

Academic Vocabulary



Introduction

- Education is mediated through language, therefore, language ability is critical for learning in the courses of study.
- Academic language proficiency and being able to use general and content-specific vocabulary, and specialised grammatical structures are vital when producing academic documents (including research reports, assignments, dissertations, theses, research scripts and journal articles).



Purpose

The presentation will enable the student to:

- Define academic language and vocabulary
- Know the demands of academic language
- Use academic language that meets the demands of university education.
- Learn the ways to use academic language.



What makes writing academic?

Writing is academic when it:

- informs rather than entertain.
- is well-organised and planned.
- demonstrates understanding.
- is informed by academic literature and debates on the subject matter.
- has a clear interpretation of key concept use .
- gives an accurate description of an issue .
- it equips the student with the required speaking, listening, reading and writing skills for university environment.



Academic Language (English)

- Formal language
- It often uses more advanced vocabulary.
- The language that is different from everyday English and is needed in situations which demand respect and sophistication, for example, debates and job interviews.
- It is used to write university essays, assignments, create reports and literature analysis.
- It is used in academic environments- lectures, books , journals and seminars



Academic Language (English)

- It conveys ideas in a precise and objective manner.
- Vocabulary is carefully chosen to express oneself accurately and coherently.
- Sentence structure is varied- simple, compound and complex.
- The tone is serious.
- It observes reference systems.



The demand of academic language

It demands that students should:

- Construct viable arguments.
- Critique reasoning of others.
- Engage in an argument and provide evidence.
- Reason abstractly and quantitatively.



Formality

- English is complex.
- Uses appropriate terminology and writing style
- No grammatical, spelling or typing errors.
- Use United Kingdoms spelling rules (as prescribed by the lecturer or module coordinator.
- Avoid personal ways of expressing oneself such as “ I think...” , “Our needs...” or “ In my opinion...”
- Uses non-personal language such as “ One may argue that...” or “The researcher discovered that...”



What to avoid?

The following informal ways of writing must be avoided:

- Colloquialism
Contractions such as don't, it's, can't
Abbreviations such as etc, i.e.
Acronyms- use only after having written it in full when it was introduced writing it for the first time.
- Beginning a sentence with a conjunction but, and because
- Numerals , except dates



What to avoid?

Informal word expressions

- Stuff: equipment, luggage, substances, possessions, gear, paraphernalia
- A lot of: substantial, sufficient, significant, adequate, considerable, abundant
- Things: aspects, areas, materials, subject, situation, points, facts



What to avoid?

- Informal adjectives such as
hard: difficult, complicated, unpleasant
easy: manageable, obvious, effortless,
mere
big: considerable, extensive, immense,
substantial and tremendous



What to avoid?

- Informal verbs

get: acquire, accomplish, attain, capture, elicit, extract

do: execute, fulfil, perform, arrange

go: advance, continue, embark, travel, journey

- Two word verb forms such as look into , found out



Words to use

- Academic words

High frequency academic words

Establish, beneficial, fundamental, inevitable, acquisition, strategies, initiative, criteria, controversial, validity, differentiation, phenomenon

- Verbs for analysing literature

Illustrated, analysed, clarified, concluded, denoted, justified, related, depicted



Words or phrases to use?

- Noun phrases

Instead of writing , “I analysed the data and we found evidence” ,

You would rather write, “Analysis of the data provided evidence....”



Ways to learn academic vocabulary

- Read more academic books such as:
 - ✓ articles from peer-reviewed academic journals, such as those available on the library
 - ✓ textbooks or books written by academic authors;
 - ✓ articles from reputable professional journals or magazines aimed at practitioners in a particular industry
- Learn the vocabulary used in your discipline .
- The vocabulary chosen must depend on the context and the way in which the word is to be used.
- Consult a dictionary and a thesaurus.
- Subject-specific dictionaries, encyclopaedia as well as reference works compiled by acknowledged subject-specialist.



Conclusion

- Students are expected to learn academic language and achieve fluency. They must master it in order to succeed in any discipline.
- The presentation explored ways in which academic language can be used in various academic environments.

“ Best wishes”

