Academic Writing

Dylan Glynn
dglynn@ath.bielsko.pl
http://www.linguistics.ath.bielsko.pl/Glynn/
Academic writing is boring

But despite what you may think

Because it is structured and should be simple

It's can be easier than 'normal' writing!!
Revision:

The Genre of Academic Discourse

Basic notions:

Genre and discourse

The written mode

Register, style and power!
Genre and discourse - exercise

Think of an example of a genre
In language in concrete terms, what is something that indicates of genre?
  (e.g.: a word, a grammatical form etc...)

Think of an example of a discourse
In society in concrete terms, what is something that indicates discourse?
  (e.g.: a piece of clothing, a mannerism etc...)
The written mode - exercise

What are some differences between written and spoken language?

Work in groups. Identify 3 concrete differences.
Register, style and power - exercise

In language in concrete terms, what indicates of register?

Work in Groups:
In society in concrete terms,
Identify 3 linguistic expressions of power.
Grammar – Personal Pronouns

In many languages, pronouns are important grammatically and stylistically.

In Semitic language, you mark the second person for gender

In Latin languages, the “formal” forms mark social distance between speakers. But this interacts with gender, social hierarchy, social identity and age...

In Slavic languages, social hierarchy is marked by the “formal” forms. But this interacts with gender, social distance, social identity and age...

In most Germanic languages, gender is restricted to 3rd Person singular and formal forms, if they exist, are archaic. But Germanic languages often have emphatic (strong) forms of personal pronouns.
Polish Pronouns - exercise

In groups -

a. For the nominative only, list the personal pronouns for Polish
b. For each indicate the person and the gender.

c. Note if there is conflict between the grammatical person and the “semantic person”
d. Does grammatical gender always match “semantic gender”?
e. Are any of the forms marked? If so, why?

f. Indicate the register of the pronouns

   g. Is there a difference in markedness between the “zero” pronoun and the emphatic use of the pronouns? Is this true for all the pronouns?
English Pronouns

English is much more diverse language than Polish it is also a much simpler language morphologically

This has two serious implications for the language structure – can you think of how this would influence the personal pronouns system?
**English Pronouns**

Grammar:
Almost no inflection for person in the verb – pronouns cannot normally be dropped.

Variation:
In different parts of the English-speaking world, we have different pronouns.
Remember there is no real concept of “standard language” in English culture.

Germanic:
Strong and weak forms!!!!

!! Is the English strong distinction like *jego / go* and *jemu / mu* ?? !!
Some Singular Personal Pronouns in English

1st Person
I – USA, Southern English, Welsh, Australian...  us – British polite informal ACC
Ah – North English, Scots

2nd Person
the – Informal North English
thee – Emphatic informal North English  thou – Emphatic informal North Eng. ACC
ye – Scots, formal North English
jə – USA, Southern English, Welsh, Australian...
you – Empathic and written form USA, Southern English, Welsh, and Australian.
Yall – Empathic informal southern USA

3rd Person
one – animate gender neutral, formal written
jə – animate gender neutral (written form: you)
they – gender neutral (takes 3rd person verb)  ‘th’m’ (them empathic and written form)
he – masculine  ACC: him (heem Scots)
she – feminine, inanimate Australian  ACC: her (er Scots)
it – inanimate USA, UK, Ireland...
What are the plural personal pronouns in English???

Write them down...!
Personal Pronouns – Exercise

1. Could you lend ______ 10 quid? (Polite British, 1st Pers. Sing.)

2. ______ have to really spend years at uni now, just to land a simple job (Informal, 3rd Pers. Sing.)


4. The market changes indicate that ______ needs to be extra cautious when buying at the moment. (Formal, 3rd Pers. Sing.)

5. Ladies and gentlemen, we would like to welcome ______ to the ball (Formal, 2nd Pers. Pl.)

6. Man, you’re coming to the match aren’t ______? (Informal, 2nd Pers. Sing.)

7. I would ask of you to give ______ your personal details. (Formal, 3rd Pers. Sing.)

8. Great. But ya didn’t have to give to ______, did ya! (Informal, 3rd Pers. Sing.)
Avoiding you

In formal written English, the use of the second person is considered direct and even rude.

The second person is “implied” from context. For an antaive speaker this is not subtle at all! Normally a passive voice is used, but in some situations, a generic pronoun can also be used instead

**Generic pronoun**

* You need need to submit before June
* With all the troubles at the university, you need to make sure you check the emails

=>

One needs to submit before June

With all the troubles at the university, ones need to make sure to check the emails
Avoiding I

In formal written English, it is frowned upon to use the first person singular.
The three most important ways of avoiding the use of the I is to use the inclusive we or the passive voice

Inclusive we
The inclusive we is difficult – it means you (the writer) and the reader, so it can only be used with certain verbs. You have to be able to imagine the reader and you the writer together.

So:
We will see the importance of the results
We will consider the arguments for X in section 5
But not
* We will show the importance of the results
* We will argue for X in section 5
The passive

Generally, in academic texts, explicit reference to agents is much more rare than in normal writing.

The passive can be used to avoid I or you, but it can also be used to avoid they.

Since the Agent is not overtly referred to, the proposition seems much less subjective.

Consider:
I argue that X is right
It is argued that X is right

I show that Y is wrong
Y is shown to be wrong
Passive

When we speak we avoid the passive, but in formal writing it is important

In formal writing, we do not use “I” and we only use we with certain verbs

Active

They arrested Peter two days ago

The Mercian press has declared him (to be) a spy

They’ve announced he’ll be tried

They’re not complying with the law

A friend gave me the information/the information to me

A friend gave me the information

They’ve refused Peter access to a lawyer

They’ve refused Peter access to a lawyer

Passive

Peter was arrested two days ago

He has been declared a spy by the Mercian press

It has been announced (that) he’ll be tried

The law is not being complied with

The information was given (to) me by a friend

I was given the information by a friend

Access to a lawyer has been Peter

Peter has been refused access to a lawyer
Work together

Both sentences in each pair have the same meaning. Complete the second sentence.

a) The crowd was slowly filling the huge stadium.
   The huge stadium ___________ by the crowd.

b) The inventor of the computer simplified the work of the accountants.
   Since the computer ___________________________ the work of accountants
   ________________________________ simplified.

c) Someone has suggested that the shop should close.
   It ________________________________ that the shop should close.

d) 'I'd take out some travel insurance if I were you, Mr Smith.'
   Mr Smith ________________________________ take out some travel insurance.

e) The waitress will bring your drinks in a moment.
   Your drinks ________________________________ in a moment.

f) Someone used a knife to open the window.
   This window ________________________________ a knife.

g) You will hear from us when we have finished dealing with your complaint.
   After your complaint ________________________________, you will hear from us.

h) An announcement of their engagement appeared in the local paper.
   Their engagement ________________________________ in the local paper.

i) Nobody ever heard anything of David again.
   Nothing ________________________________ David again.

j) They paid Sheila £1,000 as a special bonus.
   £1,000 ________________________________ Sheila as a special bonus.
Work together

Rewrite each sentence in the passive, omitting the words underlined.

a) Someone left the phone off the hook all night.
   The phone was left off the hook all night.

b) The government has announced that petrol prices will rise tomorrow.

c) A burglar broke into our house last week.

d) People asked me the way three times.

e) The fruit-pickers pick the apples early in the morning.

f) It's time the authorities did something about this problem.

  g) Lots of people had parked their cars on the pavement.

h) The government agreed with the report and so they changed the law.

i) You have to fill in an application form.

j) They don't know what happened to the ship.
Put each verb in brackets into an appropriate passive verb form.

a) The boxes have not been packed (not/pack) yet.
b) Your food (still/prepare).
c) The new ship (launch) next week.
d) Luckily by the time we got there the painting (not/sell).
e) We had to go on holiday because our house (decorate).
f) I'm afraid that next week's meeting (cancel).
g) If we don't hurry, all the tickets (sell) by the time we get there.
h) All main courses (serve) with vegetables or salad. At least that is what is written on the menu.
i) The second goal (score) by Hughes in the 41st minute,
j) The cathedral (build) in the fourteenth century.
Nobody knows exactly when someone invented gunpowder.

People know for a fact that the Chinese made rockets and fireworks long before people used gunpowder in Europe, which occurred at about the beginning of the thirteenth century.

We generally believe that gunpowder brought to an end the 'Age of Chivalry', since anyone with a firearm could bring down a mounted knight.

In fact, people did not develop efficient firearms until the sixteenth century.

They used gunpowder mainly in siege cannon when people first introduced it.

Later they used it in engineering work and in mining, but they found that it was extremely dangerous.

Modern explosives have now replaced gunpowder, but we still use it for making fireworks, just as the Chinese did.
Revision:

**Information structure**

Structure I - The message!
   Linking the big picture to the text

Structure II – The organisation of the text
   Structuring the writing to facilitate communication

Structure II – The language
   Using writing that is correct in terms of register, style, and grammar
Structure Level II – IMRaD

IMRaD is the ‘standard’ structure in a scientific article and most scientific writing uses this structure.

Introduction
Method
Results
Discussion

Would it work for a literary article?
Structure Level II – Dialectic

This is the traditional structure used in literature and philosophy.

Most of continental Europe uses this structure for secondary school essay writing.

Thesis
Antithesis
Synthesis
Structure Level II – Exercise

What structure did you learn for essay writing at school?
What structure did you learn for experiment reporting?

What is the point of a structure like this?
Work in groups –
Think of reasons why we structure texts in such specific ways.
Think of key words that are used to signal the part of the text.
Homework

Think of a question – something you don’t understand in the world
Think of a hypothesis – something you think may explain it

Use IMRaD and the Dialectic structure to propose a study that will answer that question.

IMRaD is about testing a hypothesis
Dialect is about arguing the pros and cons.
Vocabulary

There are three main differences between academic writing and ‘normal’ writing in vocabulary.

1. Linking words
2. Avoid qualitative expressions
3. Latinate verbs instead of phrasal verbs
Linking words

1. Simple rule – never forget it

*and, but, because* can never start a sentence!

If you turn on MS Word's grammar check and set it to formal, it will sport this for you.

To start a sentence use

*And = > Moreover, Furthermore, In addition,*

*But = > However, Nevertheless, Yet*

*Because = > Since, Due to the fact that, It follows that, thus, Whereas...*
Commas and Insertion – ‘but’ and ‘and’ words

Some of these words can be used in two ways

To start the sentence or inserted between the verb and the object or between the main clause and the dependent clause

Be warned, inserting the linking words makes the phrases sound even more academic, but it can make the text heavy.

However, it is important to note that cost reduction remains essential

It is, however, important to note that cost reduction remains essential

It is important to note, however, that cost reduction remains essential
Qualitative Expressions

The point of academic writing is to be as OBJECTIVE as possible.

Weasel words –

This a sneaky way of getting your opinion into a text

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples of weasel words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some people say...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...is widely regarded as...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...has been called...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is believed that...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It has been suggested/noticed/decided...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some people believe...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It has been said that...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some would say...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legend has it that...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critics say that...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many/some have claimed...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And...

... some people say, many scholars state, it is believed/regarded, many are of the opinion, most feel, experts declare, it is often reported, it is widely thought, research has shown, science says ...
### Puffery –

#### Examples of peacock terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>An important...</th>
<th>One of the most...</th>
<th>One of the best...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prestigious...</td>
<td>A significant...</td>
<td>The great...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influential...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do not use adjectives which express your opinion

e.g.: ... good, excellent, legendary, great, acclaimed, visionary, outstanding, leading, celebrated, landmark, cutting-edge, extraordinary, brilliant, famous, renowned, remarkable, prestigious, world-class, respected, notable, virtuoso ...

This also holds true for negative evaluation

bad, terrible, awful, despicable etc...
Avoiding Phrasal Verbs

get together
make up
look into
blow up
bring up
call off
fill out
give back
give away
hand in

hold up
leave out
look over
make up
point out
put off
read over
set up
talk over
throw away
use up
Exercise

Convert the following sentences to academic English.

In my study, I point out that the bus system in Bielsko-Biala is insufficient. But, I would like to add that the network is extensive.

The Silesian rail network is beefing up its commitment to a good service. And recently, it has been given large grants by Brussels to buy new trains.

I found out that when you mix alkaline and acid together you get water.

I think that Poor old Hamlet was a sexist character, even in his day.
Exercise
Describing a scene without using qualitative language or phrasal verbs and try to objectify the scene using the passive voice.
Use your imagination and write a story of one paragraph about this picture...