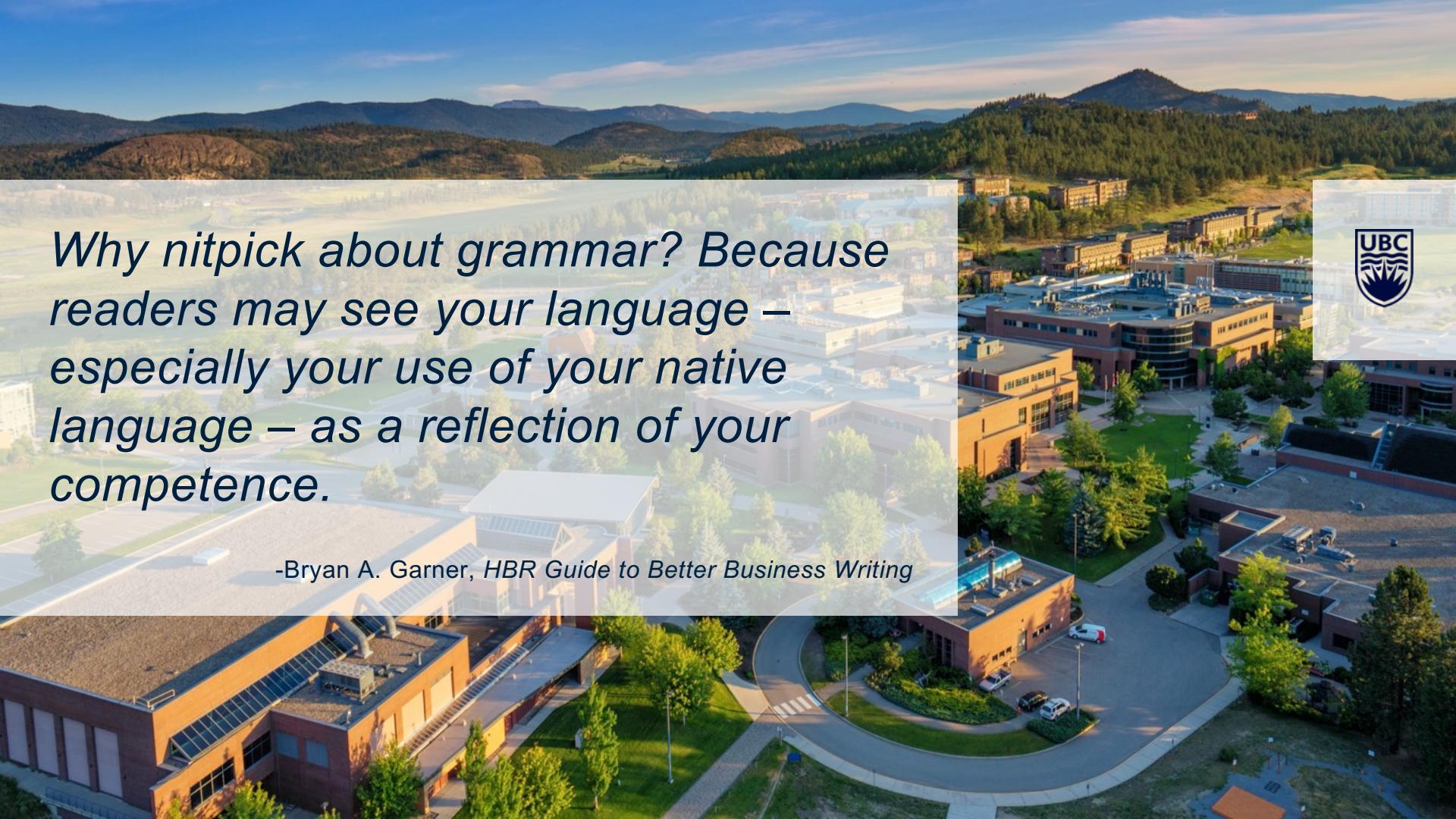


Tone, Language, and Style

UBCO Master of Data Science – DATA 552





Why nitpick about grammar? Because readers may see your language – especially your use of your native language – as a reflection of your competence.

-Bryan A. Garner, *HBR Guide to Better Business Writing*



Class Outline

1. Quick Recap
2. Business genres
3. Business and technical communication: Tone, language, and style
4. Emails: subject lines, attachments, and organization
5. Homework
6. List of objectives

Recap: Monday's Lecture

Oh No! I have to prepare this super important business document outlining my data findings. There's just so much information, and I really need to make a good impression. My career depends on it. What do I do!?



1. **Figure out your purpose:** what do you want to accomplish? What do you want your audience to do? Why do you want them to do this?
2. **Identify your audience:** who are they? What's important to them? What do they need from you? Why do they need this? How do they like to receive their information? Will they understand your information or do they need more background information or simplified terminology?
3. **Consider the context:** What type of communication are you sending? What platform will your audience read/hear it on? What is happening in the world and around your audience that might change how they think about and react to your information.

Genres in Business and Technical Settings

When I think of communication, I think about the following forms:

Verbal

- One-on-one
- Phone
- Presentations (Keynotes, lectures, small gatherings)

Written

- Emails
- Instant Messages
- Proposals
- Reports, Strategies, Procedures

Written Communication Forms, continued

Written

- Performance Appraisals
- Business Letters
- Blogs
- Social Media Profiles
- Social Media Posts
- Resumes and Cover Letters
- Press Releases
- Requests for Proposals



Business and Technical Communication: Your Brand

It's not about you. It's about your audience.

... but,



Business and Technical Communication: Your Brand

Communication is also about strategy and presentation. As a communicator, you want to present yourself as

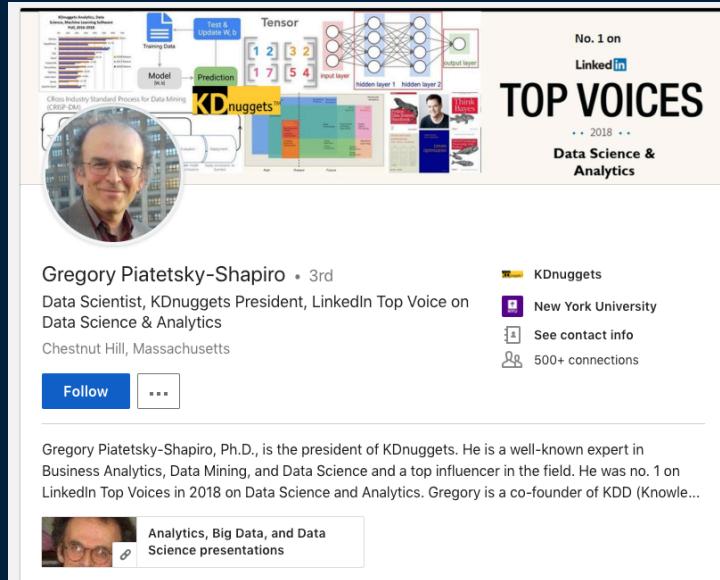
- Trustworthy
- Logical and thoughtful
- Approachable

... and you want to do this consistently, across all the spaces you communicate in.



... but I'm a data scientist / analyst, not a communicator.

What's your public identity?



Gregory Piatetsky-Shapiro • 3rd

Data Scientist, KDnuggets President, LinkedIn Top Voice on Data Science & Analytics

Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

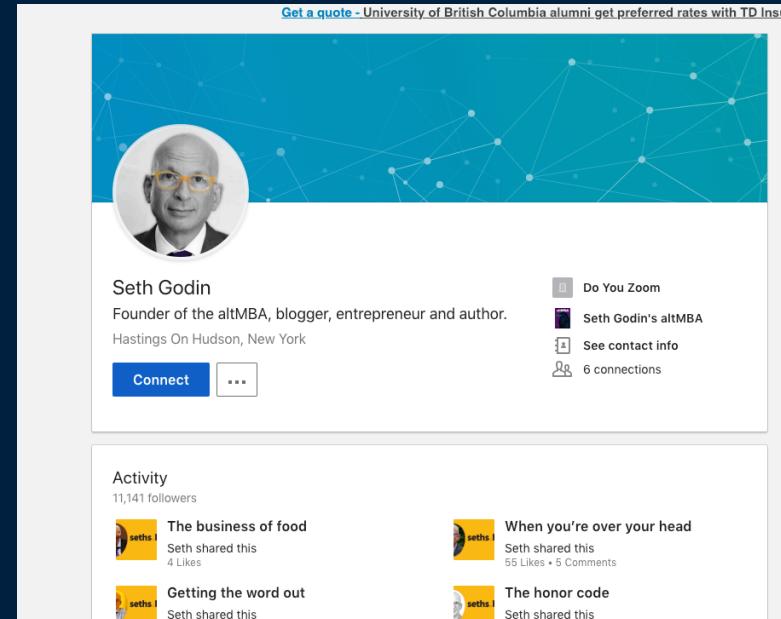
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Gregory Piatetsky-Shapiro, Ph.D., is the president of KDnuggets. He is a well-known expert in Business Analytics, Data Mining, and Data Science and a top influencer in the field. He was no. 1 on LinkedIn Top Voices in 2018 on Data Science and Analytics. Gregory is a co-founder of KDD (Knowledge Discovery in Databases).

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Activity

11,141 followers

 The business of food
Seth shared this
4 Likes

 When you're over your head
Seth shared this
55 Likes • 5 Comments

 Getting the word out
Seth shared this

 The honor code
Seth shared this

... Even Caesar (my dog) has a public identity as dog that helps first-year-students develop strong writing and communication skills.

Try it: What's your public identity?

Question 1: Think about your public identity. Your public identity refers to your online presence, your professional image, and your interpersonal communication activities.

- Google yourself – anyone want to share?
- How would you like people to describe you?
- What kinds of characteristics would you like to present to the world?
- What do you want people to think when they think about you?
- What does this person walk like? What do they talk like? How do they dress? How do they write?

Instructions: Take five minutes to think about this. When you're done, I will ask 3 people to share to share.

Tone, Language, and Style: The Basics

Tone: Garner reminds us "that every communication you send is a commentary on [you,] your team or company and [your]/its level of professionalism" (p. 87).

This doesn't, however, mean that you have to be ridiculously formal.

- *e.g., How may I be of assistance? vs. How may I help?*

Instead, you want to adopt a relaxed and direct tone.

Tone, Language, and Style: The Basics

Relaxed, professional, respectful, and direct

Do

- Address the audience directly. Use “you”
- If speaking as part of an organization/company, use “we”
- Use gender specific (personal) pronouns when possible, and gender neutral pronouns when appropriate
- Meet your audience half way



Tone, Language, and Style: The Basics



Relaxed, professional, respectful, and direct

Don't

- Be aggressive or sarcastic
e.g.,

Given that Monday was a bank holiday, as declared by federal statute no less, your e-mail of the 17th of the present month did not come to my attention until yesterday. It is with no small degree of regret that we note that you deemed it necessary to send a follow-up email to us regarding this matter, since we are desirous of establishing a relationship of mutual trust and respect.

vs.

Because Monday was a bank holiday, I did not receive your e-mail message of the 17th until yesterday. Naturally I was chagrined that you had to write a second time. But of course I want you to call on me whenever I can help.

Example from Bryan A. Garner, *HBR Guide to Better Business Writing*



Tone, Language, and Style: The Basics

Simple, specific, and easy-to-understand

Do

- Use simple, standard (every day) English
e.g.,

Efficiency measures that have been implemented by the company with strong involvement of senior management have generated cost savings while at the very same time assisting in the building of a culture that is centered around the value of efficiency. We anticipate that, given this excising of unnecessary expenditures and enhanced control of other expenditures, the overall profitability of the company will be increased in the near term of up to four quarters.



vs.



Our senior management team has cut costs and made the company more efficient. We expect to be more profitable for the next four quarters.

Example from Bryan A. Garner, *HBR Guide to Better Business Writing*



Tone, Language, and Style: The Basics

Simple, specific, professional, and easy-to-understand

Do

- Vary sentence length
- Define acronyms
- Do follow basic grammar rules (subject-verb agreements, noun-pronoun agreements)
- Write in complete sentences
- Keep sentences to 20-words or less

Tone, Language, and Style: The Basics

Simple, specific, and easy-to-understand

Don't

- As Garner explains, “use two words for one, three words for two, and so on”
e.g., January of 2019 **vs.** January 2019
The smiley face was in violation of business etiquette. **vs.** The smiley faces violates business etiquette.



Tone, Language, and Style: The Basics

Get rid of all the unnecessary words!

- the question as to whether
- there is no doubt but that
- use for fuel purposes
- his is a man who
- in a hasty manner
- this is a subject that
- her story is a strange one.
- the reason why is that



- whether
- no doubt (doubtless)
- used for fuel
- he
- hastily
- this subject
- Her story is strange.
- because



Tone, Language, and Style: The Basics

Simple, specific, and easy-to-understand

Don't

- Use jargon or “bizspeak”

e.g., back of the envelope, drill down, ducks in a row, operationalize, let's take this offline, level the playing field, seamless integration, strategic alliance, thinking outside the box



These terms don't make you sound cool or smart. They suggest you're too lazy to say what you really mean.

Example from Bryan A. Garner, *HBR Guide to Better Business Writing*



Tone, Language, and **Style**: The Basics

Clear, to-the-point, and easy to follow

Do

- Show instead of tell

e.g.,

He was a bad boss.

The company lost its focus and floundered.

He got a promotion based on his assistant's detailed reports, but then – despite the company's record profits – denied the assistant even routine cost-of-living raises.

The CEO acquired five unrelated subsidiaries – as far afield as a paper company and a retailer of children's toys – and then couldn't service the \$26 million in debt.

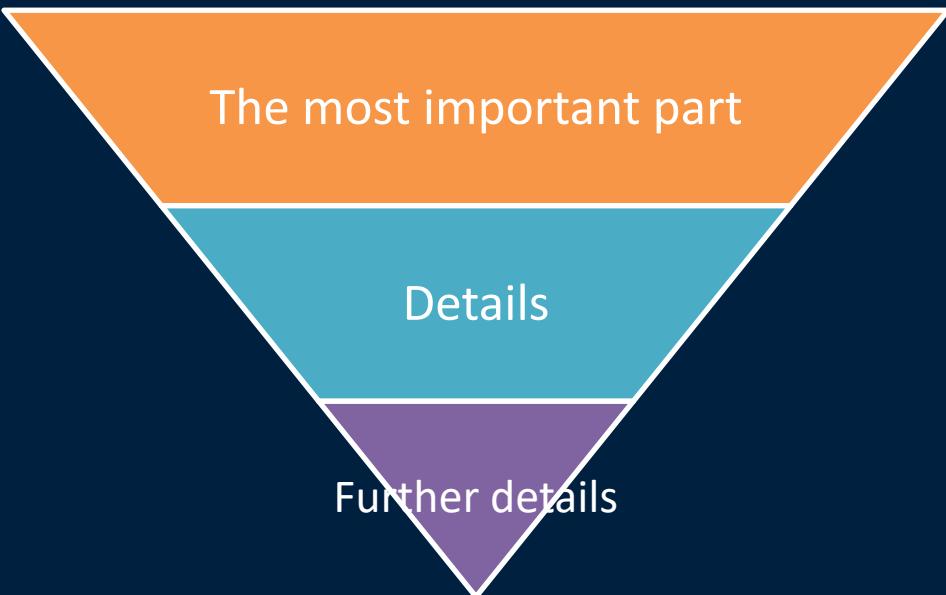


Tone, Language, and **Style**: The Basics

Clear, to-the-point, and easy to follow

Do

- Utilize the journalistic triangle
- Do organize ideas chronologically
- Keep your message to the point



Description of the journalistic triangle comes from Natasha Terk's
Effective Email: Concise, Clear Writing to Advance Your Business Needs

Tone, Language, and Style

Concrete business writing is persuasive because it's evidence-based, clear, and memorable.

-Bryan A. Garner, *HBR Guide to Better Business Writing*

Try it: Improving Emails

Question 2: Please consider how the two emails (on the paper in front of you) can be improved?

Instructions: In groups of three, please rewrite the two emails using the ideas discussed in class.

- It may be easier to have one person do the writing, and then to have that person send the revised draft to the other group members so they can have a copy for their portfolio.

[Link to Activity](#)

Email One: The Not-So-Great Version

Sarah –

It was hard making headway with Jim Martinez, but finally we're looking (in the best-case scenario) at a demonstration of what our software can do by mid-May, as I established in my first telephone conference with Jim last Monday at 9:00 a.m. He was out Wednesday and Thursday (I didn't see any reason to try calling on Tuesday), but on Friday he told me that we'd need a sample app. But prior to that, Magnabilify requires an NDA. Tuesday's meeting should clarify things. Let me know what you think.

Frank

Email Two: The Not-So-Great Version

Subject: Hello there!

Hal –

It's been ages, I know, but I've been meaning to tell you just how effective I think you've been as the editor of the Daily Metropolitan these past seven years. Although I canceled my subscription a few years back (LOL) – the papers kept cluttering the driveway – I buy a copy at the coffee shop almost every day, and I always tell people there just how good the paper is. Who knows, I may have won you some subscribers with all my gushing praise! Believe me, I'm *always* touting the good old DM.

Anyhoo, I have a mentee I'd like you to meet. You'll soon be thanking me for introducing you to her. She would like an internship, and I know she'll be the best intern you've ever had. Her name is Glenda Jones, and she is A-1 in every way. May I tell her you will contact her? (With good news, I hope!) It can be unpaid. I know your paper has fallen on tough times – but she wants to get into the business anyway! Silly girl. Ah, well, what can you do when journalism seems like it's just in the blood?

Expectantly yours,

Myra

P.S. You'll thank me for this!

Emails

General Reminders

- Always capitalize the first letter after a period.
- Always capitalize “I” when you are referring to yourself.
- Write in complete sentences.
- Avoid smiley faces and other emojis
- Single space after period, not double space

Subject Lines

- Be specific and concise
 - Rockslide **vs.** Hwy 97 Rockslide **vs.** Hwy 97 Rockslide Removal Schedule **vs.** Hwy 97 Rockslide – Social Media Update

Emails, continued

Attachments

- Give the attachment a specific name that will mean something to the receiver.
- Include a cover letter for the attachment. Don't just send an attachment without including any information in the body of the email.
- Avoided wordy introductions to the attachment.
 - We don't like attached please find, herewith please find attached, please find attached, or attached herewith please find...
 - Try: "I've attached two files: 1) filename.md: description ; 2) filename2.md ; description

Organization

- Get straight to the point
- Be brief, but specific
- Use chronological order (try bullets, and enumerated lists)

Homework

1. Finish Lab #1

- ... your group needs to meet with Maya, either in Lab or arrange a time after

2. Review Writing Assignment #2 and decide if you would like to use your own dataset

- Remember, you need to let me know by Friday if you plan to use your own dataset

Objectives

- Students will be able to identify common business and technical communication forms (genres), their purpose, and their target audience.
- Students will begin thinking about their public image and how they can convey that identity through their written and verbal communication practices.
- Students will begin to think about how they can use organization; active voice; simple, concrete language; and short, concise sentences to communicate clearly and concisely.
- Students will be comfortable with the basic practices of email communication.



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