

Postgraduate Academic Writing Course

Masaryk University

10th – 11th September 2013

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10th September – Agenda

1. Introduction to the AWL & how to make a discipline-specific vocabulary list
2. Understanding the differences between academic & non-academic writing (analysing texts)
3. Evaluating Sources
4. Writing introductions and conclusions

11th September – Agenda

1. Referencing (quoting and paraphrasing)
2. Paragraphing (ensuring cohesion)
3. Expectations of literature reviews
4. Improving & revising work

Introduction to the Academic Word List (AWL)

- What is it?
- Why is it important to know about it?

Academic Word List (AWL) (i)

- Compiled from corpus of 3.5 million words of written academic texts
- 570 word families (10% of total words in academic texts)
- Arranged into 10 sublists
- Reflect word frequency & range

(Coxhead 2000)

Academic Word List (AWL) (ii)

- Sublists

Sublist 1

| | | |
|------------|----------|-----------|
| Analysis | Approach | Area |
| Assessment | Assure | Authority |

Sublist 5

| | | |
|-----------|------------|----------|
| Academic | Adjustment | Alter |
| Amendment | Aware | Capacity |

Sublist 10

| | | |
|----------|------------|----------|
| Adjacent | Albeit | Assembly |
| Collapse | Colleagues | Compiled |

Academic Word List (AWL) (iii)

- Word families

analyse

analysed
analyser
analysers
analyses
analysing
analysis
analyst
analysts
analytic
analytical
analytically
analyze
analyzed
analyzes
analyzing

(Sublist 1)

symbol

symbolic
symbolically
symbolise
symbolises
symbolised
symbolising
symbolism
symbolize
symbolized
symbolizes
symbolizing
symbols

(Sublist 5)

assemble

assembled
assembles
assemblies
assembling
assembly

(Sublist 10)

AWL Exercises

B

- Accumulate
- Fluctuate
- Radical
- Offset
- Contemporary
- Tense
- Bias
- Infrastructure
- Via
- Deviate

Sublist 8 – Group 6

1. D
2. A
3. B
4. A
5. B
6. C
7. C
8. A
9. A

AWL – Advantages

1. Words students need in wide range of academic texts
2. Free online sources available (PC & Smartphone):

➤ Flashcard maker

<http://orangeorapple.com/Flashcards/Default.aspx>

➤ Exercises

<http://www.englishvocabularyexercises.com/>

➤ Test maker

http://www.phonetai.com/Phonetai_Software/Products.htm

➤ AWL highlighter

<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/alzsh3/acvocab/awlhighlighter.htm>

AWL – Disadvantages

1. No focus on collocations (Durrant 2009)
2. Does not address discipline-specific vocabulary (Martinez et al 2009)

Practical suggestions (i)

- Problem: Does not address discipline-specific vocabulary

How can we overcome this problem?

Discuss with your partner.

- Solution: **Create a discipline – specific wordlist.**
- **What needed?**
 - Discipline-specific texts.
 - Concordance software programme e.g. Antconc (free), Sketch engine, Wordsmith Tools.
 - Time!

Practical suggestions (ii)

6 Steps

1. Save discipline-specific journal articles as .txt docs.
2. Open the txt docs in Antconc.
3. Click on create 'Word List'.
4. From most frequent words, make a list of discipline-specific vocab.

| Rank | Freq | Word |
|------|------|------|
| 1 | 1236 | the |
| 2 | 986 | of |
| 3 | 783 | and |
| 4 | 607 | in |
| 5 | 509 | a |
| 6 | 442 | to |
| 7 | 403 | that |
| 8 | 327 | RNA |
| 9 | 274 | A |
| 10 | 265 | by |

Practical suggestions (iii)

5. Run list through AWL Highlighter

<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/alzsh3/acvocab/awlhighlighter.htm>

| | | |
|----------------|-----------------|-------------|
| RNA | target | PVY |
| gene | dsRNA | Drosophila |
| pro | protein | Ago2 |
| RISC | ATP | methylation |
| silencing | stranded | duplex |
| cells | antisense | hairpin |
| mRNA | sequence | cyclin |
| siRNA | mM | |
| complex | interference | |

Practical suggestions (iv)

Once at home, you can:

1. Write definition of key words
2. See how words work by accessing online tools e.g.
 - Word tree <http://wordtree.coventry.ac.uk/?BAWE>
 - BNC <http://corpus.byu.edu/bnc/>

Understanding the different structures of academic writing

Method

1. Heat oven to 180C/160C fan/gas 4 and line a 12-hole muffin tin with cases. In a large mixing bowl beat together the butter, 175g of the sugar and the vanilla extract until light and fluffy. Beat in the whole egg, followed by the 4 yolks, before briefly beating in the flour, baking powder and milk until smooth. Divide two-thirds of the mix evenly between the cases, then top the centre of each with 1 tsp jam. Divide remaining cake mix over the top, using a wet finger to smooth it in place so no jam is visible. Bake for 18-22 mins until a skewer poked into the centre comes out clean. Wait until cool enough to handle, then transfer the cakes to a flat baking sheet.
2. Lower oven to 110C/90C fan/gas ¼. Using a large, clean bowl, beat the 4 egg whites until stiff, then continue whisking while you gradually add the remaining 175g sugar. Beat until thick and shiny, then fold in the coconut and use spoonfuls of the mixture to top each cake. Bake for 30-35 mins until the outside of the meringue is crisp, then cool before serving.

Understanding the different structures of academic writing

Text B

Bedrooms: 1 Receptions: 1 Bathrooms: 1

A spacious One Bedroom Ground Floor apartment located in a popular Oatlands Development. This property offers a large lounge with doors leading to balcony, kitchen, bathroom and large double bedroom. The property is well located to walk to Walton on Thames mainline station and to either Weybridge or Walton On Thames town centres.

*Entrance Hall * Living Room With Doors Leading To Balcony * Kitchen * Bathroom * Double Bedroom * Communal Gardens *

Unfurnished

Available 1ST December

Understanding the different structures of academic writing

Text C

- It is a subject of considerable debate as to whether women are naturally programmed to be mothers and homemakers while men are natural breadwinners and protectors of the family. Some consider these to be gender stereotypes which are invalid in modern society. For the purpose of this assignment, 'natural' and 'naturally programmed' will be taken to mean biologically or genetically determined. The topic in question has raised considerable amounts of attention, essentially from advocates of women's rights because it implies a sexual segregation in the labour market. To date, in most western societies, the labour market exhibits a greater percentage of high status occupations being held by the male species. The reasons for these differences seem to be biological. That said, several statistics reveal an increase in the frequency of dual income families, which argues against the theory that biological differences lead to fixed gender roles. This essay will discuss if and to what extent differences in male and female behaviour and physical differences of the sexes lead to rigid 'natural' gender roles and whether these are essential for the functioning of families and societies. Firstly, we will examine the behaviour of men and women from a biological and cultural point of view. We will then consider the physical differences between men and women and examine the gender stereotypes that exist in today's society.

- Nevertheless, there are many authors who argue that there are biologically determined differences, for instance, physical differences, which unavoidably lead to gender stereotypes. Men are credited with physical strength, dexterity, rationality and objectivity while women are often associated with traits considered inferior, such as empathy and warmth. These differences are reflected in the stereotype whereby “women nurture and men go out to work” (Haralambos and Holborn 1995:326). The most common explanation for these labels seems to be linked to history. Years ago, men were hunters and women stayed at the base camp because of physical restrictions of pregnancy and because they had to raise the children. These ancient traits could still be imprinted in our genes. The anthropologist George Peter Murdock (1949) concludes that these ancient traditions lead to the sexual division of labour out of practicality (in Haralambos and Holborn 1995). Nonetheless, this view is opposed by some anthropologists and sociologists.

3. Evaluating Sources (i)

Discuss with a partner

- Where do you typically find the sources for your academic written work?
- What types of sources do you typically use?
- Are you very selective when you choose a source?
- What do you consider when deciding whether to use a source or not?

3. Evaluating Sources (ii)

How reliable do you think the following sources might be?

What do you need to be careful of?

- An article in the Times newspaper from 2001
- A blog called 'Best and Worst of Business'
- A supermarket website
- CIA World Factbook
- A Powerpoint of a talk given at a conference
- An editorial from The Economist (British newspaper)
- A newspaper article citing an academic report which found the UK to be the worst place to live in Europe.
- A journal article from Google Scholar

3. Evaluating Sources

- <http://scholar.google.co.uk/>

4 Writing introductions & conclusions

Introductions (i)

Discuss with a partner.

- Do you find writing introductions difficult? If yes, why?
- What is the purpose of an introduction?
- What should you typically include in an introduction?
- What percentage of an essay should the introduction be?
- Why is an introduction one of the most important parts of an essay?

Introductions (ii)

Time to reflect

- What do you notice about the high-scoring introductions?
- Are there any key features that you have not used before?
- Underline any phrases that you could use in your essays in the future?

Conclusions (i)

Discuss the following questions with a partner.

- Do you find writing conclusions difficult? If yes, why?
- What is the purpose of a conclusion?
- What do you typically include in a conclusion
- What percentage of an essay should the conclusion be?
- When do you usually write your conclusion?
- Why is the conclusion one of the most important parts of an essay?

Conclusions (ii)

Time to reflect

- What do you notice about the high-scoring conclusions?
- Are there any key features that you have not used before?
- Underline any phrases that you could use in your essays in the future?