

Academic English: Writing a Research Article

Arts, Humanities and Law

Academic English: Writing a Research Article

Arts, Humanities and Law

Catherine Verguts



ACADEMIA
PRESS

Academia Press
Eekhout 2
9000 Gent
Tel. 09/233 80 88 Fax 09/233 14 09
Info@academiapress.be www.academiapress.be

De uitgaven van Academia Press worden verdeeld door:

(België)
J. Story-Scientia bvba Wetenschappelijke Boekhandel
Sint-Kwintensberg 87
9000 Gent
Tel. 09/225 57 57 Fax 09/233 14 09
Info@story.be www.story.be

(Nederland)
Ef & Ef Media
Postbus 404
3500 AK Utrecht
info@efenefmedia.nl www.efenefmedia.nl

Opmaak: Le Pur et L'Impur

Catherine Verguts
Academic English: Writing a Research Article
Arts, Humanities and Law
Gent, Academia Press, 2011, XII + 307 p.

This book belongs to a series of five books for doctoral students and researchers from different disciplines:

- Arts, Humanities and Law (Catherine Verguts)
- (Bioscience) Engineering (Leen De Boom and Katrien L.B. Deroey)
- Life Sciences and Medicine (Katrien L.B. Deroey, in collaboration with Dominique Neyts)
- Natural Sciences (Leen De Boom)
- Social and Behavioural Sciences (Catherine Verguts)

A teacher's manual is available upon request.

ISBN 978 90 382 1814 4
D/2011/4804/164
NUR1 632
U 1642

Niets uit deze uitgave mag worden verveelvoudigd en/of vermenigvuldigd door middel van druk, fotokopie, microfilm of op welke andere wijze dan ook, zonder voorafgaande schriftelijke toestemming van de uitgever.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXERCISES	IX
INTRODUCTION: YOU AS A WRITER	XI
Unit 1: ACADEMIC STYLE	1
1.1 Managing Tone	2
1.2 Enhancing flow	13
Unit 2: ACADEMIC VOCABULARY	27
2.1 Lexical accuracy	28
2.2 Spelling	30
2.3 Consulting the Internet during the writing process	37
Unit 3: LITERATURE REVIEWS	39
3.1 Citational patterns	40
3.2 Reporting verbs	44
Unit 4: INTRODUCTIONS	51
4.1 Framing the research question	55
4.2 Highlighting a need	58
4.3 Presenting your research	62
Unit 5: ARGUMENTATION AND EVALUATION	67
5.1 Argumentation	68
5.2 Evaluation	80
Unit 6: DESCRIPTIONS	89
6.1 Describing methods and results	90
6.2 Describing objects and works of art	96
6.3 Describing temporal relationships	101

Unit 7: CONCLUSIONS	107
7.1. Consolidating your research space	110
7.2. Indicating limitations of the study	115
7.3. Recommending action or further research	119
Unit 8: ABSTRACTS, TITLES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	123
8.1. Abstracts	124
8.2. Titles	129
8.3. Acknowledgements	131
REFERENCE SECTION	133
Unit 1: ACADEMIC STYLE	135
1.1. Managing tone	136
1.2. Improving conciseness	143
1.3. Enhancing flow	146
Unit 2: ACADEMIC VOCABULARY	157
2.1. Lexical accuracy	158
2.2. Consulting the Internet during the writing process	161
Unit 3: ACADEMIC GENRES	163
3.1. Acknowledgements	164
3.2. Titles	165
3.3. Abstracts	166
3.4. Literature reviews	168
3.5. Introductions	177
3.6. Methods	183
3.7. Argumentation	185
3.8. Descriptions	187
3.9. Conclusions	194
3.10. Referee reports	198

Unit 4: GRAMMAR REFERENCE SECTION	201
4.1. Adjectives and adverbs	202
4.2. Adverbial position	203
4.3. Conditionals	205
4.4. Linking expressions	207
4.5. Parallel Constructions	209
4.6. Participle clauses	211
4.7. Passive Voice	212
4.8. Punctuation	215
4.9. Quantifiers	224
4.10. Relative clauses	225
4.11. Spelling	230
4.12. Tenses	232
4.13. Verb agreement	234
UNIT 5: WRITING AIDS	237
5.1. Books on academic writing	238
5.2. General websites on academic writing	240
5.3. Search engines and dictionaries	240
5.4. Journal style guides	241
5.5. Grammar books	242
5.6. Editing / revising / proofreading	243
KEY	247
INDEX	293
SOURCES	297

EXERCISES

INTRODUCTION: YOU AS A WRITER

First, answer these questions individually. Then discuss in groups.

1. What type of texts have you written so far (e.g. research articles, letters and e-mails, scholarly assignments and progress reports)? What type of text will you be writing in the near future?
2. What is your attitude towards writing (negative – neutral – positive)? Do you know why? What exactly do you (dis)like about writing?
3. What have you been praised for or criticised for in the past as a writer?
4. What do you think are the main differences between writing in your mother tongue and in English?
5. What would you like to learn about writing research articles? In other words, what do you expect from this course?

Session aims

- Writing in a sufficiently formal register
 - Adopting an impersonal style
 - Writing clearly and concisely
 - Structuring paragraphs and sentences
 - Establishing logical connections between sentences and paragraphs

 - Language focus: The passive
 - Language focus: Relative clauses
 - Language focus: Participle clauses and dangling modifiers
-



To achieve fluent academic discourse, your text needs the correct tone, conciseness and a good flow. These three criteria will be discussed in more detail in this unit.

1.1. Managing Tone

A. Formality

Exercise 1

What makes the following text too informal? Make suggestions to create a more formal style.

(1) How can we explain the origins of the compositional system of communication? **(2)** Till recently, researchers tackling this problem (e.g. Bickerton 1990; Pinker & Bloom 1990; Newmeyer 1991; Hurford *et al.* 1998) explicitly tried to relate linguistic models with evolutionary theory. **(3)** These argue that the central features of human language have come forward over evolutionary time in response to natural selection pressures. **(4)** In this paper we are going to look at a new approach to understanding the origins of the syntactic system. **(5)** We'll show you that compositional syntax is an inevitable outcome of observationally learned communication systems. **(6)** In a simulated population of individuals, language goes from a simple idiosyncratic vocabulary with not much expressive power, to a compositional system with lots of expressivity, nouns and verbs, word order expressing meaning distinctions, etc. **(7)** As far as we know, this happens without natural selection of learners.

Formality is achieved by:

Formal vocabulary

- ✓ Avoid colloquial vocabulary (words and expressions used in everyday spoken language);
- ✓ Limit the use of run-on expressions such as 'and so forth' and 'etc.'

Formal grammatical constructions

- ✓ Do not contract words;
- ✓ Be careful about using imperatives and direct questions;
- ✓ Replace phrasal verbs by single-word verbs (exercise 2);
- ✓ Place adverbs with the verb (exercise 3);
- ✓ Write in a more impersonal style (exercise 4).



Reference section: Formal vocabulary and grammar

Exercise 2

A. Choose a verb from the list to replace the less formal words in bold. You may need to make other changes so that the sentences are still grammatical.

attribute	enhance	persist in	explore
incorporate into	enable	arise	implement
concern	dedicated to		

1. This strong claim **is about** the intention behind these artifacts.
2. Covering this period **makes it possible** to study the early school-to-work transition.
3. The *Medieval Mystery* author specifically **gives** one or more symbolic meaning to each element discussed.
4. Some art historians have recognized the problems that **come** from associating objects with meaning.
5. Depending on how, when, and why they are **put into practice**, Western ideas can be a powerful positive force in societies where skeptics might assume that they would have no positive effect.
6. In this wonderfully fruitful period, feminists have been able to **carry on with** their tradition of collaboration across paradigms.

7. First, caring labor and domestic labor are vital parts of any economic system, and should be **made a part of** the analysis from the beginning.
8. The July 2002 issue of Feminist Economics **is about** issues of gender, color and class.
9. Cervone, Shadel, Smith, and Fiori (2006) present a compelling case that advances in personality science can **make** coherence in the study of self-regulation **better**.
10. We have **looked at** people's efficacy and control beliefs about each project.

B. Find five words in task 2 A which are American spelling.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____



Reference section: British and American spelling



Language focus: Adverbial position

In academic writing, single adverbs tend to be placed with the verb (mid-position). Compare these examples:

- ✓ Scholars now **commonly** teach jazz and a wider range of non-Western music.
- ✓ It will **already** have been noticed that not all his arias begin with a formal ritornello.
- ✓ Numerous studies have **strongly** established the influence of formal moral philosophical reasoning in the context of ethical decision making.
- ✓ There is **always** a careful and suggestive review of the cases.



Reference section: Adverbial position

Exercise 3

Find a single adverb to replace the words in bold, and place it with the verb.

1. **As a rule**, observers who share this view attribute Islamist terrorism to one or more factors.
2. **It appears that** the existence of multi-judge panels adds to the perception that such courts are more likely to be trustworthy.
3. **In essence**, the logic is the same in the panel-decision model.
4. **In effect**, Priest's model is "precedent-free" because of the constancy of the parameter.
5. **In general**, time is thought to be one of the more mysterious ingredients of the universe.
6. **Before**, several approaches have been taken to the problem of discriminating between speech and music signals.
7. In addition to meeting these criteria, information on participation is required **as well**.
8. However, **more and more** feminist writers have recognised that a Marxist approach is often inadequate in explaining female subordination.
9. Part II of this paper describes **in only a couple of paragraphs** the laws of the U.S. that pertain to agricultural biotechnology.

B. Impersonal style



Academic Style is typically depersonalised: most fields favour a style in which the personal author disappears behind arguments and analysis.

Exercise 4

Discuss the use of personal pronouns in research articles using the leading questions. The following examples can help you in your discussion.

- ✓ Since most readers of this review can be expected to be familiar with earlier editions of the text, **I** will summarize the differences between the new edition and the second.
- ✓ As **we** will see in section 5.2, restrictions of a syntactic nature upon idioms have received considerable attention from generative grammarians.
- ✓ In fields where imperatives were present in the main text, **we** recorded interviews with the authors of one of the articles.
- ✓ Finally, **we** created a category that we refer to as “critical items.” **We** identified three criteria for referring to an item as critical: [...].
- ✓ **We** have discovered no significant changes in color that can be attributed to color alterations in the seven paintings.
- ✓ While **I** am very enthusiastic about the recent “presence” debate as far as it opens a new way of thinking about history, **I** fear that “presence” could turn into an obscure metaphysical or even mystical category if it is not firmly embedded in a criticism of the notions of historical time and the “historical present.”
- ✓ **We** especially acknowledge our editor for his enthusiastic advocacy and stoic patience.

1. Are first-person pronouns ‘I’ and ‘we’ used in research articles in your field?
2. If they are, in which situations are they used?