



**ACADEMIC WRITING COURSE AUTUMN 2014**  
**SESSION 4 (selected activities)**



**Mgr. Robert Helán, Ph.D.**  
**Mgr. Radomíra Bednářová**  
*Masaryk University Language Centre*

- 1. PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF WRITING ABSTRACTS – FOLLOW UP ON LECTURE**
- 2. WRITING INTRODUCTIONS TO RESEARCH ARTICLES – THEORETICAL ASPECTS/  
FOLLOW UP TO READING**
- 3. WRITING INTRODUCTIONS TO RESEARCH ARTICLES – PRACTICAL ASPECTS**

**In the session the following areas will be covered:**

- summary of the general conventions in writing abstracts,
- basic principles of writing introductions to research articles: introduction + practice
- example analysis (peer-review), error correction

**E-learning:**

<https://is.muni.cz/auth/el/1411/podzim2014/DSAJz01/index.qwarp>

## I. DISCUSSION ON WRITING STRATEGIES

*Discuss these possible writing strategies with a partner. Which one/ones do you use a lot? If you rarely or never use some of the strategies, discuss why you do not.*

1. **Translating.**

2. Spending a lot of time on **gathering information** or **doing research** and then quickly writing your paper from your notes, data sources, or outlines.

3. Referring to one or more “**model**” **papers in your discipline**, noticing in particular such matters as how the papers are organized, how phrases are used, and where and why examples or illustrations are provided.

4. **Relying on a mentor** (either native or non-native speaker) who “knows the ropes” and can anticipate how a particular written text might be received by a particular set of readers or reviewers, and who may also be able to offer advice on which journal or conference a piece might be submitted to and why.

5. **Relying on friends** who are not in your field to help you with phraseology.

6. Developing a sense of the **anticipated audience**, particularly with regard to what needs to be said and what does not.

7. Recognizing the need for some **stylistic variation** and acquiring the linguistic resources to achieve this.

8. **Finding useful phraseology** from other, possibly published papers and using it to string your ideas together.

9. Constructing an appropriate author “persona”, so that you come across as **a member of the disciplinary community**.

10. Concentrating on making sure your **sentence-level grammar** is accurate because that is the most important aspect of getting your ideas across.

## II. ABSTRACTS AND WRITING OF ABSTRACTS:

### Structure

1. Background/introduction
2. Purpose
3. Methods/materials
4. Results/findings
5. Discussion/conclusion

**1. Each section answers some implied questions. Match the following questions with the sections above.**

- a. What was discovered? Section \_\_\_\_
- b. How was the research done? Section \_\_\_\_
- c. What do we know about the topic and why is it important? Section \_\_\_\_
- d. What do the findings mean? Section \_\_\_\_
- e. What is this study about? Section \_\_\_\_

**2. Here is an abstract from a published paper. It is 178 words long. Read it through looking for the main function of each sentence (background, purpose, methods, results, and discussion).**

Warmer Climates Boost Cyanobacterial Dominance in Shallow Lakes<sup>1</sup>

(1) Dominance by cyanobacteria hampers human use of lakes and reservoirs worldwide. (2) Previous studies indicate that excessive nutrient loading and warmer conditions promote dominance by cyanobacteria, but evidence from global scale field data has so far been scarce. (3) In this paper we show that although warmer climates do not result in higher overall phytoplankton biomass, the percentage of the total phytoplankton biovolume attributable to cyanobacteria increases steeply with temperature. (4) Our analysis is based on a study of 143 lakes along a latitudinal transect ranging from subarctic Europe to southern South America. (5) Our results reveal that the percent cyanobacteria is greater in lakes with high rates of light absorption. (6) This points to a positive feedback because restriction of light availability is often a consequence of high phytoplankton biovolume, which in turn may be driven by nutrient loading. (7) Our results indicate a synergistic effect of nutrients and climate. (8) The implications are that in a future warmer climate, nutrient concentrations may have to be reduced substantially from present values in many lakes if cyanobacterial dominance is to be controlled.

**3. Answer the following questions about the abstract.**

\_\_\_\_\_

<sup>1</sup> (Kosten, S. et al. (2012), Warmer climates boost cyanobacterial dominance in shallow lakes. *Global Change Biology*, 18: 118-126.)

- a. Are introductory statements general or specific?
- b. Are they in first person or third person style?
- c. What tense is used?

**4. Read the sentences below and fill in the gaps with one of the following verbs:**

**develops - calls - argues - provides - looks - consider**

- a. This paper \_\_\_\_\_ an axiomatic basis for a representation of personal preferences in which ...
- b. The authors \_\_\_\_\_ a broad class of situations where a society must choose from a finite set of alternatives.
- c. This paper \_\_\_\_\_ that the analysis of these games involves a key technical issue.
- d. This paper \_\_\_\_\_ at the effectiveness of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in reducing the time that manufacturing plants spend in a state of non-compliance.
- e. This study \_\_\_\_\_ into question the established view that lack of information on clean-up cost functions represents a serious problem ...
- f. This paper \_\_\_\_\_ a model of corporate hierarchy in which workers accumulate heterogeneous human capital suitable for different positions within the hierarchy.

**5. Sometimes, the Methods section sentences are expressed in the passive form. Rewrite the following sentences using the passive voice.**

- a. We then monitored the physicochemical parameters of the lake water for 1 year.

\_\_\_\_\_

- b. We collected samples for particulate toxin analysis from more than 140 lakes...

\_\_\_\_\_

- c. We detected microcystins in nearly 50% of the samples.

\_\_\_\_\_

**6. Read the following conference abstract on conference abstracts © Complete it with the following phrases:**

has not yet become a subject of research As a result, this study raises a broader question

This paper attempts to describe to provide some tentative explanations

plays a significant role

It will also be shown

This issue will be discussed

can be regarded as

has been investigated

### Cultural Variation in the Genre of the Conference Abstract: Rhetorical and Linguistic Dimensions

The conference abstract is a common and important genre that A. \_\_\_\_\_ in disseminating new knowledge within scientific communities, both national and international. As a genre with the specific features of "interestingness" created to attract the attention of reviewing committees, the conference abstract B. \_\_\_\_\_ by Berkenkotter & Huckin (1995) and Swales (1996). However, the issue of cultural variation in the genre C. \_\_\_\_\_, although the conference abstract, like other genres of academic discourse, can be presumed to reflect national proclivities in writing.

D. \_\_\_\_\_ the cultural-specific differences of English versus Ukrainian and Russian conference abstracts on the level of their cognitive structure and language, and E. \_\_\_\_\_ of the cultural and ideological backgrounds underlying these rhetorical and textlinguistic preferences. F. \_\_\_\_\_ how the inherited cognitive patterns of Slavic writers interplay with the acquired stereotypes of English scientific discourse in the abstracts they construct in English. These texts, hybrid from the viewpoint of their cultural shaping, G. \_\_\_\_\_ evidence of the transition period typical of both sociopolitical and intellectual life of Ukraine and other states of the former Soviet Union. H. \_\_\_\_\_: To what extent is it necessary to adopt the English conventions of this genre in order to be accepted and recognized by international fora? I. \_\_\_\_\_ in connection with the pedagogical implications arising from the findings and observations of this study.

*Interesting phrases: tentative explanations, national proclivities*

### III. PARAGRAPH SKELETON FOR INTRODUCTIONS

1.) *This excerpt comes from the beginning of an article, where a wide body of research is reviewed in an economical way so that the author can situate her own approach. Underline those phrases that you think you could use in your own writing. One example has been done for you.*

[1] The study builds on and contributes to work in critical linguistics (Coulthard, 1996; Chilton, 1982; Fairclough, 1989; Seidel, 1985; Van Dijk, 1989, 1991; Wodak, 1989). [2] Although studies in critical linguistics have examined the discursive construction of past events, there has not been an extended study of the construction of a projected event. [3] As such, this study provides additional insight into the constructive processes of language by explicating the linguistic and rhetorical processes through which a projected—future—event is constructed as a discrete and autonomous state of affairs. [4] The analytic focus on a projected event enables another contribution. [5] This study analyzes how the political and social interests underlying accounts of the Iraq/Saudi Arabia projected event were rhetorically managed in *The New York Times (NYT)* and *Washington Post (WP)*. [6] Although numerous studies (Bruck, 1989; Clayman, 1990; Fairclough, 1992c; Fowler, 1991; Van Dijk, 1988, 1989, 1993; Zelizer, 1989) have identified sourcing (i.e., using spokespersons representing so-called elite groups and institutions as sources for information) as a constructive social and ideological practice, little analytic attention has been paid to the implications of this finding for how texts are linguistically constructed within newspaper discourse, a discourse context guided by the professional canon of objectivity, balance and neutrality. [7] I address this issue by demonstrating how assertions about a hypothetical future event attributed to a specific group of spokespersons were transformed into unmediated and presupposed information.

2.) *Questions:*

- Which sentence locates her analysis within a specific discipline?
- How and where does she signal a gap?
- How and where does she signal the contribution her study will make to the field?

3.) *These are the phrases forming the skeleton of the article. Can you think of synonyms which could be used for some of the words? One example has been done for you.*

work
research
paper
report
survey
article

1. The **study** builds on and contributes to work in \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Although studies in \_\_\_\_\_ have examined \_\_\_\_\_  
there has not been a/an \_\_\_\_\_.
3. As such, this study provides additional insight into \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The analytic focus on \_\_\_\_\_ enables another contribution.
5. This study analyses \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Although numerous studies ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) have identified \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_,  
little analytic attention has been paid to \_\_\_\_\_.
7. I address this issue by demonstrating \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

4.) *Use the paragraph skeleton and synonyms of your choice to write a short introduction of a research paper (research you have carried out or have already written about).*

5.) *Read the introduction and answer the question below the article.*

**Fraud in Medical Research:  
An International Survey of Biostatistics**

Ranstam, J. et al.  
*Controlled Clinical Trials*, 21, 415-427.

(1) The public awareness of scientific fraud has increased remarkably since the late 1980s when a controversy made front-page news, in which a paper investigated for fraud had as co-author a Nobel laureate [1]. (2) During the 1990s scientific fraud was disclosed on numerous occasions [2]. (3) In fact, it was recently suggested that fraud now in “endemic in many scientific disciplines and in most countries” [3]. (4) However, the clandestine character and consequential lack of reliable information make it difficult to study scientific fraud. (5) The characteristics and frequency of scientific fraud, therefore, are generally unknown, and its impact on medical research is unclear. (6) Biostatisticians routinely work closely with physicians and scientists in many branches of medical research and have unique insight into data. (7) In addition, they have the methodological competence to detect fraud and could be expected to have a special professional interest in the validity of results. (8) Biostatisticians therefore could provide unique and reliable information on the characteristics of fraud in medical research. (9) The objective of this study was to assess the characteristics of fraud in medical research by surveying members of the International Society of Clinical Biostatisticians (ISCB).

**Questions to discuss:**

1. Underline all words and phrases in the first three sentences that help establish the research territory.
2. Identify all the linking words and phrases. What are their functions?
3. Where and how is the gap established?