Applied Standards for Effective Writing in English for Academic Purposes

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Abstract

Academic writing is one of the most used skills among the academic community that comprises teachers, researchers, lecturers and students. Academic writing takes the form of presentations, reports, essays, research papers, dissertations and theses. The academic discourse of this community is characterized by precision and accuracy in reporting data and facts. This applies an accurate and scientific writing style to render the communicated message more effective and widely accepted by the worldwide community of academicians and researchers.

This work seeks to illustrate the importance of mastering academic writing by the academic community and suggests some practical practices to make the academic style and content more accurate and scientific by meeting the needed academic writing standards.

Therefore, this paper highlights the best practices in academic writing and practical ways in the academic discourse. This study is an attempt to demonstrate how to use the different parts of speech in academic writing such as punctuation items, articles, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. We suggest some examples of acceptable writing styles against the unacceptable and vague ones.

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Introduction

The growth of tertiary education and internationalization of universities have contributed to the need to use a common discourse agreed upon by the community involved in this area. According to Ken Hyland (2006:1): "EAP has expanded with the growth of university places in many countries and increasing number of international students undertaking tertiary studies in English". Academic English is the common language used by the different academicians who can be students, researchers, lecturers or academic staff. Academic English is the tool used by the academic community, or to what is referred to as academia, to excel and master their field of study such as medical studies, economics, sociology or biology…etc.

In fact, internationalization of higher education involved the travel of students to other universities and meeting international colleagues to study together in different areas of study. This gathering imposed the use of a common language agreed upon by all the gatherers. This concept is the same throughout all the historic phases. Olwyn Alexander confirms (2008:5-6):

> "As early as the 12th century, students from a range of cultural and linguistic background crossed the Alps or sailed across the Mediterranean to study Italian thinking on law, the Greek philosophy of Aristotle or to gain access to translations of the great Arabic writers on science, medicine and mathematics. Similarly, scholars journeyed across Asia to share philosophical and religious ideas. In recent decades, modern university campuses have become more aligned to this original concept".

Nowadays, the dominating language of these international scientific gatherings is English and more precisely English for Academic Purposes which is a sub-branch of English for Specific Purposes.

1 English for Academic Purposes

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is a wide term covering all areas of academic communicative practice such as journal articles, conference papers, essays, dissertations and theses. EAP refers to teaching English for the purpose of helping learners in their study or research. EAP is a wide term covering all areas of academic communicative practice such as classroom interactions, student writing and research genres like journal articles and conference papers. Ken Hyland (2006:4) suggests: " EAP attempts to offer systematic, locally managed, solution oriented approaches that address the pervasive and endemic challenges posed by academic study to a diverse student body by focusing on students' needs and discipline specific communication skills". EAP therefore is the discipline that provides international students, researchers and academicians with a linguistic tool that allows them to communicate in their field of study. This communication can be oral or written one. The written communication can be in the form essays, research papers, dissertations or thesis.

1.1 Theoretical influences of English for Academic Purposes

EAP has not emerged from a vacuum. It is rather founded from a combination of different fields such as learning theory and applied linguistics. EAP focuses more on curriculum and instruction rather than on research and theory because it is called to answer practical and immediate needs of learners who need the language as means of communication in their fields of study. Sarah Benesch (2001:4) confirms: "The theoretical influences that have shaped EAP throughout its 30 year history include: linguistics; applied linguistics; sociolinguistics; learning theory; and genre studies. The emphasis however, has been less on research and theory than on curriculum and instruction.

1.2 The Teaching of English for Academic Purposes

The needed situations where English will be used is what determines how English for academic purposes will be taught. It is rather based on needs analysis that a course of EAP will be designed. A course for a researcher who wants to enhance his skills in presentations will be different from the course of the researcher who wants to enhance his skills in writing academic papers. According to Olwyn Alexander (2008:7): "The EAP classroom is a context for research. Both teachers and students in EAP are learning about the target academic community and this requires the teacher-student role to be more equal than in most general English classes". It is therefore the target situation that will define what is to be focused upon in the EAP course.

2 Characteristics of EAP Discourse

The discourse of English for Academic Purposes is characterized by the precision and clarity of its author. Peter Master (1998) suggests the following verbs used as applied standards that EAP discourse should include:

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Situation of the writer(author)	Verb to be used
Agreement	to argue, to contend, to claim, to maintain, to propose, to recommend and to suggest.
Definition	To state, to define
Emphasis	To draw attention to, to mention, to note, to observe, to point out, to remark, to emphasize, to focus on, to insist, to reiterate, to remind, to stress and to underline.
Admission	To acknowledge, to admit and to recognize.

Table 1: Used verbs in EAP Discourse

Henceforth the written discourse of EAP is specific and should respect the applied standards that are different from the ones of general English. Olwyn Alexander (2008:7) confirms that: "The English in EAP is the language of academic discourse and focuses specifically on the vocabulary, grammar and discourse features found in academic communication, both spoken and written. Academic genres are used so that audience, purpose and organization can be examined, together with the appropriate rhetorical functions and information structure". These standards should be followed by the academic community in their writing if they want to reach a wider number of readers and to achieve academic excellence.

2.1 The Form of Academic Writing

The following table summarizes the main standards related to the form of academic writing and that the EAP author or writer should respect:

The form	Applied Standards
Content	relevance to title and topic level
Argument:	- Logical, sequential, chronological - Clarity and lucidity - Originality
Structure	Introduction, body, conclusion
Layout	**Typing**: size, font, indentation, heading and subheading **Graphics**: placement, size, clarity
Language:	**Register:** lexis, structures **Level:** cognitive, affective **Signposts:** connectives, references **Grammar:** structures, agreement

Table2: The Form of Academic Writing

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2.2 Cohesion of Academic Writing

Cohesive markers or linking words are important tools used in academic writing to make it more cohesive so that the logical sequencing of ideas is not lost. These tools can be logical, grammatical or lexical. They allow establishing relationships between different parts of a sentence or different sentences. They also act as linguistic signs to help the reader make the transition between previous and next ideas or sentences. According to Lee (2002) and in order to guarantee coherence in writing, the author or writer should respect:

- An **outline** of the main functions of the text and of the ways of expressing them to achieve the intended purpose.
  For example, when the text is narrative, the events are to be arranged in a chronological order.

- An **information** structure: that is organizing ideas in a certain order.
  For exampl**e**, old information is given before new ones.

- **Connectivity** of the text by the use of cohesive devices.
  Some examples are pronoun reference (he, she, it, this, that) others are conjunctions (but, also, therefore, however).

- The use of metadiscourse1 **markers** in texts helps readers organize, interpret and evaluate information.
  Some examples are logical connectives (therefore, but), sequencers (firstly, secondly, finally), certainty markers (certainly, no doubt).

According to Brookes and Grundy (1990), Harris (1993) three other variables are to be taken into consideration for effective writing; purpose, content and audience:

- ➢ **Purpose**: refers to the communicative function of a text i.e. informing, instructing, entertaining, persuading, explaining or presenting an argument. Keeping the purpose in mind will help the writer to convey an effective that can be accepted widely by a large number of readers.

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- ➢ **Content**: refers to the form and the meaning of the language used. The types of written texts can be stories, essays, plays, letters etc. In addition, the writer has to develop the assigned topic through relevant and well organized ideas, appropriate vocabulary choice and adequate grammar use.

- ➢ **Audience**: in effective writing, one of the most important elements is to develop a sense of readership. An awareness of the reader's expectations and prior knowledge is important even in the simplest forms of writing. In academic writing, the audience are academicians who expect to read an academic text meeting all the standards such as accuracy and precision of supplied information.

2.3 Academic Writing Style

Researchers and academic staff should be aware of the importance of using a writing style that can be qualified to be an academic one. This awareness can be reached by avoiding using unacceptable styles. Such of these styles are as follows:

Example	Reason
during last few years	Vague- how many years exactly
To do an important work	Too informal , use "to conduct" in place of "to do
Like Algeria	Use "such as" better than like
Lots of discussions are taking place	"Lots of" is not academic, use "various"

Table 3: Academic Writing Style

2.3.1 The use of Articles, Passive and Active and Punctuation

Academic writing requires the use of articles, passive and active and punctuation as it is clarified in the table below:

Articles	Active and passive	Punctuation
The	Active voice to focus on the doer of the action	Capital letters
A	Passive voice to focus on the action	Full stop (.)
An		Comma (,)
		Semicolon (;)
		Colons (:)
		Quotation marks (" ")

Table4: The Use of Articles

2.3.2 Academic Adjectives

The academic discourse is characterized by accuracy and precision that is why the unnecessary use of nonacademic adjectives makes it low graded and affects its wide readability and credibility.

Here is a list of suggested academic adjectives with their opposites:

Adjective	Its opposite
Abstract	Concrete
Accurate	Inaccurate

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Effective	Ineffective
Exclusive	Inclusive
Rational	Irrational
Theoretical	Practical or Empirical
Reliable	Unreliable

Table5: Academic Adjectives

2.3.3 Academic Verbs

The use of proper and academic verbs renders the written discourse more attractive to the academic community. This leads to a wide visibility of the paper, essay, thesis or dissertation.

Here is a list of suggested academic verbs with examples:

Academic Verb	Example
To conduct	The researcher has **conducted** this study.
To prove	The use of this new raw material **proved** to be promising.
To undergo	The installation of this new system **underwent** three main phases.
To yield	The investigation **yielded** unclear results.

Table 6: Academic Verbs

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2.3.4 Academic Verbs of Reference

When the author presents a case, the following verbs can be used:

Academic verbs of reference	Example
To argue	T U (2010) **argues** that the inflation rate is not accurate.
To claim	E H (2015) **claims** that the previous empirical studies were more qualitative than quantitative.
To consider	The author (2018) **considers** that nanotechnology will shape the future of industry.
To suggest	S R **suggests** that new methods should be used in evaluation.
To believe	K L (2012) **believes** that more practice is needed to foster learning

Table7: Academic Verbs of References

2.3.5 Academic Verbs of Reaction to a Position

When the author reacts to a previous position or statement declared by another author or writer, the following verbs can be used:

Academic Verbs of Reaction to a Position	Example
To accept	T O (2020) **accepts** what J O has declared about the spread of the virus.
To admit	U J **admits** (2017) that the economic crisis will have severe effects for the medium term.
To agree	The author (2019) **agrees** with that statement.
To deny	H O (2020) **denies** the statement of the American medical researcher.
To doubt	The Chinese researchers (2020) **doubt** what has been stated by the French researcher.

Table8: Academic Verbs of Reaction to a Position

2.3.6 Academic Adverbs

The use of adverbs in academic discourse should be precise and purposeful. There are three main situations where can be used:

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Adverbs of Time	Adverbs of Degree	Adverbs of Manner
Recently	Clearly	Surprisingly
Increasingly	Particularly	Factually
Originally	Broadly	Politically
Currently	Highly	Locally
Traditionally	Crucially	Alternatively
Continuously	Emphatically	Similarly

Table 9 Academic Adverbs of Time, Degree and Manner

Conclusion

As a conclusion to this paper, we can state that academic writing is a discourse that requires the use and respect of common standards agreed upon by the academic community. These standards need to be applied by authors in order to reach a wider visibility. Respecting the standards of academic writing makes the paper, the dissertation or the thesis of the teacher, researcher or student precise and accurate.

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The academic community is committed to produce an academic writing that abides by the appropriateness of the content which needs to be relevant to the topic and the clarity of the content that should be original and logical.

Researchers, teachers and students have to produce a cohesive academic writing by providing an outline of the main functions of the text and of the ways of expressing them to achieve the intended purpose, and by organizing ideas in a certain order and by respecting connectivity of the text by the use of cohesive devices.

Besides that, they have to respect academic writing style by raising their awareness about avoiding using the unacceptable writing style which is not considered by the worldwide academic community. The use of the verb "to do" for example is to be avoided and to be replaced by the verb "to conduct". Academic writing style includes as well the appropriate use of articles, passive and active and a written production that respects punctuation. It requires as well the appropriate use of adjectives and adverbs that make the discourse more clear and precise.

Therefore, we have attempted in this work, to highlight the importance of mastering academic writing by suggesting some practical practices to be respected by the academic community in order to guarantee an efficient written discourse that can be accepted by academicians worldwide. Consequently, this accepted discourse will increase the visibility of the scientific production of authors and will make them known and famous internationally.

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