

<i>Module</i>	<i>Part 3: Language for Proposal Writing</i>
2C	

Objective:

To further understand and apply language features in technical writing with a focus on proposal writing

References

- Coombs, P. (2005). *IT project proposals: Writing to win*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Higher Education Language and Presentation Support, University of Technology Sydney. (2014). Formal and informal language. Retrieved from <http://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/support/helps/self-help-resources/grammar/formal-and-informal-language>
- Language and Learning Online, Monash University. (2007). Grammar for engineering. Retrieved from <http://www.monash.edu.au/lis/lionline/grammar/engineering/index.xml>
- Riordian, D.G. (2005). *Technical report writing today*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
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1. Other C's in technical writing

In addition to the 2 C's (*clarity* and *conciseness*) covered earlier, the following C's are also important in technical writing, including proposal writing:

a. C_____

This refers to both contextual and grammatical accuracy. Care should be taken to make sure that all the information provided is technically accurate (by applying your disciplinary knowledge) and that grammar, punctuation and spelling are correct. As you write or edit your work, pay attention to the following types of errors. Are you familiar with these items?

1. Subject-verb agreement	2. Tenses	3. Verb structures	4. Articles
5. Gerunds and infinitives	6. Prepositions	7. Pronoun reference/ agreement	8. Countable/ uncountable nouns
9. Run-on sentences	10. Sentence structures	11. Collocations	12. Spellings

Task 1 Proofreading

Below are some problematic sentences extracted from previous CUHK engineering students' work. Identify the types of problems (refer to the above) and correct them. Some sentences may contain more than one mistake.

Sample sentences	Type(s) identified
1. According to Transport Department, from 1999 to 2003, there were more than 14000 drivers and passengers dead or got injured in traffic accidents every year.	
2. We will invite some volunteers to make an experiment in hospital.	
3. As shown in the photographs below, people usually forgot to take their water bottle, stationaries, and even mobile phone.	
4. This is why the product invented.	
5. Firstly, the safety of implantation. And it is exactly what most clients are concerned about.	
6. We want the product is affordable.	
7. Our product has three major functions: used as a reminder, prevent from thieves, and locating position.	
8. The idea of the product as we observer that electronic devices become part of our life, we cannot live without them.	
9. The short-term aim of our product is that it can provide the convenience for the user.	

10. Our primary data is come from the Internet.	
11. We may consider design different models of the product.	
12. After a few discussions based on several researches, we had decided to invent a product called 'Super Recharger'.	
13. We need to search for different data too, to emphasize the importance for using our product. For example, how bad the air quality is affected by smoking or how human's health is affected.	
14. The body size of every people is not the same, some maybe too thin so that the seat belt cannot really protect them.	
15. Since the inner part of the seat belt is like the normal seat belt, it can fasten everyone no matter you are fat or thin.	

b. C_____ (*also known as comprehensiveness*)

This refers to the inclusion of all necessary, relevant, and important information. Make sure the proposal covers all the essential parts adequately and answers all the questions asked. For example, when presenting the budget, the writer should include all the estimated costs. Make good use of appendices to provide supplementary information when necessary.

2. Other good proposal writing practices

a. Providing facts

When presenting ideas in a proposal, writers should write persuasively by striking a balance between providing facts and opinions. Writers should provide accurate information wherever appropriate. Which sentence below do you find more convincing?

Sentence 1: *iChat is by far the best and most reliable app available for videoconferencing.*

Sentence 2: *iChat offers videoconferencing with up to 10 participants and runs its own P2P servers, which ensures quality communication.*

Facts contain accurate information and are readily verifiable and are thus often more convincing.

b. Enhancing specificity

Proposal writers should seek to provide specific information so that readers have a clear understanding of what the project can offer, which serves as the basis for judging the value and merits of the proposal. Writers should decide the degree of specificity according to the reader's needs. Compare the following sentences:

Sentence 1: *After using the posture brace, users will improve their posture.*

Sentence 2: *After 6 weeks of continuous use, the posture brace can improve users' posture by pulling their shoulders back and aligning the clavicles.*

How can you make the following sentences/phrases more specific? You may make up the necessary details.

1. With 3D touch, you can do things that were never possible before.
2. Applications to derive the data...
3. This program can improve profitability.
4. Maintenance processes are supported by a range of software technologies.

c. Using analogies

Proposals are often read by mixed readers, who possess varying levels of technical knowledge. Analogies are a good way to help readers visualise abstract or difficult concepts. However, make sure the analogy can really help explain the required concept and only use this technique when necessary.

Example 1: *Like a human brain processing ideas and thoughts, a CPU processes instructions and performs operations.*

Example 2: *An IP address is like a home address.*

Ways of writing analogies:

1. A is to B as C is to D.
2. A is analogous to B.
3. A is as...as B.
4. A is like B. (semi-formal)

Write an analogy that helps explain a concept in your project:

d. Using strong words

The use of stronger or more precise words helps explain ideas more effectively. Consider this example given by Coombs (2005):

Original: *The steering committee made a resolution that an investigation be carried out by a performance analyst into the feasibility of the provision of extra Oracle nodes.*

Revised: *The steering committee resolved that a performance analyst should investigate whether it is feasible to provide extra Oracle nodes.*

Examples of weak words:

Weak verbs: be, have, do, make, get, come

Weak adjectives: good, great, bad, nice, many

Weak adverbs: really, well

Weak nouns: things, stuff

Improve the following sentences by using stronger words:

1. After making improvements to the design, the project team would like to carry out evaluations of the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed implementation plan.
2. Technicians have to have a basic understanding of the overall design of the system.
3. After we did an analysis, we made a decision that the choice of materials should be compatible with the existing models.

3. Sentence combining techniques

Describe your team's proposed innovative product in 1 or 2 sentences:

Work together with another team and exchange product descriptions. Are you clear about the other team's invention? Ask them any questions to clarify your understanding.

If you experienced any problems in describing your product concisely, below are sentence combining techniques that you could apply.

a. Compounding sentences

Sentence coordinators are words which join two independent clauses to form one compound sentence. Examples of coordinators are FANBOYS (*for, and, nor but, or, yet, so*).

Coordinators do not normally start a sentence.

Example:

Independent clause 1	In cold climates, water evaporates slowly.
Independent clause 2	Melting snow adds runoff to the sea.
Sentence combining	In cold climates water evaporates slowly. And melting snow adds runoff to the sea. (✗)
	In cold climates, water evaporates slowly and melting snow adds runoff to the sea. (✓)

Sentence connectors are words which form bridges between two independent clauses. Some examples are: *however, therefore, furthermore, for example, on the other hand, in addition, still, otherwise, that is.*

To form one compound sentence, a connector is punctuated by placing a semicolon (;) before and a comma (,) after it. To form two sentences, a connector is punctuated by placing a full stop (.) before, and a comma (,) after it.

Independent clause 1	Cycling is being encouraged as it has the potential to ease traffic congestion and air pollution.
Independent clause 2	The high number of accidents is a concern.
Sentence combining	Cycling is being encouraged as it has the potential to ease traffic congestion and air pollution, however the high number of accidents is a concern. (✗)
	Cycling is being encouraged as it has the potential to ease traffic congestion and air pollution; however, the high number of accidents is a concern. (✓)
	Cycling is being encouraged as it has the potential to ease traffic congestion and air pollution. However, the high number of accidents is a concern. (✓)

b. Subordinating one clause to another

Subordinators join two clauses into one complex sentence. As these words introduce a dependent clause (one which cannot stand alone as a sentence), both clauses must be combined in one sentence. Some examples: *because, after, since, as, although, if, when, so that.*

Below is an example of a dependent clause at the beginning of the sentence which should be followed by a comma.

Dependent clause	Because water evaporates rapidly in hot climates.
Independent clause	The surrounding oceans have higher salinity.
Sentence combining	Because water evaporates rapidly in hot climates, the surrounding oceans have higher salinity.

The following is an example with the dependent clause last, in which case no comma is used.

Independent clause	Oceans in hot climates have higher salinity.
Dependent clause	Because the water evaporates more rapidly.
Sentence combining	Oceans in hot climates have higher salinity because the water evaporates more rapidly.

c. Using appositives to connect ideas

An **appositive** is a noun or noun phrase that renames another noun next to it. The appositive can be a short or long combination of words.

Example:

1. The insect, a cockroach, is crawling across the kitchen table.
2. The insect, a large cockroach, is crawling across the kitchen table.
3. The insect, a large cockroach with hairy legs, is crawling across the kitchen table.

Appositive: *The insect, a large, hairy-legged cockroach that has spied my bowl of oatmeal, is crawling across the kitchen table.*

d. Using participial phrases to connect ideas

A writer can integrate the idea of one short sentence into a larger structure by turning that sentence into a modifying phrase called a participial phrase. Participial phrases begin with a present or past participle (‘**Considering** his previous history...’; ‘**Given** the current situation ...’)

Sentence 1	3D Virtual Market is a newly invented web system that aims to enhance people’s online shopping experience.
Sentence 2	It utilizes the latest 3D viewing technology to virtualize every market product.
Sentence Combining	Utilizing the latest 3D viewing technology to virtualize every market product, 3D Virtual Market is a newly invented web system that aims to enhance people’s online shopping experience.

Ambiguity could occur in participial phrases when a modifying phrase has no word to modify (dangling modifier). For example: ‘Covered in mustard and relish, I enjoyed the hamburger.’ The modifier “Covered in mustard and relish” is ‘dangling’ because it refers to the subject of the sentence ‘I’. Rewriting as ‘I enjoyed the hamburger covered in mustard and relish’ would resolve the ambiguity.

Rewrite the following sentences by fixing the misplaced modifiers.

1. Reviewing the cost/benefit analysis, a decision was made to go ahead with the implementation.
2. Undertaking the estimates, many risks were discovered.

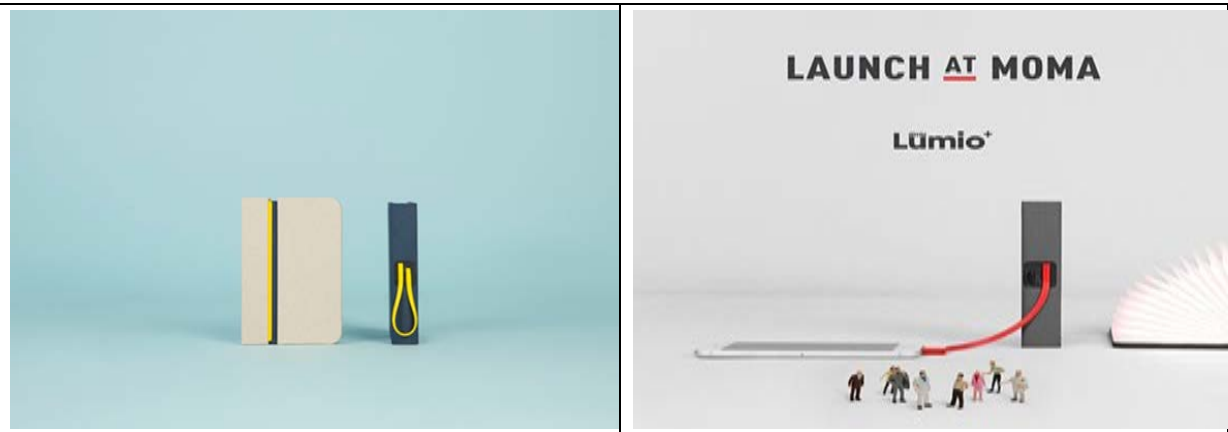
Task 2 Writing practice

Combine the phrases found in the advertisements of the products below into a brief description of each product utilizing the sentence combining techniques.

Product 1: Apple Watch

	
<p><i>To wear it is to love it.</i></p> <p>Receive and respond to notifications in an instant. Track your daily activity. Control your music using only your voice. Start a workout just like that. With Apple Watch, important information and essential features are always just a raise of the wrist away.</p>	

Revised:

Product 2: Mini Lumio+

Mini Lumio+ is a compact lamp

Mini Lumio+ is a multi-functional lamp.

Mini Lumio+ has a battery pack for mobile phones

The battery pack of Mini Lumio + disguises itself in the form of a hard-cover book.

Mini Lumio+ opens to 360°

Mini Lumio+ comes with an embedded micro-USB charger for mobile phones,

Mini Lumio+ comes with an interchangeable magnetic spine cover.

Revised:

Product 3: Openair

Openaire is a combination of:

- a laptop-carrying case,
- a work table,
- a chair.

Openaire is designed with style.

Openaire is designed with ergonomics in mind.

Openaire can be folded up to form a standard-sized bag

Openaire allows you to set up office pretty much anywhere!

Revised:

4. Revisiting writing style and tone: formal and informal

Which text is more formal? Discuss the differences between the following extracts.

Email 1

Ted, thanks for that laptop suggestion. The steering committee loved it. Like you, we feel it will solve the eyestrain issue and will facilitate data flow. And we think it will also raise morale. I'd like you to begin work on this soon. Can you make an appointment...

Email 2

A decision to provide each employee with a laptop has been made. Laptops will reduce the eye fatigue that some employees have experienced and the laptops will also increase data flow. Ted Baxter will chair the implementation committee. Donna Silver and Robert Sirabian will assist...

Formal and informal writing:

Informal	Formal
1. Use of contractions: <i>I'd, can't, won't, shouldn't, etc.</i>	1. No contractions/ use of c_____ forms.
2. Use of first, second or third person: pronouns: <i>I, you, we, they, you, your, etc.</i> to address readers.	2. Use of t_____ person pronouns: <i>employee, one, one's, the reader, the reader's, etc.</i> or impersonal tone
3. Use of colloquial words/expressions: <i>love, kids, guy, awesome, a lot, etc.</i>	3. Use of more formal words/expressions.

Although both styles are correct, each style is used in a different setting. Formal English is used mainly in academic writing, business or technical communications, whereas informal English is appropriate when used in a more casual setting, for instance communicating with family or friends, or close colleagues. Knowing your audience is crucial to determining which style to choose. Whichever style you write in, make sure to keep it consistent.

Below are other differences between formal and informal language:

Informal	Formal
4. Use of phrasal verbs: The balloon was <i>blown up</i> for the experiment.	4. Use of s_____ verbs: The balloon was <i>inflated</i> for the experiment.
5. Use of clichés: <i>loads of, conspicuous by absence, etc.</i>	5. Use of o_____ words: <i>many, was absent, etc.</i>
6. Use of abbreviated words: <i>photo, TV, etc.</i>	6. Use of f_____ versions: <i>photograph, television, etc.</i>
7. Use of imperative sentence: <i>Remember to....</i>	7. Use of d_____ sentence: <i>Users should remember to... or Please remember to...</i>
8. Use of the active voice: <i>We've decided ...</i>	8. Use of the p_____ voice: <i>A decision has been made...</i>

Task 3 Sentence rewriting

An overly informal or conversational tone may sound disrespectful and offensive to readers. Modify and adjust the style and tone of the following excerpts adapted from the oral proposal on the product “3D Virtual Market” into a style and tone suitable for technical writing.

1. *Hey guys, I heard about this 3D Visual Market web system which is cool! You'll have an amazing online shopping experience with it. It's got 3D viewing technology which makes the products look like their real shape and it makes you feel like you're shopping in a real shop!*

2. *So many customers have complained about online shopping and 3D Visual Market is nothing like ordinary online shopping. It looks more real. It offers systematic ways for users to shop and it is easy to use. No need to worry, there's nothing complicated about it!*
3. *You know what? They use this 3D modeling which makes it look like a real shop. You'll feel like you're shopping in a real shop. The 3D Item Viewing helps you to like... see the real product virtually....You could even try on the products like clothes, body accessories, jewelry and so on cause they've this 3D Mirror function.*
4. *Don't worry, it is safe! Thanks to the verification process. Yes, there is a verification system. The system protects your personal data from any criminals. Criminals can't steal our product or cheat us.*
5. *And so I think the 3D Virtual Market will be famous soon both here in our city and also elsewhere in the world. The amazing stuff there will attract people all over the world. Some might be interested in it for doing business.*

Task 4 Editing

Edit a draft (your own draft or one provided by your instructor) according to the aspects covered in this module and present your revised version (with reasons for the changes) to your peers.