Rules of Thumb

How to improve your academic writing.

Week 4 Wednesday February 27

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Collaboration between Computer Science, ELTC, 301 and the library on improving academic writing for MSC students.

Input session on some key rules of academic writing. You will then apply what you Learn today into an assignment.

Writing- Your last assignment (10 minutes).

Analysis of previous writing (10 minutes).

The Rules of Thumb.

The assignment.

Problems

1 Accuracy with language (staffs/staff, repetition mark/ markers etc , this system in continuous touch, In last section ,those areas are a little repeated the menu part function, It have the friendly and simplify of the interface, figure 2.2, the task 1, students were doing degrees with a final dissertation).

2 Accuracy with style-(hot topic, really brilliant, last but not least).

3 Conciseness (sentences too long : 43, 44 and 47).

4 Theme and rheme - The ideas are not clearly linked(last one).

5 Ineffective linking (last one).

Rule 1 Conciseness.

- Sentence length

- 15- 20 words

- Jyoti Sanyal's *Indlish* shows readers find sentences of 8 words or less very easy to read; 11 words, easy; 14 words fairly easy; 17 words standard; 21 words fairly difficult; 25 words difficult and 29 words or more, very difficult.

Rule 2 Theme/ Rheme

Most sentences in English have two parts: a *theme* (or *topic*) and a *rheme* (or *comment*).
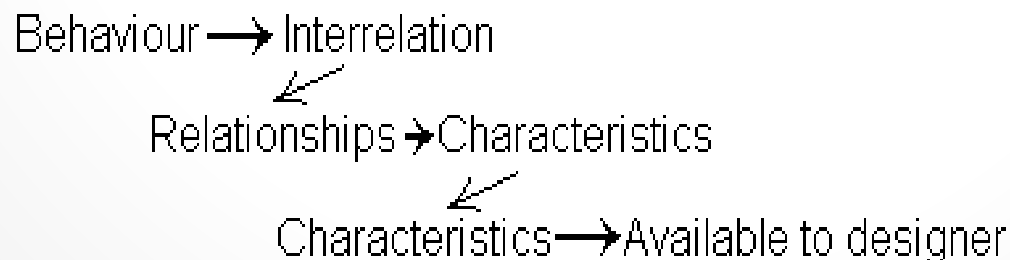
a) Look at the following sentences:
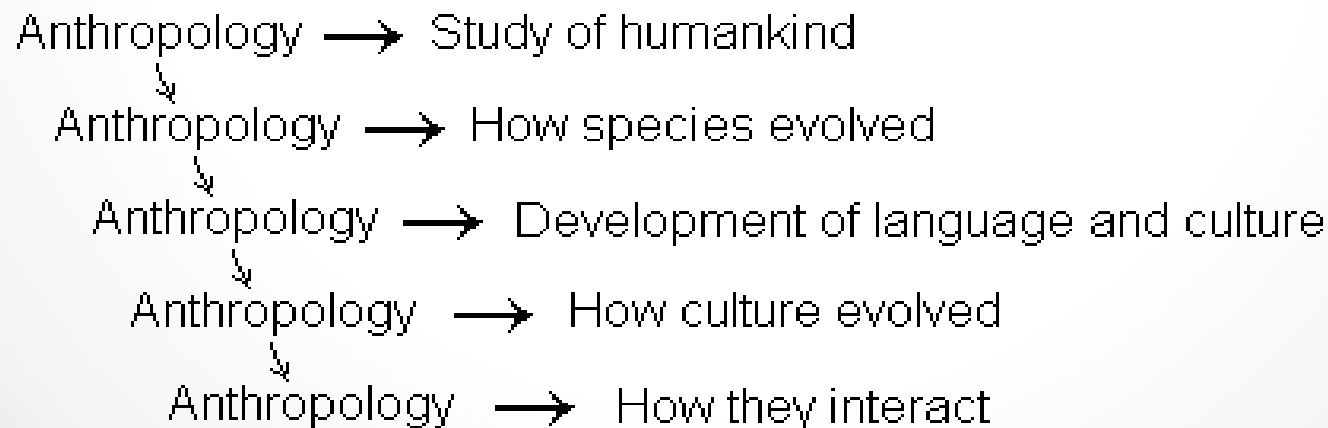
1. The M1 goes from London to Leeds.
The *theme* in sentence 1 is "the M1". The reader has been introduced to the M1 but does not know where it goes and therefore needs to be told.

2. The motorway that goes from London to Leeds is called the M1.

The complete electrical behaviour of any valve or transistor can be described by stating the interrelation of the currents and the voltages between all the electrodes. These relationships can conveniently be displayed graphically, and the various curves are known as the 'characteristics' of the device. In principle, all the characteristics should be available to the designer proposing to use the device in a circuit.

Behaviour ⟶ Interrelation

Relationships → Characteristics

Characteristics ⟶ Available to designer

Anthropology is the study of humankind, especially of *Homo sapiens,* the biological species to which we human beings belong. It is the study of how our species evolved from more primitive organisms; it is also the study of how our species developed a mode of communication known as language and a mode of social life known as culture. It is the study of how culture evolved and diversified. Finally, it is the study of how culture, people, and nature interact wherever human beings are found. (Marvin Harris, (1975), Culture, people nature, p. 1)

Anthropology ⟶ Study of humankind

Anthropology ⟶ How species evolved

Anthropology ⟶ Development of language and culture

Anthropology ⟶ How culture evolved

Anthropology ⟶ How they interact

Rule 3 Effective linking

- Discourse markers (However, moreover, nevertheless).

- Substitution (use a pronoun to replace the subject).

- Punctuation (use a semi-colon to separate 2 similar sentences).

   The first experiment failed; the second also had many problems.

   The first experiment failed: they had not measured correctly.

Rule 4 Accuracy

- Accuracy of ideas.

- Accuracy of language.

- Most common language issues (articles, tense, word form and prepositions).

Read Again.

Ask yourself:

Do my sentences link well?

Are the sentences too long?

Are all the ideas connected and relevant?

Is my language accurate?

Anagram: REACT (read again, effective linking, accuracy, conciseness, theme/ rheme).

Other Key areas

- Referencing

- Paraphrase/summarise

- Criticality

These are crucial but are not part of the remit. The ' Rules of Thumb' are based on comprehension and ability to convey your ideas.

Assignment information:

- Based on your project choose a relevant publication (article/ dissertation).
- Write a report of 500 words (+/- 10%).
- Itemise the good and bad points.
- Focus on the 'Rules of Thumb' and not technical elements.
- You will be marked out of ten, with 5 marks for depth of analysis and 5 for your own writing style.
- Deadline: 23.59 Wednesday 13th March 2017.

Support

- ELTC WAS – writing consultations.

- Email: m.d.lawrence@sheffield.ac.uk

- Writing for Computer Science- Justin Gobel
Writing for computer science 3rd edition

DLP Fridays 11.00-12.00 Angela Aldridge Tucker.
Email: o.a.Aldridge.tucker@Sheffield.ac.uk