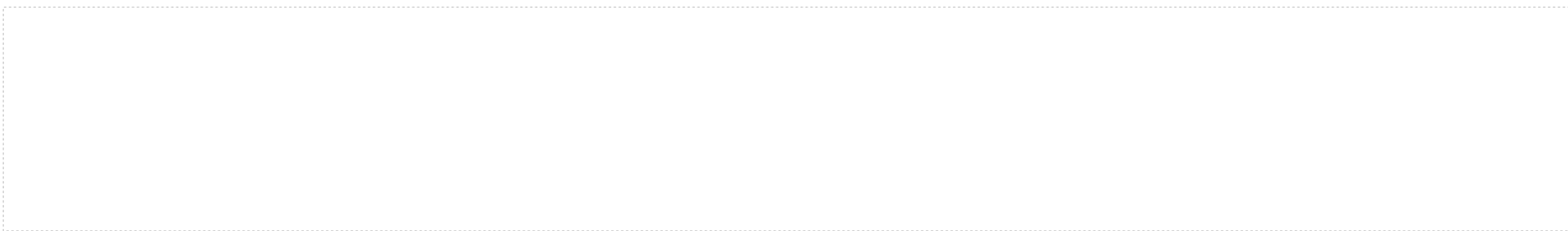


# Academic Writing

Academic Writing

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- ☞ In this lesson, you will
  - ☞ • discuss the characteristics of different types of writing
  - ☞ • identify characteristics/features of academic writing

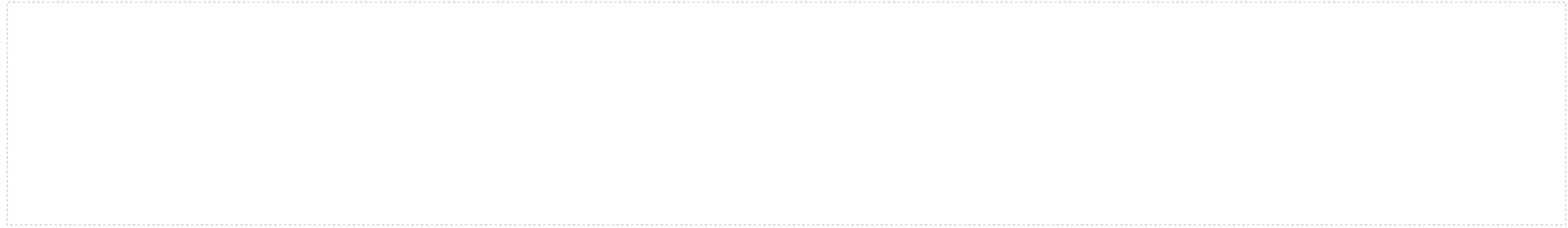
## Discussion (in groups)

✎ Have you written anything academic in English before?

✎ How do you think it is different to other writing?

## Why do students write?

- ✧ To develop and express ideas
- ✧ To provide evidence to support their ideas
- ✧ To show they can dispute or support existing theories ( involves demonstrating their critical thinking ability)
- ✧ To demonstrate knowledge, based on their extensive reading, lectures and seminars



the type of writing

the purpose of writing.

What is expected of university students?

- ☞ Acquire knowledge
- ☞ Demonstrate knowledge
- ☞ APPLY that knowledge
- ☞ Analyze and synthesis information
- ☞ Critically evaluate information

# What students in higher education write ?

- Work with a partner. Brainstorm the kinds of writing students have to do in higher education.
- Brainstorming involves writing down as many ideas as you can about the topic. (3 mins)
- Example:
- reports
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Undergraduate students as well as postgraduate students are frequently required to write *extended essays*. A typical length for an extended essay is 2,500–3,000 words. We sometimes refer to these extended essays as *projects*.

Towards the end of their period of study, most students will be expected to write either a *thesis* or a *dissertation*. In the United Kingdom and Ireland, a dissertation is often written for a master's-level degree.

According to the University College London website, a thesis is:

the acquisition and dissemination of new knowledge. In order to demonstrate this, the author must demonstrate an understanding of what the relevant state of the art is and what are the strengths and weaknesses of this situation. For someone's work to be knowledge, there must be a demonstration that suitable and systematic methods were used to evaluate the chosen hypothesis.<sup>1</sup>



Not all students are required to write traditional-style essays. For example, in the engineering department of a university, students will often be expected to write *reports* on projects they have been working on during their course.

In certain academic disciplines, such as applied linguistics, education or sociology, students may be required to write a case study. A good example of a case study might be the “study of speech, writing, or language use of one person, either at one point in time or over a period of time, e.g., a child over a period of one year” (Richards, Platt & Weber, 1985, p. 36)<sup>2</sup>. A student in an applied linguistics department would probably write a case study like this.

Students also have to write notes from written sources, or when attending a lecture, seminar or tutorial. Some students annotate lecture handouts, either by highlighting key points or by writing notes/comments in the margins of the text, which may be useful later.

- 1 Clack, C. (Ed.) (1997). *PhD Thesis Structure and Content*. Retrieved June 13, 2011, from <http://www.cs.ucl.ac.uk/staff/c.clack/phd.html>
- 2 Richards, J., Platt, J., & Weber, H. (1985). *Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics* (p. 36). Harlow, Essex, England: Longman.

# thesis vs. dissertation

- In most universities in the UK, Hong Kong and Australia, a thesis is written for the research degrees of PhD and MPhil (Master of Philosophy), while a much shorter dissertation is one of the final requirements for a taught Master's degree.
- A thesis is a long piece of writing based on your own ideas and research that you do as part of a university degree, especially a higher degree such as a PhD.
- A dissertation a long formal piece of writing on a particular subject, especially for a university degree.

- In many American universities the terms are reversed, with theses written at Master' s level and a doctoral dissertation at the PhD level.
- thesis: a dissertation advancing an original point of view as a result of research, especially as a requirement for an academic degree.
- dissertation: a lengthy, formal treatise especially one written by a candidate for a doctoral degree at a university; a thesis.

Type of writing	Explanation
Extended essay/ project	Written work submitted as part of the course requirement during term-time
Annotations	Comments, explanations or highlighting added to written sources or lecture handouts.
Notes	Information recorded from written sources, lectures, seminars or tutorials, for later reference
Case study	An account that gives detailed information about a person, group or thing and its development over a period of time.
report	Describes research, a piece of informative writing that describes a set of actions and analyses any results in response to a specific brief

Type of writing	Explanation
Course Paper	Mainly refers to the paper written during a specific course, or at the end of a semester. Therefore, the contents should be in line with the course requirements.
Research Paper	Published in academic journals, original research results or reviews existing studies. Deals with a relatively specific topic and a comparatively narrow subject. Including: Title, Author, Affiliation, Abstract, Keywords, Introduction, Theoretical Analysis and/or Experimental Description, Results and Discussion, Conclusion, Acknowledgements, References, etc.
Academic Report	Specific intention of relaying information or recounting certain events. Display result of an experiment, investigation, or inquiry. May Not give the writer's own opinion, nor evaluate the findings, but merely presents them in a sensible sequence. IMRAD structure: introduction , Methods, Results and Discussion.
Thesis/Dissertation	for a degree or academic qualification, including Acknowledgments, Abstract, Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Data Collection and Data Analysis, Findings and Conclusions, Suggestions for

What is the similarities between different types of writing?

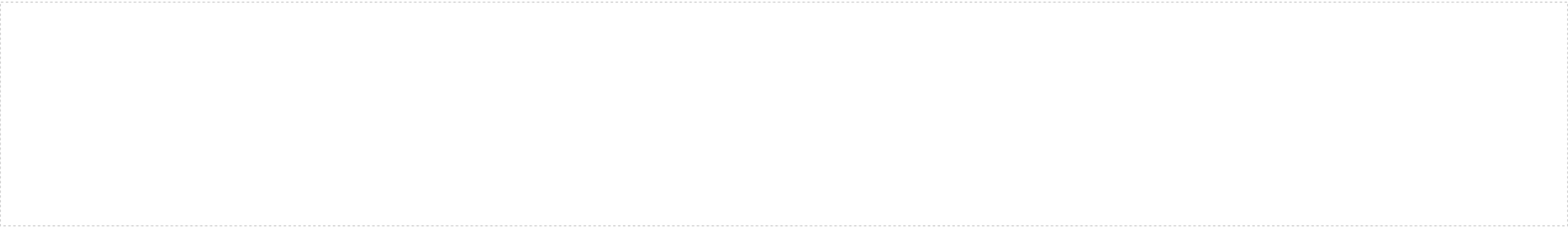
\*Gathering ideas

Present views and research findings on a chosen topic

\*Organizing them into a plan

\*Drafting

\*Redrafting

- 
- A writer is able to communicate the research  
through written essays, articles and papers  
and orally through presentations and  
discussions.

# Style

- 1. It may refer to a writer's particular way of using language, can be translated into “风格”。



- 2. It may refer to the style guide in writing that is recommended by associations or publications and can be rendered as “格式” .
- APA style: social sciences journals tend to follow American Psychological Association style.
- Chicago Manual of Style: used in some social sciences publications and most historical journals
- MLA style: Modern Language Association of America, the academic style guide used in the USA, Canada and other countries, research in Humanities, such as English literature, media studies, cultural studies, etc.

❧ 3. It may refer to the characteristic aspects of the language of writing, as a genre, which is called “语体”.

❧ Informal and formal writing

Informal	Formal
An informal tone	A formal tone
Colloquial language	Avoid using colloquial expressions, employment of formal expressions
The first person narration	More objective expressions, use passive voice, nominal structures etc.
	More academic expressions

# Which is more academic

- In this paper, we' ve given a reason why the competitive ability of the national firms is weak. Because the non-national firms can get very cheap labor, under the same technical and economic conditions and the same cost, a non-national firm can produce more output than a national firm does. So it can get much more profit. In this way, the competitive ability of the non-national firms is stronger than that of the national firms.
- The paper indicates the reason for the weakness of the competitive ability of the national firms. Since the non-national firms can obtain very cheap labor, under the same technical and economic conditions and the same cost, a non-national firm can produce more output than a national firm does. Therefore it can achieve much more profit, and the competitive ability of the non-national firms is stronger than that of the national firms.

## More formal expressions



☞ Halliday (1989, p.79) compares a sentence from a spoken text:

☞ You can control the trains this way and if you do that you can be quite sure that they'll be able to run more safely and more quickly than they would otherwise, no matter how bad the weather gets.

☞ with a typical written variant:

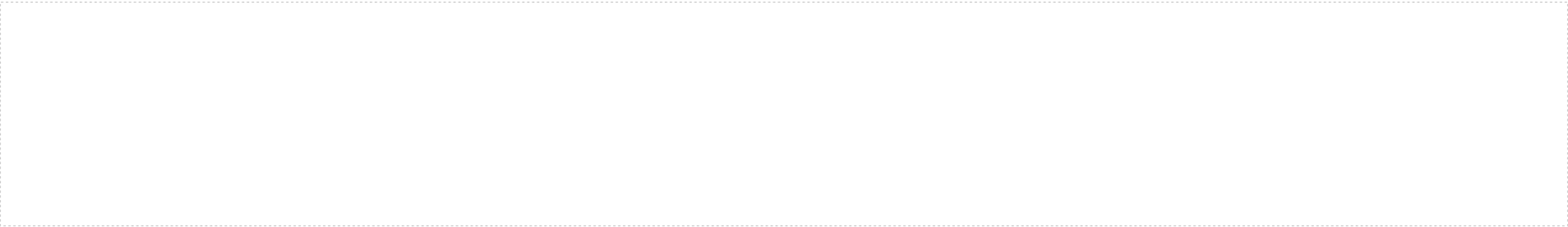
☞ The use of this method of control unquestionably leads to safer and faster train running in the most adverse weather conditions.

Spoken	Written
Whenever I'd visited there before, I'd ended up feeling that it would be futile if I tried to do anything more.	Every previous visit had left me with a sense of the futility of further action on my part.
The cities in Switzerland had once been peaceful, but they changed when people became violent.	Violence changed the face of once peaceful Swiss cities.
Because the technology has improved its less risky than it used to be when you install them at the same time, and it doesn't cost so much either.	Improvements in technology have reduced the risks and high costs associated with simultaneous installation.
The people in the colony rejoiced when it was promised that things would change in this way.	Opinion in the colony greeted the promised change with enthusiasm.

☞ Exercises: Re-write the sentence above in a more typically written style.

1. "Because the jobs are even more complex, programmes to train people will take longer."

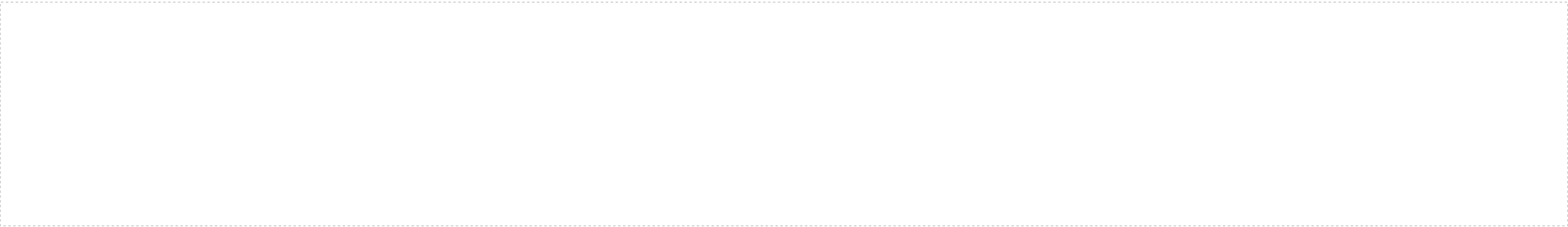
☞ The in \_\_\_\_\_ will  
\_\_\_\_\_ to the \_\_\_\_\_ the  
\_\_\_\_\_ programmes.

- 
- Answer: The increased complexity of tasks will lead to the extension of the duration of training programmes.



2. “I handed my essay in late because my kids got sick. ”

The \_\_\_\_\_ the late \_\_\_\_\_ of  
my \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ of my \_\_\_\_\_

- 
- **Answer:** The reason for the late submission of my essay was the illness of my children.

## More objective expressions

### Passive voice

We carried out an experiment to investigate the effect of light on plant growth.

An experiment was carried out to investigate the effect of light on plant growth.


# Nominalisation

- Formal written English uses nouns more than verbs. For example, "judgement" rather than "judge", "development" rather than "develop", "admiration" rather than "admire". Changing a verb or other word into a noun is called nominalisation.

e. g.

☞ We analyzed the experiment and what we found made us realize that the technique is quite complex.

☞ The experimental analysis showed technical complexity.

 This information enables us to formulate precise questions.

 This information enables the formulation of precise questions.

c.f.

- All organisms reproduce and sometimes when they reproduce, the children vary. This is an important characteristic of life. If organisms did not reproduce, life would quickly come to an end. How did the earliest single-celled organisms reproduce? They duplicated their genetic material and then they divided in two. Two daughter cells resulted from this process; they were identical to each other and to the parent cell. But sometimes as the genes duplicated, they changed or mutated. These errors are not very common but they provide the basic material for life to evolve. So when the genetic material duplicates, they reproduce and they make errors. As a result, there is a change in what the genes are composed of. When these processes combine, life evolves.

c.f.

- Reproduction with variation is a major characteristic of life. Without reproduction, life would quickly come to an end. The earliest single-celled organisms reproduced by duplicating their genetic material and then dividing in two. The two resulting daughter cells were identical to each other and to the parent cell, except for mutations that occurred during the process of gene duplication. Such errors, although rare, provided the raw material for biological evolution. The combination of reproduction and errors in the duplication of genetic material results in biological evolution, a change in the genetic composition of a population of organisms over time.



- Compare these sentences:
  - Organisms reproduce. This is a major characteristic of life.
  - Reproduction is a major characteristic of life.
- In general they mean the same, but sentence 2 is expressed more concisely. It uses the word “reproduction” , whereas sentence 1 uses the word ” reproduce”. Here the word “reproduce” is a verb. It would change to “reproduces” if “organisms” changed to “an organism” .  
“Reproduction” is a noun made from the verb “reproduce” ; we call this process nominalisation.

## More academic expressions

- Highly specialized vocabulary “jargon”

- Academic writing uses vocabulary accurately. Most subjects have words with narrow specific meanings.
- Linguistics distinguishes clearly between "phonetics" and "phonemics"; general English does not.
- In academic writing you need to be accurate in your use of vocabulary. Do not confuse, for example, "phonetics" and "phonology" or "grammar" with "syntax".
- Choose the correct word, for example, "meeting", "assembly", "gathering" or "conference".
- Or from: "money", "cash", "currency", "capital" or "funds".

# Learning Journal

- What makes academic writing different from other kinds of writing? Write a paragraph about what you think the primary characteristics of academic writing are.