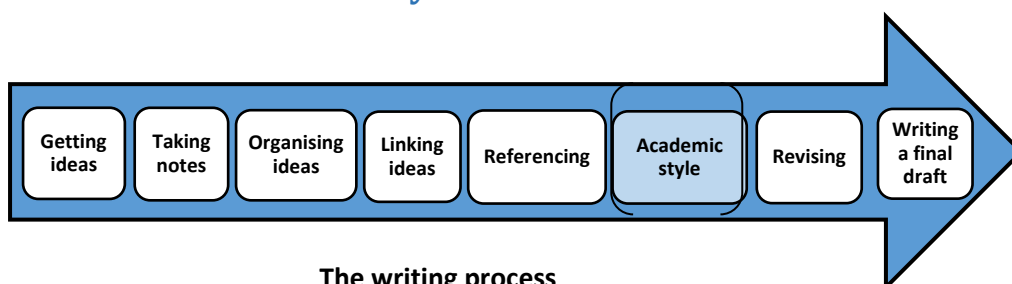


Unit 7 Academic Style



Session 1

In this session you will learn how to do the following:

- Recognise key features of academic style
- Understand formality and the tone needed for academic writing

Activity 1: Understanding academic writing style



Read the texts in columns A and B below. Which text do you think is written in an academic style – A or B?

A	B
Do you know one of the really big problems in Bangladesh? I think it's illiteracy – yes, that's right. You heard me. Sadly it's having a big effect on our country's development. The government is trying lots of ways to get rid of it like making primary education free and e.g. they're saying all little kids MUST go to school. Other cool initiatives are things like giving girl students stipends and giving street children food if they come to class etc. Something else. Did you know that the government and NGOs have published and handed out free books to students? Not bad, eh!	Illiteracy is a major problem in Bangladesh. Existing on a huge scale, it might be considered one of the greatest barriers to national development. A number of initiatives have been taken by the government to possibly eradicate illiteracy, for example making primary education free and compulsory for all. In addition, female students are commonly given stipends; street children may be given food for education, and both the government and non-government organisations have often published and distributed books free of charge to students.

Now work in pairs. Study texts A and B carefully, and write down the differences between the texts with some examples.

Features	Text A	Text B
Active and passive tense Example: it's, don't	All verbs are in the active tense e.g. The government is trying lots of ways	Some verbs are in the passive tense e.g. a number of initiatives have been taken by the government
Verb contraction Example: it's, don't		
Direct questions Example: How can we sort out this problem?		
Personal pronoun* Example: I, we, you		
Colloquial language & phrasal verbs Example: kid, cool, like, sort out, get		
Emotive language Example: unfortunately, luckily, surprisingly, thankfully		
Non-specific language Example: thing, stuff, sort of, people, lots of		
Abbreviations Example: etc.		
Punctuation Example: use of exclamation marks (!) and dashes (-), CAPITAL LETTERS		
Sentence fragments Example: Coming tonight? No idea.		

Study Tip

Keep a list of formal words as you learn them and their informal equivalents to refer to when you are writing (e.g. *also* ~ *furthermore*).

Activity 2: Using cautious language in academic writing



One of the features that make your writing style more academic is using cautious language. When you express your standpoint on a particular subject, you need to use cautious language because absolute justification of claims is seldom made. You may use cautious/hedging* language in order to demonstrate your competence as a writer, reduce the risk of criticism, be more precise in reporting results and show modesty and politeness.

Dhaka **has** inadequate road networks for its size.

Introducing an underground rail service **might solve** some of Dhaka's congestion problems.

a) *Discuss in pairs:*

1. What type of language do you use to state facts?
2. What type of language do you use when you are uncertain or want to be cautious?

b) *Here are some more examples of cautious language. Put the word in the correct column in the table that follows.*

suggest	probability	often	tendency	claim
likely	may	frequent	generally	indicate
appear	tend to	might		probably

	A: Common ways to make your writing style more cautious	B: Examples of cautious language
1.	Use introductory verbs e.g. It seems that ...	<i>appear</i>
2.	Use modal verbs e.g. It could be argued that ...	
3.	Use modal adverbs e.g. It is commonly found that ...	
4.	Use modal adjectives e.g. It is possible to find that ...	
5.	Use modal nouns e.g. There is an assumption that ...	

Look back at Text B in Activity 1. Find and underline examples of cautious language that the writer has used.

Activity 3: How cautious are you?



Work in pairs. Do you think that the following sentences are cautious enough? Make them more cautious, if necessary.

1. Jute cultivation is becoming unpopular among farmers.

[Example] Reports suggest that jute cultivation is becoming unpopular among some farmers.

2. Telemedicine does not work in rural areas.

3. Urban young women prefer not to wear *sarees*.

4. Microcredit has transformed the lives of all women in rural and urban areas.

Activity 4: Developing an academic style



a) Read the following text. Find and underline the informal language features.

According to me cricket is the most popular game in Bangladesh nowadays. Its popularity is going up more and more among people of all ages. You'd be surprised to see that a lot of kids love to watch cricket matches in the stadium. They support the Bangladeshi team waving the national flag. It's amazing! Don't you think so? There're stadiums in almost all the district towns but not many of them are of international standard. A few of them like Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium, Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium etc. are used as international venues. I think the government's patronising cricket a lot but it needs to promote other games as well. If the government supports other games—football and Ha Du-Du, they will regain their past glory.



- b) Rewrite the text in an academic style using formal language.
Include cautious language, where appropriate.

Extension: Academic style recap



Work in pairs. Create a checklist of tips: 'How to write in a good academic style' Now use your checklist to evaluate each other's writing in Activity 4b.

My Checklist: Good academic style

-
-
-
-
-

Home task

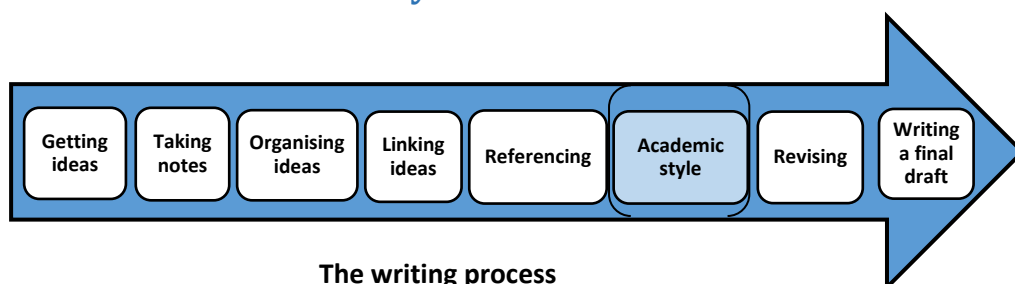


- a) Portfolio task



Write a paragraph on the topic of climate change. Make sure you use an academic writing style that uses formal and cautious language. Put the completed task in your portfolio.

Unit 7 Academic Style



Session 2

In this session you will learn how to do the following:

- Use objective and impersonal language
- Develop precision in your academic writing
- Write cohesively and coherently

Activity 1: Writing objectively and impersonally – can you do it?



Good academic writing is objective and impersonal rather than personal and subjective. Using 'I' can lead to writing about personal feelings / experiences. In academic writing the readers are interested in the information itself rather than the informer.

a) Study the following table and use the information to do the task in b).

Creating an objective and impersonal academic style	Do not write	Do write
Avoid using pronouns* (I/my/me, you/your, and we/our/us)	<i>I</i> assume that ...	<i>It</i> is assumed that ...
Use impersonal subjects (It, There is)	<i>I</i> believe that ...	<i>It is</i> believed that ...
Use passive verbs (avoid stating the subject)	<i>I interviewed</i> thirty students from three different faculties.	Thirty students from three different faculties were interviewed
Avoid using emotive language (fortunately/unfortunately, luckily, shockingly, surprisingly, thankfully)	<i>Luckily</i> the meeting had started late.	The meeting had started late.
Avoid using personal opinion words and informal words E.g. get personally, in my opinion, actually, to be honest, in reality, frankly	<i>Frankly</i> , I am not surprised he failed.	It is not surprising that he failed.

b) Rewrite the following sentences to make them more objective and impersonal.

1. Me and my classmates all got fantastic grades in the final examination.

2. Fortunately he got another job.

3. Our government has made considerable progress in the garments sector.

4. In reality, I knew about the plan already.

Activity 2: Precision



Discuss in pairs.

In academic writing, as well as using a formal style and cautious language, it is also important to be precise.

a) Look carefully at the examples in column A. Match and then compare them with the examples in column B. What do the examples tell you about how to make your writing precise?

A: Imprecise	⇒	B: Precise
A number of people/a lot of people opined that ...		He then visited Bangladesh .
India was ruled by the English for many years .		I like chicken stir-fry , which is very tasty.
Auto-rickshaw fares were lower in the past .		60% of respondents opined that ...
He then visited another country .		India was ruled by the English for about 200 years .
I like it . It is very tasty.		Auto-rickshaw fares were lower last year .

b) Now underline the imprecise language and insert a more precise word or phrase in the spaces below to make the writing precise.

1. Many studies suggest that low level educational attainment correlates with high rates of child marriage.

_____ suggest that low level educational attainment correlates with high rates of child marriage.

2. Dr Abdul Hussam invented the SONO filtration system to remove arsenic from water a few years ago.

Dr Abdul Hussam invented the SONO filtration system to remove arsenic from water in _____.

3. In recent times more than 1.2 million solar home systems have been installed in rural villages.

_____ more than 1.2 million solar home systems have been installed in rural villages.

4. Some organisations offer something to poor meritorious students in rural areas so that they can continue their education.

_____ offer _____ to poor meritorious students in rural areas so that they can continue their education.

5. I know him. He is a renowned scientist in the fight against Cholera.

I know _____ is a renowned scientist in the fight against Cholera.

Compare your answers with your partner.

c) Read Mithila's account of the introduction of wifi-facilitated buses in Dhaka.

As part of a plan to make the country more technological, some of the buses on bus routes in the capital have been fitted with Wi-Fi so that people on the bus can access the internet free of charge on their devices during their journeys. If it is successful, it will be rolled out to other areas.

How could she make her account more precise? Rewrite it with necessary changes to help improve it.

(Use the information in the table below to help you).

April 2014: Digital bus service launched in the Farmgate area of Dhaka by Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC);
20 buses on Motijheel-Uttara route equipped with 3G wireless routers.
An experimental initiative that supports the Government's pledge to build a 'Digital Bangladesh'.
It will be expanded to other parts of the country if successful.

Work in pairs. Comment on each other's writing: Is it more precise? How?

Activity 3: Cohesion and coherence



Cohesion and coherence are important features of academic writing. You can help readers to follow and understand your ideas clearly and easily by using, for example cohesive devices, pronouns and synonyms to show relationships between ideas within your essay.



a) Read Abid's, essay to his teacher on the topic: **Are students lazy?** and discuss in pairs:

1. Are the ideas easy to follow?
2. Does Abid answer the title question?

Are students lazy?

Education and learning clearly involves a lot of effort. Some (1) are a little (or very) lazy and others work very hard. All students can be successful in their studies if they(2) can find a good balance between study, relaxation and other duties or responsibilities and provided that they adopt a responsible attitude to life. This essay will discuss if students are lazy and suggest some possible reasons for this perception.

Many lecturers complain about them (3) that they are not very focused on studying. Students prefer to socialise with their friends rather than study hard so students become lazy because of the fact that students go out too much with their friends so students do not get as much sleep as they need (4). Consequently, students start to feel tired and tiredness brings laziness. At the end all they want to do is rest and be lazy. A significant aspect of lifestyle that causes laziness in students is technology use(5). Students spend their time playing computer games or surfing the internet and chatting with their friends on Facebook. Because of playing computer games or surfing the internet and chatting with their friends on Facebook (6), their eyes become tired and they want to rest and sleep all the time. (7) They do not want to go to class, or even if they do go, they do not concentrate in class. A further result of feeling tired is that they cannot be bothered to do their homework on time (8).

(9) life is too short to spend all the day only studying. If students study five or six hours a day and use the rest of the day wisely to fulfil their responsibilities and then to relax, this does not mean that these students are lazy. Indeed, they can be both successful students and useful citizens.

In conclusion, every student can study with a different way, but they have to find it. They must grow up and take responsibility for their way of living. The most important thing in life is being happy; money is not everything (10).

b) The teacher gave Abid a feedback sheet of comments about his essay.

1. Read the feedback sheet.
2. Work in pairs. Match each comment of the teacher (a-j) to the relevant part of the essay (1-10).

Teacher's feedback sheet:

- (a) If you use a pronoun* (them) to refer back to a noun* (students), they must be in the same paragraph; otherwise the reader will be confused.
- (b) Remember, each paragraph should contain only one main idea. This is a new idea, so you need to start a new paragraph here.
- (c) Your conclusion is inconsistent – it does not relate to the essay title or your thesis statement.
- (d) This sentence is far too long. The reader will lose the thread of your argument!
- (e) Do not use a pronoun (some) if it is not clear who / what you are referring to.
- (f) There is no concluding sentence for this paragraph.
- (g) Try not to repeat the same words or phrases. Use different synonyms or expressions to make your writing more interesting
- (h) Use a cohesive device here to show the relationship between your ideas.
- (i) Use a linking phrase between paragraphs to show the development of your ideas and to guide the reader through your discussion.
- (j) Good use of pronoun (they) to avoid repeating the noun.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
		a							

Extension: Using cohesion and coherence



Work in pairs to complete the following tasks

a) Use the teacher's feedback comments from Activity 3 to improve Abid's essay and explain your correction below.

1. _____
2. No change needed
3. Instead of 'them' I shall write 'students'

4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

b) Complete the summary about cohesion and coherence. Use words from the box. You can use a word more than once.

cohesive device	synonyms	final sentences
same paragraph	linking phrases	pronoun

To make my writing more cohesive and coherent I need to use pronouns, cohesive devices, _____, words from the same word family and correct paragraph structure. However, I can only use a _____ to refer back to a noun, if I have already *previously* introduced the noun. Otherwise the reader will not know what the _____ refers to. I can only use a _____ to refer to a noun within the _____.

I must remember to use a _____ to show the relationship between my ideas within a paragraph.

It is important to use _____ between paragraphs and to make sure that I have clear topic sentences and _____ for each paragraph to show the development of my ideas and to guide the reader through my discussion.

Home task



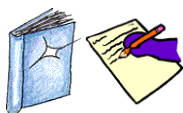
a) Critical reflection



Think back on what you have learnt in this unit and reflect on the experience.

1. What have you learnt about the major features of academic writing?
2. What have you learnt about cohesion and coherence in academic writing?

b) Portfolio task



Write a paragraph on a topic related to your honours subject. Write in an academic style: impersonal and objective, precise, cohesive and coherent. Put the completed task in your portfolio.

c) New vocabulary



Use your dictionary to search the meaning of the following words which you will encounter in the next unit and write in the table.

Words	Meaning
comprehensive	
conventions	
critiquing	
devastation	
evaluate	
hypothetical	
prejudice	
stationary	
unintelligible	