

Academic Writing



Language features

- Complexity
- Formality
- Precision
- Objectivity
- Explicitness
- Accuracy
- Hedging
- Responsibility

Complexity

- Written language is more complex than the spoken language.
- More varied vocabulary.
- Complex grammar structures:
 - Use Relative Clauses:
 - Air pollution can cause health problems. Air pollution is largely caused by motor vehicles.
 - Air pollution, **which** is mostly caused by motor vehicles, can cause health problems.

- Compound Sentences

Compound sentences consist of two independent clauses linked together with a conjunction such as ‘and’, ‘for’ or ‘but’.

- I really want to study, **but** I’m too tired.

- Conditional Clauses

- I will be really happy, **if** I pass the IELTS test.

➤ More lexical density: distinguish between content words and function words

Content words

- nouns (e.g. dog, Susan, oil)
- adjectives (e.g. red, happy, cold)
- adverbs (e.g. very, carefully, yesterday)
- lexical verbs (e.g. run, walk, sit)

Function words

- auxiliary verbs (e.g. can, will, have)
- prepositions (e.g. in, to, after)
- conjunctions (e.g. and, but, if)
- numerals (e.g. two, three, first)
- determiners (e.g. the, those, my)
- pronouns (e.g. she, yourself, who)

Examples

- Because the technology has improved it's 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.

Formality

- Avoid colloquial words and expressions
things/stuff/a lot of/ sort of
- Avoid abbreviated forms: "can't", "doesn't", "shouldn't"
- Avoid clichés
Last but not the least/First and foremost
- Avoid two word verbs
put off, bring up, set up

➤ Avoid Rhetorical questions

Industrial sites cause vast amounts of environmental pollution, so why do we still use them?

➤ Avoid Run-on expressions

and so on, etc

Precision

Be precise when information, dates or figures are given.

- Lot of people suffer from cancer.
- 50 million people suffer from cancer.

Objectivity

- Emphasis on the information that you want to present not your opinion.
- I would call Da Vinci a subjective artist. What I mean is that his art had its source in his personality.
- Da Vinci can be called a subjective artist since his art had its source in his personality.

How to achieve objectivity

➤ Avoid words like I, me, myself

Don't write: In my opinion, this is a very interesting study.

Write: This is a very interesting study.

➤ Avoid 'you'

Don't write: You can easily forget how different life was 50 years ago.

Write: It is easy to forget how difficult life was 50 years ago.

- Minimize the use of active voice and try to use the passive voice

Active: We used a standard graphical representation

Passive: A standard graphical representation was used to...

Active: We have observed that

Passive: It has been observed that

- Use the generic pronoun “one”

Explicitness

- Use signposting
- Give the source

- Managing people is not easy. However, it can be done successfully with proper planning.
- According to Peters (1983) evidence from the case study of foreign students indicates culture shock is inevitable.

Accuracy

- Correct use of grammar
- Correct use of words
 - Choose the correct word, for example, "meeting", "assembly", "gathering" or "conference".

Hedging

➤ Use of cautious language

This concept appears to establish three categories

It may be possible to obtain .

Responsibility

- Demonstrate knowledge of the source text
(paraphrase/summarize)
- Provide evidence (citations)
- Provide justification (citations)

Online activity

<http://www.monash.edu/rlo/research-writing-assignments/writing/features-of-academic-writing/academic-language>



Activity 1

Read the following sentence from a student's essay:

*Articles on women's sports were placed on the left page and often at the bottom, which is **a place skipped by many readers**.*

Which two sentences below express the same idea using more formal language?

- ☐ Articles on women's sports were placed on the left page, often at the bottom, which is an area most readers jump over.
- ☐ Articles on women's sports were placed on the left page, often at the bottom, which is a less prominent position.
- ☐ Articles on women's sports were placed on the left page, often at the bottom, which is an area often overlooked by readers.

✓ Check



Activity 3

Match the informal vocabulary in the list below with the more appropriate formal options underneath.

English often has more than one way to express an action. The choice is usually between a phrasal verb (often verb + preposition) and a single word. Phrasal verbs (e.g. give up, write down) are often used in conversation; however, in academic writing **single verbs** are used wherever possible.

Look at

Go over

Show

Begin

Good

A lot of

A bit

Fix

Make sure

Demonstrate, indicate, illustrate

Satisfactory, positive, favourable

Solve, repair, amend

Confirm, determine, verify

A great deal of, many, an abundance of

Commence, initiate, undertake

Somewhat, fairly, quite

Revise, review

Consider, monitor, analyse



Activity 4

Identify and click on the **three** instances of **subjective** wording in the text below.

These results are as we expected. The model fits very well with the data points, as indicated by the R^2 values of 0.32 shown in Table 1 above. However, the method used to obtain the best values for a , b , and c was frustrating as it involved spending long hours entering values into an Excel spreadsheet to obtain the lowest R^2 value

Reference

- <http://www.uefap.com/writing/writframgenre.htm>
- [http://lib.vcomsats.edu.pk/library/ENG401/COURSE%20CONTENT/LECTURE%20SLIDE/LECTURE%20\(22\)/COMSAT%2021%20Features%20of%20Academic%20Writing.ppt](http://lib.vcomsats.edu.pk/library/ENG401/COURSE%20CONTENT/LECTURE%20SLIDE/LECTURE%20(22)/COMSAT%2021%20Features%20of%20Academic%20Writing.ppt)
- <https://www.ieltsadvantage.com/2015/03/27/ielts-writing-complex-sentence/>
- <http://www.monash.edu/rlo/research-writing-assignments/writing/features-of-academic-writing/academic-language>