

Lecture V

Tips for Improving Academic Writing (I)

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声明

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Tip #1 Use the Right Language

- ▶ Academic language is the language used in the classroom and workplace. It's the language of the assessments when you are students, and the language of text when you begin your career, so it is also the language of academic success.
- ▶ The difference between social and academic language is in that when using social, or informal, English in daily conversation, it's possible to communicate by using slang and without using English in a grammatically correct way. The following table shows some differences. So remember, when you do the academic writing, use the academic language.

Informal Language	Academic Language
repetition of words	variety of words, more sophisticated vocabulary
sentences start with “and” and “but”	sentences start with transition words, such as “however,” “moreover,” and “in addition”
use of slang: “guy,” “cool,” and “awesome”	No slang

Tip #2 Resist Plagiarism

- ▶ It is of vital importance for the authors to ensure that they have not failed to cite the original source of any information, advertently or inadvertently. It could appear tempting, at times, to share some interesting data or statistics as one's own, possibly by paraphrasing the original text. However, this will be considered blatant plagiarism, and the research paper may potentially be desk rejected or never sent for peer review.
- ▶ Plagiarism is considered a serious offense in academic studies and research. The office of research integrity of the universities, or editorial office of the publishers usually determines plagiarism as both the theft or misappropriation of intellectual property and the substantial unattributed textual copying of another's work. Given that the consequences of plagiarism, which may serve as a deterrent, range from mere caution of course failure, paper rejection at screening, even to permanent ban from the journal.
- ▶ There might be those who commit the offense because of various misconceptions about it. However, this plea is usually of least convincing so just resist it at the first place.

Tip #3 Do the Appropriate Referencing or Citing

- ▶ Academic referencing and academic citing mean the acknowledgment of the sources used by authors in their manuscripts. It requires the linkage of citations to the list of works cited in a paper. It also gives credit to the sources of information used in the manuscript. Citing a reference acknowledges the study you have referred to and allows others to find the work that you have cited. Citing each source that you use in your academic writing has some implications. Academic referencing helps demonstrate that you are not the first author who started the topic. Moreover, it enables authors to show that they use others' ideas to create a new one. Thus, readers could track those references to obtain more ideas about a particular point you have made.
- ▶ Whenever you use words, facts, ideas, or explanations from other works, those sources must be cited. Academic referencing is required when you have copied texts from an essay, an article, a book, or other sources verbatim, which is called quotation. You also need referencing when you use an idea or a fact from another work even if you haven't used their exact expression.

Tip #3 Do the Appropriate Referencing or Citing

- ▶ However, there is no need to do over-reference when the information is considered common knowledge, which is something that anyone probably knows. But if you are unsure whether to reference something or not, then you better reference it. Furthermore, academic referencing enables your target readers to follow up on the original source if they want to. It also allows them to see how dated the information might be. Academic referencing validates and strengthens your arguments.
- ▶ There are two elements used in academic referencing: in-text citations and a reference list. Citations cover only sufficient information for the reader to find the sources in the reference list, while in-text citations generally comprise the author's last name in the order that it appears on the actual publication. It is followed by the year of publication of the source that the author has cited. Page and paragraph numbers must be included for direct quotations.

Tip #3 Do the Appropriate Referencing or Citing

- ▶ The reference list is a list of all the publication information for the sources used and cited in your study. The main purpose of the reference list is to give the readers all the information they need to find those sources. The term reference list is called a bibliography in some publication styles. However, the APA style uses the reference list.
- ▶ Academic referencing requires a formal system. Authors must follow the rules and standards when formatting citations and references. Although most researchers find referencing quite daunting at first, there is no need to worry; it takes time and patience to learn. Different colleges, journals, and institutions may require distinct styles, such as APA style, Harvard style, MLA, or Oxford style.
- ▶ There are many tools that can help you in this regard, for example, EndNote. It supports conversion from different referencing style automatically. There are also online tools, you can use it to format your references in a way that meets the requirement of the journal.

Tip #4 Limit Use of Personal Pronouns

- ▶ It's crucial in academic writing that the 'fact-value' distinction is upheld. This means that what is presented as factual information should not be conflated with the personal values of the author. If too much of an academic work is muddled in opinions and bias, this can confuse the reader as to what is fact versus simply the author's perspective. In extreme cases, it may even lead to readers being skeptical as to the validity of an paper. This means that removing the focus from personal experiences is paramount, and that begins with avoiding personal pronoun use.
- ▶ "In my opinion", "I think that" and "My belief is" – statements such as these remove a sense of authority from the claims being made in the paper. Where otherwise these sorts of statements could be honest admittances that the author is fallible, in academic writing that fallibility should be largely assumed. If the writer makes a claim, it should be based on the facts presented in the paper, not on personal belief or opinion.

Tip #5 Pay Attention to the Grammar

- ▶ **Syntax:** Syntax is the technical word that is used to describe sentence structure. It is extremely important, as a well-ordered sentence makes meaning clear and concise, whereas a badly ordered sentence makes the reader (and marker) work very hard to understand the meaning.
- ▶ **Example:**
 - 🗣️ Although the current set of AI ethics could be argued just reflexive and retrospective anticipations for outcomes and conduct of artificial intelligence product.
 - 👍 Although it can could argued that the current set of AI ethics are just reflexive and retrospective anticipations for outcomes and conduct of artificial intelligence product.
- ▶ Do learn transform your sentence from the syntax perspective. Think about the best way to order the key words and phrases. If you are struggling to make your meaning clear in a sentence, try changing the word order.

Tip #5 Pay Attention to the Grammar

- ▶ Tense: Make sure you use the correct tense – and be consistent with it. When you are introducing and discussing other people's opinions, use the present tense, e.g. 'Mills believes' or 'Mills claims' rather than 'Mills believed' or 'Mills claimed'. By putting them in the past tense, their opinions seem dated; it also suggests that their views may have since changed. It may, however, be appropriate to use the past tense if the person in question has been dead a long time, or was writing in a different era.
- ▶ Example:
 - 🗨️ A few years ago, Robert P. Crease asked physicians what they think is the most beautiful experiment of all time.
 - 👍 A few years ago, Robert P. Crease asked physicians what they thought was the most beautiful experiment of all time.
- ▶ You may use the future tense in introductory sections of essays, for example 'The purpose of this essay will be to explore....'. However, the future tense can sound uncertain and unconfident, so you can be more assertive by writing in the present tense, e.g. 'The purpose of this essay is to explore...'.

Tip #5 Pay Attention to the Grammar

- ▶ Prepositions: Prepositions are words that describe the position and movement of the nouns in a sentence. They are very easy to use incorrectly, because they often seem to sound right in a sentence. The secret is to step back and think about each one and whether it is describing the right position or movement.
- ▶ Example:
 - 🗨️ We have been overwhelmed by the electronics and disconnected ourselves **with** our fellow members of society and no longer know the neighbours around us.
 - 👍 We have been overwhelmed by the electronics and disconnected ourselves **from** our fellow members of society and no longer know the neighbours around us.
- ▶ Correct use of prepositions shows clarity of thought and a good understanding of the relationships between everything that is described in the sentence. Think carefully about the position and movement of nouns in your sentences. Is so-and-so in or on this-or-that? Is this-or-that being taken to or from so-and-so?

Tip #5 Pay Attention to the Grammar

- ▶ **Definite Article:** One of the most confusing things about the English language for some international students is the ‘definite article’ – otherwise known as ‘the’ – because some languages do not have articles.
- ▶ **Example:**
 - 🗣️ To find a sense of reason instead of drowning in the depths of confusion the society bestows upon us....
 - 👍 To find a sense of reason instead of drowning in the depths of confusion society bestows upon us....
- ▶ Although correct use of the definite article is a common problem among international students, it is also increasingly common among home students. Learn the difference between the definite article (‘the’, e.g. ‘the house’) and the indefinite article (‘a’, ‘some’, e.g. ‘a house’ or ‘some houses’) – you can see why they are classed as indefinite or definite. Think carefully about whether you need to use one, the other, or neither.

Tip #6 Eliminate Wordiness

- ▶ Adding a bunch of words can help you make word count in no time flat, but more words don't always equate to better writing.
- ▶ Example:
 - 🗨️ Due to an extremely unfortunate circumstance, which was due to the computer memory constrain, we might not be able to run our model to obtain the-state-of-the-art result which demands a large batch size.
 - 👍 Due to the computer memory constrain, our model may not present the-state-of-the-art result.
- ▶ Usually, a paper full of fluff rather than strong content will be sooner or later noticed by the editor or reviewers. Usually, research papers to be published have to meet a minimum word, paragraph, or page count. Instead of adding more context or evidence to your paper, too much fluff will gradually lure them to doubt the quality and impact of your work. Such an impression once formed is probably irreversible, which tends to incur the under-assessment of your work even it might be a good one. So, don't let wordiness kill your writing.

Tip #7 Using Logical Reasoning

- ▶ Logic refers to the process of making a conclusion under valid laws of inference. Through this process, a writer makes arguments using statements to explain why these arguments are true. Logical reasoning is the act of settling on a viewpoint and then expressing to others why you selected that opinion over all other available conclusions. Although lots of engineering papers are based on the experiment fact, it does not hinder reasoning from a logical and consistent way.
- ▶ When using logical reasoning, you draw conclusions whose evidence to support the claim creates a guarantee of a specific result. If you are publishing a paper on your own research, aim to represent your work clearly and thoroughly by outlining the steps you took to create a conclusion, during the process you should gather irrefutable evidence to support your claim.
- ▶ Meantime you should try to avoid logical fallacies, which is false reasoning that leads your argument to become unreliable or untrue. When your readers encounter a logical fallacy, you lose their trust in your argument. Be aware of these fallacies and take measures to avoid them within your argument.

Tip #8 Keep Overall Consistency

- ▶ In written communication, consistency can be defined as the orderly presentation of a set of linked/associated elements in the text. These elements can be considered to be linked or associated when it is intended that they be perceived as a coherent group (for example, abbreviations, figure/table headings, etc.). Being consistent with the variants you use has two big advantages:
 - ▶ If you pick a style and stick to it, you'll make things easier on yourself. If you decide from the beginning to write all acronyms without periods, you won't have to keep stopping to make a decision about periods every time you write an acronym.
 - ▶ Consistency makes your document look more polished and professional. Switching back and forth between various styles and formats can come across as sloppy to readers. This is why some journals require authors to follow a particular style guide, like the Chicago Manual or the AP Stylebook.
- ▶ It can be challenging to remember the various nuances and rules about consistency. However, beware of it in writing is part of the guarantee for your fruit-bearing academic outputs from the paper perspective.