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English for Academic Purposes (EAP) – Writing

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Re-cap of previous lesson

- Why writing matters
- How writing can help you
- Good academic writing
- Basic essay structure
- ‘Rules’ of academic writing
- EAP verb tenses
- Course outline

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2. Words (diction)

Lesson aims

- Recall the parts of speech
- Hear about criticisms of academic writing
- Understand the importance of plain style
- Recognize some ‘rules’ for plain style
- Find out about the Academic Word List
- How to paraphrase (and why)
- Learn about what to do with unknown words

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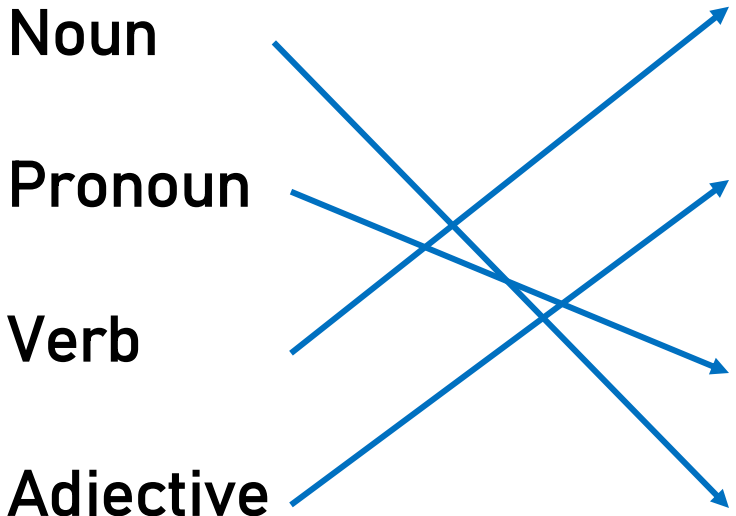
Parts of speech (the different types of words)

Parts of speech



Expresses action or being

Modifies (affects) or describes a noun or pronoun (*Pretty, Old, Blue, Smart*)

A word used in place of a noun (*She, We, They, It*)

The name of a person, place, thing, or idea

(Note: An individual word can function as more than one part of speech when used in different circumstances.)

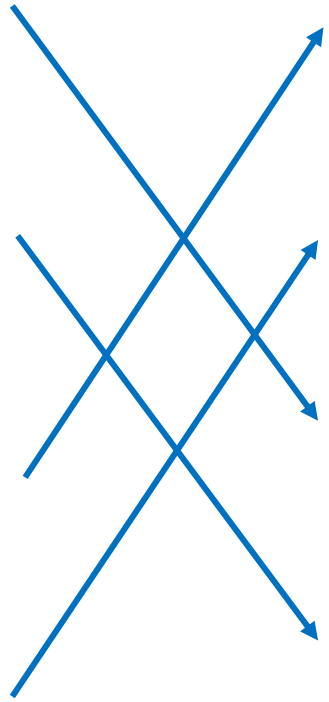
Parts of speech

Adverb

Preposition

Conjunction

Interjection



Joins words, phrases, or clauses, and indicates the relationship between the elements joined (*And, But, Or, While*)

A word used to express emotion (*Oh!, Wow!, Oops!*)

Modifies (affects) or describes a verb, an adjective, or another adverb (*Gently, Extremely, Carefully, Well*)

A word placed before a noun or pronoun to form a phrase modifying another word in the sentence (*By, With, About, Until*)

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Academic and non-academic language

Academic language

Do use:	Example:
• Cohesive devices	*However*, *Therefore*
• Hedging language	*Could be, Is possibly*
• Reporting verbs	*Argue, Claim, Report*
• Subject vocabulary	*Innovation, Profit, Loss*
• Varied vocabulary	*Investigation, Study*
• Passive constructions (?)	*The study was conducted*

Non-academic language

Don't use:

- Contractions
- Direct questions
- Emotive vocabulary
- Exclamations
- Generalizations
- Hyperbole (exaggeration)

Example:

- *Can't, Shouldn't, Won't*
- *Is this study true?*
- *Fantastic, Terrible*
- *Wonderful!*
- *Cats are nicer than dogs*
- *The best study ever*

Non-academic language

Don't use:

- Idioms
- Slang
- Vague expressions
- Incorrect conjunctions
- Phrasal verbs
- Personal pronouns (?)

Example:

- *See the light*
- *Lost the plot*
- *Stuff like that*
- *And so, the study…*
- *Check out, Put up with*
- *I believe that…*

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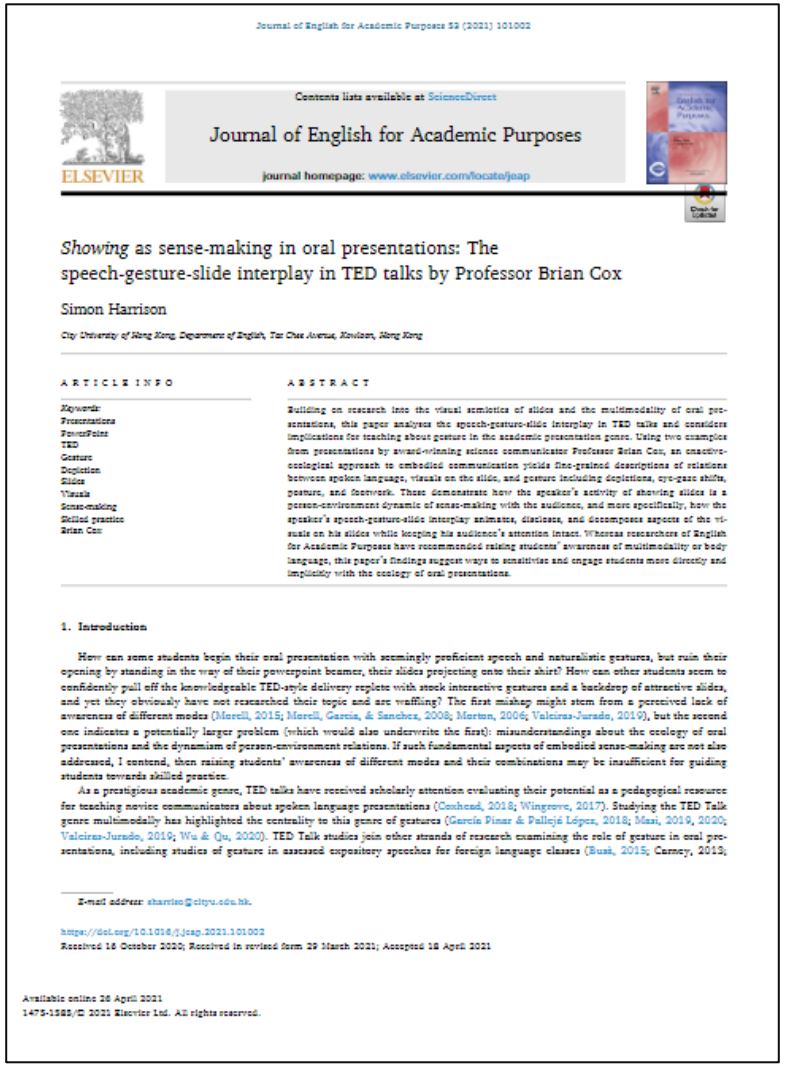
Criticisms of academic writing

Unfortunately…

Generally, academic writing has a poor reputation for being:

- difficult to understand
- unnecessarily complicated
- boring to read



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Showing as sense-making in oral presentations: The speech-gesture-slide interplay in TED talks by Professor Brian Cox

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Brian Cox

ABSTRACT

Building on research into the visual semiotics of slides and the multimodality of oral presentations, this paper analyses the speech-gesture-slide interplay in TED talks and considers implications for teaching about gesture in the academic presentation genre. Using two examples from presentations by award-winning science communicator Professor Brian Cox, an enactivist-ecological approach to embodied communication yields fine-grained descriptions of relations between spoken language, visuals on the slide, and gesture including depictions, eye-gaze shifts, posture, and footwork. These demonstrate how the speaker's activity of showing slides is a person-environment dynamic of sense-making with the audience, and more specifically, how the speaker's speech-gesture-slide interplay animates, discloses, and decomposes aspects of the visuals on his slides while keeping his audience's attention intact. Whereas researchers of English for Academic Purposes have recommended raising students' awareness of multimodality or body language, this paper's findings suggest ways to sensitise and engage students more directly and implicitly with the ecology of oral presentations.

1. Introduction

How can some students begin their oral presentation with seemingly proficient speech and naturalistic gestures, but ruin their opening by standing in the way of their powerpoint beamer, their slides projecting onto their shirt? How can other students seem to confidently pull off the knowledgeable TED-style delivery replete with stock interactive gestures and a backdrop of attractive slides, and yet they obviously have not researched their topic and are waffling? The first mishap might stem from a perceived lack of awareness of different modes (Morell, 2015; Morell, Garcia, & Sanchez, 2008; Morton, 2006; Valeiras-Jurado, 2019), but the second one indicates a potentially larger problem (which would also underwrite the first): misunderstandings about the ecology of oral presentations and the dynamism of person-environment relations. If such fundamental aspects of embodied sense-making are not also addressed, I contend, then raising students' awareness of different modes and their combinations may be insufficient for guiding students towards skilled practice.

As a prestigious academic genre, TED talks have received scholarly attention evaluating their potential as a pedagogical resource for teaching novice communicators about spoken language presentations (Cochcad, 2018; Wingrove, 2017). Studying the TED Talk genre multimodally has highlighted the centrality to this genre of gestures (García Pinar & Pallejá López, 2018; Mast, 2019, 2020; Valeiras-Jurado, 2019; Wu & Qu, 2020). TED Talk studies join other strands of research examining the role of gesture in oral presentations, including studies of gesture in assessed expository speeches for foreign language classes (Busà, 2015; Carney, 2013;

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Simon Harrison, '*Showing* as sense-making in oral presentations: The speech-gesture-slide interplay in TED talks by Professor Brian Cox', *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, Volume 53, September 2021, 101002. www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1475158521000461?via%3Dihub

What does this mean?

“Building on research into the visual semiotics of slides and the multimodality of oral presentations, this paper analyses the speech-gesture-slide interplay in TED talks and considers implications for teaching about gesture in the academic presentation genre. Using two examples from presentations by award-winning science communicator Professor Brian Cox, an enactive-ecological approach to embodied communication yields fine-grained descriptions of relations between spoken language, visuals on the slide, and gesture including depictions, eye-gaze shifts, posture, and footwork…”

What does this mean?

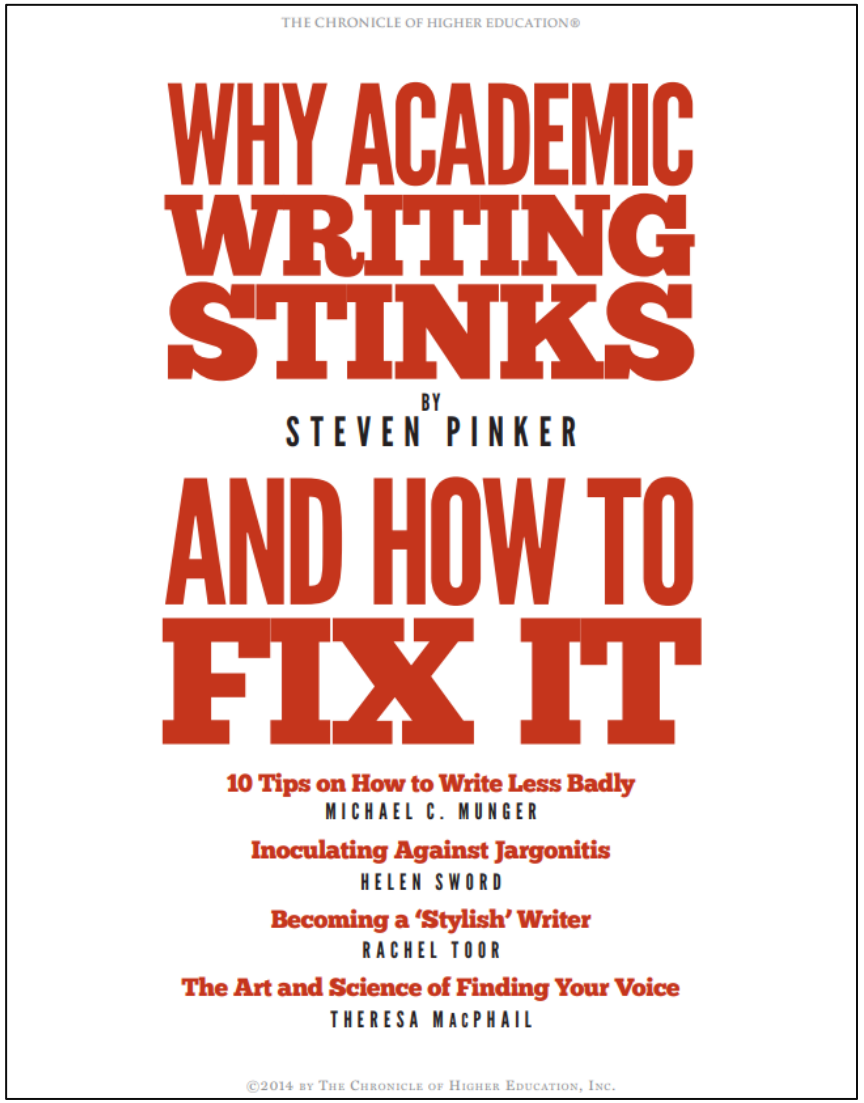
“…These demonstrate how the speaker's activity of showing slides is a person-environment dynamic of sense-making with the audience, and more specifically, how the speaker's speech-gesture-slide interplay animates, discloses, and decomposes aspects of the visuals on his slides while keeping his audience's attention intact. Whereas researchers of English for Academic Purposes have recommended raising students' awareness of multimodality or body language, this paper's findings suggest ways to sensitivise and engage students more directly and implicitly with the ecology of oral presentations.”

What does this mean?

Many speakers use body language and gestures (moving parts of the body) in coordination (together) with their slide presentations to emphasize their points and help listeners understand what they are saying.

What does this mean?

Body language and gestures can help listeners understand what you are saying.



The Chronicle of Higher Education, September 2014. https://grad.ncsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Why-Academics-Stink-at-Writing-1-2.pdf

Remember

Good (academic) writing is about:

- clarity
- simplicity
- readability

Remember

- Good (academic) writing is *not* about pretending you are clever by using complicated, difficult-to-understand words and sentences

- Good (academic) writing is about showing you understand and can share meaning with other people

Remember

- In fact, the cleverer you are, the more you can write simply and clearly for other people

Remember

- But making writing simpler can be difficult and take time

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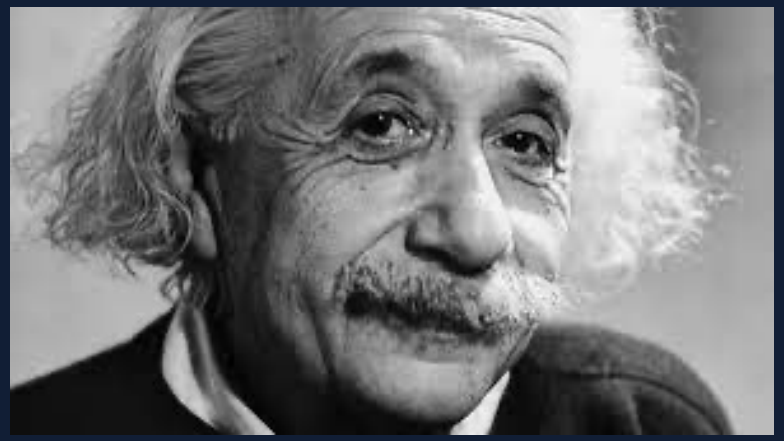
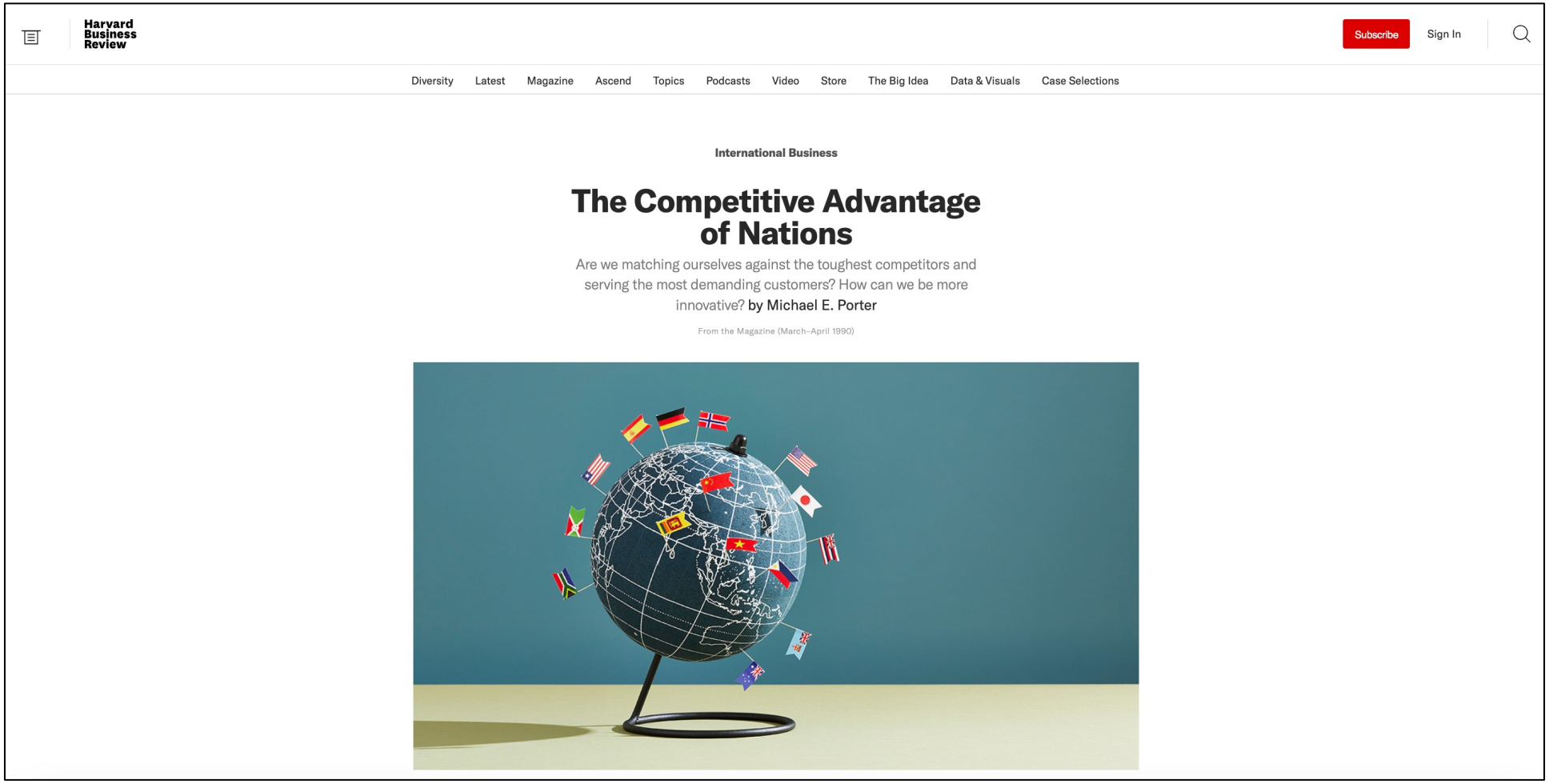


“Everything should be made as simple as possible, but no simpler”

- Albert Einstein (maybe)

Not all academic writing is bad!



Michael Porter, 'The Competitive Advantage of Nations', *Harvard Business Review*, 1990, https://hbr.org/1990/03/the-competitive-advantage-of-nations

Not all academic writing is bad!

[From the introduction:]

“National prosperity is created, not inherited. It does not grow out of a country’s natural endowments, its labor pool, its interest rates, or its currency’s value, as classical economics insists.

A nation’s competitiveness depends on the capacity of its industry to innovate and upgrade. Companies gain advantage against the world’s best competitors because of pressure and challenge. They benefit from having strong domestic rivals, aggressive home-based suppliers, and demanding local customers. …

Not all academic writing is bad!

These conclusions, the product of a four-year study of the patterns of competitive success in ten leading trading nations, contradict the conventional wisdom that guides the thinking of many companies and national governments – and that is pervasive today in the United States.

According to prevailing thinking, labor costs, interest rates, exchange rates, and economies of scale are the most potent determinants of competitiveness. …Among governments, there is a growing tendency to experiment with various policies intended to promote national competitiveness – from efforts to manage exchange rates to new measures to manage trade to policies to relax antitrust – which usually end up only undermining it.

Not all academic writing is bad!

These approaches, now much in favor in both companies and governments, are flawed. They fundamentally misperceive the true sources of competitive advantage. Pursuing them, with all their short-term appeal, will virtually guarantee that the United States – or any other advanced nation – never achieves real and sustainable competitive advantage.

We need a new perspective and new tools – an approach to competitiveness that grows directly out of an analysis of internationally successful industries, without regard for traditional ideology or current intellectual fashion. We need to know, very simply, what works and why. Then we need to apply it."

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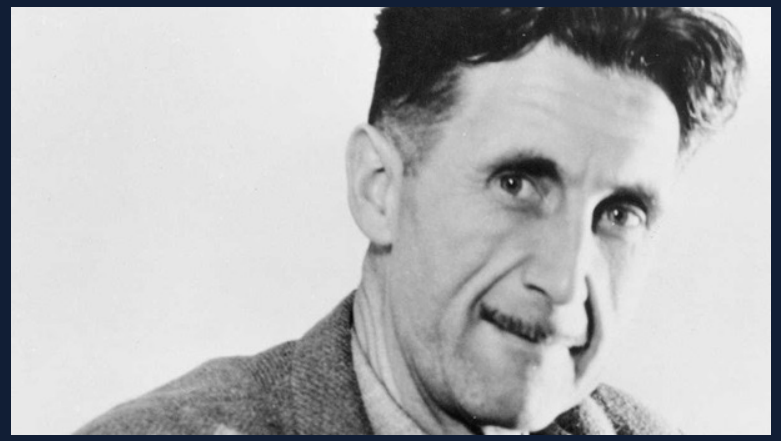
Plain style

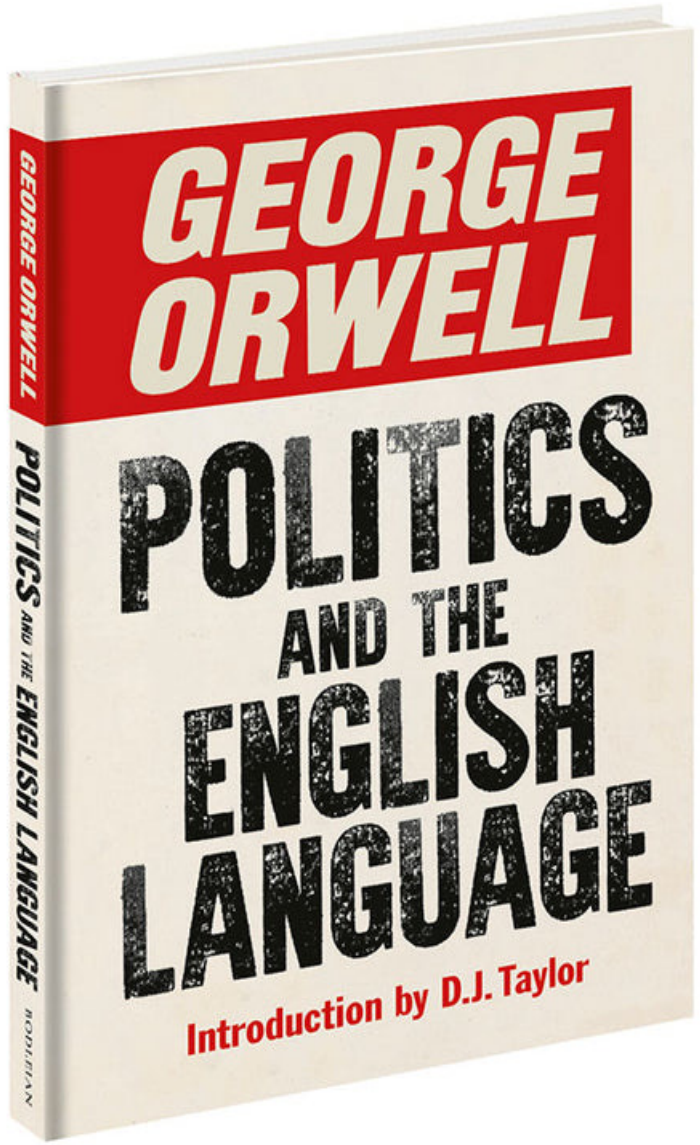
Plain style

- In English, ‘plain’ often means boring, dull, uninteresting
- But it can also mean clear, simple, uncomplicated



"But if thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought."

– George Orwell


GEORGE ORWELL
POLITICS AND THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE
GEORGE ORWELL
POLITICS AND THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE
Introduction by D.J. Taylor
BODLEIAN

George Orwell's writing rules

#1: Never use a metaphor, simile or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print.

#2: Never use a long word where a short one will do.

#3: If it is possible to cut out a word, always cut it out.

Metaphors and similes

- Metaphor - describes an object or action in a way that isn't literally true, but helps explain an idea or make a comparison (e.g. *Life is a journey*)
- Simile – a comparison of one thing with another thing of a different kind, used to make a description more vivid (e.g. *…as brave as a lion*)
- Figure of speech - a creative use of language to generate an effect

George Orwell's writing rules

#4: Never use the passive where you can use the active.

#5: Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.

#6: Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.

George Orwell's writing rules

"A scrupulous writer in every sentence that he writes will ask himself at least four questions, thus: *What am I trying to say? What words will express it? What image or idiom will make it clearer? Is this image fresh enough to have an effect?* And he will probably ask himself two more: *Could I put it more shortly? Have I said anything that is avoidably ugly?*"

So ask…

- What am I trying to say?
- How can I say it more clearly or effectively?

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Some ‘rules’ for plain style

Say it simply

High-quality learning environments are a necessary precondition for facilitation and enhancement of the ongoing learning process.

✓ Children need good schools if they are to learn properly.

Keep it brief (short)

With design-time controls, you control the look and feel of your Web pages in a WYSIWYG editor environment, and at the same time use all the functionality of SAS/IntrNet software in your Web pages.

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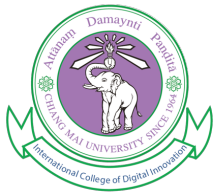

Use the active voice

To access the results that are returned by the query, use standard JDBC syntax.

✓ To access the results that the query returns, use standard JDBC syntax.

Be logical, literal, and precise

✓ This report compares the salaries of employees who have the same education level, grouped by department.

This report compares the salaries of different departments for employees who have the same education level.

Use verbs, not nouns

The committee came to an agreement to the effect that a study should be carried out by the consultants into the feasibility of the provision of national funding.

✓ The committee agreed that the consultants should study the feasibility of providing national funding.

Build towards new information

✓ When all applicants have submitted their project applications, the Committee will meet to decide how much ESF aid it will grant to each one.

Its decision on allocation of ESF assistance will be taken subsequent to receipt of all project applications at the Committee's meeting.

Use clear and consistent terminology (words)

Article, Blog, Blog post, Post, Piece, Entry

✓ Blog

Be honest

We use the data we have – for example, about the connections you make, the choices and settings you select, and what you share and do on and off our products – to personalize your experience.

✓ We will collect your personal information on and off the platform and give it to advertisers who market ads specifically for you.

- Facebook's Terms of Service

Jargon

Jargon: [noun]

1. technical terminology used by a special activity or group

2. obscure, often pretentious (flashy) language, typically long words

3. confusing, difficult language

‘Business speak’ jargon

- ballpark figure
- be proactive not reactive
- bring it to the table
- mission critical
- move the goalposts
- think outside the box
- blue-sky thinking
- pushing the envelope
- there is no 'I' in team
- knowledge base
- core competencies
- win-win situation
- client focus
- deliverables
- incentivise
- take it to the next level

Avoid jargon

The patient is being given positive-pressure ventilatory support.

✓ The patient is on a respirator.

Are these jargon?

- due diligence
- AWOL
- hard copy
- cache
- stat
- holistic
- magic bullet
- best practice

Jargon depends on context

- Jargon can be confusing and unnecessary…
- …or it can just be the correct words used in a particular professional or social context (situation) for a particular audience

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Exercise: Write eight (8) sentences on why it is important to write simply and how to do it

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The Academic Word List

Academic Word List

- The most used (non-everyday English) words in academic texts
- Not connected with any particular subject
- Developed by Averil Coxhead at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

Academic Word List

- 570 words in ‘word families’
- Divided into 10 sublists according to how frequent they are in academic writing
- See: https://academic-englishuk.com/awl/

Academic Word List – example

Group 1

sector · available · financial · process · individual · specific · principle · estimate · variables · method · data · research · contract · environment · export · source · assessment · policy · identified · create · derived · factors · procedure · definition · assume · theory · benefit · evidence · established · authority · major · issues · labour · occur · economic · involved · percent · interpretation · consistent · income · structure · legal · concept · formula · section · required · constitutional · analysis · distribution · function · area · approach · role · legislation · indicate · response · period · context · significant · similar ·

Exercise: AWL gap fill tests

Complete two of the tests at:

www.englishvocabularyexercises.com/academic-word-list/index.html

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Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing

- Paraphrasing is putting writing in your own words
- (Summarizing is more comprehensive and often keeps the wording of the original)
- But paraphrasing is more like what you will use in your actual essays
- Paraphrasing should also help you to avoid accidental plagiarism (cheating)

Paraphrasing

- Paraphrasing is not just changing a few words
- This can still be seen as plagiarism

Paraphrasing - example

Original passage:

Students frequently overuse direct quotation in taking notes, and as a result they overuse quotations in the final [research] paper. Probably only about 10% of your final manuscript should appear as directly quoted matter. Therefore, you should strive to limit the amount of exact transcribing of source materials while taking notes. Lester, James D. Writing Research Papers. 2nd ed. (1976): 46-47.

Paraphrasing - example

Changed only slightly – could still be plagiarism:

Students often use too many direct quotations when they take notes, resulting in too many of them in the final research paper. In fact, probably only about 10% of the final copy should consist of directly quoted material. So it is important to limit the amount of source material copied while taking notes.

Paraphrasing - example

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Paraphrasing - example

Better paraphrase:

In research papers students often quote excessively, failing to keep quoted material down to a desirable level. Since the problem usually originates during note taking, it is essential to minimize the material recorded verbatim (Lester 46-47).

Paraphrasing - example

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Better paraphrase:

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Chunking method

Lots of | students who are studying abroad | hope | formally

Many | international university students | want | a more formalized | process of social interaction | with American students.

to communicate and make friends | local students

Lots of students who are studying abroad in U.S. universities hope they could have more opportunities to communicate and make friends with local students formally (Thomas and Chui, 2010, p.37).

Exercise: Paraphrasing

Paraphrase the following sentence:

A paraphrase (or paraphrasing) is a restatement of another piece of writing with new words or phrases while keeping the same meaning, usually to modify the language or simply avoid plagiarism.

Exercise: Paraphrasing

Paraphrase the following sentence:

The student requested that the professor excuses her absence, but the professor refused.

Exercise: Paraphrasing

Paraphrase the following sentence:

The International College of Digital Innovation provides presessional English classes. They help non-native speakers of English practice their English writing and speaking skills.

Exercise: Paraphrasing

Paraphrase the following sentence:

“There is nothing inhuman about an intelligent machine; it is indeed an expression of those superb intellectual capabilities that only human beings, of all the creatures on our planet, now possess.”

(from ‘In Defense of Robots’, by Carl Sagan)

When to quote directly?

- Specific or notable definition, or law/policy
- To show support for your point, or
- To present a position/argument for critique
- Particularly effective or succinct (short) phrasing
- Meaning would be lost if paraphrased

- …but don’t overdo it!

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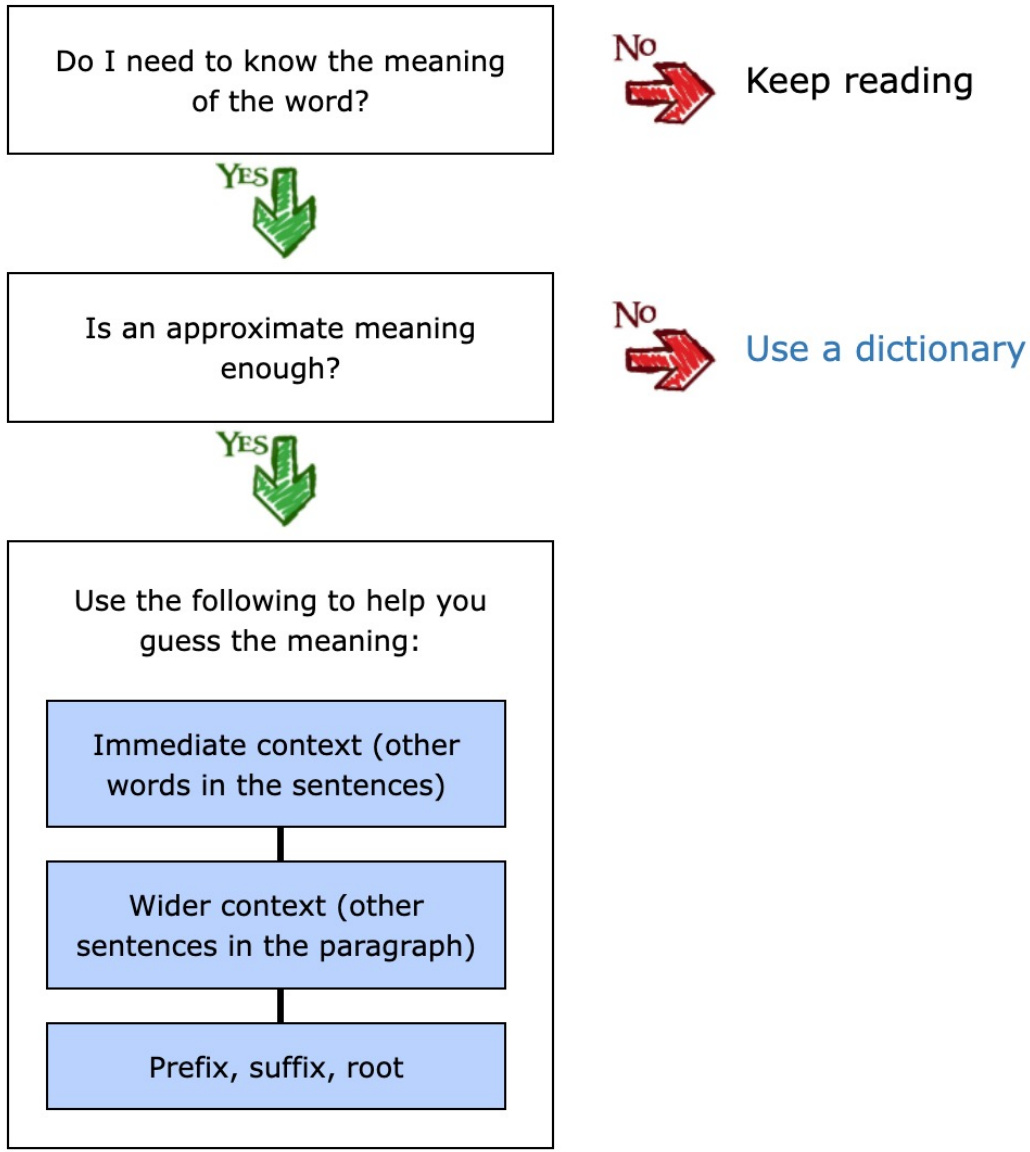
Dealing with unknown words

Dealing with unknown words



Dealing with unknown words

Consider the following paragraph:

Although the company's income from sales was higher than expected, its high costs in the form of salaries and other overheads put it in a disadvantageous position. This was one of the main reasons why the company folded. This put all two hundred of its employees out of work.

Immediate context: probably negative, because it relates to 'high costs', and the sentence begins with 'although'

Wider context: again, probably negative (employees being 'out of work')

Using prefix, suffix, root: This word can be broken down into three parts: dis- (prefix); advantage (root); -ous (suffix). So again, probably negative (negative prefix dis-, and opposite to the root word, advantage)

Exercise: Unknown words

I don't wish to impede your progress. I was merely trying to make sure you understand the instructions.

✓ Slow

Improve

Exaggerate

Exercise: Unknown words

She showed great prowess in the engineering competition and won the first prize.

Anxiety

Patience

✓ Skill

Exercise: Unknown words

The teacher admonished her for talking in class when she should have been listening.

✓ Criticized

Praised

Listened

Exercise: Unknown words

Notwithstanding his poor performance in the exam, overall he had done okay in the course.

Because of

✓ In spite of

Irrelevant to

Conclusion

Re-cap:

- Parts of speech
- Criticisms of academic writing
- Plain style
- Jargon
- Academic Word List
- How to paraphrase
- Dealing with unknown words