

MASARYK UNIVERSITY
Dept. of Foreign Languages

POSTGRADUATE ACADEMIC WRITING COURSE

SESSION 2

10. SENTENCE

10.1.

Read the following sentences and decide which of them could be appropriate for an academic text.

1. Such excellent feedback from the visiting auditor.

2. Throughout the cold war, the Baltic States, recognising the futility of asserting their independence against the overwhelming strength of the Red Army, stoically remained parts of the Soviet Union, which needed to use their ports as naval and military bases to protect the littoral between Kaliningrad and Leningrad.

3. Gerald began -- but was interrupted by a piercing whistle which cost him ten percent of his hearing permanently, as it did everyone else in a ten-mile radius of the eruption, not that it mattered much because for them "permanently" meant the next ten minutes or so until buried by searing lava or suffocated by choking ash -- to pee.

(Adapted from: 3. Jim Gleeson (2007))

10.2. Sentence definitions and characteristics

Read the comments below and discuss them.

► A sentence can be defined as “the largest structural unit normally treated in grammar. The sentence is notoriously difficult to define; numerous definitions have been offered and found wanting. The classical definition, that a sentence expresses a complete thought, dates from the first treatise on grammar... This traditional notion definition, however, only solves the problem by transferring it: how does one define a complete thought?”

▶ Every sentence in academic writing should be included for a specific reason and should connect with the sentences around it and the overall topic. Each sentence should make logical and grammatical sense and be expressed in an appropriate style.

▶ There is no right or wrong method for sentence combining as long as you punctuate correctly; create logical, understandable sentences; and do not write fragments. No one method of sentence combining is better than another, but do not use the same method for combining all your sentences. The objective is to achieve variety.

(Adapted from: McArthur, T.1992, p.918; Alison Brown, 2007; Williams, V.; Blake, C.D.:1992, p.353.)

10.3. Degree of formality

Read the sentence triplets below and discuss which of the examples are suitable for an academic text from the perspective of formality.

1.

- a) The president was obliged to return earlier than planned due to poor weather conditions.
- b) The inclement climatic conditions obliged the President to return earlier than scheduled.
- c) The president had to go back sooner than he'd planned because the weather was so bad.

2.

- a) Essential measures should be undertaken at the earliest opportunity.
- b) You should do whatever you have to as soon as you can.
- c) One should undertake any necessary measures at the earliest opportunity.

3.

- a) Before they discovered America, Europeans didn't eat potatoes.
- b) Prior to the discovery of America, potatoes were not consumed in Europe.
- c) Before America was discovered, potatoes were not eaten in Europe.

(Adapted from: <http://website.lineone.net/~eshp/styles.htm>)

10.4. Degrees of certainty

Which of the sentences below can be appropriate for academic writing and why?

- a) Recent research suggests that a majority of people prefer email to traditional letter-writing as a mode of communication.
- b) According to the recent research people prefer email to traditional letter-writing as a mode of communication.
- c) The traditional view that women need to spend more time at home and that this detracts them from their active time commitment to politics is true in CEE countries.
- d) The traditional view that women need to spend more time at home and that this detracts them from their active time commitment to politics seem to be true in CEE countries.
- e) The leachant dissolves the lead and tin content in exactly the same ratio as the solder, leaving the copper content of the boards intact.
- f) The leachant tends to dissolve the lead and tin content in exactly the same ratio as the solder, leaving, apparently, the copper content of the boards intact.

► ► ► **tend/s to, appear/s to/that, indicate/s that, suggest/s that, the majority of, there is a tendency for, probable, seem/s that, the evidence suggests that, it is widely accepted, apparently, seemingly, presumably, etc.**

(Adapted from Alison Brown, 2007; Mahlab 1994; Soós, G., Zentai, V.:2005:p92; <http://www.azom.com/details.asp?ArticleID=1767>)

10.5. Degrees of personality

Which of the sentences below can be appropriate for academic writing and why?

a) Always begin negatively, a former teacher once instructed me. Tell your readers what you are not going to do; it will relieve their minds, and they will be more inclined to accept what seems a modest project. So I will begin this plea for tolerance with a couple of negative distinctions.

b) One should always begin negatively, some teachers used to instruct students. Readers should be informed about what the author is not going to do; it will relieve their minds, and they will be more inclined to accept what seems a modest project. So this plea for tolerance will begin with a couple of negative distinctions.

c) Based on the most recent progress in nanophotonics, controlling light by way of photonic crystals, plasmonics, and left-handed (meta-) materials is no more just an exciting theoretical approach, but real practice. It is expected that optical metamaterials, when combined appropriately with light emitters, will make optics in a non-distant future compatible with an integrated system technology, supporting the long-sought development of fully integrated optical circuits comparable to the development of micro- and nanoelectronics.

d) We found that the most recent progress in nanophotonics, controlling light by way of photonic crystals, plasmonics, and left-handed (meta-) materials is no more just an exciting theoretical approach, but real practice. I expect that optical metamaterials, when combined appropriately with light emitters, will make optics in a non-distant future compatible with an integrated system technology, supporting the long-sought development of fully integrated optical circuits comparable to the development of micro- and nanoelectronics.

► **The third person voice (*it, they, he, she, the authors, researchers*) distances the self from the work and appears more objective than the first person *I, we* or second person *you*.**

► **Overuse of "I/ we" in papers can seem overly subjective & trying to avoid offering proofs.**

► **Expected modesty.**

► **Whatever is included in a piece of academic writing that is not attributed to someone else, is assumed to be the author's.**

(Adapted from Alison Brown, 2007; Waltzer, M.:1997,p.8; <http://www.iop.org/EJ/abstract/1367-2630/8/9/E04>)

10.6. Hedging

Classification of Hedges

Hedge Class	Function
<p>Shields</p> <p>Devices that take responsibility for the claim made away from the author. They function as a tool protecting the author from any criticism. The writer aims at not being on record with regard to the propositions expressed in the text.</p>	<p>Responsibility shifting</p> <p>Devices which suggest that in case there is another interpretation of the propositions made, the criticism should be aimed at somebody else. The person or people accountable for the claim are known or can be found.</p> <p>e.g. ...([1], [2], [3],)..., ...it is shown in [3]..., Romanowska found..., ...we refer reader to [3, 4]..., ...see [10]...</p>
	<p>Speaking facts</p> <p>The author indicates lack of other interpretation. The writer shields his claims through stating "the commonly accepted" view.</p> <p>e.g. Definition 1..., A map is..., ...is defined to be..., ...space is said to be...</p>
<p>Mitigators</p> <p>The author admits his/her responsibility for the claims made. The writer takes stance while using mitigators, but decides to weaken his propositions for various reasons.</p>	<p>Approximation</p> <p>Referring vaguely to the quality or quantity of something.</p> <p>e.g. ...some..., ...more..., Several, ...similar...</p>
	<p>Possibility</p> <p>Referring to things that may happen or be the case.</p> <p>e.g. ...may..., ...can..., ...possible...</p>
	<p>Understatement</p> <p>Devices used in order to downgrade the claims and express modesty which is generally expected from authors of scientific articles. By using these devices, they lessen the importance and the validity of their claims.</p> <p>e.g. ...notions..., ...concept...</p>
<p>Admitting incompleteness</p> <p>The author expresses that some facts might have been omitted or that there might be other possibilities that have not been covered by the research article scope.</p> <p>e.g. ...briefly..., ...however,...</p>	

Decide on the type of hedges:

Example 1:

Structure of the Introduction	Text of the Introduction	Hedge Function
Making a topic generalization	<i>Usual Banach space methods show that a norm one functional in the predual N^* of a JBW^*-subtriple N of a JBW^*-triple M has extensions in M^* approximating to one without guaranteeing attainment.</i>	
Claiming centrality	<i>Uniqueness of norm preserving extensions in this context</i>	
Reviewing previous research	<i>has been extensively studied in [4-6] with deep results.</i>	
Announcing present research	<i>The purpose of this paper is to address the question</i>	
Continuing a tradition	<i>raised in [18, p. 102] (see also [17, §4]) of the existence of norm preserving extensions from N^* to M^* and to settle it affirmatively.</i>	
Announcing present research	Briefly,	
Definitions	a JBW^*-triple is a complex Banach space M with a predual and with a continuous ternary product $(a, b, c) \rightarrow \{abc\}$ conjugate linear in b , symmetric bilinear in a and c , and satisfying $\{ab\{xyz\}\} = \{\{abx\}yz\} + \{xy\{abz\}\} - \{x\{bay\}z\}$ such that $\ \{aaa\}\ = \ a\ ^3$ and $a \rightarrow \{aax\}$ is an hermitian operator with positive spectrum. We recall that the predual M^* of a JBW^* -triple M is unique [2, 10] and that for a tripotent u (that is, $u = \{uuu\}$) in M the Pierce-2 projection $P_2(u)$ on M given by $P_2(u)(x) = \{u\{uxu\}u\}$ is weak* continuous, contractive and that $P_2(u)(M)$ is a JBW^* -algebra with identity u and with Jordan product and involution given by $x \circ y = \{xuy\}$ and $x^\# = \{uxu\}$. General references for JBW^* -triples and their preduals are [7, 10-12]. We refer to [9] via [3] for the theory of JBW^* -algebras. Bunce (2001)	
<u>Example 2</u>		
Recommendation for further research	1. This paper suggests a more general problem. Let A be a variety of algebras, $A = \langle A; \mu \rangle$, of type $\langle 3 \rangle$, say; other types will suggest similar problems. Consider the class of all two-sorted algebras, $\underline{A} = \langle A, A; \tau \rangle$, obtained by doubling the carriers of all the algebras in A , as was done in (2.1). When is this class of doublets a variety? And how are its subdirectly irreducible members and identities related to those of A ?	
Extension of the topic	2. In closing, we may have lost sight of the original phenomenon that inspired this paper: the nice correspondence between distributive lattices and median algebras. In a sense we were sidetracked by the allure of distributive multiseuilattices as two-sorted algebras. But what if we ask for the analog of distributive lattices with respect to pseudomedian algebras? Since Theorem 6.1 tells us that each pseudomedian algebra is realizable in some algebra of M with only two actions i and j needed - $\mu = \Delta(i, j)$ - we need only rewrite the axioms for M to define a new variety with two binary operations i and j . There appear to be six subdirectly irreducibles. (Knoebel & Meletiou 1999)	

10.7. Passive and active voice

Which of the sentences below can be appropriate for academic writing and why?

- a) We wanted to understand how penicillin affects growth of bacteria. To do this, we grew bacteria in the presence of varying concentrations of penicillin. We learned that penicillin inhibits growth of bacteria.
- b) The growth of bacteria was studied. Bacteria were grown in the presence of varying concentrations of was learned that bacterial growth is inhibited by penicillin.
- c) One sample was dissolved prior to thermal treatment. At 30 min. intervals, samples were withdrawn and dissolved in carrier solutions, and the temperature of the bath was increased by approx. 5°C.
- d) We dissolved one sample prior to thermal treatment. At 30 min. intervals, we withdrew samples and dissolved them in carrier solutions, and we increased the temperature of the bath by approx. 5°C.

- ▶ The passive voice emphasises the action over the person doing the action (the actor). It is a very useful technique when the actor is not important to the event.
- ▶ **Warning: You should only use the passive voice when you really need to; overuse tends to produce dull writing; particularly in conjunction with nominalization it can contribute to writing sounding very formal and losing clarity!**
- ▶ To know more about, read: Lilita Rodman: The passive in technical and scientific writing; <http://www.camlang.com/tsp001.cfm>

(Adapted from Alison Brown, 2007; Bonte and Martin, 1481-82 in Rodman, L. <http://www.camlang.com/tsp001.cfm>)

10.8. Contractions (shortened forms)

Which of the sentences below can be appropriate for academic writing and why?

- a) It's no less important to understand that conversation, so far as it concerns the idea of trusteeship, is principally an European affair: African and Asian voices don't become audible in any substantial way until the onset of decolonisation.
- b) It is no less important to understand that conversation, so far as it concerns the idea of trusteeship, is principally an European affair: African and Asian voices do not become audible in any substantial way until the onset of decolonisation.
- c) As Salman Rushdie, who became the first Western writer to become the victim of a *fatwa*, said: "It's ridiculous – isn't it? –to have to say, but I *am* a human being, unjustly accused, unjustly embubbled. Or is it I who am being ridiculous, as I call out from my bubble, *I'm still trapped here, folks; somebody, please, get me out?*"
- d) As Salman Rushdie, who became the first Western writer to become the victim of a *fatwa*, said: "It is ridiculous – is it not? –to have to say, but I *am* a human being, unjustly accused, unjustly embubbled. Or is it I who am being ridiculous, as I call out from my bubble, *I am still trapped here, folks; somebody, please, get me out?*"

(Adapted from Alison Brown, 2007; Bain, W: 2003, p.11; Rushdie. S. in MacArthur, B.: 1999, p. 484)

10.9. Nominalization (noun forms)

Which of the sentences below can be appropriate for academic writing and why?

- a) Comprehension is aided by repetition.
- b) You can understand something better if it is repeated.
- c) Germany invaded Poland in 1939 and that was the immediate cause of the World War II breaking out.
- d) Germany's invasion of Poland in 1939 was the immediate cause of the outbreak of the World War II.
- e) The company's original conclusion that the establishment of increased flexibility in attendance hours has resulted in a decrease in absenteeism, was endorsed in the most recent analysis.
- f) In a recent analysis the company confirmed its earlier conclusion that greater flexibility in attendance hours for workers reduces absentee rates.

- ▶ Academic writing usually has more noun structures than verb structures.
- ▶ The noun forms are useful in condensing text and when the focus is on conditions or results rather than actions.
- ▶ **Warning: too much nominalization can make your writing very dense, unnecessarily complex and tedious to read. You have to strike a balance here!**

(Adapted from Alison Brown, 2007)

10.10. More tips:

Formal forms of quantity with positive verbs

- No vs Not any** The analysis did not yield any new results **vs** The analysis yielded no new results
Few vs Not many There do not seem to be many viable solutions to this problem
vs There seem to be few viable solutions to this problem
Much vs a lot of Much research has been conducted into global warming

Conciseness - clichés, redundant words and colloquialisms

- ▶ Try to use the most straightforward term and reduce unnecessary words, e.g. *with a high degree of certainty vs certain; advance planning vs planning* (all planning is in advance).
- ▶ Jacob (1998) *says* that the test is not 100% reliable. **vs** Jacob (1998) *concedes* that the test is not 100% reliable. (E.g. *describe, contend, examine, state, disagree, observe, assert, support, claim, dispute, suggest, purport, persuade, dismiss, refute, propose, concur, recommend, object, contradict*)
For more, see the appendix.
- ▶ The paper was *pretty awful*. **vs** The paper was *poorly researched*.
- ▶ The idea that primary sequence alone determines tertiary structure in protein folding can be *an idea that not everyone agrees with*. **vs** The idea that primary sequence alone determines tertiary structure in protein folding can be *a controversial one*.

Note: Although you should be aware of these characteristics, it's probably not a good idea to try to completely change your writing style when you first sit down to write a draft of an article or thesis. If you try to remember everything, you may sit for hours trying to perfect the first sentence. Instead, write however you feel comfortable writing, but learn to develop your editing skills, paying attention to the above mentioned characteristics.

(Adapted from Alison Brown, 2007)

On the use of active and passive

Table 1

Percentages of voice per section in the processes of three types of sciences in 21 research articles.

	Introduction		Method		Results		Discussion	
	A	P	A	P	A	P	A	P
Physical sciences	63,0	37,0	26,0	74,0	72,0	28,0	71,0	29,0
Biological sciences	74,0	26,0	38,0	61,0	68,0	32,0	79,0	21,0
Social sciences	84,0	16,0	46,0	54,0	77,0	23,0	85,0	15,0

A=active, P=passive

Source: I.A.Martinez/English for Specific Purposes 20 (2001) 227-247

On self-mention in the articles

Table 2

Frequency of self-mention forms per discipline (Ø per 10,000 words).

Discipline	Total	Citation	I	Me	My	We	Us	Our	Other
Physics	64,6	8,7	0,0	0,1	0,0	39,3	0,6	14,4	1,4
Marketing	61,3	6,9	1,6	0,0	0,7	31,0	1,1	18,9	0,6
Biology	56,2	22,6	0,0	0,1	0,1	24,0	1,1	7,2	0,7
Philosophy	52,7	3,1	35,6	2,5	7,7	1,4	0,2	0,6	0,0
Applied ling.	51,8	9,1	36,1	3,0	9,7	25,4	2,8	14,5	0,2
Sociology	47,1	6,8	12,7	1,0	2,0	15,3	0,7	7,6	0,2
Electronic eng.	44,4	10,7	0,0	0,0	0,0	23,3	0,4	8,6	0,5
Mechanical eng.	17,8	9,6	0,0	0,0	0,0	5,5	0,0	1,4	0,4
Overall	50,5	8,3	11,2	0,8	2,4	17,8	0,8	8,3	1,1

Source: K. Hyland/English for Specific Purposes 20 (2001) 207-226

On grammar in scientific articles

Table 3

Most frequent words (pharmaceutical corpus).

Rank	Title	Abstract	Introduction	Methods	Results	Discussion
1	of	but	been	were	no	that
2	for	these	has	was	in	be
3	on	of	have	at	did	may
4	and	there	is	then	not	is
5	in	in	such	for	had	our
6	-	was	can	each	after	in
7	-	that	it	and	there	not
8	-	did	we	from	the	this
9	-	w ho	of	after	when	we
10	-	both	to	with	all	have

Source: C.Gledhill/English for Specific Purposes 19 (2000) 115-135

10.11.

Here is a paragraph that should be written in a more academic tone. Read it through and underline the parts that need to be rewritten and try to suggest possible improvements.

Given the general knowledge of the health risks of smoking, it's no wonder that heaps of smokers have tried at some time in their lives to quit. However, in most cases, their attempts are unsuccessful. People begin smoking, often when they're adolescents, for lots of reasons, including the example of parents and pressure from peers. If others in one's group of friends are starting to smoke, it can be hard to resist going along with the crowd. Once people start smoking, they're likely to get hooked. The addiction to smoking is partly physiological; smokers become used to the effects of nicotine and experience painful withdrawal symptoms when they give it up. In addition, people become psychologically dependent on smoking as a way of reducing anxiety and coping with particular situations.

(Adapted from Alison Brown, 2007)

11. TITLE

11.1.

Watch the video (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KGJYYGIAZpU>) and discuss what are the most important characteristics of titles from an academic perspective.

11.2.

Decide which titles could be of high quality from an academic perspective and which could not. Explain your opinion.

1. Gender Issues in Reproductive Health and Promoting Male Responsibility
2. Early Prediction of Response to Chemotherapy and Survival in Malignant Pleural Mesothelioma Using a Novel Semiautomated 3-Dimensional Volume-Based Analysis of Serial ¹⁸F-FDG PET Scans
3. Shells
4. Pretty Feet Hit the Street
5. The Impact of Herbivory on Plants in Different Resource Conditions: A Meta-Analysis
6. A Study of Moral Relativism and Moral Objectivity
7. Diffusion on a curved surface coupled to diffusion in the volume: Application to cell biology
8. The Effect of Institutional Culture on Change Strategies in Higher Education: Universal Principles or Culturally Responsive Concepts?
9. This is a research on Female Tragic Hero in English Renaissance Drama.
10. Study on Parallel Translations of Passages from the Seventh Chapter of: *On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite into Old Church Slavonic and Church Slavonic
11. Direct Discrimination, Indirect Discrimination and Autonomy
12. How Do We Introduce the Next Generation of Radiotracers into Clinical Practice?
13. Cold War to Cold Peace: Explaining U.S.-French Competition in Francophone Africa
14. Statistics for ESC in AO, PO and IO
15. Why The Axioms and Theorems of Arithmetic are not Legal Norms

11.3.

Try and create your own title for your PhD work. Discuss the suggestions with the whole group.

12.

Listen to Monika, answer the questions and perform the tasks below.

1. Where does/did she work?

2. What exactly does she do?

3. How does she seek authors?

4. What can be a typical problem of the manuscript?

5. What should you do to get your work published? Do you need to be recommended? Why?

6. How does this work in science?

7. How does this work in social science?

8. When you want your dissertation published, you should:

Look at _____

Do not send _____

Prepare a book proposal, which consists of

9. If a non-native speaker gets published, are there any problems with the language correctness?

10. Fill in the gaps:

What people sometimes don't realize is that we need new ideas and new work and new authors just as much as authors need us, it is a mutual thing, and we are always looking for new exciting work and new developments in the field.

11. Summary:

What is mentioned regarding the following topics?

Publishers

Market

Libraries

12. How many books get published? _____