

IGA – Academic and Project Writing

Seminar 2

Homework Task from seminar 1:

* Find and examine a short piece of your own academic writing (introduction, abstract, part of a discussion etc).

* Mark examples of academic or subject specific vocabulary, make a note of the style of the writing etc.

** Cut and paste your text onto the MS Teams HW 1 file

* Be prepared to share and peer review it with the group next week.

** If you don't understand any vocabulary / language, please ask and we shall discuss it **

* As we peer review each other's work, look for examples where the language / vocabulary could be improved.

To further summarise from last week:

- You may ask how a report, essay or any other piece of academic writing should be written - unfortunately, *there is no one format that such a text should take.*

- Different departments, publishers, courses and even individuals have their own interpretation of what an academic text should consist of.

- Some components only apply to certain types of work, however, differences between the types are often not so strict, e.g. the boundaries between 'reports' and 'essays' are often blurred: by definition, a report is a document which reports the findings made by an individual or group, but this is not always the case.

- *There are many possible components within an academic text. You will not always be expected to include all of them:* it will of course depend on the type of text you are writing and the length.

- formal style - neat presentation - structure - reasoned argument - citations.....etc.

ACADEMIC LANGUAGE

1. Read the two texts below and compare them:

* *Think about the language used in each article and the effect(s) that it creates;*

* *Underline any examples of language that you think could be more academic:*

Drug Treatments in Alzheimer's Disease

Although it causes big problems to do with public health, only five medical treatments are allowed to be used for Alzheimer's disease (AD) and these help to control symptoms rather than change how the disease progresses. Studies of potential drug therapy have mainly been done in patients with disease that is already showing symptoms, yet study findings show that the changes in the illness connected to AD begin a few years before this. Maybe drug therapy can help in this stage before the disease shows up and the process of gradual breakdown of nerves really occurs. Techniques that allow the condition to be picked up much earlier, such as cerebrospinal fluid biomarkers and neuroimaging, are really important to test out this theory in clinical trials. Some results from the recent times for the trials of specific agents look really positive but definitely people should think carefully about these results. Such medicines could maybe stop dementia coming on earlier and would therefore reduce how common it is by a lot.

Pharmaceutical Treatments in Alzheimer's Disease

Despite the significant public health issue that it poses, only five medical treatments have been approved for Alzheimer's disease (AD) and these act to control symptoms rather than alter the course of the disease. Studies of potential drug therapy have generally been undertaken in patients with clinically detectable disease, yet evidence suggests that the pathological changes associated with AD begin several years before this. It is possible that pharmacological therapy may be beneficial in this pre-clinical stage before the neurodegenerative process is established. Techniques providing earlier diagnosis, such as cerebrospinal fluid biomarkers and neuroimaging, are key to testing this theory in clinical trials. Recent results from trials of some agents are encouraging but must also be interpreted with caution. Such medicines could potentially delay the onset of dementia and would therefore markedly reduce its prevalence. However, we currently remain a good distance away from clinically available disease-modifying therapy.

Original text: (Adapted from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5922703/>)

Which text is more academic, and why? Give some examples:

What is the effect of the language used in each article?

Why is the language important?

2. What are the features of academic language?

- ▶ professionally acceptable
- ▶ neutral
- ▶ clear, understandable
- ▶ cohesive and coherent
- ▶ timeless
- ▶ impersonal language;
- ▶ Academic language is factual, backed up by evidence.
- ▶ cohesive and coherent
- ▶ precise, unambiguous
- ▶ well structured
- ▶ tentative
- ▶ specific; formal language
- ▶ powerful reporting words
- ▶ correct

3. Why is vocabulary important? In what ways can building and increasing your vocabulary improve your academic writing?

General academic words:

Academic word list – 570 head words – 3,000 words; Medicine – 1540; Criminal Law – 376; Music – 269;

4. General academic words

** Match the letter of the most appropriate definition with the following words from the Academic Word List.*

1. *predominant*: a. the most common b. the earliest variety c. the weakest
2. *phenomenon*: a. a spectacular event b. something which occurs at a precise time
c. something that is observed to happen or exist
3. *whereas*: a. in contrast b. similarly c. in another place
4. *dynamic*: a. fuel-powered b. rigid, fixed to a spot c. constantly changing and progressing

5. *paradigm*: a. a rectangular shape b. a model which explains an event
c. contrasting theories of the same event
6. *hierarchical*: a. multi-layered b. passing information from generation to generation
c. a system of ranking by importance
7. *arbitrary*: a. judged by merit b. without principles or plans
c. following pre-determined procedures
8. *parameter*: a. defined limit b. variability c. a system of measurement
9. *commodity*: a. weakness b. something sold for money
c. a feature shared by two or more people
10. *infrastructure*: a. animal skeleton b. public transport system c. the basic facilities of an organisation,
or a society

Adapted from Alison Brown, 2007)

5. Academic Vocabulary

** Do you know the words below? Do you use them confidently in your writing?*

** For each of the following words, write a definition / meaning and use it in a sentence:*

advocate:

deduce:

constraint:

conversely:

comprehensive:

empirical:

ambiguous:

deviate:

distort:

predominant:

facilitate:

incidence:

(Adapted from McCarthy and O'Dell, English Vocabulary in Use, 2003)

6. Formal vs Informal Vocabulary

** How could the below sentences be changed to make them more formal? Which words or phrases could be more formal?*

1. It was decided to start the first experiment at the earliest possible time point.
2. The results of the research study clearly showed that sleep deprivation is a big problem.
3. We got quite a lot of subjects from the local town or village where they live.
4. It is clear that the continued widespread use of fossil fuels links to the many problems associated with climate change.
5. The results of the experiment, when compared to those conducted before, are considered to be worse.
6. The use of social distancing in the UK has occurred on and off through 2020 due to the pandemic.

7. The aim of the law is to keep maximum control of the situation at all times.
8. The situation in Hong Kong seems to be changing from week to week at the moment.
9. It is always wiser to tell your colleagues when you need to go and do difficult laboratory tasks.
10. It was decided to stop the experiment as a result of the side effects that were reported by several subjects.

(Adapted from: <https://www.academic-englishuk.com/formality>)

Try and make sure your academic writing is appropriately formal, such as the alterations above. It will help your writing sound more academic and professionally acceptable.

7. Good ways to improve your academic vocabulary?

- General and academic reading in English. Highlight unfamiliar words, look them up, record down useful ones. It's an active process.
- Use a thesaurus with your writing – look for synonyms, practice using them.
- Practice academic writing, seek feedback from colleagues, etc.
- Listening: podcasts, seminars, webinars, general English around your field.
- Courses on academic writing. Practice using new language, understanding isn't enough.

Homework Task:

** Research 5 new academic words that you don't know, or use confidently in your writing.*

** Give a definition and an example in context, such as what we practiced above:*

incidence: how often something occurs in a population, eg the incidence of alcohol use in the under 25 population in the UK has dropped over the past decade.

** Cut and paste your example into the MS Teams file which I will create: named: **HW2 – Academic vocabulary***

** Be prepared to share and peer review it with the group next week.*