

TDDDD89

Writing Academic English

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Lecture on writing academic English

- General assumptions
- Resources for writing academic English
- The process of writing
- Style and register, formal vs informal
- Language independent principles of writing
- The use of language

General assumptions

- You are reasonably proficient users of English
- You are reasonably experienced in writing in English

However

- Your foreign language intuition is imperfect
- Writing is generally hard and requires considerable effort
- Academic text is a specific text type, requiring specific knowledge to write
- Time and resources must be spent on the writing process

Also:

- You know or have information available about the basic structure and formatting of a thesis

Make use of the resources at your disposal

- Recommended resources
- Freely available dictionaries, usage books, style guides, reference systems, thesauruses, grammars
- Lecture/seminar in the course
- Feedback from teachers
- Feedback from your peers
- Feedback from yourself

Use translation resources with caution

Google translate renders the English

Food is scarce.

into Swedish as

**Mat är ont om.*

Recommended resources for writing a thesis in English

TDDD89 course web page under “Lectures”

- Kessler. *Stylistic advice to my students for writing a thesis*
- Ramsey. 2016. *Learning technical writing using the engineering method*
- IEEE Editorial Style Manual for Authors
- The Academic Phrasebank from Manchester University, UK
- Åberg. 2015. *Instruction for a final thesis report*

”The only kind of writing is rewriting”

Ernest Hemingway

The process of writing

- Pre-writing:
 - Conduct background research
 - Create an outline
 - Plan your writing
- Writing:
 - Write a draft
- Revising:
 - Re-read your draft
 - Arrange for peer reviewing

Creating a good text

Local level

- Write clear and correct sentences
- Combine these sentences into clear and correct paragraphs

Global level

- Combine these paragraphs into clear and correct sections
- Combine these sections into a clear and correct text

Style and register

- The influence of mobile phone applications is often massive but can vary a whole lot.
- The influence of mobile phone applications is often **massive** but can vary **a whole lot**.
- The influence of mobile phone applications is often **considerable/enormous/great/substantial/dramatic** but can vary **considerably/enormously/greatly/substantially/dramatically**.

Informal register

In these rotten economic times, putting in long hours has become a popular strategy for boosting job security. And that's really too bad.

If you rabidly focus on work, in the long run, you'll be unhappy. Ran Kivetz, a professor of business at Columbia University, recently conducted a series of experiments that identified a paradox in our behavior: Doing the "right" thing—putting our responsibilities ahead of momentary pleasures—often leaves us unhappy down the road. When we skip a vacation to work overtime or pass up that awesome vintage Porsche for a used minivan—sure, we pat ourselves on the back for a week or two. But as the years go by, we invariably regret our monkishness and wish we'd enjoyed ourselves more.

The word for this is hyperopia: an excess of farsightedness[...]

Formal register

Many purchase and consumption decisions involve an intrapersonal struggle between consumers' righteous, prudent side and their indulgent, pleasure-seeking side. Whereas purchasing and consuming utilitarian necessities and virtues (e.g., a practical car, a healthful food item) is considered responsible and farsighted, yielding to hedonic temptations (e.g., buying a luxurious car, eating a chocolate cake) is viewed as impulsive and wasteful. The perceived precedence of virtue and necessity over vice and luxury is at least as old as ancient Greek civilization (Plato and Aristotle argue that reason should rule appetitive and passionate elements). [...]

Recent research challenges this approach and suggests that consumers often suffer from a reverse self-control problem—namely, excessive farsightedness and overcontrol, or “hyperopia.” Hyperopic consumers overemphasize virtue and necessity at the expense of indulgence and luxury[...]

Characteristics of formal and informal writing

Informal

- Vocabulary that is used in everyday speech and writing ("*rotten*", "*awesome*", "*too bad*", "*skip*", "*pass up*")
- Features that emulates casual spoken conversation ("*you'll*", "*that's too bad*", "*sure*")
- Often refers to writer and reader with pronouns like "*you*" "*us*" and "*we*"
- Starts sentences with "*and*" and "*but*".
- Use contracted forms "*that's*", "*you'll*", "*we'd*"
- Short, general phrasal verbs "*put in*", "*pass up*"

Formal

- Longer and more complex noun phrases and clauses "*an intrapersonal struggle between consumers' righteous, prudent side and their indulgent, pleasure-seeking side*"
- More specific and technical vocabulary ("*purchase*", "*interpersonal*", "*prudent*", "*indulgent*")
- More use of third person referents ("*consumers*", "*recent research*") or impersonal constructions ("*decisions involve*")
- More use of passive construction ("*is considered*", "*is viewed*")

Why use Formal/Academic prose

- High specificity/precision
- Enables the description of complex and abstract relationships
- Achieves a higher degree of information density
- More limited need for establishing social relations

Language independent principles of writing

A text should

- have development
- be coherent
- avoid vagueness or lack of clarity
- avoid redundancy

Development

Kaplan. 1966. "Cultural thought patterns in Intercultural Education"

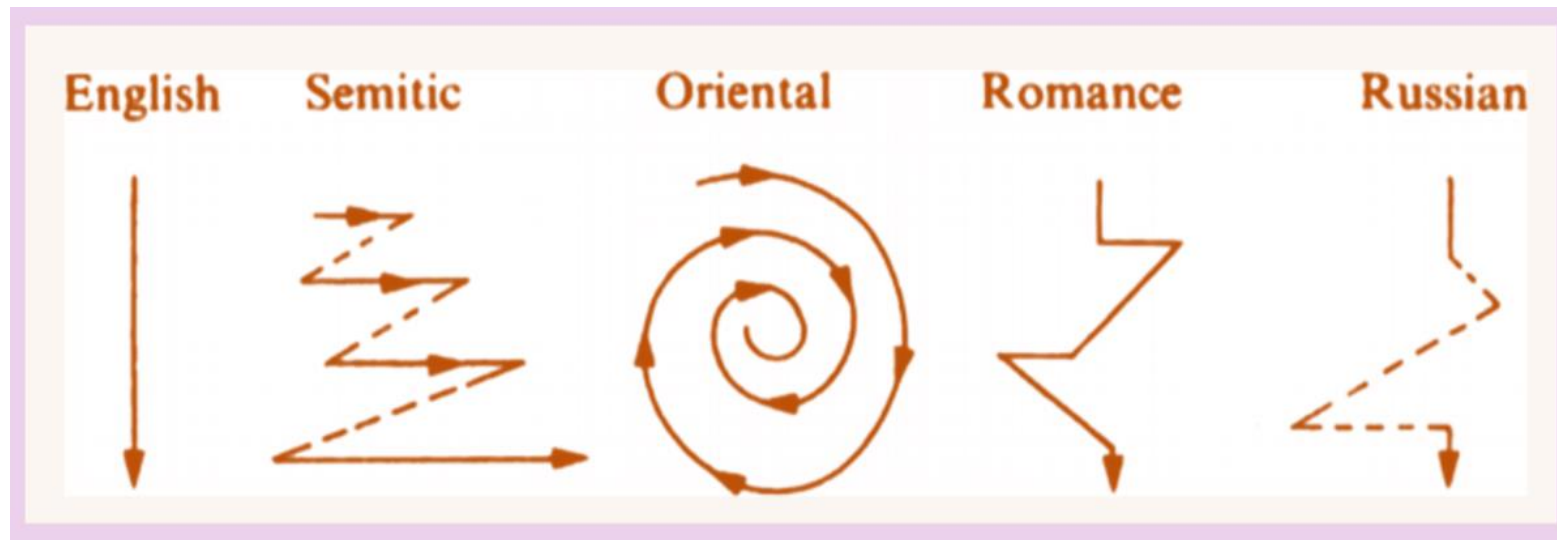


Fig 1. Paragraph development in different cultures

- The 3D-market is small but growing.
- The 3D market is moving from prototyping to final products
- The part of the 3D market that prints production-ready items is growing

Topic

The market for 3D printers and services is small, but growing fast. Last year it was worth \$2.2 billion worldwide, up 29% from 2011, according to Wohlers Associates, a consultancy. As producers become more familiar with the technology, they are moving from prototypes to final products. Last year Wohlers reckons more than 25% of the 3D-printing market involved making production-ready items.

Supporting points

The market for 3D printers and services is small, but growing fast. Last year it was worth \$2.2 billion worldwide, up 29% from 2011, according to Wohlers Associates, a consultancy. As producers become more familiar with the technology, they are moving from prototypes to final products. Last year Wohlers reckons more than 25% of the 3D-printing market involved making production-ready items.

Concluding sentence

The market for 3D printers and services is small, but growing fast. Last year it was worth \$2.2 billion worldwide, up 29% from 2011, according to Wohlers Associates, a consultancy. As producers become more familiar with the technology, they are moving from prototypes to final products. Last year Wohlers reckons more than 25% of the 3D-printing market involved making production-ready items.

Some of those parts are taking shape in RedEye's printers.

Coherence

Issues with coherence

- Even if new technology simplifies our lives, it also increases our dependence on them.
- Even if new technology simplifies our lives, it also increases our dependence on technical devices.

Some issues

- I am talking about smartphones and its incredible impact on our lives.
- I am talking about smartphones and their incredible impact on our lives.
- I am talking about the smartphone and its incredible impact our lives.

Vague or unclear

- The reason could be that when creating exergames, the focus is on physical activity and is not created in the same spirit as a more traditional game.
- The reason could be that when **developers create** exergames, the focus is on physical activity and **this type of game** is **therefore** not created **in the same spirit (?)** as a more traditional game.

Dangling participle

- Having finished our breakfast, the boat was loaded and launched

Redundancy

- These positive benefits can lead to an excessive use of social media.
- These benefits/positive effects can lead to an excessive use of social media.
- The reason for this development is because the military and industry will work together.
- **The reason** for this development is **that** the military and industry will work together.

The use of language

- Your foreign language intuition cannot always be trusted
- Learning words include learning the structures in which they can be used
- Look up any use of language which you are not confident is correct

Åberg 2015

- "An abstract shall normally be maximum 150 words long, and not contain any references or line breaks."
- "An abstract **shall** normally be **maximum** 150 words long, and **not** contain any references or line breaks."

The use of *shall*

old-fashioned

used instead of "will" when the subject is "I" or "we":

- *If you do that one more time, I **shall** be very angry.*

formal in US

used, with "I" or "we", to make a suggestion:

- *"I'm cold." "**Shall** I close this window?"*
- ***Shall** we go out for dinner tonight?*

formal or old-fashioned

used to say that something certainly will or must happen, or that you are determined that something will happen:

- *Don't worry, I **shall** be there to meet the train.*
- *You **shall** go to the ball, Cinderella.*

law

*Nothing in this letter **shall** be construed as a license to use our property.*

maximum

maximum speed/effort/temperature

- *The pillars, which are outside the building, are so placed in order to provide **the maximum space** inside.*

a/the maximum X of Y

- *The bomb was designed to cause **the maximum amount of damage**.*

Max, informal for maximum , often used after an amount:

- *"How much will the trip cost?" "£40 **max**."*

- "An abstract **is** normally **no longer than** 150 words, and **does** not contain any references or line breaks."
- "An abstract **should** normally **be no longer than** 150 words, and **should** not contain any references or line breaks."

- Solar, wind and hydro-power will contribute to make society carbon free.
- Solar, wind and hydro-power will contribute to making society carbon free.

To as a preposition

- She started *to* swim
- She has gone *to* the park

look forward to, object to, be used to, prefer, get round to, in addition to, contribute to.

- I am not used to *driving* in London.

Some common problems

- Subject-verb agreement
- Overuse of definite articles
- Reference to past action leading up to the present

Subject-verb agreement: Getting it right

To know which present-tense form to use. We have to be able to tell:

- what part of the sentence is the subject.
- what part of the subject is the main word (head)
- Is the head singular or plural.
- What is the correct singular and plural form of the verb

The recent development of breeder reactors (is/are) completely changing the economics of ore extraction and (is/are) boosting the known reserves of nuclear energy considerably.

The recent **development** of breeder reactors **is** completely changing the economics of ore extraction and **is** boosting the known reserves of nuclear energy considerably.

Riding a bicycle in London _____ courage and agility.
(demand/demands)

Riding a bicycle in London **demands** courage and agility.

If the sound spectrum is divided into frequency bands, each _____
separately coded. (are/is)

If the sound spectrum is divided into frequency bands, each **is**
separately coded.

Overuse of the definite article

- Self-driving cars have not replaced the normal cars yet.
- Self-driving cars have not replaced normal cars yet.
- Electric cars have been too expensive for the working-class people.
- Electric cars have been too expensive for working-class people.

Tense

- Since the start of the 21st century, many technological changes occurred.
- Since the start of the 21st century, many technological changes have occurred.

Collocations

- Every day we send text messages, do phone calls and use social media.
- Every day we send text messages, **make** phone calls and use social media.

Collocations – between word and sentence structure

- The separation between sentence structure and individual words is not as distinct as often assumed
- The possibility to combine words are restricted by the properties of the different words and their ability to form natural expressions
- **arouse** interest/suspicion
- ~~**arouse**~~ stress/exhaustion
- **heavy** rain
- ~~**strong**~~ rain

The yellow-haired boy said he had joined the English class to get some new friends. He also said that he wanted to learn about collocations because it would be of big importance in helping him to do fewer mistakes when writing in English.

The **blond**-haired boy said he had joined the English class to **make** some new friends. He also said that he wanted to learn about collocations because it would be of **great** importance in helping him to **make** fewer mistakes when writing in English.

technology/technique

- **technology** the application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes, especially in industry: *advances in computer technology*
- **technique** a way of carrying out a particular task, especially the execution or performance of an artistic work or a scientific procedure: *there are different techniques for solving the problem*

The use of “data”

- People are right to be concerned about how their data is being processed.
- People are right to be concerned about how their data are/is being processed.

In Latin, data is the plural of datum and, historically and in specialized scientific fields, it is also treated as a plural in English, taking a plural verb, as in the data were collected and classified. In modern non-scientific use, however, it is generally not treated as a plural. Instead, it is treated as a mass noun, similar to a word like information, which takes a singular verb. Sentences such as data was collected over a number of years are now widely accepted in standard English

Punctuation - terms

.	period or full stop
?	question mark
!	exclamation mark
,	comma
:	colon
;	semi-colon
–	dash
()	parentheses or brackets

Comma, co-ordination

1. *Christina and Peter had decided to go to Greece on vacation, **and** they needed some extra money.*
2. *Christina and Peter went to Greece **and** they needed some extra money.*

Punctuation exercise

Everyone present was startled by the arrival of the president and several senators who had been standing in the hall rushed into the room to hear his announcement.

Everyone present was startled by the arrival of the **president**, and several senators who had been standing in the hall rushed into the room to hear his announcement.

Comma – items in a series

9. *She loved life, liberty, and the happiness of being pursued.*

10. *We have said that we will explain paragraph structures, that we will discuss punctuation matters, and that we will offer several exercises.*

Comma

After an introductory subordinate clause or phrase

12. To stop the leak, we have been replacing old shingles with new ones.

13. While he ate, the dog would bark ferociously at the door.

14. Nevertheless, the living room remained dry.

Punctuation exercise

After eating the lions yawned and then dozed.

After **eating**, the lions yawned and then dozed.

On the left walls of sheer ice rose over five thousand feet into the clouds.

On the **left**, walls of sheer ice rose over five thousand feet into the clouds.

Comma

Before and after non-restrictive modifiers and parenthetical expressions

15. The first method, called deduction, is to put the topic sentence in or near the beginning of the paragraph.

Comma

16. *My brother, who lives in Paris, is studying to be a physician.* (non-restrictive)
17. *My brother who/that lives in Paris is studying to be a physician.* (restrictive)

Comma

17. *The tortoise, as far as we know, has been on earth for thousands of years.*

The tortoise (as far as we know) has been on earth for thousands of years.

The tortoise – as far as we know – has been on earth for thousands of years.

Semicolon

18. I can see no remedy for this; one can't order him to do it.

*I can see no remedy for **this. One** can't order him to do it.*

19. He knew everything about me; I knew nothing about his recent life.

Semicolon

20. There were three new delegates at the meeting: Ms. Barbara Smith from Boulder, Colorado; Ms. Beth Waters from Omaha, Nebraska; and Mr. James Papson from Greenwood, Arkansas.

Colon

Introduce an explanation or example

21. Nevertheless, the main problem remained: what should be done with the two murderers.

Introduce a list

22. To be authentic these garments must be of natural materials: cotton, silk, wool and leather.