English Language Support

Academic Writing I

Open Seminar
What is academic writing?

• Writing in an academic setting
• By scholars for scholars, e.g. research articles

• Logically structured
• Objective
• Combines theory and empirical data
• Analytic and critical
• Develops a central problem area
• Draws conclusions
• Argues in relation to what others have said/written
• Includes references
• Formal in style

(after Dysthe et al. 2002:19-20)
Two major kinds of writing

- **Writer-oriented**
  - **Audience:** self
  - **Purpose:** personal, exploration of ideas
  - **Language:** informal
  - **Forms:** journals, notes, rough drafts

- **Reader-oriented**
  - **Audience:** others
  - **Purpose:** communication between individuals
  - **Language:** formal
  - **Forms:** essays, papers, theses, business, letters

(Björk & Räisänen 2003:16-19)
Overview

Academic writing I:

In this seminar, we will approach academic writing from a textual perspective mainly. What does a typical introduction look like? What signifies a successful paragraph? How can we create a text which is maximally efficient in communicating its message? Finally, we touch upon referencing techniques.
Academic writing II:

– Paragraphs revisited
– Vocabulary
– Grammar
– Punctuation
– Spelling
CULTURAL CAPITAL
(French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu)

• Economic capital/cultural capital/social capital/symbolic capital

• “[E]very linguistic interaction […] bears the traces of the social structure that it both expresses and helps reproduce.”
  (Mesthrie et al. 2000:342)

• ‘symbolic domination’: “the process by which the ruling class is able to impose its norms as the sole legitimate competence on the formal linguistic markets (education, the bureaucracy, ‘high’ society).”
  (Mesthrie et al. 2000:344)
Logically structured

• Clear structure
  – Introduction
  – Main body
  – Conclusion
Introduction: the funnel design

• “Few Americans stay put for a lifetime. We move from town to city to suburb, from high school to college in a different state, from a job in one region to a better job elsewhere, from the home where we raise our children to the home where we plan to live in retirement. With each move we are forever making new friends, who become part of our new life at that time.

The paragraph

A paragraph is a thought unit with a topic sentence.

One idea and its supporting arguments = one paragraph.
Example of a Deductive Paragraph

*Hurricanes, which are also called cyclones, exert tremendous power.* These violent storms are often a hundred miles in diameter, and their winds can reach velocities of seventy-five miles per hour or more. Furthermore, the strong winds and heavy rainfall that accompany them can completely destroy a small town in a couple of hours. The energy that is released by a hurricane in one day exceeds the total energy consumed by humankind throughout the world in one year.

(Oshima & Hogue 1999)
Every so often, some enthusiasts plead for English spelling to be revised: […].
Yet spelling reform is unlikely to happen, at least in the near future. […]
Spelling also sometimes enables links between the words to be revealed, connections that are partially hidden by the pronunciation.

Based on the topic sentence, you can make predictions on what will follow.
Information structure

• **The information structure principle:**
  Known/given info first – unknown/new info last

  *My cousin bought a new car. The car is red.*

• **Principle of end weight:**
  Heavy subject noun phrases are placed later in the clause

  *A very relevant and interesting issue that needs attention is unemployment.*

  *Unemployment is a very relevant and interesting issue that needs attention.*
Primarily short sentences:

(1) There is one positive result of the rising crime rate. (2) This has been the growth of neighborhood crime prevention programs. (3) These programs really work. (4) They teach citizens to patrol their neighborhoods. (5) They teach citizens to work with the police. (6) They have dramatically reduced crime in cities and towns across the country. (7) The idea is catching on.

(Fawcett 2007:294)
(1) One cause of the falling crime rate in some cities is the growth of neighborhood crime prevention programs. (2) These programs really work. (3) By patrolling their neighborhoods and working with the police, citizens have shown that they can dramatically reduce crime. (4) The idea is catching on.

(Fawcett 2007:295)
AVOID VAGUENESS

- The president’s military spending increased the budget deficit
- The president did things that caused problems

(Fawcett 2007:322)
AVOID WORDINESS

• In my opinion I think that the financial aid system at Ellensville Junior College is in need of reform

• The financial aid system at Ellensville Junior College needs reform

(Fawcett 2007:328)
Coherence – signposts, linking words

**Addition:** also, and, as well, besides, beyond that, furthermore, in addition, moreover, what is more

**Attitude:** naturally, of course, certainly, strangely enough, luckily, fortunately, unfortunately, admittedly, undoubtedly

**Comparison:** also, as well, both, in the same way, likewise, similarly, in comparison

**Contrast:** although, but, even though, however, by contrast, nevertheless, on the contrary, on the other hand, whereas, yet, in spite of, while

**Emphasis:** above all, especially, indeed, in fact, in particular, most important, surely
Coherence, cont.

**Hedging**: perhaps, may be due to, maybe, probably, presumably, possibly

**Illustration**: as a case in point, as an illustration, for example, for instance, in particular, one such, yet another

**Order**: first, in the first place, firstly, to begin with, second, third, etc., last, lastly, finally

**Result/effect**: and so, as a consequence, consequently, as a result, because of this, therefore, hence, thus, so, accordingly

**Summary**: all in all, finally, in brief, in short, in conclusion, to sum up, in other words, on the whole, summing up
Let’s look at how to...
from MacMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2nd ed. 2007: writing section

- Add information
- Compare and contrast
- Exemplify
- Express cause and effect
- Express personal opinion
- Express possibility and certainty
- Introduce a concession
- Introduce topics and related ideas
- List items
- Reformulate
- Quote and report
- Summarize and draw conclusions
Adding Information

• *in addition* – *moreover* – *furthermore* – *other* – *another*

• “After the election, we asked whether the parties should change their leaders, their policies or both. In addition, we asked about voting preferences.”

MacMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2nd ed. 2007: writing section
Adding Information cont.

- *Moreover* – used to add a “final powerful argument”

* “When the prisoner is released, his situation will be very painful because he will have to reintegrate into society. Moreover, he will have the greatest difficulties of integration because of his past as a prisoner.

MacMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2nd ed. 2007: writing section
Moreover cont.

- “There was an assumption that whoever did take up the office would closely reflect Lee’s views. It was likely, moreover, that candidates would be restricted to former ministers and senior civil servants.”

MacMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2nd ed. 2007: writing section
Comparing and Contrasting

• resemblance – similarity – parallel – analogy

• “A useful analogy for understanding Piaget’s theory is to view the child as a scientist who is seeking a ‘theory’ to explain complex phenomena.”

MacMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2nd ed. 2007: writing section
Comparing and Contrasting cont.

• contrast – difference – distinction – the contrary – the opposite – the reverse – resemble – comparable – correspond

• “There is a sharp distinction between domestic politics and international politics.”

MacMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2nd ed. 2007: writing section
Consider:

*resemblance* and *similarity* tend to occur with:
  - *certain*, *close*, *remarkable*, *striking*, *strong*, *superficial*

*contrast* tends to occur with:
  - *direct*, *marked*, *sharp*, *stark*, *striking*

MacMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2nd ed. 2007: writing section
Exemplification

- for example – as an illustration – a case in point – for instance – such as – exemplify – e.g. – i.e. – viz.

“This is very much a generational problem. Consider, for example, the new students who begin courses and universities and polytechnics. They cannot remember when Britain was not part of the European Community.”

MacMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2nd ed. 2007: writing section
Exemplification cont.

*"Nowadays children play with technological toys (i.e. video games)

“It implied primogeniture amongst males, i.e. inheritance by the eldest son.”

MacMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2nd ed. 2007: writing section
Expressing Cause and Effect


“Differences in performance can be measured. Employees can therefore be rewarded differently and appropriately.”

NOTE: Learners tend to overuse therefore at the beginning of sentences. More frequent inside sentences.

MacMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2nd ed. 2007: writing section
Expressing Personal Opinions

it is reasonable – it is essential – it seems that – (in my opinion) – (in my view)

MacMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2nd ed. 2007: writing section
Remember

The writer is usually invisible

– Rephrase

I will write about the situation in my country.

This essay will focus on the situation in Sweden.

– Passivize

We carried out the investigation in 2006.

The investigation was carried out in 2006.
Expressing Possibility and Certainty


“One possible explanation for these findings is that people take time to adjust to living in residential homes.”

MacMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2nd ed. 2007: writing section
Introducing a Concession

however – nevertheless – nonetheless – although –
though – even if – albeit – despite – in spite of

NOTE: learners tend to overuse however at the
beginning of sentences

NOTE II: despite is much more frequent in academic
writing than in spite of

MacMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2nd ed. 2007: writing section
Introducing Topics and Related Ideas

*consider – discuss – examine – subject – aim – issue – another/
  further/next/last question – objective – topic – concern – emphasis –
  focus of attention*

Common in speech: *thing – by the way*

MacMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2nd ed. 2007: writing section
Listing Items

First / firstly / first of all – second – third – next - finally

AVOID: last but not least…

MacMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. 2007:
writing section
Reformulation

*i.e. – that is – that is to say – in other words – namely – viz.*

“This was particularly so in areas with larger farms, **namely** Derbyshire, Leicestershire, South Wales, and Speyside.”

MacMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2nd ed. 2007: writing section
Summarizing and Drawing Conclusions

**in summary** – *in sum* – *to summarize* – *in conclusion* – *it is reasonable to conclude* – *we can conclude*

INFREQUENT: *in a nutshell* – *in brief* – *all in all* – *we can conclude*

MacMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2nd ed. 2007: writing section
Quoting and Reporting


MacMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2nd ed. 2007: writing section
References

• Use many relevant sources but indicate all of them!

• All sources mentioned in the text must occur in the list of references. Similarly, the list of references may only include works mentioned in the text.
References in the text

- Respect for ideas and results
- Be selective
- Short quotations (1-3 lines):
  ”…….” (in the running text)
- Long quotations (more than 3 lines):
  within a new paragraph with extra indentation, often in a smaller fontsize
- Never change the content of a quotation!
Quotations

Name, year of publishing, page according to the format:

In this article, Goldberg (1995:210) argues that…

OR

Another view is that these facts cannot be determined without considering more data (Goldberg 1995:210).
List of references

Article in a journal:

Article in a larger volume:

Internet source:
List of references

Book, a single author:

Book, two authors:

Book, more than two authors:
Page references

A single page: (1995:34)

Alternatively:

(1995:38f) = p. 38 and the following page
(1995:38ff) = p. 38 and the following few pages
Number of authors

- A single author: (Goldberg 1995)
- Two authors: (Goldberg & Johnson 2002)
- More than two authors: (Goldberg et al. 2003)
- Several works: (Goldberg 1995; Smith 2001)
- No official author: (2003:36)
Academic writing seminar I & II
Works mentioned during the seminar


THANK YOU!