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The Use of English Language in Research

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Abstract

English as the global academic language facilitates the international mobility of young researchers (Graddol, D. ,2006). English has been the language of choice for many international scholarly journals. Academic writing is complex, formal, objective, explicit, hedged, and responsible. It is organized and planned precisely and accurately. Glatthorn, A. (1998) says about the academic writing style that the academic writing should strive for clarity, maturity, and formality and should strike a balance between confidence and tentativeness.

Introduction

In the present scenario, English has become one of the most important academic and professional tools. English is recognized as undoubtedly the most important language to learn for the increasingly mobile international community, and English has become the official language of the business and scientific world (Schütz, 2005). English as the global academic language facilitates the international mobility of young researchers (Graddol, D. ,2006).

In most cases research papers are often rejected due to lack of good writing skills in English language and lack of using appropriate words/vocabulary or sentence structures. English is widely considered and predominantly used for writing academic or scientific research papers /work. English has been the language of choice for many international scholarly journals.

English used in everyday situations or general purpose is quite different from the English used in academic writing. Academic English is purposely used for reading and understanding the study materials, and writing about the subject. It is used to describe an object, situation, a process or how something works and explain something. Writing for academic or scientific research should be lucid, brief, exact and accurate in meaning for the reader's understanding. Generally a simple formal tone and style is used in academic writing, avoiding colloquial, idiomatic, slang, or journalistic expressions in favor of precise vocabulary.

Academic English

Academic English is a unique set of rules which should be explicit, formal, factual, objective and analytical in nature. Academic writing is complex, formal, objective, explicit, hedged, and responsible. It is organized and planned precisely and accurately.

Some Features:

- is usually formal in tone and impersonal in style
- avoids contractions or shortened forms of verbs, such as won't, doesn't or it's
- avoids using a linking word such as 'and' or 'but' at the beginning of a sentence
- avoids personal pronouns such as I, me, you, your
- may use the passive form of verbs
- avoids verbs that are composed of multiple words, such as 'give up', 'put up with'
- tends to employ a cautious way of explaining findings, using expressions such as 'may', 'it is possible that...', 'could'
- may use specialised vocabulary.

The Use of English Language in Research

Researchers should have command over the knowledge of English language in order to express their ideas, opinions, hypothesis and insights about their research and to disseminate their research findings and results to the people of related research area.

English language skills: As a matter of fact, English is not a subject, but skill-oriented language. Language is indispensable to students' learning in order to communicate or understand a subject. LSRW (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing) are the 4 basic skills of English Language. In addition to the 4 skills, the fundamental aspects of English grammar, vocabulary and punctuation are also important and very much useful in written and spoken English. The above said skills and aspects play a significant role in order to:

- understand and make the most effective use of your study materials
- develop the specialised language and vocabulary relevant to your subject
- interpret assignment questions and select relevant and appropriate material for your response
- write well-structured and coherently presented assignments, without plagiarism

- communicate your needs to your tutors
- work productively with other students.

Features of Academic English

The use of academic language is precise and accurate, and the features of academic writing are complexity, formality, precision, objectivity, explicitness, accuracy, hedging, responsibility, organisation and planning.

Complexity: Written language has longer words, it is lexically more dense and it has a more varied vocabulary. It uses more noun-based phrases than verb-based phrases. Written texts are shorter and the language has more grammatical complexity, including more subordinate clauses and more passives.

Formality: Academic writing is relatively formal. In general this means that in an essay, colloquial words and expressions should be avoided.

Precision: In academic writing, facts and figures are given precisely.

Objectivity: Written language is in general objective rather than personal. It therefore has fewer words that refer to the writer or the reader. This means that the main emphasis should be on the information that you want to give and the arguments you want to make, rather than you. For that reason, academic writing tends to use nouns (and adjectives), rather than verbs (and adverbs).

Explicitness: Academic writing is explicit about the relationships in the text. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the writer in English to make it clear to the reader how the various parts of the text are related. These connections can be made explicit by the use of different signalling words.

Accuracy: Academic writing uses vocabulary accurately. Most subjects have words with narrow specific meanings. Linguistics distinguishes clearly between "phonetics" and "phonemics"; general English does not.

Hedging: In any kind of academic writing, it is necessary to make decisions about the stance on a particular subject, or the strength of the claims. Different subjects prefer to do this in different

ways. A technique common in certain kinds of academic writing is known by linguists as a 'hedge'.

Responsibility: In academic writing one must be responsible for, and must be able to provide evidence and justification for, any claims. It is also responsible for demonstrating an understanding of any source texts used.

Organisation: Academic writing is well organised. It flows easily from one section to the next in a logical fashion. A good place to start is the genre of the text. Once it is decided on the genre, the structure is easily determined.

Planning: Academic writing is well planned. It usually takes place after research and evaluation, according to a specific purpose and plan. (<http://www.uefap.com/writing/feature/featfram.htm>)

Characteristics of Academic Writing

Scholarly or academic writing should be considered writing of high quality with the intent of publication in journals refereed by peers. According to Huff (1999), the primary goal of scholarly writing is to contribute to the canon of scholarly work in a subject. A prospective author should know his/her audience, should target an article to a specific journal, and should attend to the details that are specified for publication and other similar observations. So, the academic or research paper/article should consist of the following characteristics of academic writing.

- Planning - There is a certain amount of planning before you start writing the paper; so, it will be analytical and organized.
- Outline - A proper outline is a must for academic writing. An outline will not only help you formulate your thoughts, but will sometimes make you aware of certain relationships between topics. It will help you determine the pertinent information to be included in your paper.
- Tone - A formal tone is used. You do not use slang words, jargon, abbreviations, or many clichés.
- Language - The language in your paper needs to be clear and words need to be chosen for their precision. A thesaurus is a good tool to help you pick just the right words to explain the issues.

- Point-of-view - The point of view in the third person, as the focus of academic writing is to educate on the facts, not support an opinion.
- Approach - Deductive reasoning is a big part of academic writing as your readers have to follow the path that brought you to your conclusion.

Deductive reasoning and an analytical approach are important in academic writing. Much planning and forethought are needed to have a well organized paper.

Diction and Style of Academic Writing

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Diction is the author's word choice in writing. There are several general ideas and rules to keep in mind in order to choose the right words. All writing has a purpose, and the diction should coincide with the purpose, based on the audience. This should help you to pick words that they will understand, but also will not be below their level (Gibbons, W. 2001). The number of syllables in a word is also related to diction. Words can be monosyllabic or polysyllabic. Monosyllabic words can add emphasis to the point you are making. In contrast the more polysyllabic words, the more difficult the content (Henney, K. 2001). Idioms and phrases are frequently used in everyday speech or writing in an informal way.

In scholarly (or academic or professional) diction, the goal is to convey information and ideas clearly and precisely using the vocabulary and basic concepts in a particular field.

Therefore, scholarly diction should:

- Be as precise as necessary. This may require a specialized vocabulary. For example, use “compensation” instead of “salary”.
- Be as simple and clear as possible. Don’t use a word that “sounds good” if the meaning isn’t absolutely clear (to you and to your reader.) Use your dictionary. Don’t use “elevated” language (“thus”, “heretofore”, “indubitably”) for its own sake.
- Avoid colloquialisms (slang), clichés, and expressions or metaphors that might be common in ordinary speech but that add nothing to your meaning. for example, use “Children” instead of “kids”, “Alcohol” instead of “booze”.

- Express your opinion, but not your prejudices. Make your point with facts and arguments, not with emotional appeals. Avoid expressions of your personal reactions (“Wow!”, “Yuck”), and “I believe...” is usually inappropriate.
- Never talk down to your reader. Don’t over-explain things that will be obvious to someone in your field, and don’t over-generalize. A statement like “Winter is the coldest season” is out of place in an academic paper, as is “New Yorkers hate Winter.” Your sentence structure and organization should also reflect the sophistication of your thought. Use a variety of complex and compound sentences.
- Most importantly, remember to take these as guidelines, not rigid rules, and use your own judgment about what works and what doesn’t.

Style is a way in which something is written. Style influences the reader’s impression of the information itself. Style includes diction and tone. The main goal in considering style is to present information in a manner appropriate for both the audience and the purpose of the writing. Glatthorn, A. (1998) says about the academic writing style that the academic writing should strive for clarity, maturity, and formality and should strike a balance between confidence and tentativeness. He also notes that a writer should write clear, mature sentences that have the main idea in the main clause and should have many simple sentences. Like other authors of this ilk, he notes that writers should not use the passive voice. He then gives the following advice:

- Use jargon with discrimination.
- Avoid fad expressions.
- Avoid colloquial expressions.
- Avoid the use of contractions.
- Avoid adjectival nouns.
- Avoid the vague use of we and our. (Italics in original text)
- Avoid the second person you. (Italics in original text)
- Avoid the sexist use of the masculine pronouns in referring to males and females. (p. 121)

According to the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, the tips of writing style are as follows:

- Use the past tense or the present-perfect tense;
- Avoid noun strings;
- Try to use short words and short sentences when possible;
- Avoid jargon;
- Avoid wordiness;
- Avoid redundancy;
- Vary sentence length;
- Use specific language;
- Avoid colloquial expressions;
- Avoid pronouns such as, 'this, that, these and those';
- Avoid illogical or ambiguous comparisons;
- Avoid third person references when referring to yourself;
- Avoid anthropomorphism;
- Avoid the editorial 'we'.

Conclusion

English is widely considered and predominantly used for writing academic or scientific research papers /work. English has been the language of choice for many international scholarly journals. Academic English is a unique set of rules to be explicit, formal, factual, objective and analytical in nature. The 4 basic skills of English Language as well as the fundamental aspects of English grammar, vocabulary and punctuation are important and very much useful for Good Academic Writing.

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