

Hamma Lakhdar University of El-Oued

Faculty of Arts and Languages

Department of English Language



Module: Academic writing

Module convenor: Dr. Nour Toumi

Level: MA1

Lecture two: Language of Academic Writing

Lecture objectives

This lecture is designed to raise your awareness towards the linguistic features/aspects that contribute to the formality, objectivity and precision of academic writing.

The do's and don'ts in academic writing

➤ **Rule one: Use formal vocabulary. Avoid less formal or idiomatic words.**

Examples of informal/colloquial words are: gonna/ stuff/ a lot of/ things/ gets

Stuff: alternative more formal synonyms: equipment, goods, individual, baggage, possession, substance.

A lot of: alternative more formal synonyms: abundant, adequate, considerable, substantial, sufficient, significant.

Things: alternative more formal synonyms: aspects, areas, elements, facts, figures, materials, points, situations, subjects, information.

Rule two: Use formal verbs instead of two-word verbs (phrasal verbs).

verbs + prepositions are often considered informal

Examples of these are

look into	investigate/examine/explore
come across	discover
go up	increase
go down	decrease/decline/fall
talk about	discuss
get better	improve/enhance/develop
get worse	deteriorate
go on	continue
bring up	raise

Rule three: Use the full form of verbs, not contractions.

Examples:

don't	do not
can't	cannot
couldn't	could not
shouldn't	should not
won't	will not
didn't	did not

Rule four: Use formal grammar structures, such as nominalisation (noun phrases) and clauses, rather than too many simple sentences.

Examples:

The environment is increasingly polluted. This is a global concern.

- The increasing pollution of the environment is a global concern (nominalisation/ noun phrase)

Rule five: Use statements. Avoid questions, which are less formal (though these are common in spoken academic English, i.e. lectures and presentations).

Examples:

- What were the reasons behind the decline?
- There were four main reasons for the decline
- How are written and spoken English differ?
- Written is different from spoken English

Rule six: Use impersonal phrases such as “there is..” “it is ..” or passive voice. Avoid personal pronouns (e.g., I, we, you..., in my opinion) and adverbs which show your feelings (e.g., luckily, amazingly, shockingly...).

- **I** can think of three main problems
- There are three main problems.
- In the experiment, **I** heated the water
- In the experiment, the water was heated...

Rule seven: Avoid idiomatic language (Idiomatic expressions are a type of informal language that have a meaning different from the meaning of the words in the expression).

Examples

- I am under the weather.--- not well
- That sound is driving me up the wall! ---> making me very annoyed

- This assignment is a piece of cake. ---> very easy
- Yikes! This shirt costs an arm and a leg. ---> It is extremely expensive.
- I was just pulling your leg. ---> just joking
- It's Greek to me. ---> I don't understand.