


Scientific Writing in English: Techniques and Tools



Effective Writing: Focus on Language
Part VI

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Focus on Language

- Associated with each component
 - V-tense: Done? >> past tense
“We **created** a sub-corpus of daily news...”
 - Voice: active?
“We **constructed** a large corpus...”

Effective Writing?

- **Cut unnecessary/vague words**
- **Shorten sentences**
- **Active voice (Subject + Verb + Object)**
- **Use verbs (strong)**
- **Do not “stack” NPs**

Dead weight words and phrases

- Fail to contribute to text and/or content
 - As it is well known
 - As it has been shown
 - It can be regarded that
 - It should be emphasized that

Empty words and phrases

- Frame of reference?
 - Important
 - Successful
 - Significant/**very/quite**
 - Extremely
 - **Many/several/some/few**

Repetitive words and phrases

- “Successful solutions”
- Hopefully, a solution is successful!

Long sentences

- Very common among Brazilian Portuguese writers
- Taught to write at length?
- Breathe....

Long words or phrases

- Too many words to say something

- Due to the fact that >> because


- The majority of >> most

- Occur less frequently >> rare

Passive Voice

- Very common
- Who is the “author”?
- Distance between subject and verb?
 - Use ACTIVE voice

Verbs or Nouns?



“Examination of language patterns
has been shown to...”

Vs.

“We examined language patterns to
show...”

Some Tricks

- Eliminate negatives
- Eliminate superfluous uses of “there are/there is”
- Omit needless prepositions

Negatives

- Did not have >> lacked
- Does not remember >> forgets
- Not significant >> ?
- Not important >> ?
- Not honest >> ?

Our Findings...

- **Errors**
 - **Word–Use (WU)**
 - **Word–Use Collocations (WUCol)**
 - **Missing Articles (ART–)**
 - **Extra Articles (ART+)**

Word–Use errors (WU)

- Result when incorrect word is used

WU Example

- Need to describe sequence of multiple steps called “alignments.” There are a given number of steps, i.e., one can count them
- Correct = “The **number of alignments**” (because they can be counted)
- Incorrect = “*The amount of alignments”

Word Use–collocation errors (WUCol)

- Many times, speakers of English as a foreign language use the wrong words when making up a sentence
- E.g., incorrect preposition

WUCol Examples

- * The search **of** genes responsible for
The search for genes responsible for
- * Capable **to** produce
Capable of producing
- **At** amplification
Under magnification

Missing Articles (ART-)

- Writers trying to minimize number of words used and simply eliminated articles ?
- Articles not used in Portuguese but **MUST** be used in English

ART– Examples

- * With \emptyset values expected for full sibs
With the values expected for full sibs
- * Pollen is \emptyset male gamete of higher plants
Pollen is the male gamete of higher plants
- * In \emptyset acute phase of the disease
In the acute phase of the disease

Extra Articles (ART+)

- **Writer may include article when it is not necessary**

ART+ Examples

┌
*The molecular markers are employed...
∅ molecular markers are employed...

In this paper, we write about the protein.
We discuss how the bacteria grows and we
discover how the protein has a lot of
strength...

Recommendations

- Keep at it!
- You can do it with
 - Techniques
 - Tools

Thank you!

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- Questions?

Contact Information



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