style)**
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. **(relaxed, simplified chat, very informal spoken style – the addition of repetition and fillers)**
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. **(jargon, very formal, this is the style of language used in official reports, technical studies; it is exclusively a style of written English, full of verbal nouns, technical words and passives)**
4. As Sterling went up in value, the government had to put up taxes to stop consumers splashing out on too many cheap imports. **(relaxed, informal spoken style: discussion, there is plenty of prepositional verbs, all actions are expressed through verbs, not verbal nouns)**
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. **(formal, spoken style – radio, seminar, talk)**
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. **(written, formal, clear English, as found in the press or in documents aimed at ordinary educated readers)**

Task 4:

1. With women especially, there is **a lot** of social pressure to conform to a certain physical shape. **(a great deal)**
2. Significantly, even at this late date, Lautrec was considered **a bit** conservative by his peers. **(somewhat)**
3. It focused on a subject that **a lot** of the bourgeois and upper-class exhibition-going public regarded as anti-social and anti-establishment. **(much)**
4. 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. **(collaborated)**
5. We'll tell you how you got on in the test in a couple of weeks. **(inform / the result / shortly)**
6. Therefore after six months the dieter is behaving according to all twenty-six goals and she has achieved a **big** reduction in sugar intake. **(considerable)**
7. Modern houses have so many labour-saving **things** that it is difficult for the person at home to have adequate exercise by doing chores, cooking, and looking after a family. **(devices)**
8. Making the effort to reclaim this wasted **stuff** for fertilizer would have a positive effect on greenhouse releases. **(material)**
9. 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. **(objects)**
10. Unfortunately, since there are so many possible explanations, the correct one is most difficult to **find out**. **(ascertain)**

11. These exercises can easily be incorporated into an exercise routine, with each exercise **done again** a number of times. (**repeated**)
12. Fleming **did well** in isolating a streptococcus from the cerebrospinal fluid of the patient. (**succeeded**)
13. Effective planning prevents such hazards, but only if a social organisation **makes sure** that all potential target individuals are acquainted with the procedure. (**ensures**)

Task 5:

formal	informal
<b>appear</b>	seem
<b>ascend</b>	climb
<b>assist/aid</b>	help
cease	<b>stop</b>
commence	<b>begin</b>
<b>consume</b>	use
decrease	<b>shorten/reduce</b>
demonstrate	<b>show</b>
depart	<b>go</b>
<b>desire</b>	want

formal	informal
enquire	<b>ask</b>
<b>finish</b>	end
<b>inform</b>	tell
obtain	<b>get</b>
preserve	<b>keep</b>
reject	<b>say no</b>
<b>release</b>	free
<b>repair</b>	mend
require	<b>need</b>
<b>reside</b>	live

formal	informal
<b>comprehension</b>	understanding
deficiency	<b>lack</b>
opportunity	<b>chance</b>
perspiration	<b>sweat</b>
<b>residence</b>	house
<b>vision</b>	sight
amiable	<b>friendly</b>
<b>complete</b>	whole
energetic	<b>lively</b>
fortunate	<b>lucky</b>

formal	informal
<b>immature</b>	childish
<b>incorrect</b>	wrong
inferior	<b>worse</b>
inexpensive	<b>cheap</b>
<b>indistinct</b>	dim
insane	<b>mad/crazy</b>
<b>relaxed</b>	laid back
responsible	<b>in charge</b>
<b>sufficient</b>	enough
<b>vacant</b>	empty

Task 6:

1. **primarily, principally, essentially, predominantly**
2. **virtually, practically, essentially**
3. **solely, exclusively, entirely, totally**
4. **in sum/to sum up/in summary, essentially, fundamentally**
5. **attempted, strived for, strived to do**
6. **prime, chief, primary, principal, fundamental**
7. **characteristic, representative**
8. **In no way/respect can London be...**

Task 7:

This is to inform you that your paper has been rejected by our publishing company as it was not up to the required standard. In case you would like us to reconsider it, we would suggest that you revise it and make some necessary changes.