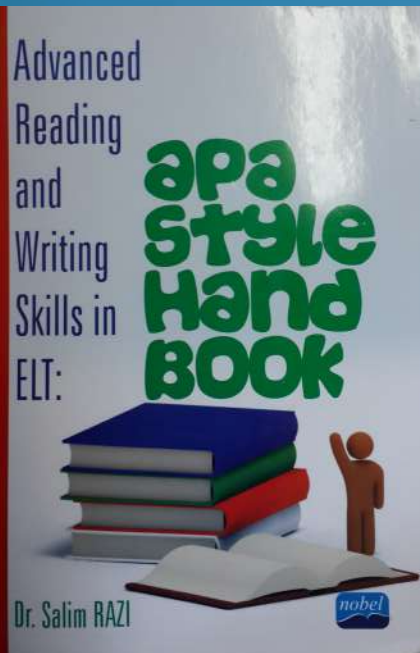




Introduction to Academic Writing

COMU ELT Department

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Outline



- Academic writing
- Choosing the right academic level
- Level of formality
- Types of academic writing
- Characteristics of informal and formal writing
- Activities

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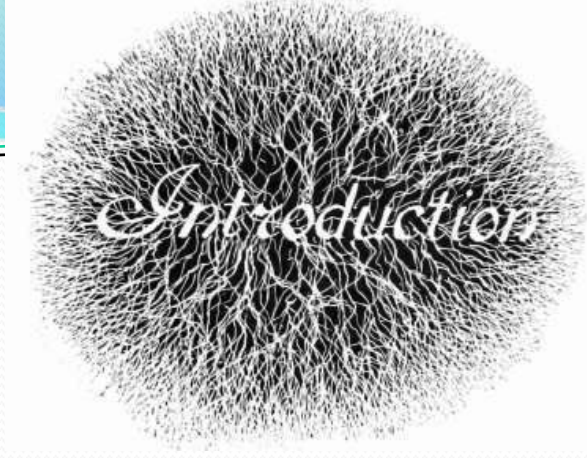


Citations Received



Conference
Organizations

Introduction to Academic Writing



- Do you talk to your close friends and lecturers in the same style? If not,
 - What are the differences?
 - What might be the reasons of these differences?

When the teacher asks a question and you're trying to avoid eye contact

Some more questions



- What kind of texts do you write in L1 & FL?
- What about the differences in writing? If there are differences in relation with our style in spoken language, do you think there are also differences in different types of written texts?

What does it mean to sound academic?



- The style of the text differs according to its purpose:
 - formal or
 - informal.
- Consider your readers:
 - Who is going to read my paper?
 - What is their aim in reading it?
- Academic papers are formal.
- Their aim is informing readers rather than entertaining.

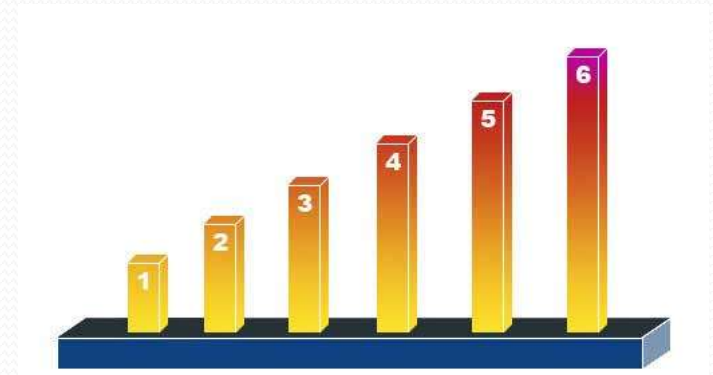
Choosing the right academic level



- Various styles both in spoken and written language.
- Compare talking to your friends and to a stranger.
- Authors:
 - formal language: a paper for an academic journal.
 - informal language: if the text is addressed to a friend.
- As in informal writing, there are various levels of formality in academic writing.
- To decide the right level of formality, consider:
 - your purpose in writing and
 - your readers.

Level of formality

- *Put them into order of formality:*
 - Newspaper article
 - Email to a friend
 - Mail to your aunt
 - Scientific article
 - Diary



Level of formality: Sliding scale



diary

email to
a friend

mail to
your aunt

newspaper
article

scientific
article

Exercise:

Put the following in order of formality, starting with the most *informal* and ending with the most *formal*:

- Speech to the School Governors
- Magazine article for teenagers
- Speech to your year group
- Letter to a shop manager
- Advice for parents
- Analytical report for a magazine

Answers



- **Speech to your year group:**
 - *should be lively and a bit informal, as you know them.*
- **Article for teenagers:**
 - *still lively but a bit more formal, as you don't know them.*
- **Advice for parents:**
 - *you don't know them, but advice can put people off if it's too formal.*
- **Speech to the School Governors:**
 - *quite formal, although they may know you.*
- **Letter to a shop manager:**
 - *formal; you don't know this person at all.*
- **Analytical report:**
 - *also formal as you don't know your audience and this is a detached form of writing.*

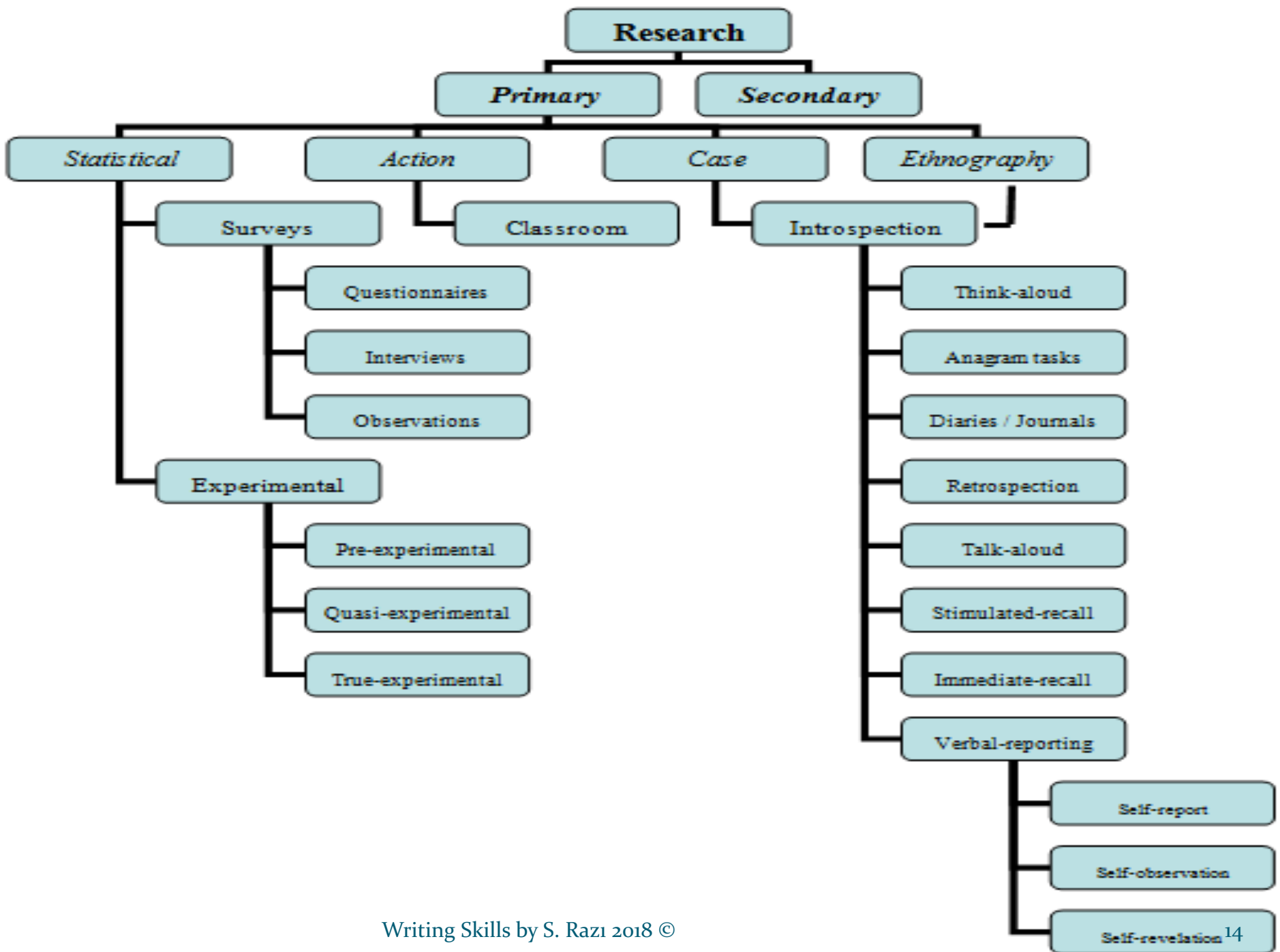
Examples of academic writing



- Your assignments at university will be located towards the formal end of the scale.
- Use a formal academic style.
- Examples of academic writing:
 - Essays such as informing, discussing, and/or evaluating;
 - Research reports; and
 - Reports of case studies.

Other types of academic writing

- There are also some other types of academic writing.
- Examine the following figure.
- It demonstrates various types of educational research studies under the two basic categories of primary and secondary research.
- It indicates that almost all types of research studies appear as primary research and there are various ways of obtaining data and presenting results.



Characteristics of informal writing



- Informal language can be regarded as spoken language.
- Speakers feel relaxed specifically about grammatical rules when they talk to other people.
- Spoken language is less complex than written one.
- Like spoken language, informal writing also reflects such relaxations.
- Use of personal style,
- Use of colloquial English,
- Use of short forms
- It is easier to persuade your readers in informal style.

Characteristics of formal writing

- Usually, formal language is the written one.
- Use of impersonal style
- Use of non-colloquial English
- Use of passive voice
- No use of short forms
 - In quotations they are acceptable.
- Use of complex sentences in well-developed paragraphs.
- It should not become incomprehensible because of the complex sentences.



Characteristics of academic writing



- Academic writing has various characteristic features in relation with the characteristics of formal writing.

Referring to other sources

- Refer to the other sources to persuade your readers:
 - paraphrase an idea,
 - summarize it, and
 - sometimes directly quote from the original source.

Sample paraphrase

- The very important role of background knowledge on reading comprehension is noted by Anderson (1999) that readers' comprehension depends on their ability to relate the information that they receive from the text with their background knowledge.

Sample quotation

- According to Swales (1990, p. 83), background knowledge consists of two main components of “our assimilated direct experiences of life and its manifold activities, and our assimilated verbal experiences and encounters”.

Focussing on the issue



Focus

- Never focus on the author in academic writing.
- Avoid the use personal pronouns such as 'I' and 'we'.
- If you are delivered a topic on your personal opinion; then, of course, you will need to use 'I'.
- When you focus on the topic, show that you have researched the topic from different viewpoints before you argue for a particular view.
- Keep your writing objective and impersonal to make it more convincing.

Consider two samples

- **Sample 1**

In this essay, I will discuss the differences between the two methods of ‘Suggestopedia’ and ‘Total Physical Response’.

- *Presents the differences by focusing on the author.*

- **Sample 2**

The present study aims to explain the differences between the two methods of ‘Suggestopedia’ and ‘Total Physical Response’.

- *Directly focuses on the issue without dealing with the author.*

Activity: Focusing on the issue

- The following text is an invitation for a conference.
- The author focuses on himself/herself.
- Find examples from the text to support this.
- Focus on the issue rather than the author by transforming the text.



The text

On 27-28 April 2012, we are very proud to be organizing the 7th International ELT Research Conference with the chosen theme of 'Philosophical perspectives in ELT research' in Çanakkale, Turkey. We organize the conference under the auspices of Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Faculty of Education, ELT Department. Our aim is to provide the highest calibre of ELT research by means of keynote speakers, a large number of scholars and presenters, and scientific and cultural exchange within a friendly, informative and stimulating atmosphere. We encourage researchers to submit their proposals for oral presentations, workshops, and poster presentations.

Suggested answer



The 7th International ELT Research Conference will be organized with the chosen theme of 'Philosophical perspectives in ELT research' on 27-28 April 2012 in Çanakkale, Turkey. The conference is organised under the auspices of Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Faculty of Education, ELT Department. The 7th International ELT Research Conference aims to provide the highest calibre of ELT research by means of keynote speakers, a large number of scholars and presenters, and scientific and cultural exchange within a friendly, informative and stimulating atmosphere. Proposals for oral presentations, workshops, and poster presentations are invited.

Use of passive forms

- As the author aims to focus on the issue rather than himself/herself, it is therefore necessary not to focus on who is doing the action, but on who is experiencing it.
- Then, authors have an intention of using the passive voice in academic writing since it allows them to do this.

Sample: Use of passive forms

- Another vital characteristic of good readers is indicated as automatised usage of bottom-up processes; therefore, developing automaticity is the essence of becoming a good reader (Paran, 1997) to be able identify the words and language structures quickly (Hedge, 2000).

Use objective language

- Since you are expected to report facts in academic papers, you should use objective language in your paper which is free of bias.
- To do this, apart from avoiding focusing on the author, you should also avoid the use of judgemental and emotive language and extreme adjectives in your paper.

Sample: Use objective language

- *Sample*

The **chair** of ELT department will announce the decision next week.

- *In preference to*

The **chairman** of ELT department will announce his decision next week.

Precise vs. vague meanings

- Integrate words with precise meanings.
- Avoid words with vague meanings since they are more colloquial.

Sample informal sentences

- The present study aims to **look at** the issue in relation with behaviouristic point of view.
- The author **says** that young children are more advantageous in foreign language learning in comparison to adults.
- Grabe and Stoller (2002) **talk about** readers who follow a mechanical pattern by creating a piece-by-piece mental translation of the information in the text.

Sample formal sentences

- The present study aims to **examine** the issue in relation with behaviouristic point of view.
- The author **maintains** that young children are more advantageous in foreign language learning in comparison to adults.
- Grabe and Stoller (2002) **argue** readers who follow a mechanical pattern by creating a piece-by-piece mental translation of the information in the text.

Avoid using contraction

- You must not use contractions; instead use full forms.

- *Sample*

In most instances, readers do not realize that there are strategies which make their learning process easier.

- *In preference to*

In most instances, readers don't realize that there're strategies which make their learning process easier.

Avoid using slang, jargon, and clichés

- Do not include slang, jargon, and clichés.
- When you use slang and jargon, you restrict the comprehension by a certain group of people.
- **Slang:** deals with colourful expressions.
- **Jargon:** deals with technical terms.
- **Clichés:** you integrate over-used items.

Samples

- *Sample use of slang (the use of a pig in pocket)*

There seems to be a pig in the Prime Minister's pocket as he devotes so little money on education.

- *Sample use of jargon (the assumption of knowing STM and LTM)*

Chastain (1988) calls attention to the significance of converting information from the STM to the LTM; otherwise the information in the STM vanishes in a maximum of twenty-second period.

- *Sample use of cliché (the use of work like a beaver)*

The participants in the study worked like beavers.

Use of abbreviations

- Abbreviations must not affect your reader's comprehension.
- Use the full term which is followed by the abbreviation in parentheses when you use it for the first time.

Sample

CALLA (the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach) was developed by Chamot and O'Malley (1987) and it is an instructional model either for second or foreign language learners in which cognitive theory plays an essential role. The initial aim in designing **CALLA** is assisting intermediate and advanced students at upper elementary and secondary schools who are not proficient users of English.

Standard abbreviations

- If you are using standard abbreviations such as units of measurement; then, you do not need to write out what they stand for in parentheses.

Samples: Standard abbreviations

- By taking an online test you can get your **IQ** score quickly.
- ‘IQ’ represents ‘Intelligence Quotient’
- All the participants in the pilot study were coming from other cities with a minimum distance of 100**km**.
- ‘km’ represents ‘kilometre’
- There is no need to explain what they stand for.

Use of periods & spaces

- Do not use periods or spaces in the abbreviations.

- *Sample*

Reading was once considered the most essential language skill in language classes since many **EFL** learners rarely had the chance to speak English in their daily lives due to difficulties in travelling.

- Abbreviate English as a foreign language as **EFL** but not as **E.F.L.**

Use of markers and linking devices

- Use markers in order to reflect their attitudes towards the authors' of other sources.
- They also assist your readers to understand the organization of the text and connect ideas across sentences by providing explicitness.

Sample use of markers

The reason in reading a text might be **firstly**, gathering information or fulfilling curiosity; **secondly**, receiving instructions for executing some duties; **thirdly**, taking part in a game; **fourthly**, corresponding either in a formal or an informal style; **fifthly**, getting information about when and where an activity is taking place; **sixthly**, learning what is happening; and **seventhly**, just for pleasure.

Sample use of linking devices

Apart from the above mentioned specific approaches of teaching reading, it might be interesting to scrutinize approaches of language teaching to evaluate how they appraise teaching the skill of reading. **For example**, although readers meet with difficult texts early in Grammar-Translation Approach (Celce-Murcia, 2001), little attention is paid to the skill of reading as the contents of texts are disregarded.

Contrary to this, Celce-Murcia maintains that Direct Approach allows proficient readers to read literary texts for comprehension and pleasure. **However**, she indicates that Reading Approach is different from all other approaches since it encourages reading from the beginning with specifically adapted texts and considered to be mostly beneficial for those with practical and academic aims. **Then**, the most essential aim in this approach is regarded to be reading comprehension.

Avoid extremeness

- Words with extreme meanings might be irritating and they may also cause bias.
- Avoid using such words.

- *Sample (use of overwhelmingly successful)*

Participants in the experimental group were **overwhelmingly** successful.

Use of 'prove'

- Avoid using 'prove'.
- In social sciences, it is almost impossible to prove a theory by the help of a single study.
- Instead, there should be an interaction among several studies which assists researchers to draw conclusions.
- Consider the two sample sentences in the following examples.

Sample sentences

- *Sample preferred sentence*

The evidence **suggests** that female learners are superior to male learners in terms of reading comprehension.

- *In preference to*

The evidence **proves** that female learners are superior to male learners in terms of reading comprehension.

An essay should have an argument

- Before you write, read related articles and reference books.
- Integrate your argument into your essay.
- Your paper should answer a question or several questions (research questions).
- For an assigned topic by the lecturer; then, most probably you will need to prepare your own question(s) in relation with the topic.
- While you are answering your question(s), you need to prove something.
- Developing a thesis statement is the most important step to prove something.
- While developing your thesis statement, try to provide a reason and evidence and then try to convince your readers by providing apt examples from the sources you read.
- You can do this by backing up your points with reasons and examples.
- Also think about the counter ideas about your statement and try to provide responses to such prospective questions.

Sample

At a glance, when the definition of reading is taken into consideration, the main reason to read can be considered simply as to receive information. However, Noda (2003) maintains the insufficiency of this response and mentions people who read the same story for several times. Therefore, their reason in reading the same story for multiple times might be more than gathering information. According to her, in each reading, readers integrate the story with their experiences; and since experiences have a tendency to change, readers' interpretation of the text in different times can be different. That is what Mori (1995) calls as 'social dialog' where readers interact with the text individually by taking their background knowledge into consideration. It is in parallel with Wallace's (1992, p. 39) notions of reading as she points out that "[t]exts do not 'contain' meaning; rather they 'have potential for' meaning".

Explanation of the sample

- The author starts the paragraph by considering the general tendency about the aim in reading.
- The thesis statement of the paragraph is ‘reason in reading the same story for multiple times might be more than gathering information’.
- The author mentions an idea which might be regarded as opposite to the previous one.
- By referring to Noda, the author aims to support his claim.
- Moreover, the author refers to a second researcher to persuade his readers.
- With reference to the second researcher, he is able to provide the terminology of ‘social dialog’ in relation with the topic.

Activity: Discriminating a formal essay from an informal one

- The following texts are both about **extensive** and **intensive** reading.
- One is written in formal, the other in informal style.
- Identify formal and informal ones
- Justify your reasons by giving examples from the texts.

- I think, both Hedge (2000) and Day and Bamford (1998) are successful in drawing a general picture about extensive reading. As you know, there're some reading problems in extensive reading classes. In order to overcome them, it's necessary to employ some reading strategies. I agree with Hedge who points out that intensive reading may assist extensive reading. Because by the help of a teacher in the classroom, readers can be familiar with reading strategies.

- Both Hedge (2000) and Day and Bamford (1998) succeed to draw a general picture about extensive reading. However, extensive reading classes require employing some reading strategies by readers to overcome the problems they encounter during reading. Moreover, Hedge indicates that intensive reading may assist extensive reading since readers are able to familiarize themselves with reading strategies under the guidance of a teacher in the classroom.

Use formal words

- While writing academic papers, you are expected to use formal words.
- As formal words are single words not multi-words, you should avoid using phrasal verbs and colloquialisms.
- Also formal words are longer than informal ones.
- You can check formal informal equivalences of words in dictionaries.

*sizeable / stimulating / minor / significant / questionable / senior /
unacceptable / controversial / disappointing / affordable*

- Pollution is a significant (*big*) problem in Hong Kong.
- Living conditions in some housing developments are unacceptable (*horrible*).
- The influence of computer games on young people is a controversial (*hot*) topic.
- Mark's performance in the examination was disappointing (*bad*).
- She received a sizeable (*big*) sum of money from the insurance company.
- Chan's (2001) method of investigation is questionable (*wrong*).
- The company's affordable (*cheap*) products have proved to be very popular.
- A number of senior (*old*) members of staff have left in recent years.
- Professor Yau's new book is very stimulating (*good*).
- This is a minor (*small*) detail, which I think we can discuss another time.

Activity: Transforming informal texts into formal ones

- There are two similar exercises in this activity.
- What follows is a paragraph written in informal English.
- You are expected to transform this informal argumentative text into a formal argumentative paragraph.
- Remember the following main conclusion of the paragraph while you are transforming the paragraph into a formal one.
- When you finish the first exercise, examine the suggested answer and move to the second one.

Exercise 1:

***Main conclusion:* Reading comprehension is essential in the reading process.**

- I think, the skill of reading goes beyond the ability of simply recognizing letters and sounding them. That's why I regard the essential step in the skill of reading as the comprehension of the material. Similar to my ideas, Goodman (1988, p. 11) also says two views on reading; with the first one he accepts it as “matching sounds to letters”, and with the second one he indicates that it's a mystery, that “nobody knows how reading works”. I suppose Goodman was under the sway of MacLeish (1968, p. 43) who asserted that “readers of all written languages are ‘getting’ sounds from the printed page”. But I think researchers can succeed to discover the mystery of reading by the help of advances in recent reading research.

Suggested answer



- The skill of reading goes beyond the ability of simply recognizing letters and sounding them. Thus, the essential step in the skill of reading is the comprehension of the material. Relatively, Goodman (1988, p. 11) proposes two views on reading; with the first one he accepts it as “matching sounds to letters”, and with the second one he indicates that it is a mystery that “nobody knows how reading works”. In a probable manner, Goodman was under the sway of MacLeish (1968, p. 43) who asserted that “readers of all written languages are ‘getting’ sounds from the printed page”. However, advances in recent reading research enable researchers to discover this mystery.

Exercise 2: *Main conclusion*

Extensive reading aims to develop avid readers.

- As I said before, extensive reading aims to develop avid readers. Encouraging readers to read lengthy texts after school must be a good idea. Chastain (1988) also thinks in this way on reading lengthy texts as she considers them much easier to read than the shorter ones. To support extensive reading, Hedge (2000, p. 219) recommends reading teachers to allocate short interview sessions. In these interview sessions, teachers can discuss the books that their students are reading. Hedge indicates that teachers can conduct interview sessions also in the mother tongue with beginner learners. But with more proficient readers it's essential to verify the use of English in order to stimulate the amount of exposure to the target language.

Suggested answer



- As stated previously, extensive reading aims to develop avid readers. Therefore, encouraging readers to read lengthy texts after school might be regarded as a good idea. This is also in parallel with Chastain's (1988) ideas on reading lengthy texts as she considers them much easier to read than the shorter ones. Similarly, to support extensive reading, Hedge (2000, p. 219) recommends reading teachers to allocate short interview sessions in which they can discuss the books that their students are reading. Hedge indicates that such sessions can be conducted also in the mother tongue with beginner learners; yet, with more proficient readers it is essential to verify the use of English in order to stimulate the amount of exposure to the target language.

Use formal subjects

- Use 'there', 'it', and 'one' as a subject.
- 'One' is used as a formal equivalence of 'you'.

- *There as a subject*

There is a misuse of the term.

- *It as a subject*

It is essential to be aware of the different aims between reading various types of texts.

- *One as a subject*

One needs to visualize the interaction between the author of the text and its reader to understand this complex process.

Task: Changing an informal argumentative text into a formal argumentative paragraph

- The following text is written in an informal tone. Rewrite it in a more formal tone
- **Main conclusion:** *The government should introduce tighter gun controls*
- Jack Spring thinks that everyone should have the right to own a gun but I don't agree with him. People like him think that the government is infringing our democratic rights when it restricts gun ownership. They think that most people who own guns are responsible citizens who keep the guns for sport and recreation. They also think that the police are unable to stop violent crime and we need guns to protect ourselves. But I think he's wrong. I agree with Josephine Bluff who thinks that guns increase the amount of violent crime in the community. I also think that human life is worth more than sporting shooters right to go shooting on the weekend. And I also think that many of the guns that are kept around the house end being used in violent domestic disputes or teenage suicides.

There are a number of ways you could order the arguments in your answer. You are correct if you:

- have placed the arguments that oppose the main conclusion in the first half of your paragraph
- have used problematising phrases to mark the opposing statements as debatable and possibly untrue
- have used a contrasting connective, such as "However", to mark where you are shifting from arguments that oppose your main conclusion to arguments that support your main conclusion
- have used listing connectives, such as "Moreover", "Furthermore", and "In addition" to list the arguments that support your main conclusion

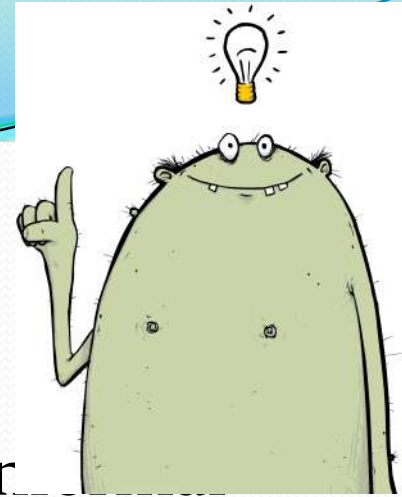
The following is one suggested translation of the informal text into a formal paragraph:

Suggested answer



- Main conclusion: *The government should introduce tighter gun controls*
- *Jack Spring maintains that* everyone should have the right to own a gun. *This position asserts that* the government is infringing our democratic rights when it restricts gun ownership. Most people who own guns, *therefore this argument goes*, are responsible citizens who keep the guns for sport and recreation. *It is further contended that* the police are unable to stop violent crime and we need guns to protect ourselves. *However, as Josephine Bluff states*, guns increase the amount of violent crime in the community. *Moreover*, human life is worth more than sporting shooters right to go shooting on the weekend. *In addition*, many of the guns that are kept around the house end being used in violent domestic disputes or teenage suicides.

Conclusion



- Academic writing has some distinctive characteristics which make it different from informal writing.
- Remember the differences between informal and formal styles of writing.
- Practise basic characteristics of academic writing.
- Next week you will read some basic information on the process of reading.

THE
END