

## English 2 d4302

Seminar 3 - Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> March, 10.40 – 13.10

### Aims

Today we will discuss some of the basics of academic writing and what is academic writing.

We will also briefly cover some language you can use in your presentations to do with graphs and numbers.

We will spend some time looking at the homework task and looking at the writing in terms of academic style, language etc – after we have a brief introduction to academic writing.

*\* Date of final seminar? To discuss and agree if possible, or complete by email this week.*

### ACADEMIC WRITING

#### 1. How can we define academic writing?

*\* Read the text below and think about: what type of academic writing it is, the language, the style, who is likely to read it, etc:*

*\* Why are some words underlined?*

*\* Why are some words in Italics?*

*\* Why are different parts of the text highlighted in different colours?*

*MicroRNAs (miRNAs), class of small, non-coding RNA molecules represent important regulators of gene expression. Recent reports have implicated their role in the cell specification process acting as “fine-tuners” to ensure the precise gene expression at the specific stage of cell differentiation. Here we used retinal organoids differentiated from human pluripotent stem cells (hPSCs) as a model to closely investigate the role of sensory organ-specific and evolutionary conserved miR-183/96/182 cluster. Using miRNA tough decoy approach, we inhibited the miR-183/96/182 cluster in hPSCs. Inhibition of the miRNA cluster resulted in an increased expansion of neuroepithelium leading to abnormal “bulged” neural retina in organoids, associated with upregulation of neural-specific and retinal-specific genes. Importantly, we identified PAX6, a well-known essential gene in neuroectoderm specification, as a target of the miR-183/96/182 cluster members. Taken together, the miR-183/96/182 cluster not only represents an important regulator of PAX6 expression, but it also plays a crucial role in retinal tissue morphogenesis.*

#### Who does the writing and who reads academic texts?

**Name some different forms of academic writing? What forms of academic writing have you had experience with?**

**What is the writing about and why is it done?**

## **2. Features of academic writing**

*\* Discuss the examples below in the context of academic writing. Which ones do you think are suitable for academic writing, and why?*

### **Formal language:**

- Others prefer more natural types of training and their workouts are all endurance based. What gives? The aim of the article is to answer this question with scientific data....
- The benefits of such a program are clearly evident in the results, as the training group demonstrated markedly superior cardiovascular fitness when compared to the control group.
- We can see that cardio is good for our health. But is it any good for improving how strong we are, or does it worsen our efforts?

### **Precision**

- This result agrees with another study in which the GLS in DMD patients decreased by 0.34% per year compared to the controls.
- The study results clearly demonstrate that the GLS in DMD patients went down by about ½ a percent each year, compared to the controls.

### **Complexity:**

- 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.
- 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.

**Objective:**

- In our study we aimed to investigate the relationship between sleep deprivation, and driving performance. However, when we analysed the data we discovered that further questions....
- Following this, 1000 subjects from the wider population of Chicago were recruited and then randomized into the two experimental groups.
- We will discuss the results and further evaluate the study findings and limitations in the following sections, however it is clear from our investigation that we will need to re-evaluate the study design...

*\* Discuss what is meant by the following terms, in relation to academic writing?*

**Planning and organisation:****Responsibility:****Explicit:****Accuracy:****Hedging:**

**Some other features of academic writing to consider:** You should be technically correct, original and compelling, have a clear topic when starting the research, use the best sources, avoid plagiarism, take notes, be persuasive, write drafts, use quotes, citations and paraphrasing, use specific format, perfect your final draft.

(Adapted from UEFAP.com).

**3. Formal vs Informal Vocabulary**

*\* Which words / phrases in the below sentences could or should be more formal (for academic writing)?*

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.*

#### **4. Read and Edit this paragraph**

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

Given the general knowledge of the health risks of smoking, it's for sure 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)

## 5. Nominalisation (noun forms in academic writing)

*\* Which of the sentence pairs below would be more appropriate for academic writing and why?*

a) Comprehension is aided by repetition.

You can understand something better if it is repeated.

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

Germany's invasion of Poland in 1939 was the immediate cause of the outbreak of the World War II.

c) The rapid increase in crime was causing concern among the police.

Crime was increasing rapidly and the police were becoming concerned.

d) Student numbers are increasing rapidly from year to year and the university is becoming concerned that they may need to build more accommodation to house everyone.

The rapid increase in numbers is causing concern at the university. More accommodation may have to be built in order to house everyone.

e) A team of scientists analysed the data in the laboratory before they completed their report.

The analysis of the data was undertaken by a team of scientists prior to the completion of their report.

f) 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.

In a recent analysis the company confirmed its earlier conclusion that greater flexibility in attendance hours for workers reduces absentee rates.

(Adapted from Alison Brown, 2007)

#### Tips for academic writing:

- ▶ 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 in your writing.**

*\* There is now a trend towards more active, 'reader-friendly' academic language. However, if you get comments written on your assignment such as: 'style not academic', this is often what they are referring to.*

#### 6. Rewrite the following sentences using noun based phrases

*\* Rewrite the following sentences, change the underlined parts of the sentence by using more formal academic language and noun based phrases.*

Many factors are important when talking about how fast the population is growing in developing countries.

He is a failure as he can't remember a word, nor does he know why he is going to be executed.

Menzel (1973) has shown that non-speaking chimpanzees can convey where food is located to one another.

It is easiest to list foods and drinks according to the best place that they should be stored.

The week after the patient is admitted appears to be the time when the risk is greatest.

Parents want schools to better educate their children to give them more opportunities in the future.

It is always advisable to fly during the week in order to obtain discounted tickets.

Universities are always looking to improve the standard of their teaching and education.

## 7. Passive and active voice

\* Which of the sentence pairs below could 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 penicillin. *It was discovered* that bacterial growth is inhibited by penicillin.

c) One sample was dissolved prior to thermal treatment. At 30 minute intervals samples were withdrawn and dissolved in carrier solutions, and the temperature of the bath was increased by approximately 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.

Examples:

*Active voice* (the subject is the performer of the action): The group conducted the study in 2010.

*Passive voice* (the subject is the receiver of the action): The study was conducted by the group in 2010.

► 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 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>)

**7.1. Now rewrite the sentences below as passive sentences:**

- a) They built the main hospital building in approximately 2 and a half years.
- b) He has designed the experiment so that it can be completed with only a minimal budget.
- c) They are holding the athletics competition in the Olympic Stadium, once they complete it.
- d) She should have finished recruiting all of her subjects for the study by now.
- e) They discovered that they had completed the research only marginally before their main competitors.

**8. Homework task from seminar 2**

*\* Think about some of the features of academic writing that you have learnt or discovered during your studies.*

*\* Write a short essay (several paragraphs, around 2-300 words or so) using an academic style. The topic of the writing is: "How and why does academic writing differ from many other types of writing?"*

*\* Upload your written text on to the MS Teams files area before the next class*

*\*\* name it: with your surname, HW task 2, (eg Floyd HW2)*

*\* Be prepared to share and peer review your writing with the group next week.*

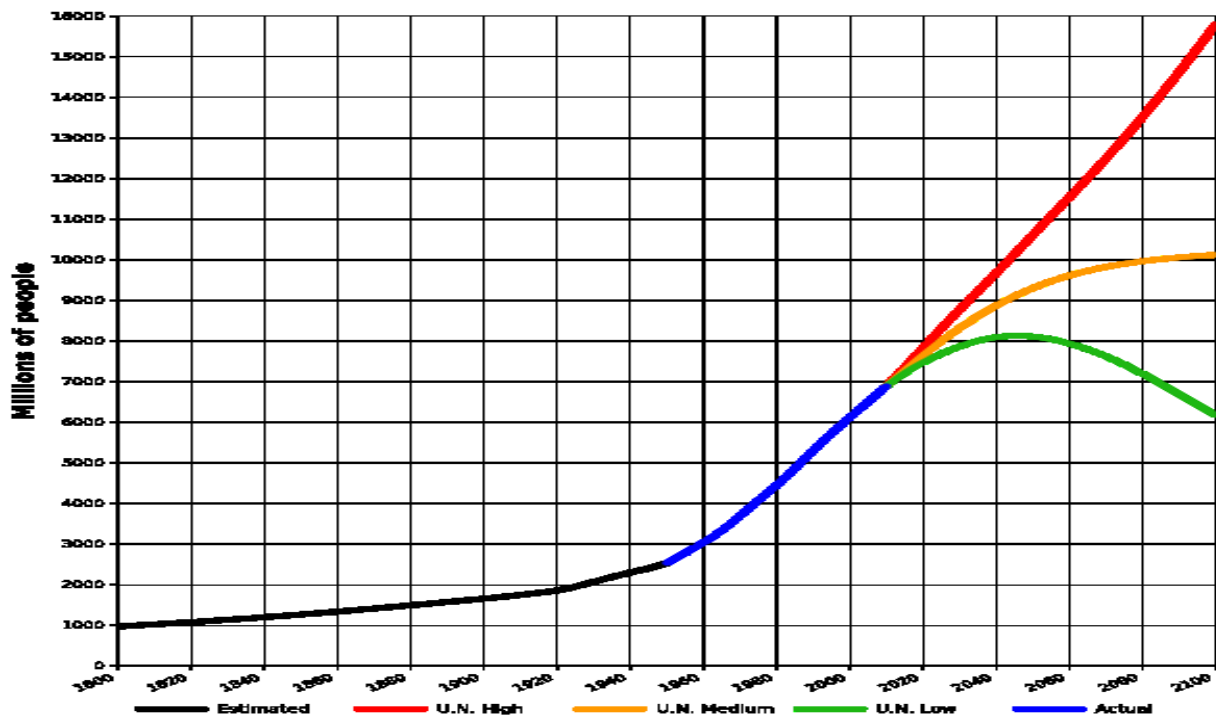
**9. Graphs and charts**

Charts and graphs measure various statistics and are helpful when presenting large amounts of information that need to be understood quickly. This includes: facts and figures, statistical information, profit and loss, polling information, etc.

*\* Look at the graph below of world population. With the group, discuss how you would describe the general trends in this graph to an audience.*



## 1. World population – describing trends



World population estimates from 1800 to 2100, based on "high", "medium" and "low" United Nations projections in 2010 (colored red, orange and green) and US Census Bureau historical estimates (in black). Actual recorded population figures are colored in blue.

### 9.1. Activities - Complete the gaps in the text using the words listed below:

\* Read and complete with the class group:

**seen range show remain experienced stood declined increase peaked**

The world population has (1) \_\_\_\_\_ continuous growth since the end of the Great Famine and the Black Death in 1350, when it (2) \_\_\_\_\_ at around 370 million. The highest rates of growth – global population increases above 1.8% per year – were (3) \_\_\_\_\_ briefly during the 1950s, and for a longer period during the 1960s and 1970s. The growth rate (4) \_\_\_\_\_ at 2.2% in 1963, then (5) \_\_\_\_\_ to below 1.1% by 2012. Total annual births were highest in the late 1980s at about 138 million, and are now expected to (6) \_\_\_\_\_ essentially constant at their 2011 level of 134 million, while deaths number 56 million per year, and are expected to (7) \_\_\_\_\_ to 80 million per year by 2040.

Current UN projections (8) \_\_\_\_\_ a continued increase in population in the near future (but a steady decline in the population growth rate), with the global population expected to reach between 8.3 and 10.9 billion by 2050. The UN Population Division estimates for the year 2150 a (9) \_\_\_\_\_ between 3.2 and 24.8 billion; while mathematical modeling supports the lower estimate. Some analysts have questioned the sustainability of further world population growth, highlighting the growing pressures on the environment, global food supplies, and energy resources.

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World\\_population](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_population))

**\* With a partner, discuss which of the verbs below can be used to refer to diagrams?**

illustrates      shows      believes      suggests      indicates  
represents      states      demonstrates      argues      reflects

**\* Create some example phrases which you can use to introduce a chart or graph:**

- If you look at the chart on this slide....
- This graph shows the relationship of....
- In this table you can see....
- You can see from this graph of ....
- On the next slide you it can be seen from the graph that....

## **10. Numbers, Trends and Pronunciation**

*\* Practice reading the following numbers aloud:*

a. 6759      b. 20.75 m      c. £6.2 million      d. 7.836%      e. \$885      f. 6 ft 2 inches

### **When you don't need to say an exact amount:**

*\* This is more appropriate for presentations, less for written academic work.*

- a. *Around* 5600 people attended the event...
- b. *Approximately* 89% of individuals present...
- c. *Roughly* \$90 million has been spent ...
- d. The figures *more or less* suggest that...
- e. *Just over*  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the subjects that we recruited were asymptomatic...

*\* Read the sentences below, then rewrite them as approximations:*

- a. At the shop they produce 995 new items every day.
- b. The company's profit was reported to be \$1.005 million last year.
- c. The constituents of the mixture included 49% paint and 51% water.
- d. 68.9% of people mentioned that they prefer eating meat over vegetables.
- e. In the UK there are 192,597 fully qualified medical professionals.
- f. There are 548 rivers in the region of greater Westonia.

g. The firm has now produced 101 different items that have gone on sale.

### **Assignment and Presentation**

**Assignment:** Submission date 5pm **Monday 26<sup>th</sup> April.**

*\* Prepare a 1000 word written document on the same topic as your upcoming presentation. Use the structure used in your plan and the ideas covered during the seminars where possible.*

*\*\* Please ensure you communicate with me prior to the submission date if you have any questions or anticipate any problems with completing this by the due date.*

**Presentation:** Final seminar date to be discussed and agreed – once it is, please ensure you can attend and complete your presentation, in order to complete the course.

*\* 8-10 minute presentation on your research or another topic of choice.*

*\* Be prepared with visual aids / powerpoint etc (bring on a flash drive or upload onto MS Teams before the seminar).*

*Think about what we have been discussing during the seminars in terms of structure, language etc.*