PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING FOR 2023/2024

OPTIMISING SENIOR SECONDARY ENGLISH LANGUAGE SERIES:
THE ROLE OF GRAMMAR AND VOCABULARY IN ACADEMIC READING AND WRITING

Patrick LEUNG

AGENDA

- **Common Features of the Academic Use of English**

- **Academic Vocabulary**

- **Academic Grammar**

- **Academic Reading and Academic Writing**

English Language Education
Key Learning Area

English Language
Curriculum and Assessment Guide
(Secondary 4 - 6)

4.2.3   Promoting the Academic Use of English

English is one of the major mediums of instruction in different senior secondary subjects and university courses. It is therefore crucial to promote the academic use of English to heighten students' awareness of English commonly used in academic texts they read and/or write in other subjects, facilitating their current and/or further studies. English teachers can take the lead to raise students' awareness of the style and features of academic texts by selecting appropriate texts and designing relevant learning activities.

Everyday English	Academic Use of English
Casual, **conversational** and **subjective** tone	**Objective** and **formal** tone
Use **contractions**, **informal expressions**, and incomplete sentences for the sake of brevity or familiarity	**Avoid** contractions, slang or informal expressions
Personal pronouns (I, you, we) to convey a sense of subjectivity or personal opinion	**Third-person pronouns** (he, she, they) to convey a sense of objectivity
Common, **everyday informal** words and phrases	More **formal**, **specialised** vocabulary, **discipline-specific** jargon
Use the **active voice** more frequently	Use the **passive voice** to convey objectivity and focus on the action rather than the subject
Avoid excessive acronyms in order to be accessible to a wider audience	Occasional use of **acronyms**
No formal citations or sources	**Citations** and **references** to support claims and provide evidence
Simpler sentence structures, usually basic subject-verb-object patterns	More **complex sentence structures** with more **subordination and coordination**
More flexibility and tolerance for **colloquialisms**, **slang**, and **informal grammar**	Greater emphasis on **correct** grammar, punctuation, and sentence mechanics
More **general** or colloquial terms, and may not be as concerned with precision (e.g., *OK*)	**Precise and accurate terminology** to convey specific meanings (e.g., *acceptable*, *appropriate*)

Everyday English	Academic Use of English
Use **figurative language**, such as **idioms** and **metaphors**, to convey meaning in a more creative and expressive way	Figurative language used **less** frequently
Emotive words (e.g., *wonderful*, *awesome*)	A **lack** of emotion, a focus on facts and evidence
More direct and assertive in expressing opinions or making statements	**Hedging** and **cautious language** to express uncertainty or to qualify statements
Fewer qualifiers and modifiers, leading to a more straightforward and direct communication style	**Qualifiers** and **modifiers** to provide nuance and precision in describing concepts or ideas
More on **personal opinions**, **anecdotes**, and less formal methods of persuasion	A stronger emphasis on presenting **evidence**, **logical reasoning**, and constructing **well-supported arguments**
More concise and may rely on context or assumptions	**Longer and more detailed explanations**, with a focus on precision and clarity
Personal opinions, biases, and **subjective** viewpoints without the need for extensive analysis or objectivity	An **objective** and **analytical** approach to information and ideas
Structure and organisation may be **less important**; may not adhere to strict organisational patterns and may be more **conversational** and **spontaneous**	A **structured** and **organised** approach (Introduction → Body → Conclusion); ideas presented in a **logical** and **coherent** way, with clear transitions between sections

Common Features of Academic Texts

Academic texts refer to texts that students read and/or produce when studying subjects of other KLAs (e.g. Science Education, Mathematics Education, Personal, Social and Humanities Education). The purpose of an academic text is usually to explain an idea or concept with data/statistics, to discuss an issue with evidence or to argue and justify a point. Academic texts are generally formal, objective, precise and technical (with subject-specific terms).

Formal **Objective** **Precise** **Technical**

Academic Use of English

Everyday English VS **Academic English**

Everyday English	Style of Academic Language	Academic English
Skinny guys should **eat more** protein and **carbs** to **put on weight**.	**Formal** *e.g.* Use **nouns** & **avoid colloquial language**	**A higher intake** of protein and **carbohydrates** helps **underweight people** to **gain weight**.
We did a study and **found** that lack of regular exercise **causes** a range of chronic health conditions.	**Objective & Impersonal** *e.g.* Use **the passive voice** & **hedging words**	**A study was conducted** and **it was found that** physical inactivity **could be a cause** of a range of chronic health conditions.
The software helps firms **keep and find old emails**.	**Precise** *e.g.* Use **exact words** & **provide specific details**	The software helps firms **archive and retrieve emails in the past 12 months**.
One of the effects of **cutting down too many trees** is that some animals and plants will lose their **homes**.	**Technical** *e.g.* Use **subject-specific words**	One of the effects of **deforestation** is the loss of **habitats** for some animals and plants.

ASPECTS OF LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY: BICS VS. CALP

	Social Language	Academic Language
Description	• Everyday use for interactions inside and outside school • Social interaction • Less specialised language • Less cognitive demand • Use in social contexts • Acquisition requires understanding of cultural and social norms, including nonverbal cues	• Academic setting: use in areas such as classroom discourse, texts, assessments, content standards, and classroom materials • Mainly used in the classroom for reading and writing • Acquisition requires specialised knowledge • More cognitive demand due to complex vocabulary and grammatical structures
Examples	• Listening to a coach review the soccer practice schedule • Having an informal, face-to-face conversation about weekend plans • Writing in a friend's yearbook • Reading a lunch menu • Writing a post on Facebook • Texting	• Describing a classic work of art • Defining a scientific term • Explaining how to solve a complex math problem • Comparing and contrasting two opposing parties in a historical dispute • Summarising information in a research paper

WHERE IS ACADEMIC LANGUAGE USED?

- Post-secondary educational institutions – the primary mode of communication

- Academic books and textbooks

- Research papers and journals

- Academic conferences and presentations

- Academic websites and online resources

- Professional and disciplinary communities

- Policy papers, reports and briefings
- Technical writing (e.g., manuals, specifications)
- International organisations and NGOs (e.g., United Nations)

Any other contexts?

...ORTANCE OF ACADEMIC LANGUAGE

"Academic language is the language needed by students to **understand and communicate in the academic disciplines**. Academic language includes such things as **specialized vocabulary, conventional text structures within a field** (e.g., essays, lab reports) and other **language related activities typical of classrooms**, (e.g., expressing disagreement, discussing an issues, asking for clarification). Academic language includes both productive and receptive modalities. **One of your goals for the learning segment should be to further develop your students' academic language abilities.** This means that your learning objectives should focus on language as well as on content. You can and should **communicate content** through means other than language, e.g., physical models, visuals, demonstrations. However, you should also develop your students' abilities **to produce and understand oral and written texts typical in your subject area as well as to engage in language-based tasks.**"

Sato, M., & Curis, M. (2008). *Making good choices: A support guide for the PACT Teaching Event.* https://www.csuchico.edu/soe/_assets/documents/making-good-choices-4.11.08.pdf

DEFINITION OF ACADEMIC LANGUAGE

- "the **specialized language**, both oral and written, of **academic settings** that **facilitates communication and thinking** about **disciplinary content**" (Nagy & Townsend, 2012, p. 92)

- "**the language used in school** to **acquire new or deeper understanding** of the content and to **communicate that understanding** to others (Bailey & Heritage, 2008; Gottlieb, Katz, & Ernst-Slavit, 2009; Schleppegrell, 2004)" (Gottlieb & Ernst-Slavit, 2013, p. 2)

- "**the language used in school** to help students **acquire and use knowledge**" (Anstrom et al., 2010, p. iv)

- "**the formalized language of school** … builds a foundation that helps our students **define terms, form concepts, and construct knowledge**" (Johnson, 2009, p. 1)

Teaching strategies!

- highlight salient features (e.g. text structures, rhetorical functions and language items) common in academic texts to draw students' attention to how they are used and the effects/purposes achieved. Below are some examples.

  - To make academic texts more formal, contractions, informal and colloquial expressions are avoided while formal vocabulary (e.g. "injection/vaccination" instead of "jab") is used to present information.

  - To create a more objective tone, judgements are supported by reasons and findings in academic texts and opinions are presented with the use of the passive voice.

  - Specific and concrete words are used (e.g. "teenagers" instead of "young people", "in 2018" instead of "a few years ago") to avoid ambiguity.

  - Subject-specific terminologies are used to describe a process, classify an object or living thing, etc. (e.g. "deforestation", "mammal"). Some common words have a special meaning in academic contexts (e.g. "class" and "family" in Biology", "mean" in Mathematics). The ability to understand and use subject-specific terminologies is essential for comprehending and producing academic texts.

- explicitly teach reading skills and strategies to help students comprehend and unpack the texts they would read in other subjects/KLAs; and

- design meaningful tasks to connect reading and writing to provide opportunities for students to apply language (e.g. text structures, rhetorical functions and language items in academic texts) and content knowledge (e.g. concepts and ideas related to non-language subjects) learnt.

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Text Size

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Academic Use of English

English is one of the major mediums of instruction in different senior secondary subjects and university courses. The academic use of English is promoted to heighten students' awareness of English commonly used in academic texts they read and write in other subjects, so as to facilitate their current and further studies.

A variety of learning and teaching resources are developed to support schools in incorporating elements of the academic use of English into the English Language curriculum and facilitate students' self-directed learning. These resource materials can be used in combination flexibly to help students acquire the skills in the academic use of English more effectively.

https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/kla/eng-edu/references-resources/Academic-Eng/home.html

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

Types of vocabulary

General / everyday / core vocabulary

Basic words used often in everyday conversation

Academic vocabulary

More complex, frequently occurring words in academic settings

Technical vocabulary

Highly specialised words that are related to a specific discipline

Beck, I. L., McKeown, M. G., & Kucan, L. (2013). *Bringing words to life: Robust vocabulary instruction* (2nd ed.). Guilford Publications.

TYPES OF VOCABULARY

- Classify the following words into "general vocabulary", "academic vocabulary" and "technical vocabulary".

recidivism	coffee	walk	reduction
analysis	determine	estimate	mutagenic
effectiveness	homeostasis	hypotenuse	predominantly
arboreal	afraid	clock	acquit
concern	incarceration	alter	malignant

Academic Word List (AWL)

The **Academic Word List (AWL)**, developed by Coxhead (2000) at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, contains 570 word families which frequently appear in academic texts.

AWL covers **around 10% of words in academic texts**. These words are **not subject-specific** (i.e., they are useful for all students).

The 570 word families of the AWL are divided into 10 lists according to how frequent they are. List 1 has the most frequent word families, List 2 the next most frequent word families, etc. Each list contains 60 word families.

https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/lals/resources/academicwordlist

Resources of Academic Word Lists

EAP Foundation – AWL Highlighter

https://www.eapfoundation.com/vocab/academic/highlighter/

Multiple Meanings of Words in Different Subjects

Legend

[History] an old story from the ancient time

[Geography] the words written on or next to a map that explain what it is about or what the symbols on it mean

Note

[Music] a single sound at a particular level in music 2.

[Economics] a banknote

Can you think of multiple meanings of the following words in different subjects?

Class

Slope

Can you think of multiple meanings of the following words in different subjects?
(Suggested Answers)

Class

[Science] a group of things, animals, or people with similar features or qualities

[History/Economics] a group of people in a society who have the same social and/or economic position

[Maths] a group of objects with some common properties

Slope

[Geography] a rising or falling surface/ground

[Maths] the steepness of a line in a graph

[Science] the steepness of an inclined plane

[Economics] a concept which measures the relationship between two variables

ACADEMIC GRAMMAR

ACADEMIC GRAMMAR – USING NOUN PHRASES

The use of **noun phrases** is common in the academic use of English to help present information and ideas in a **formal**, **objective**, **precise** and **technical** manner.

NOMINALIZATION

Nominalization **is a word formation process in which nouns are created or derived from words of other parts of speech, for instance verbs and adjectives.**

generating nouns in the English language
- e.g. **-ing can be added to a verb** which can then become a noun (aka **gerund**): "seeing is believing", "blowing bubbles is what children usually like", "Susie tactfully avoided driving off the beach".

- **attaching suffixes** such as *-ism*, *-ness* and *-ity* **to an adjective** can transform the adjective itself into a noun.
  - e.g. "The rapid growth of imperialism raises public awareness and increases the probability of a nuclear war".

- **placing a definite article** (i.e., "the") **in front of an adjective forming noun phrases**
  - e.g. the deaf, the injured, the poor, the unemployed, etc.

- **converting verbs or adjectives into nouns** without the need for changing the word form or adding extra lexical elements.

NOMINALIZATION

<mark>Nominalization</mark> is a common feature of academic English and is used to convey complex ideas, enhance objectivity, and create a more formal and precise style of writing.

Here are some key points regarding the use of nominalization in academic English.

Example 1

Original verb: "The researchers **analyzed** the data."

Nominalized noun: "The **analysis** of the data was conducted by the researchers."

Effect: To create a **more objective and formal tone**. By turning verbs or adjectives into nouns, it **removes the subjectivity** associated with the original word and presents information in a more detached and neutral manner.

NOMINALIZATION

Example 2

Original verb: "Many people **believe** in the importance of education."

Nominalized noun: "There is a widespread **belief** in the importance of education."

Effect: To **convey abstract or theoretical concepts** in a more academic and objective manner. It allows for the **focus to be on concepts, generalisations, and ideas** rather than specific instances or individuals.

Example 3

Original verb: "We **analyzed** the data and found that the results were significant. This suggests that our hypothesis was correct."

Nominalized noun: "The **analysis** of the data revealed the significance of the results, supporting the hypothesis."

Effect: To **create cohesion and coherence** in academic writing. By using noun forms throughout a piece of writing, writers can create a consistent style and structure that helps to link ideas and arguments together.

NOMINALIZATION

Example 4

Original verb: "The chemical reaction **produces** a gas."

Nominalized noun: "Gas **production** is a result of the chemical reaction."

Effect: To **express technical terminology** in academic writing. It is common to use noun forms of technical terms to **convey precision and accuracy**.

Academic Grammar – Nominalization

Change the underlined parts into nouns

e.g. The University of Hong Kong is <u>celebrating</u> its 111th anniversary.

*   **The** <u>   celebration   </u> marks the 111th anniversary of The University of Hong Kong.*

1. The University of Hong Kong is **<u>located</u>** in the southern district of Hong Kong Island.

• The **<u>location</u>** of The University of Hong Kong is in the southern district of Hong Kong Island.

2. The university has made a difficult decision to **eliminate** certain positions.

- The **elimination** of certain positions was a difficult decision made by the university.

3. Students are expected to **revise** their academic essays a few times before submission.

- Students are expected to make several times of **revisions** to their academic essays before submission.

Academic Grammar – Noun Phrases

Noun phrases consist of four components:

The **determiners**, **pre-modifiers** and **post-modifiers** <u>add extra information</u> to the **head noun**.

Challenge:

*Which group can make a longer sentence all ending with… "**The University of Hong Kong is one of the highest-ranking universities in South East Asia."***

(Location) **(History)** **(Student Population)** **(Research)**

- *Located in the southern district of Hong Kong Island, the University of Hong Kong is one of the highest-ranking universities in Asia.*

- *Celebrating its 111th anniversary recently, the University of Hong Kong is one ……..*

- *With a student population of over 30,000 students from 25 countries speaking a variety of languages, ……*

- *Hosting academically gifted students from not only Asia, but the entire world with diverse backgrounds and more than thirteen different languages……*

Post-activity Discussion:

1. Can you think of an example more familiar to your students?
2. How are these denser sentences formed?

See Academic Use of English, Resource Pack, Chapter 3 Useful sentence structure and language 3c & 3d for more examples
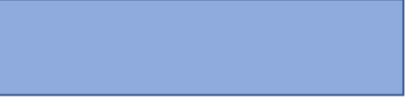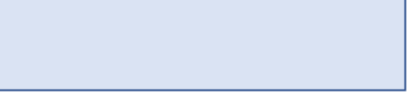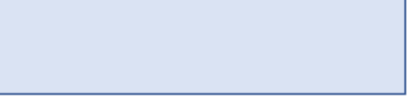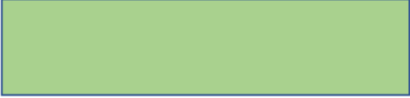
CREATING AN ACADEMIC TONE AND STYLE

We use hedging to:

- be intentionally noncommittal or ambiguous

- avoid answering a question

- show that there is uncertainty

- entertain different degrees of probability

Why do we use hedging?

- It reduces the risk of opposition and avoids personal accountability for statements.

- It shows writers do not have the final word on the subject. Making stronger statements may require more reliable data or evidence.

- It is a strategy to offset the impression of being a know-it-all or arrogant. Only if your claim is widely accepted can you present it without hedging.

- It has become conventionalised and forms part of academic writing style.

Quantity	Frequency	Certainty
A lot	Always	Must
None	Never	Highly unlikely

Can we do a similar activity with our students?

How?

Catering for learner diversity

LANGUAGE USED IN HEDGING

	More examples
Introductory verbs	*seem, tend, look like, appear to be, think, believe, doubt, be sure, indicate, suggest*
Certain modal verbs	*will, must, would, may, might, could*
Adverbs	*perhaps, possibly, probably, likely, apparently*
Adverbs of frequency or quantity	*often, sometimes, usually, generally, approximately, somewhat*
Modal adverbs	*certainly, definitely, clearly, probably, possibly, perhaps, conceivably,*
Modal adjectives	*certain, definite, clear, probable, possible*
Modal nouns	*assumption, possibility, probability*
***That* clauses**	*It could be the case that...; There is every hope that...; the case can be argued that...; in the event that...*

LET'S TRY THIS TOGETHER

What do you think about this paragraph?

If cigarette smoking continues at the current rate among youth in this country, 5.6 million of today's Americans younger than 18 will die early from a smoking-related illness.

(https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/youth_data/tobacco_use/index.htm)

Writing Practice

Now your turn, rewrite the following paragraph with the use of hedging language.

There are different reasons for teenagers to take up smoking. Some teenagers see smoking as a way of rebelling and showing independence. The developmental changes in adolescents fuel their urge to imitate adult behaviour, one of which is to make their own decisions. Coupled with the urge to rebel against authority, adolescents will start smoking. Boredom also causes teenagers to smoke. Although teenagers know the harm caused by smoking, they continue to smoke simply because they have become addicted to nicotine.

WRITING PRACTICE
(VERSION WITH A SOFTER TONE)

Surveys conducted by some non-government organisations suggest that there are different possible reasons for teenagers to take up smoking. Some teenagers may see smoking as a way of rebelling and showing independence. The developmental changes in adolescents are very likely to fuel their urge to imitate adult behaviour, one of which is to make their own decisions. Coupled with the urge to rebel against authority, adolescents are prone to smoke. Boredom is likely to be another reason for youth smoking. It is believed that although most of the teenagers interviewed know the harm caused by smoking, they may continue to smoke because of possible nicotine addiction.

Notes: With the use of the verb "suggest", adjectives "possible", "likely" and "prone to", modal verb "may" and the passive voice "it is believed", the tone of the paragraph is softened to avoid over-generalisation.

Linguistic Features in Academic Reading

1. Complex sentence
2. Reporting verbs
3. Hedging
4. Impersonal sentences
5. Complex noun phrases (nominalisation)
6. Cohesive features:
- Lexical chains
- General nouns lexical sets
- Referencing
- Linking and signposts

Source: Johns Ann M.'s framework

Whole-Text Analysis	Function	Examples
1. <u>Complex Sentence Structure</u> subordinate clauses cannot stand on its own (e.g. noun, participle and adverbial clauses) main clauses can be independent	To show and sequentially order the relationships between ideas	*As a result of the higher social status,*
2. <u>Reporting verbs / reporting structures</u> The findings conclude [that + svo] (Note the noun clauses after the verb) As Kubo (2005) argues…. According to Smyth (2012)….	To refer to/comment on sources	*President Woodrow Wilson **claimed** in 1917 that…*
3. <u>Hedging</u> Modals: may, might, could Adverbs: probably, possibly, Quantifiers: some, a few Verbs: tend to…/seem to…/appear to… Others: likely to / a tendency for [something] to…	To withhold the writer's full commitment to an idea/claim or be less definitive with quantity	***Some** of the causes* *…**could** provide them with raw materials*
4. *Impersonal sentences* This is supported by a recent report (Hidden subject) It is often believed that…	To create a sentence without a determinate subject (also to avoid pronouns, e.g. I, you, he, we, they)	**It is widely believed** that some territories were also divided among the winning powers….
5. Complex noun phrases In comparison with *current academic thought and research*, we can draw a conclusion that mental health issues….	To pack more ideas in a compact way	Owing to the fierce arms race and the adversarial nature of the two alliances formed, …was further intensified
6.<u>Cohesive features</u> Lexical chains: a) cost of…/ fees / tuition / b) young people/teenagers/ adolescence General nouns lexical sets: investment, fees, purchasing power, money laundering (all $$$) Referencing (pronouns): it, they, these, those Linkers and signposts: However, to begin with…	To tie together ideas/claims so that the reader understands the logical flow of the text	***<u>Synonyms</u>*** *countries / territory / nations* ***<u>Nouns/lexical sets</u>*** *synonyms: impacts- backwash, result; tension - conflicts* *lexical sets: war- soldiers, fighting, casualties, arms* ***<u>Referencing</u>*** *<u>their</u> contributions = women* *Given <u>its</u> unprecedented scale = WWI* ***<u>Linkers and signposts</u>*** *In addition / therefore / as a result*

Bringing them all together in Academic Reading & Writing

Linguistic Features in Academic Writing

WRAP UP & CONSOLIDATION

Promoting the Academic Use of English through Reading across the Curriculum (RaC) and Language across the Curriculum (LaC)

Teachers of all Key Learning Areas (KLAs) have a role to play in supporting students to understand and produce academic English. As English Language teachers, we can support students by interpreting English as a tool to:

- **heighten students' awareness of language features** while reading texts of broad topics, themes and concepts that students will come across in the study of other subjects; and

- **teach the commonly seen genres, text types, language knowledge and skills** (e.g. grammatical structures, vocabulary) among academic texts that students will need in order to learn and express themselves effectively.

Discussion

How do you or your school promote the Academic Use of English through Reading across the Curriculum (RaC) and Language across the Curriculum (LaC)?

**English Language Education
Key Learning Area**

English Language
Curriculum and Assessment Guide
(Secondary 4 - 6)

Ways to Promote the Academic Use of English

Academic English can be best promoted through Language across the Curriculum (LaC) and Reading across the Curriculum (RaC). LaC and RaC activities help students establish meaningful links across learning experiences acquired in different KLAs while consolidating their language skills developed in the English Language subject. Depending on school contexts, the implementation of LaC/RaC at the senior secondary level may require the collaboration between English and other subject teachers, or the English teachers taking the lead (in schools with most senior secondary subjects taught in Chinese). Teachers can conduct LaC/RaC activities in the English Language classroom as well as incorporate them into co-curricular/life-wide learning activities (e.g. STEM activities, visits to museums).

SUMMARY

Everyday language vs. Academic language

Features of academic text

Academic vocabulary:

- Academic Word List

- Word formation

- Formal vs. informal words

- Collocations

Academic grammar:

- Nominalization + Noun phrases

- Hedging

Academic reading + academic writing