

Academic English

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Foundation Course,

LICS, RUC

Definition of the academic genre

- It is **documentation**
 - of an **examination or a study**
 - of an academically relevant **problem**
- by means of **academic theories and methods**
- with the aim of **convincing peers of the accuracy** of the study's **results and conclusions**
- in a **presentation** which is **acceptable within the academic discourse community**

Features of academic English

Academic English is **linear**, which means it has **one central point or theme with every part contributing to the main line of argument**, without digressions or repetitions. Its objective is to **inform** rather than entertain. There are **seven main features of academic English** that are often discussed. Academic writing is to some extent: complex, formal, objective, explicit, concise, hedged, and responsible.

Complexity

Academic English is relatively more complex than ordinary English. It may consist of **longer, specialised words**, it is more **compact** and it has a **more varied vocabulary**.

Example

Spoken:

Because the technology has improved, its less risky than it used to be when you install them at the same time, and it doesn't cost so much either.

Written:

Improvements in technology have reduced the risks and high costs associated with simultaneous installation.

Formality

Academic English is relatively formal. In general this means that in your projects you should avoid **colloquial words and expressions and contractions.**

Examples

Informal

Begin

Stop

Show

Need

Etc.....

Formal

Commence

Cease

Demonstrate

Require

Objectivity

Academic English is in general objective rather than personal. This means that the main **emphasis should be on the information** that you want to give **and the arguments** you want to make, rather than you.

Explicitness / clarity

Academic English is explicit **about the relationships in what is said or written.**

Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the speaker or writer to make it **clear** to the listener or reader **how the various parts of what is said or written are related.**

These connections can be made explicit by the use of different **signalling words.**

Examples

- For example,...
- Similarly,...
- However,...
- In addition,....
- Accordingly,...
- In most cases,...
- Admittedly,...
- Etc.....

Conciseness

Academic language consists of **tight, precise and straightforward sentence structures** avoiding **wordiness, unnecessary repetitions, empty and inflated phrases.**

Examples

Wordy sentence:

At **what point in time** will a downturn in the stock market have **a really serious effect** on **the social life of people as a whole**?

Concise sentence:

When will a downturn in the stock market **affect society**?

Hedging

In any kind of academic discourse, it is necessary to **make decisions about your stance** on a particular subject, or **the strength of the claims** you are making. Different subjects prefer to do this in different ways by using a kind of '**cautious language**', e.g. 'often', 'sometimes', 'usually', 'it might be suggested that', 'there is every hope that', etc...

1. seem, tend, look like, appear to be, think, believe, doubt, be sure, indicate, suggest
2. believe, assume, suggest
3. will, must, would, may, might, could
4. often, sometimes, usually
5. certainly, definitely, clearly, probably, possibly, perhaps, conceivably,
6. certain, definite, clear, probable, possible
7. assumption, possibility, probability
8. It could be the case that...
It might be suggested that...
There is every hope that...
9. It may be possible to obtain...
It is important to develop...
It is useful to study...

Responsibility

In academic discourse you must be responsible for, and must be able to provide **evidence and justification** for any **claims** you make. You are also responsible for **demonstrating an understanding of any source texts** you use.

Therefore use **summaries, paraphrasing** and a **citation system** to acknowledge your sources.

Useful resources

Using English for Academic Purposes: A Guide for Students in Higher Education - <http://www.uefap.com/>

Academic Phrasebank

<http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>

Academic Word List

<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/~alzsh3/acvocab/>

Top-quality English-English dictionaries:

Oxford English Dictionary - <http://www.oed.com/>

Macmillan Dictionary - <http://www.macmillandictionary.com/>

Links for relevant language resources

http://www.ruc.dk/lics_en/english_academic/Useful_links/