English Language Support

Academic Writing II
Open Seminar
Two major kinds of writing

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

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

(Björk & Räisänen 1996)
What is academic writing? II

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

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

(after Dysthe et al 2002:19-20)
Overview

SEMINAR I:
– Textual level, e.g. how to write an introduction, paragraphing, cohesive ties

SEMINAR II:
– Paragraphs revisited
– Vocabulary
– Grammar
– Punctuation
– Spelling
The paragraph

A paragraph is a thought unit with a topic sentence.

One idea and its supporting arguments = one 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)
Paragraph 1: illustration

- Great athletes do not reach the top by talent alone but by pushing themselves to the limit and beyond. For instance, basketball sensation Lebron James keeps striving to improve. Branded the next Michael Jordan when he was in high school, drafted by the Cleveland Cavaliers, and handed a huge Nike contract on potential, James kept his cool and kept working hard. […] Like many top athletes, he turned his talent into greatness through sheer hard work.

(Fawcett 2007:71)
Paragraph II: description

• On November 27, 1922, when archeologist Howard Carter unsealed the door to the ancient Egyptian tomb of King Tut, he stared in amazement at the fantastic objects heaped all around him. On his left lay the wrecks of at least four golden chariots. Against the wall on his right [...]. Would the mummy of King Tut lie beyond it?

(Fawcett 2007:91)
Paragraph III: Process

• “Careful preparation before an interview is the key to getting the job done.”

(Fawcett 2007:100)
Cont.

• Careful preparation before an interview is the key to getting the job done. The first step is to learn all you can about the employer. Read about the company in its brochures or in magazine articles. [...]. Second, [...]. Third, [...]. When a job candidate has made the effort to prepare, the interviewer is much more likely to be impressed.

(Fawcett 2007:100)
Paragraph IV: Classification

• “Gym-goers can be classified according to their priorities at the gym as sweaty fanatics, fashionites, busybodies, or fit normals.”

(Fawcett 2007:139)
Paragraph V: cause and effect

• “What killed the dinosaurs – and 70 percent of life on earth – 65 million years ago? According to recent research, this massive destruction had three causes.”

(Fawcett 2007:148)
Paragraph VI: Persuasion

• “Passengers should refuse to ride in any vehicle driven by someone who has been drinking.”

(Fawcett 2007:158)
## Vocabulary: formal in style

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informal</th>
<th>Formal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>about</td>
<td>approximately</td>
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<tr>
<td>often</td>
<td>frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>big</td>
<td>main, major, significant</td>
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<tr>
<td>get better</td>
<td>improve</td>
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<tr>
<td>take part in</td>
<td>participate</td>
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<td>receive</td>
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<td>also</td>
<td>furthermore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>really</td>
<td>extremely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>can’t</td>
<td>cannot</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Grammar check

- Concord
- Articles
- Unexpected prepositions
- Clause types
- Countable vs. uncountable nouns
- Quantifiers
- Parallelism in coordinated sentences
Subject – verb agreement (concord)

Singular subject requires singular verb:  
*My son plays the violin.*

Plural subject requires plural verb:  
*My sons play the violin.*
Subject – verb agreement, cont.

On the other hand, the claims that the department has never violated the rules related to this distinction makes/make me suspicious.

The head in the noun phrase decides whether it is singular or plural:
– [The change in male attitudes] is most obvious in the industry.

– [The changes in male attitude] are most obvious in the industry.
Subject – verb agreement, cont.

• **Finite and non-finite clauses generally count as singular:**
  
  *How you get there* is no concern of mine.  
  *To treat them as hostages* is criminal.  
  *Smoking cigarettes* is dangerous to your health.

• **Prepositional phrases and adverbs functioning as subject also count as singular:**
  
  *In the evenings* is best for me.  
  *Slowly does it.*
Subject – verb agreement, cont.

- Collective nouns are treated either as singular or plural depending on the notion of the noun in BrE, and normally as singular in AmE

  *The audience were enjoying the concert.* (= a collection of individuals)
  *The audience was enormous.* (= an undivided unit)
  Cf. *The audience were enormous.* (= an audience of enormous people)

- Coordinated subject = always plural

  *Tom and Alice are now ready.*
  
  \[ 1 + 1 = 2 \]
Articles proper names

Normally: no article

John
Gothenburg

Article?
Countries
Mountain ranges
Oceans, seas and rivers
Large organizations
Newspapers
Magazines
Unexpected Prepositions

They are doing research ___elections.
→ research on/research into

The value has increased ___more than 20%.
→ increased by

Is this opinion representative ___all workers?
→ representative of
Unexpected Prepositions, cont.

Complements of nouns (‘research on’)

Complements of verbs (‘increase by’)

Complements of adjectives (‘representative of’)

Use **Learners’ Dictionaries** or [http://sara.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/lookup.html](http://sara.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/lookup.html)
Countable and uncountable nouns

- Countable
  - book
  - books
  - a book
  - two books

- Uncountable
  - sugar/information/advice
Countable and uncountable nouns, cont.

- A
- One
- A few
- Many
- A great many
- A lot of
- Some
- Any
- no

- Little
- Less
- Much
- A great amount of
- A great deal of
- A lot of
- Some
- Any
- no
Avoid faulty parallelism!

*The students learned a lot from writing several drafts of the paper and to read their final version aloud to the rest of the class.

The students learned a lot from writing several drafts of the paper and reading their final version aloud to the rest of the class.

Clauses joined by and, but and or require the same grammatical construction!
The sentence

• A complete sentence includes:
  – a subject
  – a finite verb (i.e. a verb expressing tense, number and person)
  and it makes sense on its own (i.e. is an independent clause)

They used to live in London.

*Although they used to live in London.
REVISION SKILLS

Charles left the room without a word

Without a word, Charles left the word

(Fawcett 2007:299)

He laboriously dragged the large crate up the stairs

Labouriously, he dragged the large crate up the stairs
REVISION SKILLS, cont.

• The nurse entered
• The nurse quickly closed the door

• The nurse entered and quickly closed the door.

(Fawcett 2007:302)
REVISION SKILLS CONT.

• Carrots, which are high in vitamin C, grow in cold climates

• Carrots grow in cold climates

• They are high in vitamin C

(Fawcett 2007:313)
REVISION SKILLS CONT.

• Judith is trapped in a dead-end job

• Judith decided to enroll at the local community college

• Trapped in a dead-end job, Judith decided to enroll in the local community college

• (Fawcett 2007:307)
REVISION SKILLS CONT.

- *Peering through the microscope, he discovered a squiggly creature*
- *He peered through the microscope*
- *He discovered a squiggly creature*

(Fawcett 2007:304)
REVISION SKILLS, cont.

• Carlos is the new wrestling champion.
• He is a native of Argentina

• Carlos, a native or Argentina, is the new wrestling champion.

(Fawcett 2007:310)
American versus British English

Be consistent in terms of spelling:

- favor → favour
- center → centre
- catalogue → catalog
- programme → program
- traveled → travelled
- analyze → analyse
# American versus British English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>American</th>
<th>→</th>
<th>British</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>analyze</td>
<td></td>
<td>analyse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Punctuation, cont.

- **Semicolon** is used
  - To separate two main clauses without conjunction:

  *The cost was too high; the purchase had to be canceled.*

- **Apostrophe** is used
  - To indicate the genitive ‘s’:

  *The company’s cars are blue and white.*
  *The managers’ meeting took all day.*
  *King James’s crown / King James’ crown*
Punctuation

• **The comma** is used:

  – **To separate words in a list**

    *Our company owns facilities in Norway, Denmark and Sweden.*

  – **To separate phrases or clauses**

    *Who is the manager, and where can I reach her?*
Comma cont.

– **Before and after adverbs**
  *The manager, however, had no part in it.*

– **Before and after non-restrictive (non-defining) subordinate clauses:**
  *He has moved to our office, which was renovated in the 1990’s.*

– **NOT before and after restrictive (defining) subordinate clauses:**
  *He has moved to our office which was renovated in the 1990’s.*
Run-ons and comma splices

• *My mother is a dentist she flosses every day.

• *My mother is a dentist, she flosses every day.
Academic writing seminar I & II
Works mentioned


THANK YOU!