



# Professional Basic English

## Fall 2021, Lecture 1

*Jari Korhonen*

[jari.t.korhonen@ieee.org](mailto:jari.t.korhonen@ieee.org)



# What is this course about?

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- Written and oral communication is essential for exchanging ideas and thoughts, presenting coursework reports and research results etc.
- English is the most common language in international communication
  - Most commonly spoken foreign language: essential if you wish to publish for international audience, study or work abroad, work in international business etc.
  - Most common language for scientific publications, technical reports and computer science literature
- The aim of the course is to prepare you for expressing yourself in English in real-life professional context
  - Main focus in professional reading and writing



# Practical arrangements

- 18 sessions with a lecture, classroom tasks and homeworks
- Course material from different sources
  - Academic Essay Writing for Postgraduates. English Language Teaching Centre, University of Edinburgh, 2014
  - Jay Belanger, William P. Fox, 王杰, 毛紫阳. 正确写作美国大学生数学建模竞赛论文（第2版）. 高等教育出版社, 2017.
  - 王慧莉, 刘文宇, 高桂珍, 曹硕. 任务型学术写作. 中国人民大学出版社, 2014.
  - Strunk&White: Elements of Style
  - Example articles



# Course outline

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- 1) Professional writing and reading in general
- 2) Basic grammar rules and style advice
- 3) Writing professional e-mails, memos etc.
- 4) Expressing caution
- 5) Basic structure of a scientific paper
- 6) Practice writing



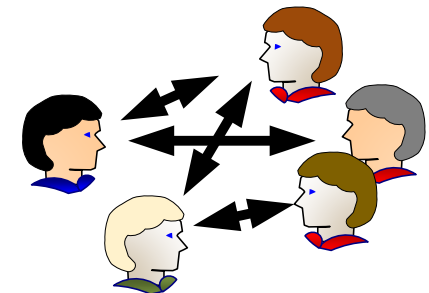
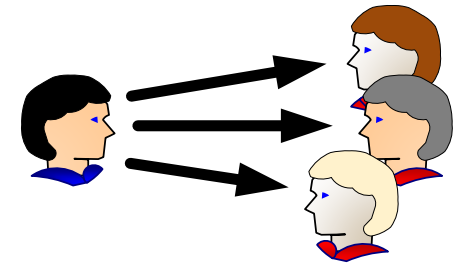
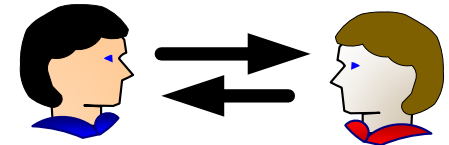
# Introduction round

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- Please introduce yourself (in English) briefly:
  - Your name
  - Where you come from
  - What do you study
  - Anything else you wish to say about yourself

# Types of communication

- Written vs. spoken
- One-to-one (e-mail, phone calls etc.)
  - Can be formal or informal, depending on how well you know the person, cultural considerations, etc.
  - Interaction: usually possible to ask for clarification
- One-to-many (written reports, oral presentations)
  - Important to consider the target audience
  - Should be self contained
- Many-to-many (group e-mails, meetings)
  - Possibly many different interests
  - Coordination of discussion (maybe a chairman)





# Types of written communication

- Professional communication by e-mail etc.
  - Can be formal or informal, depends on how well you know the person, cultural considerations, whether it is private or group e-mail etc.
- Memos and meeting minutes
  - Usually not strict formal requirements, format depends on the situation
- Scientific reports and publications
  - There are general conventions and practices, often a template is provided
  - In popular science articles, more relaxed style allowed (targeted for the public)
- Software/hardware documentation, user manuals
  - Usually very strict formal requirements, template is provided



# Wiio's laws

- 1. Communication usually fails, except by accident
  - Words and expressions (symbols) are often vaguely defined and therefore are prone to misunderstanding
    - Language differences: many words cannot be translated accurately to another language
    - Cultural differences: many ideas may have different connotations in different cultures
    - Personal differences: education and personality can lead people to interpret things differently
    - Data lost: listener does not pay attention, message lost in the Internet
- 2. If a message can be interpreted in several ways, it will be interpreted in a manner that maximizes the damage
  - Especially true in the Internet arguments
  - Motivation to use unambiguous expressions

Adopted from <http://jkorpela.fi/wiio.html>





# Understanding communication

- Effective communication is about getting your message across
  - Message is not just information, it is interpretation of information
  - Audience-friendly: consider your audience (general public, experts, mixed)
- Take the medium into account
  - In written format, there can be additional details (readers can skip parts that are not relevant for them)
  - In oral presentations, attendees cannot choose to skip parts: you must be selective about what to include and what not

Adopted from <https://www.nature.com/scitable/ebooks/english-communication-for-scientists-14053993/118519407>



# Writing or speaking to specific audience

- Writing or speaking to non-specialists
  - Convey the motivation for the work early (why is this topic interesting?)
  - Use comparisons and analogues rather than absolute values alone
  - Use a lot of visual aids (diagrams, photographs, drawings)
- Writing or speaking to mixed audience
  - Divide your presentation into more general and more specialized parts
  - In the beginning of the speech or the introduction of the paper, explain what everybody should know
  - Later, go to the details for the specialist audience (possibly leave room for questions after the presentation)

Adopted from <https://www.nature.com/scitable/ebooks/english-communication-for-scientists-14053993/118519448>



# Classroom task

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- Read the following text clips. What is the purpose and target audience of each text?



# Classroom task, text A

A computer is a machine that can be instructed to carry out sequences of arithmetic or logical operations automatically via computer programming. Modern computers have the ability to follow generalized sets of operations, called programs. These programs enable computers to perform an extremely wide range of tasks. A "complete" computer including the hardware, the operating system (main software), and peripheral equipment required and used for "full" operation can be referred to as a computer system. This term may as well be used for a group of computers that are connected and work together, in particular a computer network or computer cluster.



# Classroom task, text B

## “Point-and-Shoot” Modes (“Auto” and “Noflash”)

This section describes how to shoot photographs and movies in “Auto” and “Noflash” modes, automatic “point-and-shoot” modes in which the majority of settings are controlled by the camera in response to shooting conditions. Before proceeding, turn the camera on and rotate the mode dial to “Auto” or “Noflash” (the only difference between the two is that the flash will not fire in “Noflash” mode).



# Classroom task, text C

IPv4 is the leading addressing technology supported by Internet hosts. However, IANA, the international organization that assigns IP addresses at a global level, has recently announced the exhaustion of IPv4 address blocks. IoT networks, in turn, are expected to include billions of nodes, each of which shall be (in principle) uniquely addressable. A solution to this problem is offered by the IPv6 standard [24], which provides a 128-bit address field, thus making it possible to assign a unique IPv6 address to any possible node in the IoT network.



# Classroom task, text D

## **To: Computer Programming Division**

This is to remind the division that, starting today, we are now filing all Testing Procedure Specification (TPS) reports with new cover sheets.

The reason for this change is simple. In addition to a new format, the cover sheets provide a summary of the report as well as the updated legal copy. The new cover sheets also include company's new logo.

Though this change may initially seem like a headache and an extra step, it is necessary to include the new cover sheets due to their updated information. Failing to do so will result in a confusing and inaccurate product delivered to our customers.

Please be sure to follow this new procedure.

Best regards,

Vice President Lumbergh



# Scientific writing

- Special type of professional articles
  - Purpose is to inform the scientific community about new research results
  - Follows certain structure and writing conventions (abstract, introduction, body, conclusions, references)
- Typically published in different dedicated platforms
  - Scientific journals, conference proceedings
  - Usually peer reviewed (other researchers will assess the validity of each submitted paper)
  - Nowadays, many researchers also publish preprints before peer review





# What is good scientific writing?

- The study is well motivated
  - Explains why the topic is interesting / important
  - Shows evidence of adequate and relevant background reading
- The text shows evidence of systematic thought and argument
  - All claims justified by logic, observations or references
- Text is well written and presented
  - Clear expression, good “flow” of the text
  - Writing conventions, page limits, grammar rules etc. well observed
  - Use of diagrams, tables etc.



# Summary

- The style of writing good English depends on platform and the target audience
  - Presentation or text for specific purpose, non-specialists or specialists, formal or informal platform, communication one to one, one to many or many to many
- On this course, we will focus on professional writing and reading
  - We cover the style and basic rules for writing e-mails, memos or scientific papers, in large part applicable also for coursework reports, technical documents, funding applications etc.