



# **Formal and Informal Language: An Introduction**

**VV064**

**Mgr. Antonín Zita, M.A., Ph.D.**



## Formal and Informal Pairs

- 1) How do you do?
  - 2) It's a pleasure to meet you. Goodbye.
  - 3) I'm afraid your child is experiencing difficulty.
  - 4) One grows weary in these matters.
  - 5) I agree with my colleague that.
  - 6) Please state your business.
- A) What'cha want?
  - B) Nice to meet you. See ya!
  - C) Lily's right...
  - D) Your kid is causing trouble.
  - E) I'm tired of this junk.
  - F) What's up?



LANGUAGE  
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cataddictsanony-mouse



**whatcha doin?!**

## Formal vs Informal Language

- Single word adverbs
  - Arise, board
- Formal connecting words
  - In addition, furthermore, however
- Impersonal
  - It is claimed that...
  - It is generally known that...
- Abstract nouns
  - Is happiness possible during unemployment?
- No contractions
  - I will, we cannot
- Phrasal verbs
  - To get up, to get on
- Informal connecting words
  - And, but, so
- Personal
  - People claim that...
  - You know that...
- Modal verbs, adjectives
  - Can people be happy when they haven't got a job?
- Contractions
  - I'll, we can't

## Academic Written Language

- Standard usage and grammar
- Standard vocabulary
- Distance between the writer and reader
  - Third person
  - Passive voice
- Authoritative and neutral
  - Not aggressive, timid, or too enthusiastic

## Distance

- Passive voice – the focus is the result of an action, not the subject doing the action
  - “Scientists observed strange behavior in hedgehogs after feeding them fish and chips.”
  - “Strange behavior was observed in hedgehogs after they were fed fish and chips.”
- Third person (not “I” or “you”)
  - “One often feels the pressure of modern lifestyle.”

## Tone

- The following should be avoided:
- 1) Aggressive tone
  - “This is the correct way of spreading butter on bread.”
- 2) Timid tone
  - “This might be a decent way of spreading butter on bread.”
- 3) Enthusiastic tone
  - “This way of spreading butter on bread is amazing and should be learnt by everyone!”

## Style

- **Polonius:**

My liege, and madam, to expostulate  
 What majesty should be, what duty is,  
 What day is day, night night, and time is time,  
 Were nothing but to waste night, day, and time;  
 Therefore, **since brevity is the soul of wit,**  
 And tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes,  
 I will be brief. Your noble son is mad. . . .  
 (*Hamlet Act 2, scene 2, 86–92*)

- **AKA get to the point!**



## Academic Writing Guidelines

- Avoid common but vague words (nice, big, ...)
- Focus on structure and paragraphs
- Avoid too much personal and emotive language
- Hedging (cautious language) = avoiding commitment
  - For example, **it is possible to see** that in January this person weighed 60.8 kg for eight days,
- Avoid generalizations



# Academic Writing vs. Presentation

## Writing

- / used the least in Computer Science than in other fields
  - (Swales and Feak. *Academic Writing for Graduate Students*. 3rd ed. Michigan. 2013.)

## Presentation

- Academic/research speech different: *stuff, things, a bit*, metaphors
  - (Swales and Feak. *Academic Writing for Graduate Students*. 3rd ed. Michigan. 2013.)