

MASARYK UNIVERSITY  
Language Centre

**ACADEMIC WRITING COURSE**  
**for PhD students and novice researchers**

**SESSION 1**

**1. WELCOME**

- organisation of the course

**2. AIMS:**

- to present basic principles of academic writing in the context of postgraduate studies
- to practise and peer review writing (react to an expert review)
- to engage postgraduate students in discussion of issues in academic writing

**3. INTRODUCTION**

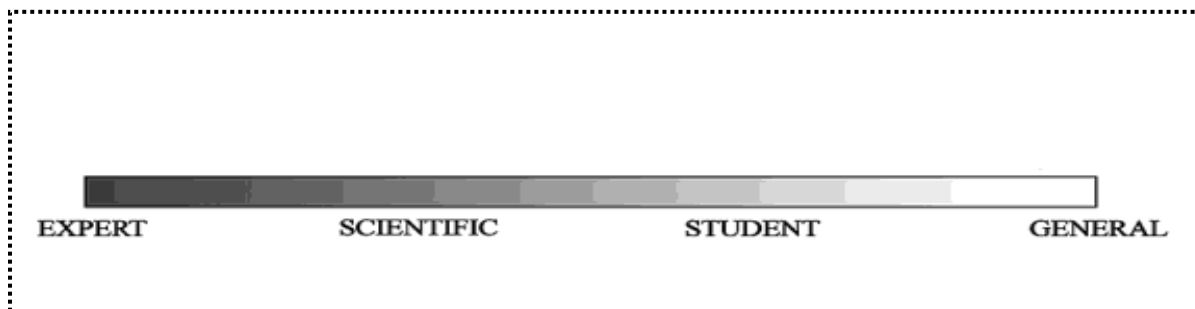
Work in pairs. Find a person you don't know and introduce yourselves to each other. Feel free to take notes as you will be asked to introduce that person (name; dept.; research area) to the whole group.

(John Morgan, 2007)

**4. WHAT IS ACADEMIC WRITING?**

<b><u>Who?</u></b> <i>Who is writing?</i> <i>Who is the audience?</i>	<b><u>What?</u></b> <i>What is the writing about?</i>	<b><u>Why?</u></b> <i>Why is the writing done?</i>

## 5. ACADEMIC AUDIENCE



(Adapted from Robinson, M., Stoller, F. (2008): Write like a Chemist, OUP, Oxford, p.10)

## 6. WHAT IS POSTGRADUATE ACADEMIC WRITING?

Find major differences between undergraduate and postgraduate academic writing.

## 7. ACADEMIC WRITING COMPLEXITY

Watch the academic writing sources publicity and note down as many aspects of academic writing as possible.

# 8. POSTGRADUATE ACADEMIC WRITING THEORY

## 1. MACRO LEVEL

text types; text structures

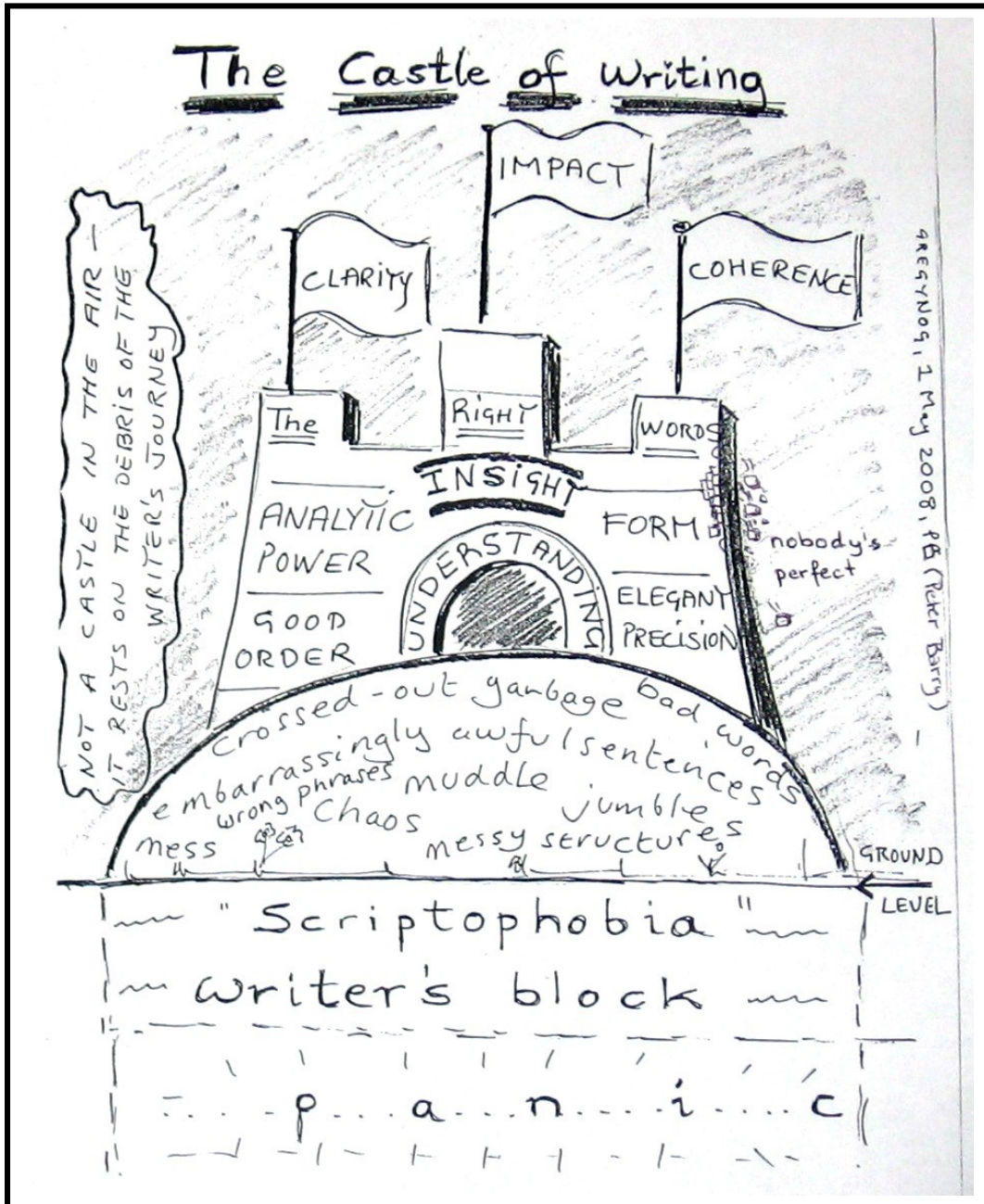
## 2. MEZZO LEVEL

paragraphs

## 3. MICRO LEVEL

academic style; words, sentences

(Adapted from Alison Brown, 2007)



## 9. STYLE

### 9.1.

*Look at these four very different styles of saying the same thing and identify the academic style.*

- a) It rained cats and dogs yesterday, didn't it?
- b) What a downpour last night!
- c) The UK Meteorology Office monitored a heavy rainfall with the rate of precipitation reading 46 millimetres per hour on 24th March 2011 in North Cumbria.
- d) She was standing there in the storm waiting for deafening thunder to come, feeling the water cooling the air and thinking of how heavy the drops of water must be so that they could fall down from the dark clouds and make her feel refreshed and so light that she could fly, and make her full of energy, make her appreciate the eternal life it delivers, when finally she realised this precipitation was indeed a friend, her only true friend.

(Adapted from: Štěpánek, L., deHaaff, J., Hradilová, A.(2011): Academic English, Grada, Praha, p.153)

### 9.2.

*In the following examples, the same message is expressed in six different styles, from an extremely formal written style, to the very informal spoken one. Match the sentences with the adequate styles.*

- a) Jargon, very formal.
- b) Written, formal, clear.
- c) Written style for the general public (scripted radio or TV news style).
- d) Formal spoken style (seminar, talk).
- e) Informal spoken style (discussion).
- f) Very informal spoken style (chat).

1. As the value of Sterling increased compared to other currencies, the government was forced to take tax measures to head off a rapid increase in consumer spending spurred on by cheaper imports.

2. And you see, Sterling got more and more valuable, so as a result, the government had to go round putting up taxes, you see, to stop everyone going out and splashing out, spending all their money on cheap imports.

3. Consequent to the appreciation in the exchange value of Sterling against other currencies, necessary fiscal measures were introduced by the government in order to reduce the likelihood of an import-led consumer spending surge.

4. As Sterling went up in value, the government had to put up taxes to stop consumers splashing out on too many cheap imports.

5. As Sterling's international value went up, the government had to take tax measures to head off a consumer spending boom spurred on by cheaper imports.

6. After the international value of Sterling rose, the government was obliged to take fiscal measures to reduce the likelihood of a surge in consumer spending led by cheaper imports.

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

### 9.3.

Examine the following texts and identify any significant features. What kind of text does the extract come from and how does the language differ among the texts?

#### TEXT 1

“Ladies and gentlemen ...” the hostess had announced to a full house of American University in Paris, “Our guest tonight needs no introduction. He is the author of numerous books: *The Symbology of Secret Sects*, *The Art of the Illuminati*, *The Lost Language of Ideograms*, and when I say he wrote the book on *Religious Iconology*, I mean that quite literally. Many of you use his textbooks in class”  
The students in the crowd nodded enthusiastically.  
“I had planned to introduce him tonight by sharing his impressive curriculum vitae. However, ...” She glanced playfully at Langdon, who was seated onstage. “An audience member has just handed me a far more, shall we say ...*intriguing* introduction.”

#### TEXT 2

**CAUTION** - Never use cloth or paper products (paper towels, tissue paper, etc.) to clean the lenses. They will scratch the coating and decrease the resolving power of the lens. Use only **lens paper**.

- Switch the microscope to the lowest magnification or raise the objectives from the stage before inserting a slide. This will prevent the objective lens from being accidentally scratched by the slide.
- Place the slide to be viewed on the stage and center the specimen over the opening.
- Begin with either the scanning lens or the low power objective lens.
- Raise the stage (or lower the lens) all the way so that the slide is as close as possible to the objective lens.
- Use the coarse adjustment knob to slowly raise the lens from the stage while viewing the image. Fine focusing is not needed when using the lowest magnification (scanning or 4X objective). If you are using any of the other objectives, it will be necessary to use the fine focus after using the coarse focus.
- Adjust the condenser so that a sharp focus is produced. This step is important at the highest magnification (oil immersion or 1000X).
- Adjust the iris diaphragm. This will need readjustment after changing to a different magnification.

#### TEXT 3

The aim is to develop transferable communication skills in English through an interactive learning infrastructure. It will link academic and non-academic worlds, provide opportunities for training and retraining and reflect the needs of practice.

The programme objectives will be achieved by setting up and running virtual transnational (between Wales, Czech Republic, Spain, Bosnia and Turkey) and transversal (between academic and professional) study circles:

- by developing training and learning materials for academic and professional purposes;
- by making effective use of advanced technological resources for authentic communication tasks (videoconferencing, internet);
- by creating an internationally accessible virtual learning environment (through development and use of an open subject village web site and by matching the academic outcomes with the needs of prospective employees.

It will also create opportunities for further training and retraining in transnational communication for professionals, in practicing essential and desirable skills in interviews, providing space for the development of equal opportunities communication.

This project makes an original contribution to intercultural communication in English language teaching and also to national vocational training by introducing advanced technology that brings together people from professional working environments and the academic world. Effective use of advanced technology and acquisition of necessary skills can open doors to a united Europe and reduce obstacles to communication and cooperation in terms of geographical distance and work.

#### TEXT 4

Relationship occurs through dialogue (Smith, 2000, p. 6; Buber, 1947, p. 24) a primary means by which authentic responses are constituted (de Feijter, 2007, p. 55). Put another way, dialogue supports the establishment of 'genuine relationships' (Kramer, 2001, p.65), offering possibilities transcending agreement and enabling greater understanding (Ibid., p.66, quoting Eck, 1993, p.19). As such, dialogue is a key component of Christian fellowship: we cannot give up talking (Astley, 2004, p.14). How might we begin talking, though? Does technology have a role in supporting and encouraging dialogue activities among church-goers? This investigation seeks to offer one insightful response through investigating experiences of supporting dialogue by means of certain available technologies. Participation flows from a culture which encourages engagement in beneficial educational, cultural and political opportunities, engagement which emerging communication technologies have been noted potentially to resource (Jenkins, 2006, p. 3). The contrary view that participation is governed by technology rather than culture is not adopted in this investigation which seeks to discover some influences of technology on continuing cultural practices of participating through dialogue about issues of faith.

#### TEXT 5

##### **Stem cells trial for MS patients**

Jane McSaley

A new treatment for multiple sclerosis (MS) is being pioneered near Bristol. Six patients at Frenchay Hospital are being injected with their own stem cells in the hope that they will repair damage to the brain.

Approximately 60,000 people in the UK suffer from MS, an incurable disease of the nervous system.

Prof Neil Scolding, of the Institute of Clinical Neurosciences, said: "We know stem cells are attracted into the brain, into these areas of damage."

He added that he hoped the stem cells would "help those areas to stop getting worse" and "repair damage".

'Lot of hope'

Liz Allison, an MS patient taking part in the trial, said: "I'm hoping there will be some improvement."

BBC health correspondent Matthew Hill said: "We've already seen stem cells used on cardiac patients but this is the first time a reputable organisation has tried it out on MS patients.

"There is a lot of hope riding on these trials but it is very early days yet."

He added that it was likely to be several months before any conclusions could be drawn regarding the treatment.

#### TEXT 6

Hi Paul,

I am finally back in the office after a gruelling week at the hospital. I am trying to catch-up on things so will talk to Alison today about VC this Wed. I am not sure which venue as Steve mentioned something about Room 2 not being available. I will try and let you know about what we have decided to do with the students - apart from the left over stuff do you think we will have time for more?

Cheers,  
Kate

## TEXT 7

### About Amnesty International

As a movement of ordinary people from across the world standing up for humanity and human rights, our purpose is to protect individuals wherever justice, fairness, freedom and truth are denied.



[Find out more](#) | [vision and mission](#) | [history](#) | [governance](#) | [finances](#) | [jobs](#) | [volunteer](#)

(Adapted from: 1. brown,2003, www.sherline.com/2125Inst.htm + <http://faculty.clintoncc.suny.edu/faculty/Michael.Gregory/files/Bio%20101/Bio%20101%20Laboratory/Microscopy/Microscopy%20lab.htm>; 3. Katrňáková H. et al.: 2005: CJV Leonardo da Vinci project application, unpublished draft; 4. Barclay, 2009; 5. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/bristol/7014813.stm>; 7. [www.amnesty.org.uk/content.asp?CategoryID=10010](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/content.asp?CategoryID=10010))

### 9.4.

*Consider the differences in approach between these four versions of the beginning of a story, Goldilocks and the Three Bears. Identify which is in a nursery style, which a journalistic style, which novelistic, and which academic.*

1. Human beings have interfered with bears' natural habitat ever since Goldilocks was on the scene. Remember how she carried on while the three bears were out walking in the woods? They thought they could come back and find everything as they had left it, except that their porridge would be just the right temperature to eat. No such luck. There had been an uninvited visitor.

2. Once upon a time there were three bears. There was a daddy bear, a mummy bear and a baby bear. They all lived together in a little cottage in the woods. One day, mummy bear made some porridge for breakfast but it was too hot to eat. "Let's go out for a walk while it cools," Daddy Bear said. "Yes, let's," Baby Bear said. So the three bears went for a walk in the woods.

3. One warm sunny morning, while Father, Mother and Baby Bear were having a stroll to give their porridge time to cool, a young girl called Goldilocks pushed open the unlocked door of their cottage in the woods.

4. "This porridge you've made is too hot." Daddy Bear said to Mummy Bear. "Why don't we go for a walk while it cools? It's a lovely sunny morning."

"Yes, let's," said Baby Bear. Mummy Bear agreed, so the three bears left their little cottage for a walk in the woods.

(Adapted from: <http://myweb.tiscali.co.uk/academicwriting/nursery2.html>)

## 9.5.

*Good academic style is neither extremely formal and incomprehensible, nor too informal close to spoken language. In the following exercise, read three texts and choose the best “academic” one of them.*

1. The move from a structuralist account in which capital is understood to structure social relations in relatively homologous ways to a view of hegemony in which power relations are subject to repetition, convergence, and rearticulation brought the question of temporality into the thinking of structure, and marked a shift from a form of althusserian theory that takes structural totalities as theoretical objects to one in which the insights into the contingent possibility of structure inaugurate a renewed conception of hegemony as bound up with the contingent sites and strategies of the rearticulation of power.

2. Sociobiologists are often accused of genetic determinism. Now if genetic determinism means that genes matter for behaviour, the thesis seems hard to reject. Dogs act differently from humans, and this is not just a matter of different environments. If, on the other hand, genetic determinism means that genes settle behaviour independently of environment, then it is biological nonsense. Genes programme organisms to reproduce, and reproductions will often require being responsive to features of the environment. What we can expect from genes is contingency plans: psychic mechanisms that respond to different environmental histories with different motivations. The sociobiologist's problem is to identify what these adaptive contingency plans are.

3. Well, I think the good point about London is that London is still a very tolerant and very relaxed place, and most people, I find, are very friendly. It's still a very fluid society if you go to America, you find a much more ghettoised society in terms of races, where you have middle class black ghettos and middle class white ghettos, whereas in this society you don't have that rigid, that rigid sort of ghettoised society, even in Brixton, which is supposed to be, you know, the black area in London you find, sort of middle class white people and black people living side by side, it's still a much more mixed and heterogeneous society than, than America. And it is in many ways in London an open and a tolerant society.

4. Much has been learned from efforts to achieve the goals of the World Summit and the Jomtien Declaration in the past decade. Despite the sometimes disappointing numbers and achievements, much more is known about what works in education than was the case a decade ago. What were once innovative ideas and promising pilot projects have become desired reforms and national programmes, successful approaches to particular problems—such in girls, education and schooling for children in remote-areas—have been developed, documented and disseminated. These include e.g. specific ways to get more children into school; specific efforts to ensure that girls have full and equal access to basic education and are able to reach the same levels of achievement as boys; or comprehensive policies and programmes that enhance educational quality and promote gender sensitivity. Finally there are a lot as these or different kinds of benefits we can get it from education, but it depend on the nature of environments (school, family, community).

(Adapted from: 1. Judith Butler, 1997; 2. Goodin, R.E.; Pettit, P.: 1993; p. 600; 3. Harmer J, 1989; 4. Majed, Al-Ali: 2006)



## 10. Complexity

Written language is usually more complex than spoken language. It has more complex and varied vocabulary and grammar; it uses more nominal phrases and it tends to be longer than spoken language.

**10.1.** *Correct the mistakes related to the complex grammar academic style:*

- a) Solubility was the principal criteria for choosing the nitrate salt.
- b) During the monitoring period we have detected different structure in the line profiles.
- c) When we will figure out how to change their profiles, we can focus on practical implementation.
- d) Students concentrated more hardly than ever.
- e) Unlike physical laws, you can violating rules of grammar, although with some loss of intelligibility.
- f) Seven from eight experimental samples resisted corrosion longer than the controls.

(Adapted from: Štěpánek, L.,(2012): TEAM Project)

### **10.2. ACTIVE AND PASSIVE**

**10.2.1.** *How do you use active and passive voices in academic writing?*

**10.2.2.** *Change the verbs in bold into the passive and change the sentences correspondingly.*

a) We **should reject** this conclusion for two reasons.  
This conclusion .....

b) We **would never have published** this book without additional financial support from the Nansen Institute.  
This book .....

c) Experts **presented** and **discussed** a total of ten innovative papers during the two-day workshop sessions.  
A total .....

d) To preserve originality of thinking, we **have kept** editing of all chapters to a minimum.  
To preserve originality of thinking, editing .....

### 10.2.3. On the use of active and passive

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
<b>Physical sciences</b>	63.0	37.0	26.0	74.0	72.0	28.0	71.0	29.0
<b>Biological sciences</b>	74.0	26.0	38.0	61.5	68.0	32.0	79.0	21.0
<b>Social sciences</b>	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

**NOTE:** To read more on passive: Lilita Rodman: The passive in technical and scientific writing; <http://www.jaonlinejournal.com/archives/vol2/rodman-passive.pdf>

### 10.3. NOMINALISATION (NOUN FORMS)

Academic writing uses often more noun structures than verb structures. The noun forms are useful in condensing texts and in focusing on conditions and results rather than actions.

**NOTE:** *Too much nominalisation can make academic writing very dense, unnecessarily complex and tedious to read, therefore, writers need to strike a balance between nominalised structures and verb-based phrases.*

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

a<sup>1</sup>) Comprehension is aided by repetition.

a<sup>2</sup>) You can understand something better if it is repeated.

b<sup>1</sup>) Germany invaded Poland in 1939 and that was the immediate cause of the World War II breaking out.

b<sup>2</sup>) Germany's invasion of Poland in 1939 was the immediate cause of the outbreak of the World War II.

c<sup>1</sup>) 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.

c<sup>2</sup>) In a recent analysis, the company confirmed its earlier conclusion that greater flexibility in attendance hours for workers reduces absentee rates.

**10.3.2.** Rewrite the following sentences to make them more nominalised.

a) We need to approach texts interactively so that we can read between the lines.

b) We analysed the data from the experiment which revealed that there were different trends.

## 11. Concise Writing

Concise writing presents information that is important to the reader. There are no unnecessary words, sentences or paragraphs. Redundant expressions and structures are eliminated or replaced wordy with more concise words or phrases that have the same meaning.

**11.1.** Rewrite the following pieces of texts to make them more concise.

- a) As an example of what we mean, triangulation can decrease, negate, or counterbalance the deficiency of a single strategy.
  
- e) Chromatography is an experimental technique used by chemists as a means to help them separate different compounds in experimental samples using the affinity of the compound for the mobile phase as well as the affinity of the compound for the stationary phase.

## 12. Formality

Academic writing is usually formal, which means, in general, that we should avoid colloquialisms and informal words and structures.

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

- 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.
- 
- 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.

**12.2.** Match the informal expressions 1-7 with their academic a-g synonyms.

- |               |                 |
|---------------|-----------------|
| 1. do         | a. frequently   |
| 2. so         | b. considerably |
| 3. often      | c. however      |
| 4. find       | d. conduct      |
| 5. very       | e. discover     |
| 6. get rid of | f. consequently |
| 7. but        | g. eliminate    |

**12.3.** Identify informal expressions in the following sentences and replace them with a more formal (academic) equivalent.

- a) In this paper, we wanna focus on qualitative analysis.
- b) Several countries have actually established standards for PCBs in dietary products such as fish, meats, and eggs.
- c) This kind of network represents an interesting environment.
- d) In general, rainfall is a bit acidic because of the presence of dissolved carbonic acid.
- e) Later Barnes got together with Flowry in an ethnographic study of advertisement contribution to everyday interactions among adolescents.

## 13. Objectivity / Personalisation

Written language is usually objective rather than personal, which means that the information and arguments are emphasised not the authors.

**13.1.** Rewrite the sentences below so that they are depersonalised.

a) Numerous studies have shown that sea grasses are very important to coastal productivity (Stohl, 1987, Rodel, 2004). We decided to examine whether this was also the case in the Bay of Biscay.

b) We wanted to understand how penicillin affects growth of bacteria.

**13.2.** Which of the texts below can be appropriate for academic writing and why?

**a1)** 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.

**a2)** 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.

**b1)** 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.

**b2)** 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.

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

**7.3.** Explain the difference between the use of the first person singular and plural in academic writing.

**7.4.** On self-mention in academic articles: 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
Electronic eng.	44.4	10.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	23.3	0.4	8.6	0.5
Sociology	74.1	6.8	12.7	1.0	2.0	15.3	0.7	7.6	0.2
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

## **14. Coherence and cohesion**

Academic writing uses cohesive devices and signalling words to make the relationships in the text explicit. The goal is to make it clear to the reader how the various parts of the text are related.

**14.1.** Read the paragraph and fill in the gaps with cohesive devices listed below.

a) however b) What c) According to d) because of e) which f) Yet

(1) ..... Jaspersen, human language originated while humans were actually enjoying themselves (2) ..... is one of the more endearing speculations concerning the origins of language. It remains, (3) ....., a speculation. We simply do not know how language originated. (4) ..... we do know is that spoken language developed well before written language. (5) ....., when we uncover traces of human life on earth dating back a million years, we never find any direct evidence relating to the speech of our distant ancestors. Perhaps, (6) ..... this absence of direct physical evidence, there has been no shortage of speculation about the origins of human speech.

(Adapted from: Štěpánek, L., deHaaff, J., Hradilová, A.(2011): p.168)

## **15. Accuracy and Precision**

In academic writing, information, facts and figures are presented precisely. There is some difference between “accuracy” and “precision”. Being “accurate” means using the right words to express exactly what you want to present and share, on the other hand, being “precise” giving exact factual information.

**15.1.** In the following construction, do the following adjectives have a positive, negative or neutral value?

**In their ..... study, Lakhina, Crovella and Diot ....**

a) important	e) small scale	i) interesting	m) ambitious	q) significant
b) limited	f) original	j) rigorous	n) useful	r) traditional
c) modest	g) exploratory	k) impressive	o) preliminary	s) remarkable
d) innovative	h) flawed	l) simple	p) unsatisfactory	t) complex

((Adapted from: Morley, J. et al: University Writing Course, Express Publishing, Newbury, 2009, p.101)

**15.2.** Which of the following are typically connected with figures, which with tables and which with both?

a) shows	b) presents	c) illustrates	d) summarizes	e) demonstrates	f) contains
g) provides	h) depicts	i) lists	j) reports		

**15.3.** Rewrite the sentences so that they are more accurate and precise.

- a) Such explosive children often need a combination of treatments to help them function better.
- b) Multinational democracies, namely Belgium, Canada and Switzerland, are countries that follow federalist principles.
- c) Herbivores that feed mainly or only on plants form an important link in the food chain.

(Adapted from: Robinson, M., Stoller, F. (2008): pp.594-596)

15.4. Into the sentence below, insert the following words and expressions so they create a scale from the highest to the lowest level of probability.

- a) possible      b) very probable / highly likely      c) certain      d) very / highly unlikely  
 e) almost certain      f) unlikely      g) probable / likely

It is (1) ..... ► (2) ..... ► (3) ..... ► (4) ..... ► (5) ..... ► (6) ..... ► (7) ..... that where we find strong evidence of special design in nature, we should expect adaptation.

(Adapted from: Štěpánek, L., deHaaff, J., Hradilová, A.(2011): p.29)

## 16. Hedging / Language of Caution / Tentative Language

Our previous sections might give the impression that academic writing is factual, conveying precise, accurate and objective facts and information. “However, it is now recognised that an important feature of academic writing is the concept of cautious language, often called "hedging". In other words, it is necessary to make decisions about your stance on a particular subject, or the strength of the claims you are making.”

(Cooper, P. (2011): Academic Writing and Czech Universities, a lecture)

### 16.1. Functional classification of hedges

Hedge Class	Function
<b>Shields</b> 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.	<b>Responsibility shifting</b> 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. <b>e.g.</b> ...([1], [2], [3],)..., ...it is shown in [3]..., <i>Romanowska found...</i> , ...we refer reader to [3, 4]..., ...see [10]...
	<b>Speaking facts</b> The author indicates lack of other interpretation. The writer shields his/her claims through stating “the commonly accepted” view. <b>e.g.</b> <i>Definition 1...</i> , <i>A map is...</i> , ...is defined to be..., ...space is said to be...
<b>Mitigators</b> The author admits his/her responsibility for the claims made. The writer takes stance while using mitigators, but decides to weaken his/her propositions for various reasons.	<b>Approximation</b> Referring vaguely to the quality or quantity of something. <b>e.g.</b> ...some..., ...more..., <i>Several</i> , ...similar...
	<b>Possibility</b> Referring to things that may happen or be the case. <b>e.g.</b> ...may..., ...can..., ...possible...
	<b>Understatement</b> Devices used to downgrade the claims and express modesty generally expected from authors of scientific articles. By using these devices, they lessen the importance and the validity of their claims. <b>e.g.</b> ...notions..., ...concept...
	<b>Admitting incompleteness</b> 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. <b>e.g.</b> ...briefly..., however,...

### 16.2. Linguistic classification of hedges

<b>Introductory verbs</b>	e.g. seem, tend, look like, appear to be, think, believe, doubt, be sure, indicate, suggest
<b>Modal verbs</b>	e.g. would, may, might, could
<b>Adverbs of frequency</b>	e.g. often, sometimes, usually
<b>Modal adverbs/ adjectives</b>	e.g. probably, possibly / probable, possible
<b>Modal nouns</b>	e.g. assumption, possibility, probability
<b>“That” clauses</b>	e.g. It could be the case that.... It might be suggested that...
<b>“To”-clause + adjective</b>	e.g. It may be possible to obtain

This system prevents attacks on both server and client sides.



According to simulation studies, under some circumstances this system may reduce certain types of attacks on both server and client sides.



~~It could be concluded that some evidence seems to suggest that this system might, under some circumstances, have the tendency to reduce at least certain types of attacks on both server and client sides.~~

**16.3.** Examine the pairs of sentences below for hedging. In each pair, discuss the difference in meaning in the sentences with and without hedging.

**a<sup>1</sup>) In general**, this research involves locating literary texts in larger discursive environments alongside household records, chronicles and parliamentary petitions.

**a<sup>2</sup>)** This research involves locating literary texts in larger discursive environments alongside household records, chronicles and parliamentary petitions.

**b<sup>1</sup>)** Se-enriched broccoli was not more effective (Table 1) than enriched garlic (3) in reducing the number of tumors; this finding **proves** that the combination of sulforaphane, indole carbinol, and chlorophyll with Se did not provide additional protection against mammary tumors.

**b<sup>2</sup>)** Se-enriched broccoli was not more effective (Table 1) than enriched garlic (3) in reducing the number of tumors; this finding **suggests** that the combination of sulforaphane, indole carbinol, and chlorophyll with Se did not provide additional protection against mammary tumors.

**c<sup>1</sup>)** The fluorescence lifetime measurement of the diol/carbonate pair **will be** complete in two months.

**c<sup>2</sup>)** The fluorescence lifetime measurement of the diol/carbonate pair **is expected to be** complete in two months.

**d<sup>1</sup>) It is estimated** that in the next fifty years the world's population **might again grow** 40-50% and if we continuously **used** the amount of water that we are currently using the water supply **may** significantly diminish.

**d<sup>2</sup>)** In the next fifty years the world's population **will again grow** 40-50% and if we continuously **use** the amount of water that we are currently using the water supply **will** significantly diminish.

(Adapted from: Robinson, M., Stoller, F. (2008): pp.594-596: (a) Rose-Petrucci, 2000; (b) Yu et al., 2001; (c) Finley et al., 1999; (d) Finley et al., 2001; (e) Plaper et al., 2002)

## 17. THE POWER OF WORDS

### 17.1. Discussion questions

Why is vocabulary important?

In what ways can building and increasing your vocabulary improve your academic writing?

**17.2.** *There are certain words and expressions to avoid in academic writing. Look at the list below and choose which ones you would avoid. Explain why.*

indicate	data	truth	suggest	really
findings	examine	fact	farther	monitor
determine	investigate	dramatically	figure	reduce
to see if	very	prove	fewer	
research	good	to find out	actually	
eliminate	analyse	measure	to look into	

**17.3.** *Match the letter of the most appropriate definition with the following words from the AWL.*

- \_\_\_ predominant      a. the most common      b. the earliest variety      c. the weakest
- \_\_\_ phenomenon      a. a spectacular event      b. something which occurs at a precise time  
c. something that is observed to happen or exist
- \_\_\_ whereas      a. in contrast      b. similarly      c. in another place
- \_\_\_ dynamic      a. fuel-powered      b. constantly changing and progressing  
c. rigid, fixed to a spot
- \_\_\_ paradigm      a. a rectangular shape      b. contrasting theories of the same event  
c. a model which explains an event
- \_\_\_ hierarchical      a. passing information from generation to generation  
b. multi-layered      c. a system of ranking by importance
- \_\_\_ arbitrary      a. without principles or plans      b. judged by merit  
c. following pre-determined procedures
- \_\_\_ parameter      a. a system of measurement      b. defined limit      c. variability

(Adapted from Alison Brown, 2007)



## **18. TITLE**

**18.1.** *What is a title?*

**18.2.** *What are its characteristics?*

- A**
- B**
- C**
- D**

**18.3.** *Read the following titles and decide which of them would be acceptable for an academic text. Justify your opinion.*

- 1) This is a research on Female Tragic Hero in English Renaissance Drama.
- 2) The Impact of Herbivores on Plants in Different Resource Conditions: A Meta-Analysis
- 3) Statistics for FCED in DS, LS and AS
- 4) Popular beliefs about reasons of poverty in the Czech Republic between 1991 and 2008
- 5) Early Prediction of Response to Chemotherapy and Survival in Malignant Pleural Mesothelioma Using a Novel Semiautomated 3-Dimensional Volume-Based Analysis of Serial <sup>18</sup>F-FDG PET Scans
- 6) A Study of Moral Relativism and Moral Objectivity
- 7) Cold War to Cold Peace: Explaining U.S.-French Competition in Francophone Africa

**18.4.** *Read the following titles and decide which of them are informative for a particular audience.*

- 1) Political liberalism in multinational democracies: The legitimacy of plural and asymmetrical federalism
- 2) Pretty Feet Hit the Street
- 3) An Investigation in General Problems and Fundamental Issues: What is More Important
- 4) How Do We Introduce the Next Generation of Radiotracers into Clinical Practice?
- 5) Molecular Cancer
- 6) The Effect of Institutional Culture on Change Strategies in Higher Education: Universal Principles or Culturally Responsive Concepts?
- 7) Why The Axioms and Theorems of Arithmetic are not Legal Norms

## **19. Home Assignment**

**19.1.** Write a peer-review to your colleague's writing.

**19.2.** Find a text of high stylistic quality from your field of study/research and write a short paragraph (max. 300 words) on that text. Support your opinion with evidence.

**19.3.** Create your own title for your PhD work / academic article / presentation. Discuss the suggestions with the whole group.