

# Acquiring Academic Englishes

Week 3

CATT SLA Theory

Center for English as a Second Language  
University of Arizona



# Review: Weeks 1 and 2

- The progression of second language acquisition is somewhat, but not completely, predictable.
- SLA is much more than learning words and rules
- SLA is not imitation and memorization – learner is an active participant who creates their own knowledge
- Many interacting factors contribute to SLA success/failure: features of L1/L2, features of learner, features of context
- Motivation is dynamic
- Interaction, purposeful use of language, active engagement, low-anxiety contexts, & scaffolding all support SLA



## Learner Characteristics

Another language?



Cognitive maturity?



Metalinguistic awareness?



World knowledge?



Anxiety?



## Learning Conditions

Silent?

Ample time?

Corrective feedback?



Type of feedback?



Modified input?



Saville-Troike &amp; Barto, 2017

## Your students

- Instrumental motivation
- Reading/writing
- (Speaking/listening)
- Academic vocabulary, syntax, discourse patterns
- English as a Lingua Franca context



# The English your students need

- Domain-specific
- ELF (English as a Lingua Franca) = interacting with other *multicompetent* English speakers
- Authentic materials
- Focus primarily on communication, not grammar
- Task-oriented
- Language and content interrelated



# SLA for Academic Purposes

- Academic vs. Interpersonal competence
- “**Cognitive-Academic Language Proficiency**” **CALP** vs. “**Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills**” **BICS**

**Table 6.1 Priorities for L2 activities**

Academic competence	Interpersonal competence
1. Reading	1. Listening
2. Listening	2. Speaking
3. Writing	3. Reading
4. Speaking	4. Writing

# BICS

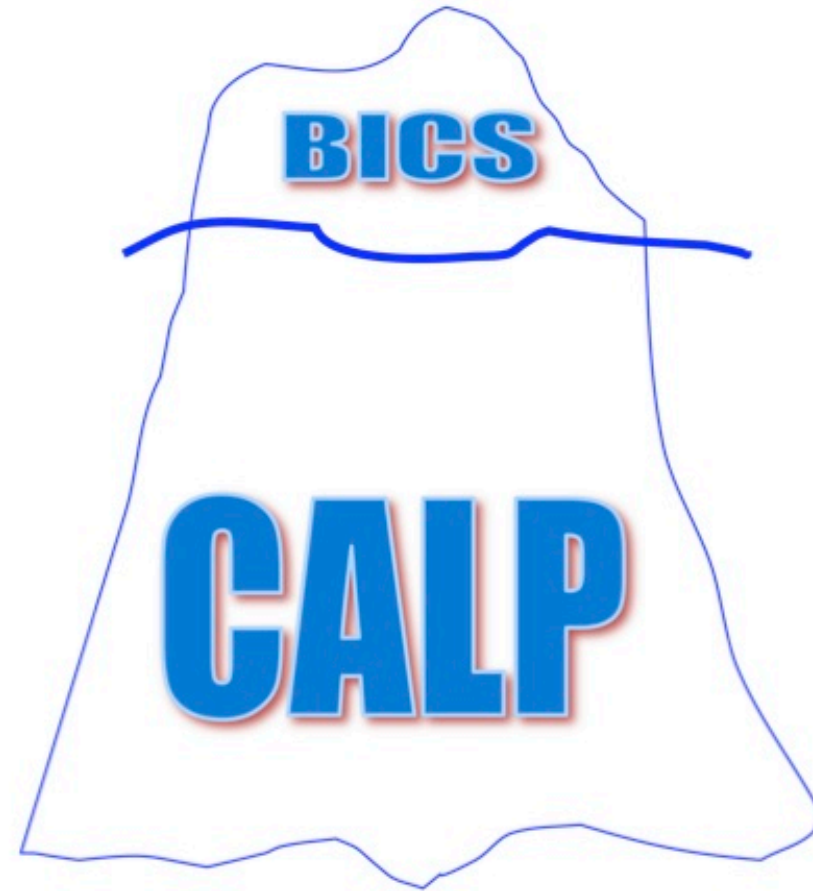
## Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills

- conversational, social, everyday language
- fluency takes 1-3 years
- often includes a 'silent period'

# CALP

## Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency

- school, textbook, academic language
- takes a minimum of five years to develop even an intermediate fluency; takes a whole lifetime to develop fully



Cummins, 1979



# What are the linguistic features of academic language in your field?

- Vocabulary
- Morphology
- Phonology
- Syntax
- Nonverbal structures
- Discourse

***Can you identify them?***



# Central questions

- What are the features of academic language?
- Which errors do my students make?
- Which of these errors negatively affect communication and comprehension?



# Academic Vocabulary

- **Function** words vs. academic **content** words  
*in, the, yes* vs. *antidisestablishmentarianism*
- Idioms, metaphors, collocations & phrasal verbs
- Cognates (true and false)



[image](#)



[image](#)



[image](#)



# What do we know when we know a word?

- Meanings in and out of context
- Grammatical usage
- Word structure
- Relationships to other words (synonyms, antonyms)
- Collocations
- Concepts & conceptual frameworks

## Completed Frayer Model: Social Studies Example

Definition	Characteristics
people moving from one place, region, or country to another	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• involves a major change (long distance or large group)</li><li>• could be forced by natural disaster, economy, warfare</li><li>• could be a choice because someone wants a different climate, job, or school</li><li>• permanent or semi-permanent, not temporary</li></ul>
Examples	Nonexamples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• move from Dar el Salam in Tanzania to Zanzibar</li><li>• people many years ago walking/floating across the Bering Strait from Russia to North America</li><li>• people moving from rural areas in the southern United States to cities in the North</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• people staying in one place all their lives</li><li>• geese flying from Canada to Mexico</li><li>• someone from El Paso, Texas, going to Juarez, Mexico, for the day</li><li>• driving from a home in the suburbs to a job in the city</li></ul>

Frayer Model adapted from Frayer, D. A., Frederick, W. C., & Klausmeier, H. G. (1969). *A schema for testing the level of concept mastery* (Technical report No. 16). Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Research and Development Center for Cognitive Learning.



# Vocabulary: Collocations

- Phrasal verbs

*do over, find out, turn off, use up*

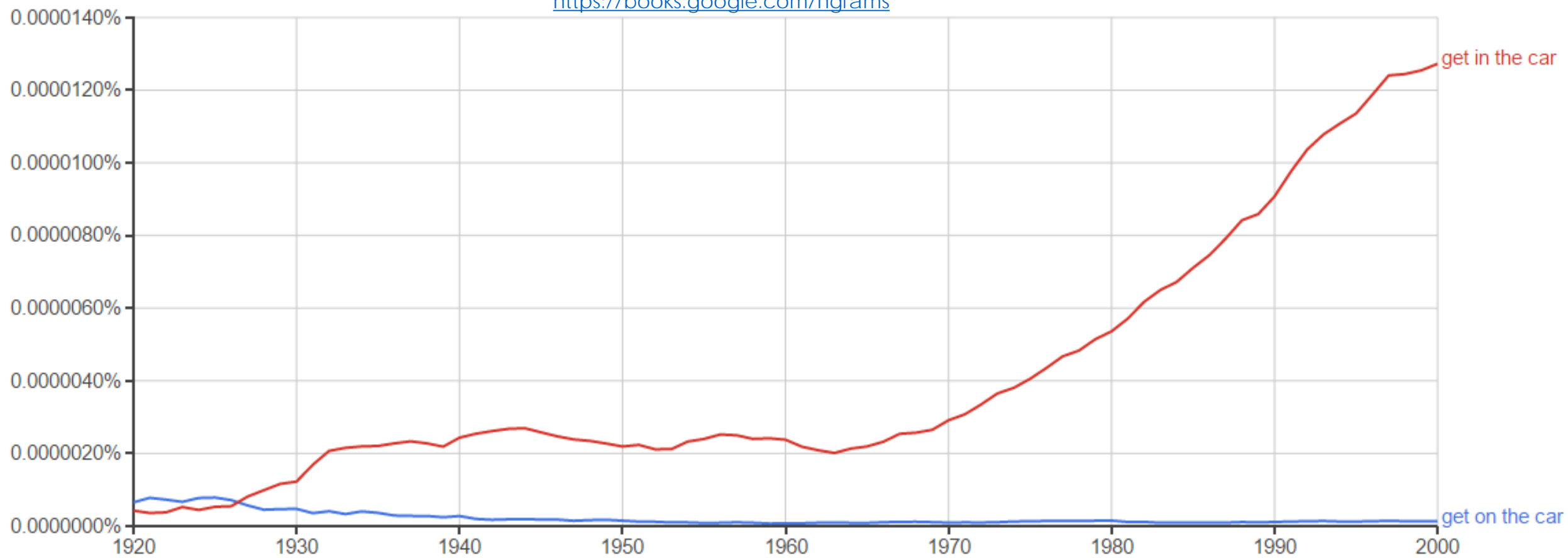
- Prepositions

*Can you comment (on) this?*

*What are you laughing (at)?*



<https://books.google.com/ngrams>





# Metaphorical language in academic English

- Linearity & movement: *drift off, get straight to the point, go back, follow through, start off*
- Building: *grounded in data, build on that point, construct an argument, break it down*
- Container/contents: *throw in, dig deep, lacks substance, empty promise, collect data*



# Vocabulary: Academic idioms

- “both national pride and notions of economic expansion *go hand in hand*.”
- “the main thing that separates a premium product from a *run-of-the-mill* one”
- Rule out
- Train of thought
- Throw everything at it and see what sticks
- As a matter of fact
- With respect to



# Vocabulary: True & false cognates

- Perspective
- Moment
- Sympathetic
- Manifestation
- Characteristic
- Pretend

*(Monk & Burak, 2001)*

- Radiation
- Jurisdiction
- Budget
- Cylinder
- Atmosphere
- Vertical

([source](#))



# Tips for supporting academic vocabulary learning

- Identify relevant vocabulary
- Analyze vocabulary in context
- Allow multiple encounters with vocabulary, in different modalities
- Present other forms of the word (n/v/adj.)
- Examine roots, prefixes, & suffixes
- Use graphic organizers
- Have students maintain personal vocabulary lists



# Graphic organizers

New Vocabulary Log				
New Word	How it was used	Clues to its Meaning (prefix, suffix, context, sounds like...)	Actual Meaning	Use in a new Context
meteorologist  <a href="#">image</a>	Being a meteorologist is usually fun.	meteor-sky rocks ist= person (biologist)	Weather Scientist (makes sense)	The meteorologist is a weather scientist.

**Word Family Tree**

Ancestor (Root Word):

Which means:

Words that are relatives:

Pronunciation Key:

Memory Clue:

Words that are similar:

Word:

Definition:

A sentence where you found this word:

Who would say it? Pick three kinds of people who might say this word and write a sentence showing how they might use it:

[image](#)

(Buehl, 1999)

## Vocabulary Cluster Map 2

Directions: Place the required information in the areas as indicated.

Word 1:

Part of Speech:

Synonyms:

Sentence Example:

Definition and Sketch:

Word 2:

Part of Speech:

Synonyms:

Sentence Example:

Definition and Sketch:

Word 3:

Part of Speech:

Synonyms:

Sentence Example:

Definition and Sketch:

Word 4:

Part of Speech:

Synonyms:

Sentence Example:







Definition and Sketch:

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[image](#)



# Morphology: Word roots (derivational)

	<b>pel</b>	drive, force	Latin	compel - to force someone to act; expel - to drive someone out of a place; repel - to force back.
	<b>pent/a</b>	five	Greek	pentagon - shape having 5 angles and 5 sides, pentagram - a five-pointed star formerly used as a symbolic figure in magic; pentathlon - an athletic contest that includes five events.
	<b>pept, peps</b>	digestion	Greek	dyspepsia - abnormal digestion; peptic - aiding digestion; pepsin - a digestive enzyme.
	<b>per</b>	through, throughout	Latin	permanent - lasting throughout all time; permeate - to spread throughout; persist - to continue for a long time; perennial - lasting through many years.
	<b>peri</b>	around, enclosing	Greek	periodontal - pertaining to bone and tissue around a tooth; peripheral - lying outside of the center; perimeter - the outer boundary of an area.
	<b>phag/e</b>	to eat	Greek	esophagus - muscular tube that carries food to the stomach; anthropophagy or sarcophagy - cannibalism; xylophagous - feeding on wood.

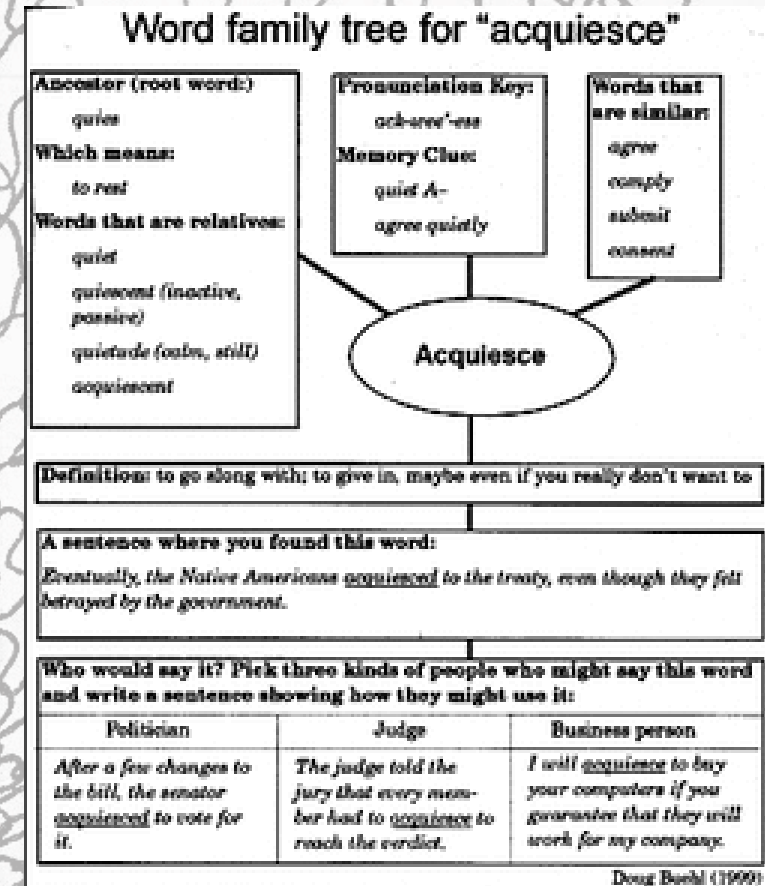
<https://www.learnthat.org/pages/view/roots.html>



# Morphology: Word families (derivational)

- deactivate, deactivation
- enact
- hyperactive, hyperactivity
- interact, interaction, interactive, interactively, interactivity
- overactive
- overreact, over-reaction
- proactive, proactively
- react, reaction, reactivate, reactivation, reactive, reactivity
- transact, transaction

<http://www.englishhints.com/word-families.html>



<http://meagandoncov.weebly.com/instructional-strategies2.html>



# Grammatical features of academic writing

- Subordination
- Complement clauses
- Sequences of prepositional phrases
- Participles
- Passives
- Lexical density and complexity
- Nominalization
- Noun-based phrases
- Attributive adjectives



# DECIPHERING ACADEMESE

YES, ACADEMIC LANGUAGE CAN BE OBTUSE, ABSTRUSE AND DOWNRIGHT DAEDAL. FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE, WE PRESENT A SHORT THESAURUS OF COMMON ACADEMIC PHRASES

"To the best of the author's knowledge..."

=

"WE WERE TOO LAZY TO DO A REAL LITERATURE SEARCH."

"It should be noted that..."

=

"OK, SO MY EXPERIMENTS WEREN'T PERFECT. ARE YOU HAPPY NOW??"

"Results were found through direct experimentation."

=

"WE PLAYED AROUND WITH IT UNTIL IT WORKED."

"These results suggest that..."

=

"IF WE TAKE A HUGE LEAP IN REASONING, WE CAN GET MORE MILEAGE OUT OF OUR DATA..."

"The data agreed quite well with the predicted model."

=

"IF YOU TURN THE PAGE UPSIDE DOWN AND SQUINT, IT DOESN'T LOOK TOO DIFFERENT."

"Future work will focus on..."

=

"YES, WE KNOW THERE IS A BIG FLAW, BUT WE PROMISE WE'LL GET TO IT SOMEDAY."

"...remains an open question."

=

"WE HAVE NO CLUE EITHER."

JORGE CHAM © 2004

[www.phdcomics.com](http://www.phdcomics.com)



I USED TO HATE WRITING ASSIGNMENTS, BUT NOW I ENJOY THEM.

I REALIZED THAT THE PURPOSE OF WRITING IS TO INFLATE WEAK IDEAS, OBSCURE POOR REASONING, AND INHIBIT CLARITY.

WITH A LITTLE PRACTICE, WRITING CAN BE AN INTIMIDATING AND IMPENETRABLE FOG! WANT TO SEE MY BOOK REPORT?

"THE DYNAMICS OF INTERBEING AND MONOLOGICAL IMPERATIVES IN DICK AND JANE: A STUDY IN PSYCHIC TRANSRELATIONAL GENDER MODES."

ACADEMIA, HERE I COME!

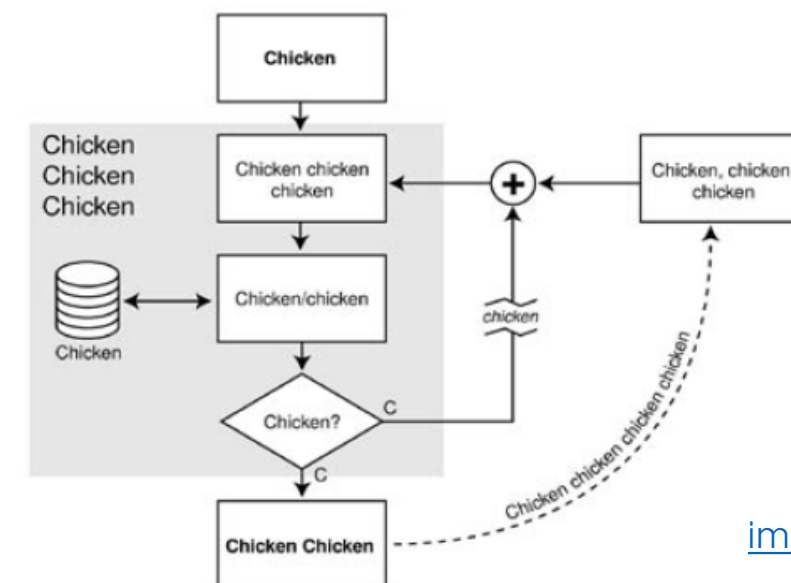
Doug Zongker  
Department of Computer Science and Engineering  
University of Washington

chicken.<sup>1</sup> Chicken chicken chicken chicken, chicken  
chicken chicken: chicken chicken chicken chicken chicken  
chicken chicken chicken chicken. (chicken chicken  
chicken chicken chicken chicken, chicken chicken chicken  
chicken chicken chicken chicken!)

Chicken, chicken-chicken chicken chicken -- chicken  
chicken, chicken chicken 95% chicken chicken-chicken  
chicken, chicken chicken chicken chicken -- chicken  
chicken chicken chicken. Chicken, chicken chicken,  
chicken chicken chicken 1987. Chicken chicken chicken  
chicken chicken chicken-chicken-chicken chicken chicken  
chicken chicken chicken chicken, chicken chicken  
chicken chicken chicken chicken chicken. Chicken  
chicken, chicken chicken chicken chicken chicken chicken  
chicken (chicken chicken chicken chicken chicken,  
chicken chicken chicken chicken chicken chicken chicken  
chicken).

Chicken chicken chicken chicken chicken chicken.

Chicken chicken, chicken, chicken chicken chicken  
chicken, chicken chicken chicken chicken chicken



image

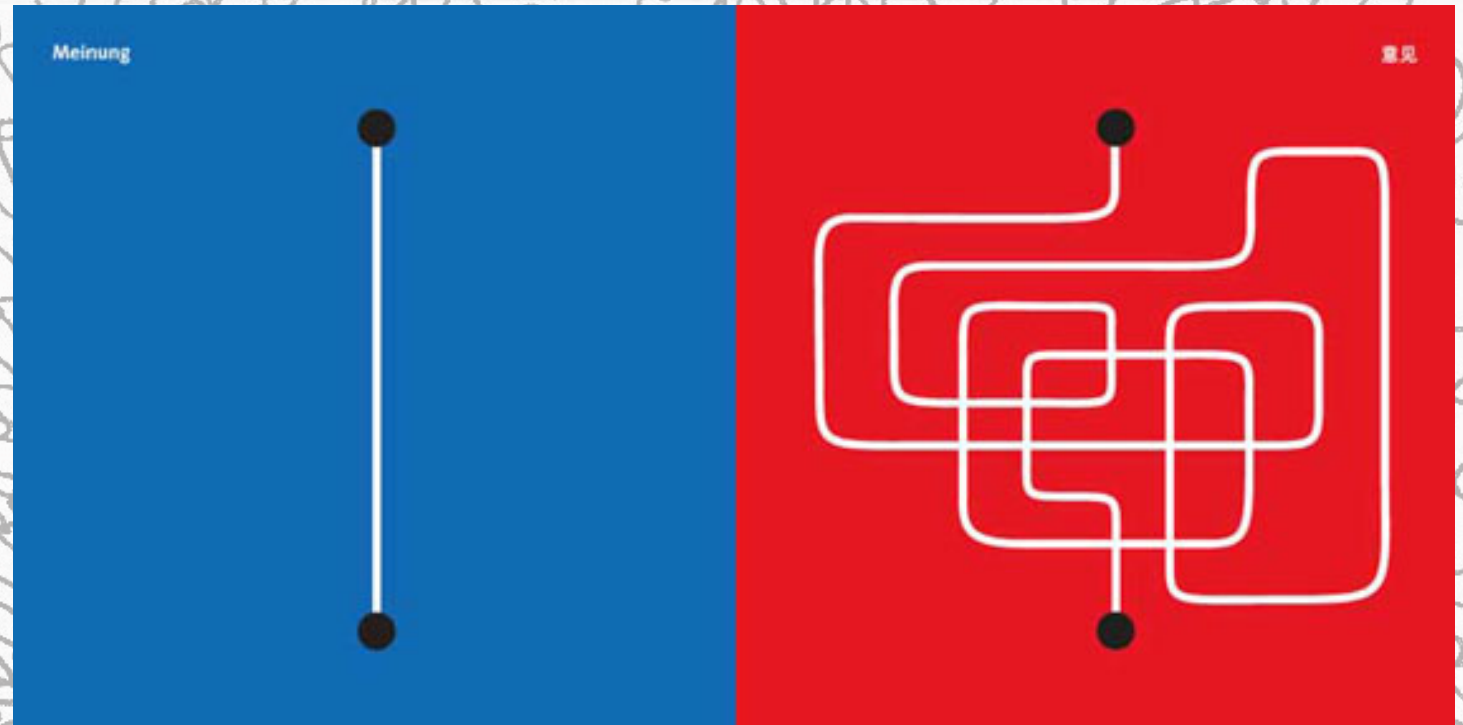
*Chicken 1. Chicken chicken chicken. Chicken chicken, chicken chicken (chicken-chicken chicken) chicken chicken-chicken.*



# Discourse

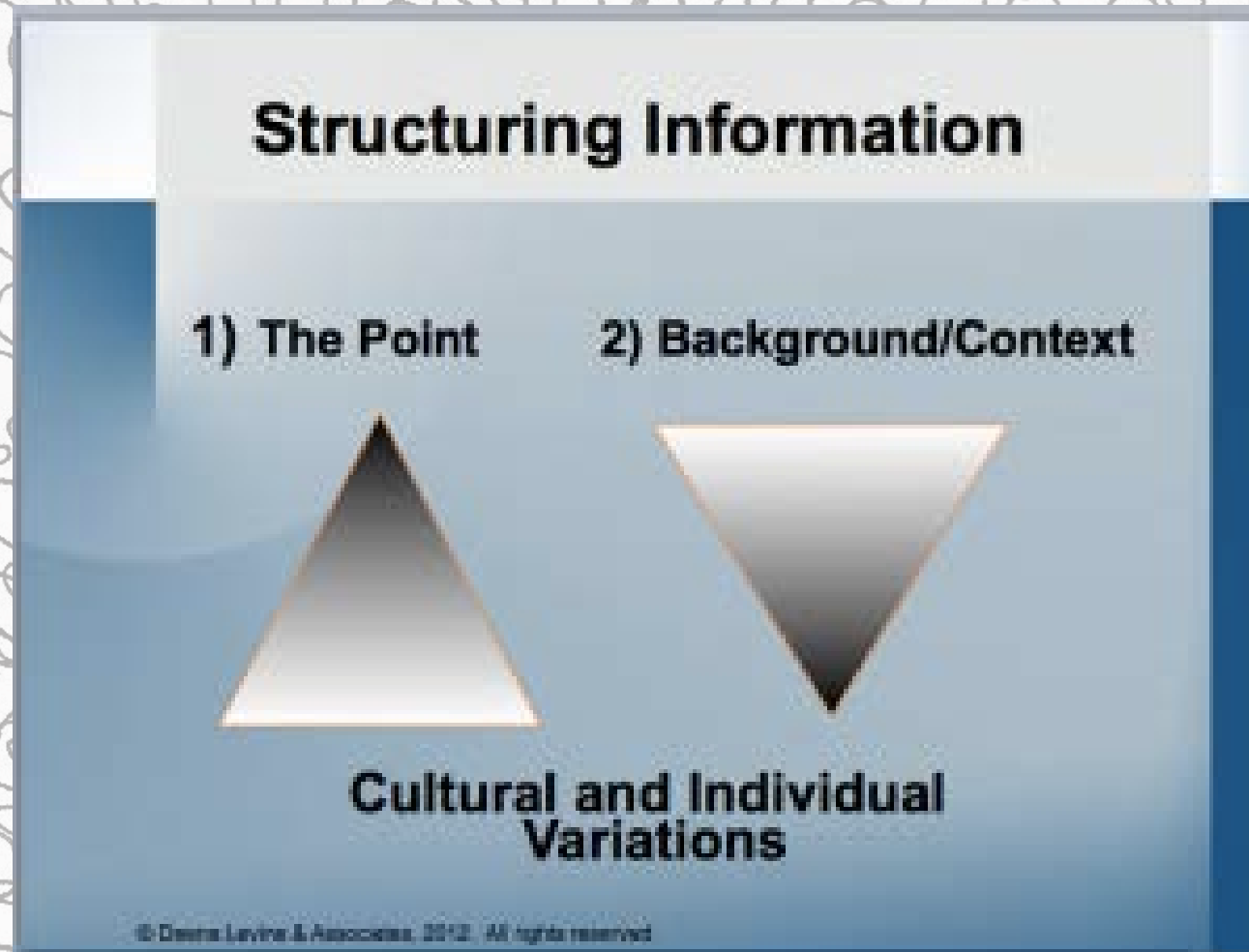
What are the features of a *text*\* in your field?

- How are arguments organized?
- How are ideas connected?
- What are the parts of the text?





# Discourse patterns





# Genre

- Function
- Participants
- Topics
- Style
- Organization

e.g. research  
articles, lectures

- (1) Statement of the problem under investigation and its potential significance
- (2) Specific research questions or hypotheses
- (3) Review of related research
- (4) Description of data collection and analytic procedures
- (5) Presentation of findings
- (6) Discussion of results
- (7) Conclusion (often including mention of limitations and suggestions for future research)

Saville-Troike & Barto, 2017



# Teaching the Conventions of Academic Discourse

(Thonney 2011)

1. Academic writers **respond** to what others have said
2. Academic writers state the **value** of their work
3. Academic writers acknowledge that others might **disagree**
4. Academic writers adopt a voice of **authority**
5. Academic writers use academic and discipline-specific **vocabulary**
6. Academic writers emphasize **evidence**



# Academic writers respond to what others have said about their topic

In the past decades, major insights have been gained into how intrinsic factors and extrinsic signals control and guide the development of dendrites and dendritic spines and how patterned neural activity shapes this process (Hering and Sheng, 2001; . . . Van Aelst and Cline, 2004). Nonetheless, large gaps still exist in our knowledge about how all these pathways integrate and execute their function at the molecular level. (Huang, Zang, and Reichardt 527)

- Writing as “joining a conversation”
- Show that you are addressing a meaningful issue
- Show that there is more to say about the topic



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- Source citations are very important!
- Know your style
- Students need to know: summarizing, synthesizing, attributing writers, and commenting on the ideas of others



# Academic writers state the value of their work and announce the plan for their papers

The vast majority of research that has assessed the effect of price promotions on brand evaluation has studied the effect after product trial, rather than pretrial. . . . Unlike previous studies . . . , we examine the effects of price promotions pretrial to isolate their informational impact on brand quality perceptions from the potentially moderating effect of prior personal experience with the brand. (Raghubir and Corfman 212)

- Demonstrate that the issue matters!
- Demonstrate that some questions remain unanswered
- Your research is necessary, unique, and valuable



# Academic writers announce the plan for their papers

First, we will provide an overview of previous work conceptualizing historical psychological distress among American Indians. Second, we will present a summary of qualitative data from elders on two American Indian reservations in the upper Midwest that was used to develop a measure of historical trauma. Third, we will describe measures of historical trauma and provide measurement characteristics and frequencies on the basis of a sample of 143 parents. (Whitbeck et al. 120)

- Help readers navigate
- Title contains topic and possibly results
- Statement of purpose or hypothesis
- Subheadings and transitions



Academic writers acknowledge that others might disagree with the position they've taken

[Oppressed people] tend to be passive and unable to recognize their own capacity to transform their social reality; and their existence is often accepted on the basis of destiny, bad luck or supernatural will. (Balcazar, Garate-Serafini, and Keys 250)

- Qualifiers and “hedges”
- Avoid generalizations
- Recognize limitations of your findings



# Hedging

- Modal verbs
- Modal adverbs, adjectives, nouns
- Adverbs of frequency
- That-clauses
- "It could be the case that..."
- To-clause
- "It may be possible to..."

- about
- apparently
- appear
- around
- basically
- can
- could
- effectively
- evidently
- fairly
- generally
- hopefully
- in general
- kind of
- largely
- likely

- mainly
- may
- maybe
- more or less
- mostly
- overall
- perhaps
- presumably
- pretty (e.g., pretty strong, pretty weak)
- probably
- quite clearly
- quite
- rather
- really quite
- really
- seem
- somewhat
- sort of
- supposedly



# Recognize limitations of your findings

## **Advising cautious interpretation of findings (Refer to *Discussing Findings*)**

These findings cannot be extrapolated to all patients.

These data must be interpreted with caution because ...

These results therefore need to be interpreted with caution.

It is important to bear in mind the possible bias in these responses.

Although exclusion of X did not ..., these results should be interpreted with caution.

However, with a small sample size, caution must be applied, as the findings might not be ...

<http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>



# Academic writers adopt a voice of authority

- Use of first person is sometimes avoided
- Concise writing (meaning-rich vocabulary)
  - Lexical rather than grammatical words



# Academic writers use academic and discipline-specific vocabulary

In her In their In this	excellent comprehensive detailed useful thorough ground breaking timely important impressive ----- limited small-scale	analysis (of X), examination (of X), study (of X), survey (of X), investigation (into Y),	Smith (2012) Jones et al. (2012)	found ... was/were able to show that ... concluded that ...
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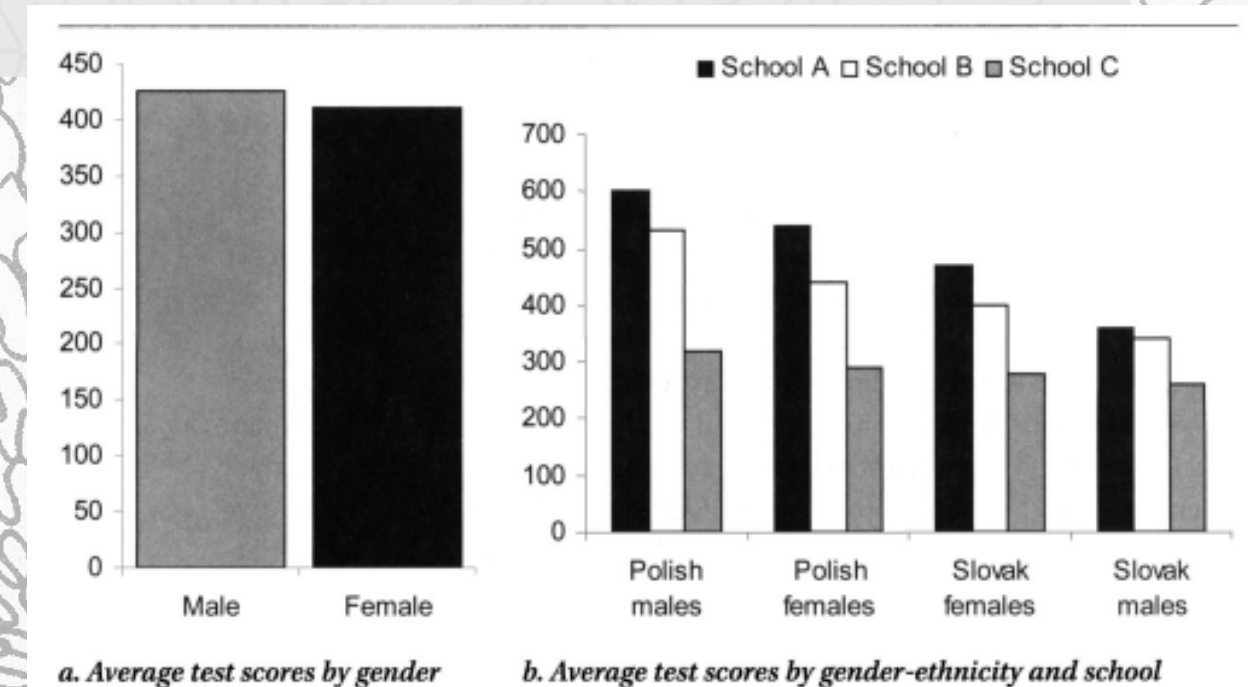
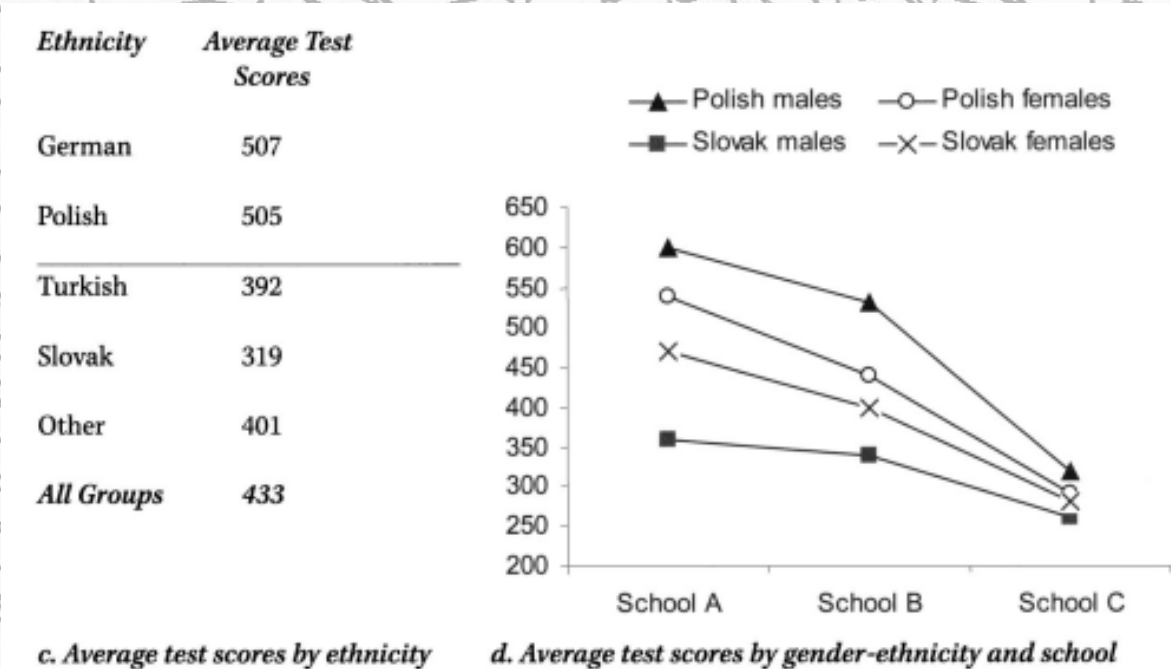
<http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>

- Lexical bundles
- Specialized language



# Academic writers emphasize evidence, often in tables, graphs, and images

- “Visual Rhetoric”
- Students need to “read” quantitative data
- Data tell a story





# Suggestions for instructors

- Have students **read** authentic academic texts from various disciplines
- Help students notice how academic writing **varies**
- Have students **infer** and **practice** academic writing principles
- Help students see that academic writing is **dynamic**



# Other tips

- Start big and get small
- Enrich your vocabulary, but CHECK
- Keep your language neutral
- Find opportunities to be critical



# Other tips

- Pattern of reasoning is deductive
  - General → specific
  - Principles → implementation of principles
  - Linear reasoning and discussion



# Supporting academic language

## Describing trends

The graph shows that there has been a  
Figure 2 reveals that there has been a

slight  
steep  
sharp  
steady  
gradual  
marked

fall  
rise  
drop  
decline  
increase  
decrease

in the number of  
divorces in England and  
Wales since 1981.

## Describing high and low points in figures

Oil production peaked in 1985.

The peak age for committing a crime is 18.

The number of Xs reached a peak during ...

Gas production reached a (new) low in 1990.

<http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>



# Your discussion assignment

- **Learn a language fast!**
- There are many people who claim to know the secret for learning a language in a few months, weeks, or even days.
- Select and watch *one* of the videos below. Each claims to show a method for rapidly learning a new language.





# Post (~500 words)

- The name of the speaker
- A brief **summary** of the language learning advice the speaker provides
- What **unspoken assumptions** does the speaker make about how languages are learned?
- In what ways do their advice and assumptions agree or conflict with the **principles and theories of SLA** we have discussed in the past three weeks of this course?
- Would the speaker's advice be **helpful** for the students whom you teach? Why or why not?



# Response (~250 words)

Play the "[devil's advocate](#):" challenge some aspect of the original post. Some topics to consider:

- Is there an **alternative interpretation or explanation** of the poster's opinion?
- Are there any **unintended consequences** of the poster's assertions?
- Can you provide a **hypothetical situation** that challenges the poster's opinion?
- Does the poster make any **unwarranted assumptions**?