Adrian Wallwork

English for Academic Research:
A Guide for Teachers

Springer

English for Academic Research

Series editor
Adrian Wallwork
Pisa
Italy

This series aims to help non-native, English-speaking researchers communicate in English. The books in this series are designed like manuals or user guides to help readers find relevant information quickly, and assimilate it rapidly and effectively. The author has divided each book into short subsections of short paragraphs with many bullet points.

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Introduction

Who is this book for?

This book was written for English language teachers who

- are <u>experienced</u> EFL teachers and wish to embark on a new challenge: teaching students doing a PhD or postgraduate course how to write their papers, present their research at international conferences, and communicate with the research community. This sector of teaching is a sub-sector of English for Academic Purposes (EAP)

- wish to use the *English for Academic Research* series in their English language courses

This book is intended for <u>native</u> speakers of English.

What kind of teacher's book is this? Is it a step-by-step guide to using all the books in the series?

The *English for Academic Research* series is <u>not</u> a series of student coursebooks. The books are self-study guides that can be used by students alone or in class with a teacher.

So the book you are holding in your hands now is <u>not</u> a step-by-step guide to all the sections in the various books of the series.

Instead the book provides a syllabus / lesson plans that you can use as a basis for holding scientific English courses.

By reading this book you will also get

- a clear idea of the academic world in terms of publishing papers and presenting research

- suggestions on how to teach the concepts outlined in the two main books in the series: *English for Writing Research Papers* and *English for Presentations at International Conferences*

My aim is to give you the confidence to teach academic / scientific English which, in my opinion as someone who has taught practically every kind of English, is the most exciting and rewarding area of teaching English.

What is *English for Academic Research*? Is it the same as *English for Academic Purposes* (EAP)? Who is the target audience?

EAP refers to the English required by anyone (generally 18 years and over) studying in higher education whose first language is not English but who needs English in order to carry out their university studies or advance their career in English.

The *English for Academic Research* series is aimed at a specific sector of the EAP market: those who need to publish their work in international journals and present their research orally at international conferences. This type of English is often known not just as 'academic' English but also as 'scientific' English.

The target users of the series are thus:

- Master's students

- PhD students

- Postdoctoral students

- Researchers

- Academic staff of all levels (lecturers, assistant professors, full professors)

Two of the books - *English for Writing Research Papers* and *English Grammar Usage and Style* are also aimed at scientific editors, proofreaders and English teachers who supplement their income by revising / editing scientific papers written by their students.

However, even undergraduates can benefit from this series as they too will be called upon to write in 'scientific' English in their essays, theses, assignments and dissertations, and to present their work orally at seminars and workshops.

What are the components of the *English for Academic Research* series?

The two core books are:

English for Writing Research Papers

English for Presentations at International Conferences

These two books are the ones that are referred to most in this teacher's book. Two other books, primarily for self-study are:

English for Academic Correspondence

English for Interacting on Campus

The above four books have the same format and structure, and are written in the same style.

There is a reference grammar book which both you and your students can consult:

English for Academic Research: Grammar, Usage and Style

There are also three exercise books:

English for Academic Research: Grammar Exercises

English for Academic Research: Vocabulary Exercises

English for Academic Research: Writing Exercises

The exercise books are primarily designed to support the writing skills outlined in *English for Writing Research Papers.* The exercises in these books can be integrated into your course by being set for homework. This teacher's book does not tell you actually how to use each exercise, but rather which exercises to use to supplement the core books.

What key differences are there between this book and other guides to teaching academic English?

This book focuses on how to teach students to write reader-focused texts and give audience-focused oral presentations. This reader / audience focus is key to your students' success in the world of academia. Thus this book differs from other EAP teacher's books / guides / manuals, which tend to see everything from the writer's (i.e. your student's) point of view and thus teach them how to sound impressive and supposedly academic, rather than clear.

The whole series of *English for Academic Research* is designed so that:

- you can cherry pick, i.e. you are not forced to do a whole load of exercises that you don't want to

- you can download the chapters you think are the most useful

- you can exploit a series of fun and stimulating introductory activities

- everything you teach has real practical value for your students

What is the main focus of this book? Which skills are covered the most?

WRITING SKILLS are given the most focus in this book. Writing and publishing a paper demands skills that are not normally taught in the world of EFL (though have some overlap with Business English). You will need to get a handle on these skills if your students are going to benefit from your courses.

PRESENTATION SKILLS are fairly intuitive and are not difficult to learn (though are difficult to put into practice). Presentations skills are also fun to teach, but it may not be immediately clear how to teach them. Several chapters of this book are therefore dedicated to helping you with this aspect.

CORRESPONDENCE, INTERACTION WITH PROFESSORS, AND SOCIAL LIFE Written correspondence (i.e. what is covered in *English for Academic Correspondence*) and social life on campus, including interactions with professors (i.e. what is covered in *English for Interacting on Campus*), are areas that you yourself are likely to have personal experience of from your student days and should therefore be easier for you to teach as skills. They are thus only covered marginally in this teacher's book.

GRAMMAR SKILLS are covered in *English for Writing Research Papers* and in *English for Academic Research: Grammar Exercises.* In addition, *English for Academic Research: Grammar Usage and Style* covers all those aspects of grammar that students will need when writing papers. Thus not all grammar is covered, only that required to write academic texts.

READING SKILLS are not covered in *English for Academic Research*. You can draw on your knowledge of reading skills that you exploited when teaching general English - the same skills apply in academic English.

VOCABULARY SKILLS are dealt with in terms of formal vs informal, and concrete vs abstract. Also, there is an entire exercise book (*English for Academic Research: Vocabulary Exercises*) dealing with discriminating between similar sets of words commonly used in academia. However, there are no vocabulary building exercises as such. Your students may be studying highly varying disciplines so it would be hard to teach them all the same vocabulary. However, if you are interested in generic academic vocabulary (e.g. test, experiment, trial) then there are many free word lists available (e.g. http://www.uefap.com/vocab/select/awl.htm)

LISTENING SKILLS are covered only to the extent of strategies for understanding native English speakers and understanding university lectures - see Chapters 6 and 9 in *English for Interacting on Campus*. Again this is because listening skills in academia are hardly different from the skills usually required in normal life and thus covered in general English courses.

My aim in this book is not to cover areas that you can easily find elsewhere. I just want to concentrate on what your students really need to know, and what for you would be difficult to find in any other teacher's book.

How is this book organized?

This book is divided into four parts.

Part 1 Academic Written English: What it is and how to teach it

This part explains everything you need to know about the world of academia, the writing of research papers, and the role of journal editors and reviewers. Part 1 thus covers syntax and grammar issues, short vs long sentences, paragraphing, exploiting student's own materials, drawing comparisons between academic writing and other forms of writing, and injecting some fun into your lessons.

Part 2 Academic Presentations: What they are and how to teach them

This part gives some very practical suggestions on how to help your students improve their presentations skills.

Part 3 Strategies for Teaching Writing and Presenting

The two chapters in this part show you how to teach academic skills but using non-academic examples, as well as how to provide evidence to students of the importance of what you are teaching them. A few suggestions are given on how to deal with multinational and multicultural groups.

Part 4 Syllabus and lessons plans

This part suggests two main syllabuses - one for a writing course and the other for a presentations course. This is a step-by-step guide on what to cover in each lesson, and how to incorporate sections from the *English for Academic Research* series into your lessons.

Does the series cover both science and humanities students?

Yes, but the bias is towards scientific research. Historians, philosophers, and other humanists often tend to write in their native language and attend fewer international conferences. When they do write in English their English is particularly arcane (as is the English of the native speakers!) and thus difficult to decipher. It may surprise you but it is actually much easier to revise and edit papers written by scientists than it is by humanists.

Why should I want to teach EAP / scientific English?

I've taught every type of English, and scientific English is without doubt the most stimulating and rewarding.

You will learn a ton of interesting information about your students' research areas thus opening you up to a completely new world. In addition your students will probably

- be more motivated to learn than any other students you have ever had - improving their English relates directly to them being able to continue conducting their research

- come from many different countries (even if you are teaching in a non-English-speaking country) - PhD students travel the world in search of opportunities to study with particular professors in particular labs and in particular courses. Having a multicultural class is fascinating

- show the fastest progress that you have ever witnessed - you will be teaching them specific skills that they can apply immediately. The results can be very rewarding for you as a teacher

- enjoy themselves more in your class than in most classes that they are obliged to attend. This is because you are teaching them skills (writing papers, presenting CVs, email, and communication in general) that are not only fundamental for their success at university, but which will also help them if they work in industry

I am a regular EFL teacher. Will I be able to use *English for Academic Research* series?

Yes.

You certainly need to have had a few years' experience in teaching general English to adults. Even better if you have also taught Business English - Business English and Scientific English have much in common.

If you have had no EFL experience but have a degree in science then this would partially make up for your lack of teaching experience.

I believe that a good academic English teacher, like a good EFL teacher, needs to

- be a good communicator with a curiosity about people of all types

- have a lively interest in English (and languages in general) and a willingness to study its grammar - which in the case of 'scientific' English can be quite different from the standard English grammar you would teach in a general English course

- teach what is necessary rather than what is sometimes prescribed

In addition to these three factors, you need to understand the life of PhD students and researchers, what the publication of research articles entails and how international conferences operate. You also need to become exposed to all the types of emails and letters that such people write in their daily life.

If you have already taught Business English then this could be the next logical step in your career. Like Business English teaching Scientific English is incredibly satisfying as you are really helping your students to progress in their careers through a series of short-term goals (e.g. drafting a manuscript, preparing for a poster session at a conference, writing a CV, dealing with referees' comments on their paper).

Given that there are far fewer teachers of Scientific English than Business English you can command a much greater fee for your services and you can supplement your income very nicely by editing the work of non-native researchers.

What are the possible pitfalls to this book?

On the market there are a few guides to teaching EAP but as far as I know there are no guides to teaching English specifically to PhD students and researchers. Nor do I know of any journals, SIGs (special interest groups), or conferences devoted to this topic. So although there are plenty of us around the world teaching English in universities at very high levels, what you are reading now may well be the first introduction to teaching scientific English ever written (but please correct me if I am wrong …). As explained above this is not a guide to teaching scientific English, but rather an introduction to teaching scientific English and a guide to how to exploit the books in this *English for Academic Research* series.

I contacted several teachers while preparing this book, but inevitably my personal experience is likely to prevail and may not totally match yours.

For this reason I would be very grateful if you could contact me (adrian.wallwork@gmail.com) and let me know whether or not this book has fulfilled your expectations, and if it hasn't what changes and additions you would like to see in future editions. Thank you.

The author

Since 1984 Adrian Wallwork has been editing and revising scientific papers, as well as teaching English as a foreign language. In 2000 he began specializing in training PhD students from all over the world in how to write and present their research in English. He is the author of over 30 textbooks for Springer Science+Business Media, Cambridge University Press, Oxford University Press, the BBC, and many other publishers.

With his wife, Anna Southern, Adrian runs an editing agency for researchers whose native language is not English - English for Academics (E4AC). They revise, proofread and edit over a million words a year - but find it much easier to find typos in the works of others rather than in their own! So if you find any typos in this book please contact Adrian: adrian.wallwork@gmail.com. Thanks.

Contents

Part I
Academic Written English: What It Is and How to Teach It

Chapter 1
What Is EAP / Scientific English? What Do I Need to Do to Prepare Myself to Teach Scientific English?

1.1 In this book, how are the terms *Academic English* and *Scientific English* used?

In terms of this book, *academic English* means any English used in formal texts and presentations by students, researchers and teaching staff of any discipline. For me, *scientific English* is a subset of academic English, and is the English used by those studying scientific subjects (e.g. chemistry, biology, engineering, mathematics) rather than humanistic subjects such as history or philosophy. In any case, there is no clear distinction and even humanist subjects can be very 'scientific', e.g. the philosophy of mathematics.

1.2 What is *Academic* English?

It's crucial to understand that there isn't just one type of academic English. It differs massively depending on whether the author is studying humanities (often long-winded, abstract and full of jargon) or one of the pure sciences (very technical but potentially clear and concrete).

The style also differs massively from writer to writer. Some native and non-natives authors alike write very well (clear and well structured), and others very badly (murky and badly organized).

It is dangerous to talk of 'academic English' as if it were a homogeneous style. You should be wary of teaching books and students books that present academic English

as if it were a style that all academics use and as if it always has certain characteristics such as:

- use of passive voice

- use of abstract nouns

- long sentences

- use of Latinate rather than Anglo-Saxon vocabulary

To get a quick idea of the various types of academic English, look at Chapter 13 in *English for Writing Research Papers* where you will find a variety of abstracts from many different disciplines, both scientific and humanistic. See in particular subsections: 13.8, 13.10, 13.15, 13.22, 13.23, 13.24.

In summary: academic English varies massively, there is no single definition of what it is.

1.3 Are the rules of Academic English the same for all disciplines?

Unfortunately not. Students need to download the 'instructions to authors' from the journal's website to see what their specific journal requires. The format of the paper (particularly the Abstract) varies from discipline to discipline and journal to journal. Even the order of the sections differs considerably. The use of *we* vs the passive form also varies, and some journals even allow the first person singular.

For example, below are some instructions from a physics journal. Physics tends to be one of the most 'conservative' disciplines there is. The guidelines, which I have edited, come from a CERN site and reflect the kind of guidelines that students are likely to come across. The numbers (i.e. 1-10) are mine - see my comments below the guidelines.

1) Language : Notes are expected to be written in British English. Please always refer to the Oxford English Dictionary.

2) Avoid the use of "we", "us", "one". Physics is supposed to be independent of the person(s) in charge of writing the note. To adopt a lower profile with respect to Physics, use the passive form instead, e.g. always prefer "A study is presented" to "We present a study". Similarly a note (or a figure or a section) does not describe / present / show anything by itself. Prefer "A study is presented in this note" to "This note describes a study".

3) In general, do not use the future in the text (except for something that will indeed happen later). For example, write "The method is described in Section 4." instead of "The method will be described in Section 4.". Because Section 4 is already written at the time you submit the note (hopefully), the use of the future tense is not correct.

4) In general, use the present tense (is, are …) for general statements such as "The efficiency of the selection amounts to 90%" and the past tense (was, were …) for specific actions such as "Events were selected as follows.". In any case, be consistent throughout your note.

5) Integer numbers between zero and fifteen must be written in letters, not in numbers, except in, e.g., Fig. 1, Section 4, Table 5, Chapter 3 and Ref. [8].

6) A Table caption is above the corresponding table, a figure caption is below the corresponding figure.

7) A sentence cannot start with an acronym, an abbreviation, a symbol.

8) Use Fig.~1 and Ref.~[1], not figure 1 or reference 1 (except at the start of a sentence, of course!)

9) Do not instruct the reader, i.e. adopt a low profile with respect to your (probably few) readers who are kind enough to read your note. For example, "(See Section 2)" should be replaced by "(Section 2)". In particular, do not use "Note that …".

10) Footnotes distract the reader from reading your paper. If the footnote content is important, move the footnote to the main text. If it is unimportant, remove the footnote.

Guideline 1 (language) is important as it tells your student whether to adopt British or American spelling. The consistency in their spelling can generally be checked by setting Word to the appropriate language and noting any mis-spellings that come up.

Guidelines 2 and 9 are, fortunately, becoming less and less common. I believe there is no evidence that a 'lower profile' is achieved by using the passive form or that, if such a lower profile could be created, it would be in any way useful. However, my opinion would be strongly contested by others (see 4.9) and may be also by your students.

The other guidelines are true whatever discipline and I think are extremely useful.

1.4 Is the grammar of Academic English different from that of General English?

The grammar of academic English is sometimes non standard, particularly in the sciences, but not normally in the humanities. For example, see *English for Academic Research: Grammar, Usage and Style* for the use of the genitive in 2.1-2.2, the definite article in 5.4, and the use of numbers in 21.1-21.3.

Below is the first part of the entire experimental section of a paper entitled *Growth of Diamond Films from Tequila* by Mexican researchers Javier Morales et al. Their English reflects the typical use of English in scientific papers by native and non-native authors, but which EFL and EAP trainers may find strange.

> Small pieces of *a Si* (100) wafer and commercial stainless steel (type 304) were used as substrates fixed to the holder through silver paste. *Temperature* was controlled at 850°C through *an automatic* PID temperature control (Eurotherm). *Reactor pressure* varied from 4.76 to 4.99 Torr due to the injection processes and to the flash evaporation phenomena. The carrier and reaction gases flux were fixed at 0.8 and 0.1 1 / min respectively. "Tequila blanco" (white tequila) Orendain brand a clear un-aged liquor distilled from the juice of blue agave (Agave Tequilana) plant [9] was used *as precursor*.

In italics I have highlighted some issues with articles (*a / an, the*). In the first line *Si* stands for silicon. If you read the sentence, you would probably read it as: *a silicon wafer* and not *an Si wafer. Si* is not an acronym - you would say, for example, *an SOS* because each letter in SOS stands for a separate word. In SOS, the S is pronounced ESS and therefore requires *an* because of the initial vowel sound (as in *an automatic* in the third line).

In Morales' paper, like in most scientific papers, the use of *a* and *the* goes against the normal rule of a singular countable noun requiring a preceding article. Morales uses - like many native speakers - *temperature* and *reactor pressure* without a preceding *the*. However, other authors opt to use *the* in exactly the same situation. Clearly, in such contexts, both forms are permissible.

Likewise, Morales writes *as precursor* which - in general English - would have to be *as a precursor*, which is what some other authors in the literature use. So again in these cases both forms seem to be possible, though the solution with *a* is twice as common.

Below is the second and final part of Morales' experimental section, which highlights some useful points with regard to numbers.

This tequila 80 proof and with C-H-O atomic relationships of 0.37 C 0.84 H and 0.29 O (Figure 1) was injected at a frequency of 2 pulses per second (500 ms) with an opening time of 4 ms. A total of 21768 pulses were applied in each experiment and a micro dose of 6.26 $\times 10^{-3}$ ml was injected per pulse (Table 1). Temperatures in the evaporation zone and along the vapor transport line were fixed at 280°C. The deposit was studied through a Dilor micro-Raman spectrometer with a 20 mW 632 nm He-Ne laser equipped with a confocal microscope and a JEOL Low-Vacuum Scanning Electron Microscope (JSM-6060LV) operating at 15 kV secondary electrons spot 50 and WD 11 mm.

The use of numbers varies from journal to journal and paper to paper. In Morales' paper, all the numbers are written as digits rather than words (e.g. *2 pulses* rather than *two pulses*).

Other journals recommend using words for numbers from one to ten and then digits. However, this rule does not apply when the number precedes an abbreviation for a measurement (e.g. *9 mm* not *nine millimeters*).

Note also that abbreviations for measurements do not have an *s* when they are plural (e.g. *9 mm* not *9 mms*).

Another rule of style prohibits beginning a sentence with a number in digits. For this reason, Morales correctly writes

… opening time of 4 ms. A total of 21768 pulses were applied …

rather than

… opening time of 4 ms. 21768 pulses were applied …

In fact, you can see clearly from these two examples why the rule exists. It exists to help readers see the numbers more clearly. Alternatively, you can begin a sentence with a written number:

Twenty thousand pulses were applied …

Clearly, if you begin a sentence with a number in words the number has to be a short number. Writing the following would be ridiculous:

Twenty one thousand seven hundred and sixty eight pulses were applied …

The last sentence of Morales' experimental contains nine pieces of information but it is not difficult to follow and it would be strange to break the sentence down into smaller parts.

1.5 Does Academic / Scientific English share any similarities with Business English?

Good writing whether academic or business should be clear and easy to understand. Just because you are an academic doesn't mean you have to couch your language in an unfathomable sequence of nouns. However, it is certainly true to say that, in the world of academia, Latinate words tend to be more precise and scientific than Anglo-Saxon words and should thus be preferred.

Business language tends to be designed to get possible clients and customers to act upon a message. This may seem like a far cry from the aim of academic language, but it isn't. If you are an academic, you need your readers to act too - reviewers to accept your paper for publication and readers to quote your papers in their papers - only then will you achieve recognition and be able to push forward your career.

Businesses have a product to sell; so do academics - their findings. This means that academics need to find a way of 'advertising' their results / findings within their paper - typically in the Discussion section (see Chapter 18 in *English for Writing Research Papers*) - by using shorter paragraphs, shorter sentences and language that draws the reader's attention to the importance of what the researcher has found. This is even more important when giving a presentation - academics need to 'sell' their ideas to the audience who will then act upon the message given by i) reading the related paper, ii) possibly setting up a collaboration between research groups, and iii) possibly helping to fund a project or providing grants for the author to be able to work in their (i.e. a particular member of the audience's) lab.

So, just as business language tends to be full of action verbs, academic speaking and to a lesser extent writing should also try to choose verbs where possible.

Businesses tend to use shorter sentences in their communication with the public. Academics tend to use very long sentences. But this doesn't mean that academics are right to do so; it simply reflects the way they have been writing for centuries. Academia is very conservative compared to business but some areas of academia are trying to bring their writing into the modern world. The best at doing so are medical researchers whose papers are now being written in a much more accessible and thus effective format (see Chapter 13 in *English for Writing Research Papers*).

Moral of the story: Your job is to help your students get their work published. Your job is not to encourage them to use an antiquated style, which although still typical of some disciplines, is currently undergoing long-awaited changes.

1.6 So can I really teach 'scientific' English when I don't have a scientific background?

Yes.

The key is to remember that you are going to be teaching your students English not science.

In reality, you will find that English is really just the starting point. In addition, you will be teaching your students:

EMPATHY - how to think from the point of view of the reader, editor, audience (for presentations), recipient (emails), and HR manager (CV)

CONCISENESS - how to say all that is strictly necessary, using the clearest and shortest form

CLARITY - how to ensure that the reader / audience is 100% clear about what they (i.e. your students) are saying. So, how to make explanations, diagrams, slides, layout etc. clear. Clarity also includes lack of ambiguity - the same phrase or word having more than one interpretation

SELF-EVALUATION - how to assess their own writing and their performance when giving a presentation

CRITICAL THINKING - how to manage the difficulty of keeping their conservative professor happy while communicating in a more 'modern' style; and how to assess what it is important to cover in their paper and presentation and what isn't etc.

SELF-PROMOTION - how to help them sell their research and themselves as effective researchers. Too often academics are trapped in an ivory tower with little idea of the importance of seeing their work as a product that they have to 'sell' to the big wide world

English is just your medium of instruction for teaching the above points.

While teaching the above you will also need to fall back on grammar and pronunciation rules - but you will quickly learn that grammar and pronunciation are probably the least of your students' problems. Basically, you will be undoing everything they learned at school about the rules of writing and presenting. You will be revolutionizing the way your students communicate. This can be very empowering and satisfying both for you and for them.

1.7 What kind of background reading will help me to understand science and how it is written up?

For the more technical side of scientific writing you can consult the webpages of the big scientific journals. In Springer's 'Journal Author Academy' there are videos that are intended to walk authors through the publishing process. Another huge academic publisher, Elsevier, has a downloadable pdf entitled: How to publish in scholarly journals. See 'Sources' at the end of this book for links to these sites.

To get an easy insight into what goes on in the academic world and what scientists study, there are many popular science books that you can read.

You could start off with all of Michael Gladwell's books, particularly *Outliers*. Below are some other books that I have particularly enjoyed.

> *Ignobel Prizes – The Annals of Improbable Research,* Mark Abrahams, Penguin Group USA
>
> *The Shallows,* Nicholas Carr, W. W. Norton & Company
>
> *Bad Science*, Ben Goldacre. Harper Collins
>
> *Quirkology*, Richard Wiseman, Macmillan
>
> *Yes! 50 secrets from the science of persuasion,* Goldstein, Martin & Cialdini, Profile Books
>
> *Freakanomics*, Levitt & Dubner, Penguin
>
> *More sex is safe sex*, Steven E Landsburg, Pocket Books
>
> *How we know what isn't so: The Fallibility of Human Reason in Everyday Life*, Thomas Gilovich, The Free Press
>
> *I wish I hadn't said that: Experts speak and get it wrong*, C Cerf & V Navasky, Harper Collins Publishers

You should also watch presentations on ted.com (see Chapter 11)

Finally, read about science in your favorite newspapers or magazines. For instance, I found some nice quotes in an article in *Wired* entitled *How to spot bad science*, where the British physicist, Professor Brian Cox, stated that hard science is complicated:

Sensationalism is not a part of writing up scientific papers. If you see a paper that says 'Higgs boson discovered' it's likely to be bollocks.

Cox also mentioned the other end of the spectrum i.e. that making mistakes is OK:

You can't avoid mistakes because if you do you're playing safe and you're not going to do anything very well.

You may or may not chose to pass insights such as these on to your students, but they will in any case enrich your experience in teaching scientific English.

1.8 How can papers and presentations written by scientists possibly be easier to correct / edit than those written by humanists?

Most EFL teachers have a humanist background and thus tend to be scared by the idea of teaching 'scientific' English. You may be under the illusion that understanding a humanist paper is easier than understanding a scientific paper. Yes, you can understand more of a humanist paper. However, you may realize that all you have done is merely to recognize the words but without being able to make much sense of them. In fact, this stream of jargon is the tool with which humanists express themselves in their specific field - it is really no different from scientific terminology.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between students' perceptions of instructors' use of hugging–bridging methods (see Section 1 above) and their (the students') perceived transfer of learning from the EAP programme to the disciplines. The investigation was framed by the high-road / low-road conceptualisation of transfer of learning: While this framework has enjoyed much currency in general education it has not yet been empirically investigated in EAP. Findings of a positive relationship between albeit nescient hugging–bridging methods and learning transfer might validate the conscious development of …

The above comes from a paper written by Jonathan Green that appeared in *English for Special Purposes*, a specialized journal published by Elsevier, a leading scientific publisher. Although the paper is about something you ought to be familiar with, i.e. teaching English, you will admit that it has its own very specific terminology (*hugging-bridging, high-road / low-road conceptualization*), uses expressions that

you have probably never used yourself (*albeit, nescient*) and probably doesn't make too much sense to you without reading the whole paper and / or without being deep into the topic yourself. It is, in fact, no less or more penetrable than the following:

> The objective of this study was to prepare, characterize and test the catalytic properties of copper and gallium salts of Aquicupron® SWQE. The samples were characterized by the determination of metal loading in fresh and used materials YUI-KLJK and telespectrometry analysis. The salts were screened in a Jensen-Björnstard acylation of various monocyclic compounds and compared with biochemical Browns acids as well as with pure Aquicupron. These new salts revealed efficient monocatalytic activity and replicability.

1.9 What do students typically think that their 'English problems' are?

I surveyed 100 PhD students and asked them to list what they thought were the three biggest language problems when writing a paper. I did not present them with a list of categories to choose from as I wanted them to come up with the categories themselves. Below are their most significant categories. The percentages refer to the percentage of students who made reference to the category in question.

vocabulary in general – 20%

phrasal verbs – 20%

false friends – 15%

prepositions and adverbs – 10%

conditionals – 10%

sentence length – 6 %

past perfect, past perfect continuous, future perfect – 5%

word order – 4 %

ambiguity – 0 %

The results were very interesting. Firstly, they differed considerably from student to student, irrespective of nationality (though around 80% were Italian). Secondly, many students identified elements of English that are very rarely used in research papers (e.g. phrasal verbs, past perfect, future perfect) or do not generally cause problems (vocabulary, prepositions). Yet, they almost completely neglected aspects that native-speaking referees and professional editors frequently complain about: sentence length, word order and ambiguity.

I think that the results of my survey highlight two factors:

- PhD students and young researchers tend to be conditioned by the English that they learned at school where grammar was given very high importance. In reality, only a limited knowledge of grammar is required when writing research papers, particularly technical ones, provided that the paper is not written primarily in long rambling sentences.

- Your students need to focus on what really causes papers to be rejected, i.e. problems with syntax, clarity and general readability.

Vocabulary problems are rarely an issue. Often the technical terms already exist in English in the student's native language as Begum Cimen, a PhD student from Turkey, explains:

> Most of the technical terms that are used in the Turkish language come from the English language. Sometimes an exact translation is not possible for technical terms and therefore the usage of foreign words in Turkish academic writing is a common case.

Of course, in humanistic subjects, a richer vocabulary is helpful but this can be learned through reading other authors' papers.

Chapter 2
The Research and Publication Process: Why Papers Get Rejected

2.1 What are the aims of PhD students and researchers?

A PhD student is someone who has already done one or more bachelor or Master's degrees.

Their main aims in life are to do research that they enjoy and survive economically at the same time. Both aims can be achieved to a large extent if they manage to publish their work.

They need to publish their work in order to:

1. justify the funds that they have been given by the institute where they work
2. share their knowledge and results with the scientific community (i.e. others working in the same or similar fields)
3. get noticed by other research labs that may be interested in funding them to carry out new research

Most researchers tend to think that point 2 above is the most important thing. In reality, that in itself is not enough to survive in academia. Your students need to get a name for themselves (Point 3), to network heavily at congresses, and to promote themselves and thereby get the funds that will allow them to continue in their privileged position as someone who spends most of their day doing something that they are passionate about.

2.2   How important is it for my students to write good papers?

In a New York Times Magazine article, economist Steven Levitt, author of the best-selling book *Freakanomics*, explained how his approach as a student at Harvard differed from his fellows. While other students were working on solving problems based on what they had been taught during lectures to ensure they would score well in examinations, Levitt focused on doing research and writing up what he had found: "My view was that the way you succeed in this profession is you write great papers."

Later in the article Levitt gives insights into a couple of tricks he used when writing a paper:

- story telling - structure your paper to guide readers along a certain path in preparation for reading the results - if they get lost in the story they won't be able to comprehend and believe the results

- be honest about your limitations - readers and reviewers prefer you to be clear about any limitations or weaknesses in your research; they don't want the limitations to be hidden

Levitt's two points - results and limitations - are covered in Chapters 17 and 9, respectively, in *English for Writing Research Papers*.

2.3   What are the main steps in getting research published?

Again, let's imagine you are a PhD student - so below when I write *you* I mean a student.

While you are doing your research you need to publish results (for the reasons given in the previous subsection) even if these are not your final results.

The process is more or less as follows:

1. You (or your professor / tutor / supervisor / instructor - these people are called different names in different universities) decide on an appropriate journal to submit your paper to.

2. You download the "instructions to authors" from the journal's website in order to ensure you follow their style rules (regarding layout, use of *we* vs passive, bibliography etc.).

3. You write your paper possibly in conjunction with other co-authors to whom you submit the various drafts of the paper.

4. When everyone is happy with the paper you then submit it to your chosen journal by uploading it onto their website.

5. The editor of the journal quickly browses your paper and chooses two or three referees to judge the quality of the paper: scientific quality (i.e. its contribution to the state of the art) and the level of English (which is supposed to be as near to perfect as possible).

6. These referees write their report and send it back to the editor. The referees may or may not know who the author of the paper is. In a blind review they don't know who you are and thus are supposedly less likely to show any bias.

7. If the referees accept the paper with no changes then the editor will proceed with the publication. However 'acceptance with no changes' is very rare and the editor is likely to request some changes - these may be of a scientific nature or simply a 'linguistic review' (i.e. due to supposedly 'poor English').

8. You make the changes requested justifying any that you feel should <u>not</u> be made. You write a letter to the editor (called a *rebuttal*) explaining the changes made.

9. You wait and pray that your paper will be accepted.

2.4   What about conferences - how do they affect the publication process?

Conferences normally get organized up to a year before the actual date of the conference itself. Several months before the conference they issue a 'call for abstracts / papers'. This is an invitation to researchers to submit an abstract (in some cases a full paper) for review by the conference organizers. If the abstract is accepted, then the author will be invited either to

- give a presentation; or to

- conduct a poster session (see Chapter 18 in *English for Presentations at International Conferences*)

Researchers often use conferences to test out their ideas and get feedback on their research. This feedback then gets implemented into the final manuscript that they produce. This manuscript will then be submitted to a journal and / or published in the 'proceedings' of the conference, i.e. a collection of the papers submitted to the conference. These proceedings may simply be abstracts or certain authors may be asked to write a full paper.

So, conferences are an integral part of the research process. Giving a good presentation massively increases a researcher's chances of getting useful feedback on their research. It also acts as an opportunity to set up future research projects and thus get additional funds (and thus have enough money to eat and pay rent for the next few months!).

2.5   What steps do the students themselves follow when writing their manuscript?

When writing a paper it helps if students have a template to follow. You can recommend that they create their own template as follows. Note that below *you* and *your* refer to the student.

1. Choose a journal from your specific field.
2. Read 10-15 articles related to your research.
3. Select one article that you particularly like (ideally one that has also been frequently cited by other authors thus indicating it is a good paper).
4. Analyse how the paper is structured as a whole (and the word count for each different section) and then look at the structure of the individual sections.
5. Choose one section in the paper and note down what the author does in each paragraph.
6. Underline useful sentences that you could use in your own paper.
7. On the basis of Points 5 and 6, begin writing the section.
8. Repeat the same process for all the other sections.

2.6 What do my students need to know about referees?

It is crucial that your students write their paper or prepare their presentations with the referees and reviewers in mind. Below are three typical 'types' of referee. Note that *referee* and *reviewer* both mean the same thing with reference to the assessment of a research manuscript.

REFEREE 1: TOP EXPERTS CURRENTLY WORKING IN YOUR STUDENTS' FIELD

These are the ones to whom most journal editors try to send manuscripts for review. They are the experts that know the most about the topic and are therefore most suitable to carry out a peer review of a paper. They are also the ones who may have the least time and inclination to do such reviews, particularly as they may receive up to 10 requests per month for their services. Such referees tend to be most interested in whether the paper makes sense from a scientific point of view. They may be less concerned with language errors provided such errors do not impede on their understanding your student's paper. They do not normally have time to make a detailed analysis of every sentence that the author of the manuscript writes.

REFEREE 2: RETIRED EXPERTS

These referees are like the first type but they have a lot more time on their hands because they are no longer officially working. Because they have more time, they tend to go into much greater detail both from a scientific and language point of view.

REFEREE 3: PHD STUDENTS

With the advent of so many online journals, more and more papers are being published every day. This means that top experts are in great demand. Rather than refusing an editor's request for them to do a review, referees sometimes ask permission to pass the paper on to one of their PhD students. This is often the case when reviews are requested for low impact / low ranked journals. Clearly, a PhD student's knowledge of your student's specific research area may be less than your student's knowledge, but this does not mean that they are unable to make a good evaluation of your student's work.

Students need to keep all these types of referee happy!

2.7 How do referees do their job? Do native speakers always get their papers accepted?

Marcelo J. Lippmann who is an Associate Editor for the Americas Earth Sciences Division explains how referees generally work and what their priorities are when assessing a manuscript:

> If the scientists are editing technical journals for a professional organization or a commercial publishing house, they tend to devote only a minimal amount of their time (a few hours a week) in editing the materials that are submitted to them. These "part-time editors" mainly want to make sure the technical / scientific content is correct. If the writing needs improvement, they either may reject the papers or ask the authors to get help from an English-speaking colleague or a science editor.

Thus, the key factor for rejection is issues to do with the technical and scientific content. Interestingly, Robert Coates (see 2.9) found that the acceptance rate for manuscripts (relating to cardiovascular research) emanating from the US and the UK was only 30.4%. Although this figure was higher than for any other nationality, it still indicates that being a native speaker is no guarantee that your manuscript will be published.

2.8 How do I know what to focus on when teaching students how to write up their research for publication? What criteria do referees follow when reviewing a manuscript or abstract?

The review of technical papers is an extremely serious process. Only technical expertise and judgement and high professional standards brought to bear on the review can ensure the publication of high-quality papers.

If the manuscript or abstract is being sent to a conference in the hope that the authors will be invited to give an oral presentation, then - in addition to the technical value of the work - reviewers will focus on

1. the degree of creativity or innovation
2. the contribution of the paper as a stimulant to discussion

This means you need to help your students highlight not just their results but the benefit of their results to the scientific community, how these results differ from previous work and what their applications / implications are (see Chapter 8 in *English for Writing Research Papers*).

If the research is going to be published, then - in addition to the two points above - reviewers will be looking at:

- whether the title reflects the content

- the main experimental question asked i.e. the aim of the research

- the rationale behind the aim

- how the work of your student relates to other research in the field and what previous papers prompted your student's research

- the methods used to address the aim of the research as stated by your student in their Abstract and Introduction

- the results, what they mean, what they add to what is already known and what should be done next as a consequence

- the main strengths, i.e. how the research really contributes to what is already known

- any limitations and weaknesses

- whether what is written in the Abstract and Conclusions is consistent with and supported by information contained in the paper

Obviously, much of this has little to do specifically with the English language. The same would be required if students were writing in their own language. So you actually have a dual role: i) helping them to write in English ii) advising them on what content is expected (and you will find that often this is equally important to teaching them good English). To learn about the expected content for each section of the paper, see Chapters 13 to 19 in *English for Writing Research Papers.*

If you want to learn more about what criteria reviewers follow, simply type "reviewers guidelines" into Google.

2.9 How can I help my students write better English? When manuscripts are rejected for 'poor English' what exactly does 'poor' mean?

In his paper 'Language and publication in Cardiovascular Research articles', Robert Coates talks about the reasons why papers are and are not accepted for publication. He writes:

> Only a few rambling sentences (often as long as a paragraph) would make a whole article sometimes incomprehensible, whereas a relatively large number of lexical 'errors' would have no effect on an otherwise well-written article.

Dr Coates found that "badly written articles" correlate with "a high rejection rate".

> Many factors could influence the rejection of an article. However, we found clear indications that carelessly written articles could often have either a direct or subliminal influence on whether a paper was accepted or rejected. On equal scientific merit, a badly written article will have less chance of being accepted. This is even if the editor involved in rejecting a paper does not necessarily identify language problems as a motive for rejection.

Coates' research refers to papers that were submitted for publication in Cardiovascular Research.. He also found that manuscripts that had the lowest acceptance rate also had the highest error rate in terms of English.

This does not mean that all papers with high error rates were rejected or that a low acceptance rate was determined exclusively by poor English. But he did find a definite correlation.

Other researchers have also investigated the types of language mistakes made in scientific papers and they are all in basic agreement. For example, Professor Felicia Brittman in her paper *The Most Common Habits from more than 200 English Papers written by Graduate Chinese Engineering Students* lists the following mistakes as the most serious and common as they 'interrupt the flow of the paper making it difficult to understand':

- very long sentences

- prefacing the main idea of a sentence by stating the purpose, location or reason first

- placing phrases which indicate time at the beginning of the sentence

- failing to place the subject at the beginning

- misuse of articles - *a / an / the*

- misuse of *which / that*

Notice that none of Brittman's findings relate to vocabulary and only two of the six points relate to grammar (to which I would add misuse of the *-ing* form and confusion between the present and past tenses particularly in the Results / Discussion section). The other four points relate to readability.

So, it is poor readability that is the main cause for manuscripts being rejected … at least by native English speaking referees. Non-native referees tend to focus more on grammar but papers are rarely rejected for just a few grammar errors.

You will find that your students will tend to be conditioned by the English that they learned at school where grammar was given very high importance (see 2.10). Try to get them to focus more on readability.

2.10 Are there differences in the comments made by native and non-native reviewers? What do I need to tell my students in this regard?

Referees are generally not English language experts. They are interested much more in the scientific content than in the level of English. The comments that referees make on an author's English often depend on whether the referees are native speakers (NS) or non-native speakers (NNS).

NNS referees tend to recognize the elements of 'poor' English that for them stand out the clearest:

- spelling mistakes and typos

- simple grammar mistakes (e.g. missing *s* on plurals and third person)

Here is a typical example written by an NNS referee commenting on an NNS's English:

A big problem with this work is the English form: there are so many language errors that it actually seriously compromises one's ability to understand what is being presented. The paper needs an extensive revision by a native English speaker.

NS referees, on the other hand, tend to focus more on problems related to intelligibility and readability: verbosity, redundancy and rambling sentences. Many native English-speaking referees are sympathetic to their non-native colleagues. David Simons, author of the wonderful article *Gorillas In Our Midst* (see his wonderful video on YouTube), told me:

> I typically don't comment on minor grammatical issues in my reviews unless the grammar makes the content hard to follow or understand. I can't imagine having to write all my scientific papers in a second language—it's hard enough to do in a native language—so I have a lot of sympathy for people who have that obstacle to publication.

Grammatical and lexical errors are unlikely to completely impair a referee's understanding of a paper but too many of them might cause referees to become irritated and lose interest. If a paper is filled with errors, this requires too much effort on the part of the referee. This may have a negative impact on his / her opinion not only of the paper but also of the author's credibility as a reliable researcher.

All referees object to spelling mistakes, particularly as this is something that authors can easily check themselves. A series of trivial and easily correctable mistakes may make some referees feel that your student is not very competent and reliable. Their opinion of your student's English may even throw doubts on how well they imagine the student carried out his / her research.

Judging errors is an extremely subjective exercise. Different referees may have very different ideas about what they would term as 'intolerable' or 'objectionable' errors. This may help to explain those occasions when a paper is rejected by one referee for 'very poor' English, whereas the other referees make no comment at all about the English level.

Sometimes referees will give no specific reasons for rejecting a paper due its poor English but they will say something like: *This referee recommends that the authors have their paper revised by a qualified native English speaker*. This may happen for two reasons:

1. the referee (whether a NS or a NNS) feels that the quality of the English is low but is unable to pinpoint exactly what it is. In this case, the cause of the problem is generally an overall lack of readability.

2. the referee is a NNS and is not sure of the level of English and wants to protect himself / herself just in case there are errors. This is a face-saving device adopted by NNS referees in relation to the editor.

2.11 So what do referees say when commenting about the English?

Here is a selection of typical comments made by reviewers. What these comments highlight is that although the English of the authors is problematic, the root of the problem is that they haven't expressed themselves clearly (and probably this would have also been the case had they written in their own language).

1. It was not at all clear from reading this paper what its precise aims and objectives were and how they fitted into the study. It is a pity as there is potentially some very interesting data here but it is poorly used.

2. Overall, this paper contains some very interesting data. However, some sections of the paper are not well written - primarily with respect to the findings, which need to be presented more clearly and concisely with better constructed sentences to ensure ease of reading.

3. The sections need to be introduced to the reader more fully so that they can quickly identify what each is one is about and how it relates to the overall story.

4. I can tell that the idea is there, but the writing is not clear and strong enough to convey the information to a more general audience.

5. This sentence has nothing to do with the rest of the paragraph. The first sentence is the most important of a paragraph: do not waste it on pointless discussion. I had a hard time understanding what this paragraph is really about and it needs major re-organization.

6. You need to tell me why all of these other studies are relevant. Bring them into context with your findings - do not just report what they found.

7. I failed to work out what the subject was and what verb related to it, nor could I identify what adjective or what adverb modified what noun or verb. One should be able at least to identify the various components of a sentence and how they relate to each other even if one does not understand the precise meaning of each component.

8. The authors have not concluded anything but just given a poor summary of what they have done. Their Conclusions read like someone who would rather be back in the lab rather than someone who wants readers to understand how their investigation may have added to the knowledge base in our field.

2.12   So do I really need to know what editors and reviewers expect from a paper?

To teach Business English, it is not essential to understand how business and commerce works. To teach academic English, on the other hand, you need to have a good handle on what readers of your students' work will be expecting.

English for Writing Research Papers will go a long way to helping you understand such expectations, and before you embark on teaching academic writing skills, you should read that book carefully, particularly Chapters 13-19 which explain how to write the various sections of a research paper. At the end of each chapter is a summary in the form of a series of questions. These questions act as a checklist of everything that should be included in a certain section of a paper.

You thus not only need to have the skills to teach English, but you also need to have a good understanding of what content is expected. This is not something you will learn overnight, but rather over several years. This subsection is intended to give you a sneak preview into the kinds of skills you will need.

Look at the Abstract below which comes from a paper that is about evaluating a project on shepherds in the Gaza Strip. Can you spot what the problem is? See 13.30 *English for Writing Research Papers* to get some ideas. Note: this is the complete abstract, not an extract from it.

Through the presentation of a case study, the article offers a reflection on the evaluation of projects of humanitarian aid in post-conflict contexts. By analysing the scenario in which the evaluation has developed, the article seeks to highlight the value of participatory evaluation in contexts and for projects of humanitarian aid. Finally, the authors seek to understand even in a more general logic what lessons can be learned from the case study presented and what are the possible outcomes that can be generated.

To be able to do a really good job, you need to be able to judge the quality of their writing not only from an English point of view but from a content point of view. This means knowing what editors, reviewers and readers expect - in this case, what they expect from an Abstract. From reading the Abstract above, the reader has no idea of:

- where the case study took place

- why the author chose that place

- who was involved (i.e. shepherds)

- what the results were

- what the authors learned from the study that they can pass on to the research community

- where else in the world the results / experience could be applied

The best way to develop such assessment skills is by reading as many top quality papers as you can. Google and Reuters have lists of the most cited papers which should hopefully be well written and thus good models. Even better if you can combine your reading with actually editing papers yourself.

The Guardian newspaper in the UK offers an annual award to researchers at universities whose projects have been outstanding. To apply for this award, the researchers have to send the Guardian a description of their project. The Guardian say they *want to see examples of work that goes beyond the mundane - something that demonstrates imagination, careful research, courage and stamina. And we want evidence to show that your project changed the lives of those who were affected by it*.

Past experience has shown the Guardian that many applicants for the award are simply not able to describe their project in a clear convincing way. The Guardian thus provides some simple writing tips:

- Keep your language conversational and specific. Avoid abstract nouns and unsubstantiated claims - "we mounted the best campaign of its kind in a challenging environment" is simply a waste of the wordcount. What did you actually do?
- Back up your claims with statistics wherever possible.
- Show us what change looks like - if, for example, you think your project made a difference to the lives of students, tell us what they were doing before and what they are doing now.
- Get a colleague to read through your application. Do they understand what this project is about and why it's important?
- Avoid cliches, jargon and academic language.
- Don't give us unnecessary context about how the sector has changed over the past 10 years – you are talking to experts who already know this!

The above tips are fantastic advice for your students on:

- how to write a research project

- key elements to include (and avoid) in the Introduction and Conclusions of a research paper

- key points to cover (and avoid) in a presentation

Chapter 3
Readability

3.1 How are papers read?

To write well, your students need to know exactly how people read.

Today, much reading is done directly from a screen rather than from a hard copy. Because we generally want information fast - particularly when searching on the Internet - we tend to scan. Scanning means not reading each individual word but jumping forwards three or more words (or sentences) at a time. The distance that we jump (in terms of number of words or sentences) depends on the value that those words are adding in our search for information. If they add no value, we tend to jump further.

If we continue to get no value, instead of scanning left to right along a line of text, we scroll from top to bottom. We thus read vertically rather than horizontally until we find what we want.

This has huge implications for your students. No one will be under any obligation to read your students' papers. If readers don't find the paper useful or interesting or at least pleasurable and they have the feeling that it was not written with them in mind, they will simply stop reading.

Your students' findings will then be lost in oblivion.

Every word your students write needs to be understood by the reader. The style should be specific, emphatic and concise. Everything should be relevant.

Readers are generally lazy and in a hurry. They need to be able to understand everything the first time they read. Readers should never have to wait till the end of a sentence, paragraph or section in order to be able to put all the pieces of the jigsaw together.

Instead of a jigsaw, a good writer of English has a chain as a writing model. Within a sentence, each word forms a chain to make the meaning of the sentence clear. And each sentence forms a chain with the next so that the reader is guided link-by-link and step-by-step towards the writer's conclusions.

3.2   How does the reader's and writer's role vary between Anglo countries and non-Anglo countries?

This role varies considerably from culture to culture. Congjun Mu of the Shanghai Institute of Technology in China explains:

> A key factor in Eastern rhetoric is reader-responsibility, which means that the reader is responsible for making all the connections between sentences, paragraphs and overall ideas that the author has laid out in his / her paper. This is distinguished from writer-responsibility in English rhetoric where the reader is expected to make less effort and can thus hopefully absorb the argumentation rapidly.

Another Chinese researcher states that:

> Scientific English, like all formal English writing, attempts to be reader-focused, presenting all aspects of a topic in as clear and precise a way as possible. In contrast, I find that many technical papers written in Chinese are more diverse and author-focused, requiring you to work to understand where the author is coming from before you can get to the point being made.

In good English academic writing, the author should write in such a way that minimal effort is required by the reader. The writer is virtually 100% responsible for whether the reader understands the text or not. Reader-centered writing also means that more academics will appreciate your student's paper and these academics will therefore be more likely to cite it in their own papers.

It is thus worth taking the time to discuss with your students what their typical approach to writing would be if they were writing in their own language and what differences they have found with the Anglo way of writing.

Note that such differences in approach not only apply to writing, but also to the style adopted by different cultures when presenting their work orally.

3.3 What do non-native speakers think about English in comparison with their own language? Are they right?

Non-native speakers typically say that English is a simple language because it favors short clear sentences. Such non-native speakers then say with a certain pride that their own language is not like English because it favors long complex sentences. The implication is also that English was 'born' an intrinsically simple language (for an intrinsically simple people!).

This is not the case, as is explained in the next subsection.

What makes modern English different from most other languages is that most text-writers try to be reader-centered. This means that the writer tries to get the message across in an efficient way that is clear to the reader. The reader thus has to make minimal effort (in fact, the effort is really on the part of the author in trying to explain everything clearly). This reader-centered approach should not be confused with 'writing simplistically'.

Ensure that your students understand that a reader-centered approach is not an intrinsic part of the English language. It is the choice of the writer, and is <u>not</u> dictated by the language (English, Chinese, French, Polish or whatever language).

3.4 How does the English of today compare to the English of past centuries?

One thousand years ago, English was a 'complex' language. Like Latin and modern German, it had a case system (nominative, accusative etc.), which meant that nouns had different endings, not just the 's' to mark the plural. It also had gender - each noun was either masculine, feminine or neuter. Over the years, it has eliminated many elements that are not useful (e.g. case and gender) or that are not democratic. For example, like most languages, English once had several forms of 'you' depending on who was being addressed. There has been a gradual progression towards simplicity but also precision.

Still today, there are people who write in a complex way using very long sentences, which makes life very hard for the poor reader. To combat such forms of writing, there is an association in Britain called the Plain English Society, which is a movement to change the focus from author-centered writing to reader-centered writing.

Here is an example of a complex text written in English. It explains the origin of adverbs, prepositions and conjunctions in English.

> But as many of them are derived from obsolete words in our own language or from words of kindred languages, the radical meaning of which is therefore either obscure or generally unknown; as the system of this very able etymologist is not universally admitted; and as by long prescription whatever may have been their origin the words in question appear to have acquired a title to the rank of a distinct species; it seems proper to consider them as such in an elementary treatise of grammar: especially as this plan coincides with that by which other languages must be taught; and will render the study of them less intricate.

The sentence is 109 words long. It requires an immense effort by the reader (even a native speaker) to follow it to its conclusion. It was written in 1795 by an American grammarian Lindley Murray. His *English Grammar* was the most frequently reprinted grammar of English during the 19th century and was even translated into other languages, thus contributing to the spread of English as a world language.

The book's aim was to help 'advanced students to write with perspicuity and accuracy' and it has very useful advice such as:

1. The first rule for promoting the strength of a sentence is to prune it of all redundant words and members.

2. Obscure sentences are generally if not always the result of obscure thought.

3. A third rule for preserving the unity of sentences is to keep clear of all unnecessary parentheses.

4. Never crowd into one sentence things which have so little connection that they could bear to be divided into two or three sentences.

5. A capital rule in the arrangement of sentences is that the words most clearly related should be placed in the sentence as near to each other as possible so as to make their mutual relation clearly appear.

Despite prescribing the above five excellent rules for writing, Lindley was unable to stop himself from extraordinarily long, complex sentences.

3.5 So how and why has the English language evolved?

English is much less prescriptional than it was say 100 years ago or even 30 years ago. As with many languages, there used to be various rules that served absolutely no purpose but have simply been handed down from generation to generation. English users have questioned the utility of such rules, e.g. the rule that says you shouldn't put a comma before *and* or that you should avoid repeating the same word in the same or consecutive sentences (or even paragraphs).

Rather than rules we now have guidelines. These guidelines regard how to write clearly from a reader's point of view. In fact, evidence clearly shows that it is useful to put a comma before *and* in many situations, and that repetition of words makes a piece of scientific or technical writing much easier to follow.

For example, the following guidelines have all been introduced only in the last 50 years or so:

- using numbers (one to nine) rather than figures (1 to 9) when the number consists of only one character and is found in the middle of a sentence with no (or just one or two) other numbers

- using hyphens to show the meaning of words, e.g. *a little used-car* versus *a little-used car*

- using short paragraphs and white space (look how online newspapers present their text and compare it with newspapers from 100 years ago)

- non-use of expressions such as *the former* and *the latter* when these would be better replaced with the words they actually refer to

English has evolved for commercial reasons. It simply costs writers less if the document they write is written in clear English. For example:

- A redesigned British passport form reduced errors by the British public from 52% to 3%, thus saving a considerable amount of money that no longer had to be employed in sending out additional explanations and forms and dealing with telephone inquiries.

- Computer manuals rewritten in clear English led to calls to helpdesks falling by 99%.

- The US Navy found the plain English style reduced reading time by up to 23%. The Navy then calculated it would save up to $350 million if every document were in plain English.

However, there is still some way to go. Many editors of research journals still insist on <u>not</u> using *we* or preferring the passive to the active and on putting some Latin terms in italics (e.g. *et al, in vivo*). And, of course, there is still legalese:

> We lawyers do not write plain English. We use eight words to say what could be said in two. We use arcane phrases to express commonplace ideas. Seeking to be precise, we become redundant. Seeking to be cautious we become verbose. Our sentences twist on phrase within clause within clause, glazing the eyes and numbing the minds of our readers. The result is a writing style that has, according to one critic, four outstanding characteristics. It is "(1) wordy (2) unclear (3) pompous and (4) dull."

3.6 What about native English researchers? Do they always write clearly?

Native speakers often complain about the difficulty of the way English is written by their compatriots. A colleague of mine recalls:

> Some of the texts I studied at university were written by American and British academics who often seemed more interested in showing off their supposedly elegant writing skills rather than helping readers to understand the topic.

Poor writing skills amongst native English speakers is also confirmed by Alyson Price who does editing work for the largest postdoctoral training programme in the world on Social and Human Sciences - the Max Weber Programme - at the European University Institute. She says:

> Native English speakers can be as guilty as their European colleagues of poorly structured papers and writing long (and occasionally unintelligible) sentences. What differentiates the native speakers is that they:
>
> 1) tend not to make grammatical mistakes
> 2) often (but certainly not always) give clear indications of what their readers can expect by making good use of the first sentences in sections and paragraphs, i.e. by quickly giving key information rather than hiding it in the middle of paragraphs
> 3) seem to be more aware that they need to hedge any claims they make about the implications of their findings

4) are sometimes a little less formal and more entertaining

5) seem to be rather more 'reader-focused'. They tend more to give examples rather than just relying on abstract explanations

In any case, being a mother-tongue English speaker certainly doesn't mean you can write good, clear English.

3.7 Why do academics write and speak in such an abstract way?

So what exactly is abstract?

The following 'ladder of abstraction' goes from the very generic to the most specific: *culture - education - teaching languages - teaching English - EFL - EAP - scientific English for PhD students*.

Your aim both, when teaching your students writing and presentation skills, is to encourage students to use words at the bottom of the ladder of abstraction, i.e. in the above case, to stay away from the constant use of words such as *culture* and *education* (which are at the top of the ladder) and - where possible - to fill their sentences with very specific words (those at the bottom of the ladder).

Back in 1962, Ernest Gowers, in his book *The Complete Plain Words*, stated that:

Unfortunately, the very vagueness of abstract words is one of the reasons for their popularity. To express one's thoughts accurately is hard work and to be precise is sometimes dangerous. We are tempted to prefer the safer obscurity of the abstract. It is the greatest vice of present-day writing.

Some of your students may argue that their article should be written in an impersonal way with the passive voice (which in itself encourages abstraction). They will tell you that the professors have informed them that writing in such a way leads to a more objective and detached outlook which is thus appropriate for a scientific context. You can tell them that they can still be detached and objective without writing in a roundabout way that completely distances (and maybe confuses) the reader. Reassure your students that there is nothing subjective about using precise words expressed clearly in short sentences.

3.8   Would some students have difficulty in writing papers even in their own language?

Professor Florkowski from Poland who is a professor at the University of Georgia highlights an important point:

> Whenever I talk about how to write in English I stress that an article poorly written in one language remains a poorly written article in English after being translated (unless the translator re-writes the whole thing).

This is compounded by the fact that many researchers, whatever their native language (English or non-English), have difficulty writing up their results - even in their native tongue. Professor Anchalee Sattayatham from Mahidol University in Bangkok, one of Thailand's top universities, told me regarding his first-year medical students:

> When asked to write an essay [in English] about 50% of them cannot connect the idea between paragraphs. In the introductory paragraph it's still difficult for them to lead the idea from a very general to a specific idea (the thesis statement). I think the medical students at Mahidol University can organize their ideas quite well when writing a paragraph after they have been taught. However, they still find it difficult to write or organize an essay because this task is difficult *even in their own language*.

3.9   Is there a connection between a student's mother tongue and how likely they are to be published?

In this section, I am not talking about 'mother tongue interference' (MIT) as a determiner of making mistakes in English. Here, the focus is on style not grammar / vocabulary mistakes.

The 2014 annual report of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) stated that poor literacy skills are equated with high unemployment. They found, for instance, that graduates from Spain and Italy had lower literacy skills than high school leavers from some of the best performing countries such as the Netherlands and Japan, and that such poor skills were also leading to higher levels of unemployment in Spain and Italy compared to the Netherlands and Japan.

Probably not coincidentally, Spain and Italy (as well as Portugal, and to a lesser extent France) also score very low in terms of the number of institutes in these two countries that manage to publish papers in *Nature*, probably the world's most prestigious scientific journal. A similar picture can be painted for the numbers of universities in these Mediterranean countries that feature in the world's top 200 ranking universities - there are very very few.

So, is there a correlation between poor literacy / writing skills and a student's:

- native language?

- chances of being published (and perhaps of getting a job)?

I don't know what criteria the OECD and the compilers of university rankings use to define 'literacy'. What I do know is that all these Mediterranean countries adopt the same style of writing which is based on what is called the 'periodic style', i.e. long-winded sentences full of subordinate clauses and parenthetical phrases. This style is designed to show off the writer's prowess at the expense of the reader's easy under-standing. However, this style is not an innate aspect of these Romance languages. They can, if they wish, write in a simple, clear style and such a style was in fact recommended by the Franciscan monks in the thirteenth century in their *Regola* (the rules that governed their monastic life).

A Frenchman and former head of the ESA Astrophysics & Fundamental Physics Missions Division wrote to me that:

> Where a French speaker would typically use a long and convoluted sentence with one or more subordinate clauses and several conjunctions, an English speaker would split it into several separate sentences, with hardly any conjunctions between them. One should also remember that France is the country of Descartes and that French people are fond of logic. Hence, they will tend to use many connecting words, such as "donc", "par conséquent", "par contre" … to clarify the logic behind the argumentation. English speakers tend to use much less of these "conjonction de coordination".

He added that, when writing in French, one needed to be careful to be elegant:

> Elegance includes the correct use of tenses, accentuation, gender agreement and, more gen-erally, of the rather complicated French grammar. It also implies a clear way of structuring one's argumentation and to make explicit the logical articulation of the discourse almost as if it was a philosophical or mathematical demonstration. The end result may sound pomp-ous or pedantic … except to a native French speaker.

But Romance language writers are not the only ones who write in a rather opaque fashion or who put eloquence to the fore over clarity; so, apparently, do the Japanese.

Here is what Tony Leggett, professor of Physics at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign who spent several years doing research in Japan, says about Japanese.

> In Japanese, it seems that it is often legitimate to state a number of thoughts in such a way that the connection between them or the meaning of any given one only becomes clear when one has read the whole paragraph or even the whole paper. This is not so in English; each sentence should be completely intelligible in the light of what has *already* been written. Moreover [in English] the connection between one thought and the next should be completely clear when it is read; for instance, if you deviate from the 'main line' of the thought to explore a side-track, this should be made clear at the point where the sidetrack *starts* not where it finishes.

Tony also recounted to me his experience of writing in Japanese:

> On my first attempt at an essay in Japanese, my Japanese tutor commented: "There's nothing actually wrong with this essay - no grammatical mistakes or anything like that - but no Japanese would want to say the things you say!"

Yet, apart from US academics, Japanese researchers published more papers in *Nature* than researchers from any other country between 2008 and 2012 (US: 1, Japan: 2, UK: 3, Germany: 4, China: 5). I have not done research on this, but I suspect that given that Japanese and Chinese are so different from English, writers from these two countries may simply start afresh and adopt an English style of writing. What I do know, however, is that the so-called 'English' style of writing is deemed by some academics in France and Italy as being 'childlike and ineloquent'. It is thus ignored in favor of a style of writing that was in fashion in the 17th century when the idea was to keep knowledge in the hands of the few (the aristocracy and the church) and keep it well away from the masses.

3.10   So is it really important to write (and speak) clearly? How can I convince my students?

You can convince your students in three ways:

1. get them to read what top journals recommend to authors in terms of writing style

2. get them to find you any example of scientific research that has proved that it is more effective to write long sentences, which are full of abstractions and in an impersonal style

3. ask them whether, when they are conducting their experiments or assessing their data, it is acceptable to opt for a vague approximative approach. (They wouldn't use such an approach when analysing their data so why do they think it's acceptable to slump into a clutter of cloudy clauses when writing about such data?)

As an example of Point 1, the author resources section of *Nature*, one of the most respected journals in the world, highlights the importance of writing in a 'simple and accessible style':

> Many papers submitted for publication in a Nature journal contain unnecessary technical terminology, unreadable descriptions of the work that has been done and convoluted figure legends. Our journal subeditors and copyeditors edit the manuscript so that it is grammatically correct, logical, clear and concise, uses consistent search terms and so that the terminology is consistent with that used in previous papers published in the journal. Of course, this process is assisted greatly if the authors have written the manuscript in a simple and accessible style as the author is the best person to convey the message of the paper and to persuade readers that it is important enough to spend time on.

With regard to Point 2 on page 38, as far as I am aware, no one has ever proved the benefits of an abstract academic style. However, research has proved the opposite.

Back in the 1980s, John Kirkman reported some research he had conducted via surveys of the Institution of Chemical Engineers, the British Ecological Society and the Biochemical Society, of whom a majority of nearly 30% preferred a 'personalized' style over a 'traditional impersonal style'. Most of those who did not opt for the personalized style admitted that it was probably the result of 'brainwashing during their education and not due to any rational objection' and acknowledged that texts produced with a personalized style 'were very clear' and that the traditional academic approach often resulted in 'pseudo-intellectual gibberish'.

Kirkman's research was conducted several decades ago and since then most companies have adopted a reader-oriented approach in their technical literature. So, while great inroads have been made in industry, academia is lagging a long way behind.

Readability indexes are another indication that there is a general consensus that long sentences full of abstraction should be flagged. Ask your students if the version of Microsoft Word for their language has a feature for checking 'readability'.

3.11 Not many of my students will be aiming to publish in *Nature*. Will my students really be able to see the benefits of communicating in a simple way? Aren't I likely to encounter a lot of resistance?

I encounter resistance every time I hold a scientific English course. The problem is that the philosophy of empathizing with the reader (of a paper), the audience (at a conference) or even the recipient of an email goes against nearly everything your students will have learned at school. They are taught to write and speak to impress rather than to inform.

In addition, students tend (quite rightly) to hold their professors in esteem and are thus reluctant to do anything that they don't see their own professors doing - even when they realise that their profs might actually be wrong.

But don't despair. I find that students do see the light eventually. Here is an email from an ex student of mine who became an art historian:

> Since your course, I have been commissioned to write seven books in English on art history! What I now realize is that at the beginning I felt that my English was less elegant than my native Italian. In Italian, I tend to use many adjectives that fit perfectly with a description of some sculpture or painting. Now, when I write directly in English, my meaning becomes much clearer. English acts as a kind of filter. It makes me focus on what is really important (what I have discovered) and helps me filter out the rest (typically long series of beautiful poetic descriptions!). I am now convinced that writing in a simpler way will certainly not affect a researcher's chances of having her papers published. It may even improve them!

3.12 Do students judge their writing in English in the same way as they would judge it if they had written the paper in their native language?

Probably not. English acts as a filter. What in their language might be considered an absolute 'howler' does not sound quite as bad when written in English - they are detached from the English they have written.

As a teacher, you need to insist that what your students write in a paper / slide / email / cover letter etc. has to make sense.

I am an editor and proofreader of research papers, slides, research proposals and emails. I read a lot of sentences, sometimes even whole paragraphs that appear to make no sense. The problem is particularly acute in the more humanistic sciences where the author may be expressing ideas and theories rather than drawing conclusions from hard data.

For me, the reason why such sentences make no sense is due to one or more of the following:

1. The author is not really interested in conveying his (for the sake of simplicity I will imagine that the author in question is a man) meaning to the readers.

2. The sentence would have made little or no sense even in the original language. The author hoped that, in some miraculous way, it would make more sense in English.

3. The author had an idea in his head. This idea appeared to make sense in his own language. He translated it into English. He looked at the result which appeared to him to match what he was trying to say. In addition, it sounded good in English. But he did not have the critical faculties to decide whether the sentence in its English version really did make sense. It is as if English filters out the author's good judgment. It seems to allow the author to distance himself from what he writes. In fact, reading a sentence that you have written in your own language is a different experience from reading a sentence that you have written in a foreign language. When you are writing in your own language, you are perhaps more critical of yourself and you are much more aware of how your peers will perceive what you have written.

Chapter 4
Difficult Grammatical Structures and Other Aspects that Are Typical of Academic English that May Be Best Left Well Alone

4.1 How can I decide what grammar (not) to cover?

Don't fall into the trap of trying to teach your students everything. I still cringe when I look back at the first scientific English course I held. I gave ten 2-hour lectures in which I gave the audience rules for just about everything they might need in order to write a paper, with very little interaction with the participants. The result was that they wrote reams of notes, when instead they could have simply read a book on the subject.

Instead, you should focus on those guidelines that

- will help the students be published and listened to attentively at a conference

- will really improve their English

- are easy to take on board because they are logical, practical and useful

It's also crucial to remember that PhD and postdoctoral students have limited time available. English is a means to them for publishing their research so, in most cases, it is not an end in itself. This means that your lessons need to provide value.

In my opinion, there is little value in getting your students, for example, to recognize instances of complex noun phrases involving pre- and post-modifiers or adverbs vs adverb phrase vs adverbial clause. First, this would entail you actually understanding the differences yourself - not any easy task! Then, you'd have to teach them what such terms mean before you even talk about whether and how they should be used.

Likewise, giving rules to explain why it is OK to write: *This paper aims to show* rather than *aims at showing* or *This paper is aimed at showing* rather than *is aimed to show* is an unnecessary use of time. Instead, just give them the two correct examples and then tell them not to mix them. You can also use Google to show that one is right and the other wrong "aims to show" gets 81 million returns "aims at showing" less than 100,000 (mostly from non-English-speaking sites).

The rest of this chapter suggests areas that I personally would generally avoid teaching because:

- they are too complicated

- the time required would be better spent teaching something more immediately valuable to your students

- they are simply not relevant

4.2   Nominalization

In a lay person's terms, nominalization means turning a phrase that contains a verb into a noun phrase. For example:

> *Building* houses is a priority for many governments.
> = House *construction* is a priority for many governments.
> *Producing* leather goods is a key industry in this area.
> = Leather goods *production* is a key industry in this area.

Nominalization is a typical feature of academic writing but there are two problems:

1. it doesn't always work, i.e. not all verb phrases can be nominalized
2. students tend to overuse it and thus produce really stodgy writing

Read the following three variations on the same sentence:

> Learning academic English is a priority for most non-native students.
> Academic English learning is …
> The learning of academic English is …

Which phrase sounds more natural to you? Would you be able to explain the grammatical differences in the three constructions? Would you be able to say that one was definitively better than the other two? Would students understand and be convinced by your explanations? Would your students confidently be able to apply what you've taught them? Would it benefit them?

In reality, it is time-consuming to teach students how to understand when nominalization is appropriate, i.e. which verbs have a noun equivalent that is not the same word but is derived from the same root verb (e.g. *producing* vs *production, constructing* vs *construction* rather than *learning* vs *learning*). And how are they supposed to know that *house construction* might be more appropriate than *house building*?

Students may also fall into the danger of not knowing whether the plural *-s* is needed. For example, in the phrase *producing leather goods* it is clear that *goods* should be in the plural form, but a student could legitimately ask why is it *leather goods production* and not *leather good production* by analogy with *selling books* and *book selling*? And what is the difference between *leather bag manufacturing* and *leather bags manufacturing*?

My philosophy is that you should never teach students something that is likely to create more problems than it is going to solve.

Teachers and teacher's books often justify focusing on nominalization because they claim that:

1. it is more 'precise' … but *Producing leather goods* actually contains the same number of words as *Leather goods production*

2. it is more 'efficient' … but efficient in what sense? and efficient for who (the author or the reader?) Many researchers who have produced readability indexes have pointed to the fact that texts full of nominalizations are less efficient because they create heavy texts that require more effort to read

3. it makes a text sound more 'authoritative' … but it only makes it 'sound' more authoritative. Readers and reviewers are ultimately interested in the content. They can quickly see through any attempts to sound smart as revealing that actually the writer is not totally convinced by what he / she is saying. I would suggest that the key is to present the content in a way that is immediately absorbable by the reader. Clearly you want to be perceived as being authoritative but this comes primarily from what you say and write not from how you say / write it (obviously within reasonable limits - you shouldn't sound like your texting someone or chatting to someone on the train)

4. it can be used to 'hide agency' … but by not revealing who carried out the action, you can actually completely confuse the reader. In any case, it seems to me that neither *building houses* nor *house construction* indicate the agent of the action

Moral of the story: yes, nominalization and densely-packed noun strings are often used in academic writing. However, native speakers intuitively know (hopefully!) when nominalization sounds right and when it doesn't and good writers know not to overuse it. The problem is that non-natives don't have this intuitive sense.

I tend to find that I am actually trying to teach my students *not* to use nominalization. I encourage them to use verbs in any sentences that are top heavy with nouns (see 5.13 in *English for Writing Research Papers*). Students seem to believe that packing nouns together is good and acceptable practice in English and they thus end up creating nonsensical strings of nouns. In any case, I have noticed that most languages tend to prefer nominalization so that it is a natural device for students to use (both when writing and speaking) so you don't actually need to teach it. This tends not to be the case for native English-speaking students whose inclination would normally to be to opt for verbs rather than nouns.

4.3   Inversion of subject and verb

Which of the following two ways of saying the same thing do you think students would have the most difficulty with?

Only when the water boils *does the substance dissolve*.

The substance dissolves only when the water boils.

Never to the best of our knowledge *has this solution* been adopted before.

To the best of our knowledge *this solution has* never been adopted before.

EAP books will tell you that the first sentences supposedly give an air of formality or a literary quality to the writing and also achieve a contrast by putting the key information at the end. But this is all very subjective. And what is the connection between writing up research (i.e. a clear recounting of findings and what this means) and sounding 'literary'? Do the first sentences really add any value for the reader that is missing from the second sentences?

The second sentences reflect normal English word order and this is the order that I believe you should encourage your students to use. If you start teaching inversions, I guarantee that you will end up confusing both yourself and your students as you try to explain which part of a two-part phrase should contain the inversion.

However, one should never be draconian when laying down guidelines. There may be some occasions when not using an inversion would lead to a more unwieldy sentence.

4.4 Complex conjunctions (*although* vs *notwithstanding*)

There is a big difference between teaching scientific English and teaching exam English. If your students are studying for a Cambridge exam, e.g. First Certificate or Proficiency, they are likely to score higher marks for writing:

Notwithstanding the fact that food is becoming a scarce commodity, the vast majority of the population are still of the opinion that …

rather than:

Although food is getting scarcer, many people still think that …

I personally cannot see the logic of using 'more complex' conjunctions. The risk is that the more complex the conjunction the more likely the student is to make a mistake in its usage and write, for example:

Notwithstanding / Despite food is becoming a scarce commodity …

So the trick is to teach the conjunctions that don't require any effort - *although, but, however, thus, and* etc.

[In any case] I agree that it is nice to create some variety. [However] Apart from *if* and *and*, which are frequently found within a short distance of each other, most other conjunctions do not need to be used in close proximity with each other. [For example] If you find a paragraph in which *in addition* appears at the beginning of three sentences, then the solution is not to replace *in addition* with *furthermore* and *moreover*. [Rather] The solution is to reorganize the paragraph so that *in addition* is only needed once. [In fact] English often just leaves conjunctions out - we can make our own connections thank you.

Note that the square brackets are designed to indicate the points in the paragraph above where students in a Cambridge exam would score big time for inserting a conjunction but which are actually distracting in the real world of scientific writing.

4.5 Avoidance of repetition

Most EAP teachers' books recommend teaching your students how to avoid repeating words, yet none of them explain the reason for doing so. Below is an extract from a blog by Miriam Hurley, a professional translator.

> Italian, for reasons still mysterious to me, dislikes repeating people and place names throughout a text. English is happy to write "Milan" each and every time it wishes to reference Milan. Italian will present its readers mini-pop quizzes referring to Milan variably as "the capital of Lombardy", "Italy's fashion capital", "the business capital" and so forth. Keeping us all on our toes and testing our general knowledge.

In reality, only certain forms of repetition are bad. If I write: *we did x then we did y and then we did z. Subsequently, we did p and then we did q and then we did r*, then I have repeated *we did* six times within two sentences. This clearly doesn't make for great reading. But substituting Milan with the three forms mentioned in the extract above is actually confusing for the reader and is presumptuous on the author's part as it assumes that the reader will immediately recognize that these are all references to Milan.

CUP's excellent teacher's book for their EAP course states: *Once a new idea has become established in the text, the writer should use pronouns and other phrases to refer back to it.* But why? Pronouns can be extremely ambiguous (see 6.3 in *English for Writing Research Papers*).

If I introduce the concept of gold in a discussion on metals and then, a couple of sentences later, I use *it* or *this metal* or *the latter* or *this precious item*, how does the reader know I am referring back to *gold* and not, for instance, to *silver*, which I may have also mentioned at some point earlier? Why not simply say *gold*?

It is absolutely true that academics don't like to repeat words but we really need to question whether they are right not to repeat words and whether it might actually be a lot clearer for everyone concerned if there was more repetition rather than less. We are talking about academic texts after all, not works of literature.

4.6 Is it worth teaching my students how to use references?

I would say that teaching the use of references is outside the scope of an English course. This comes under more 'technical' aspects - others being: use of indexing and key words, writing the bibliography, formatting the paper etc.

However, a useful exercise is to get students to look at an Introduction / Review of the Literature or Discussion written by someone in their field and to work out why the author decided to use references in certain places. Was it to:

- present the historical context

- lend authority or support to their work

- compare / contrast with their own work

- show the limitations of someone else's work to highlight the novelty of their own work

- clarify that they were talking about their own work rather than someone else's - this is a typical problem for the reader who may not be entirely sure if the author is mentioning something that he / she found or that had been previously found by another author (see Chapter 7 in *English for Writing Research Papers*).

What is also extremely important is to teach students ways of reporting what others have said without falling into the realm of plagiarism (see Chapter 11 in *English for Writing Research Papers*). They also need to know that there are many ways to say the same thing … and this is important in order to create variety in their writing (particularly in the Review of the Literature and the Discussion).

> The length of a research paper is generally in inverse proportion to the utility of the findings presented therein *(Wallwork 2016).*
>
> *As Wallwork (2016) has pointed out*, the length …
>
> *According to Wallwork (2016)*, the length …
>
> *Wallwork (2016) claims that* the length …

In the above sentences, the key idea (in normal script) is expressed in exactly the same way; it is simply the introductory parts (in italics) that are different. However, students may need to paraphrase the sentence in order to avoid plagiarism (to teach them how to do this, see 11.7-11.9 in *English for Writing Research Papers*).

Students may simply not know that plagiarism is unacceptable. They may think it is OK to report entire sentences parrot fashion, as their teachers actually encourage them to learn things by heart.

4.7   What kind of style should my students avoid?

Although I suggested earlier that academics should take a leaf out of the business community's book, there are clearly some aspects of business and general English that do not have a place in academic English:

- arrogance, i.e. very strong recommendations (see 8.6 and 15.8) or strong criticisms of other academics' views or findings

- mentioning other authors by the first name or first name + surnames

- informal words or expressions, e.g. *anyhow* (in any case), *till* (until), *big* (large), *tiny* (very small), *awesome* (notable), *get rid of* (eliminate), *give something a go* (try / attempt), *you can see an example of this in the figure* (Figure 1 highlights that), *we reckon that* (believe), *most people think that* (it is commonly accepted that). For more on this, see 4.8.

However, it is not difficult to find out what is acceptable. All you have to do is to read a section or two from papers written in your students' subject areas. You will soon get a clear idea of what kind of style is expected / acceptable.

4.8   How likely are students to be unaware that they have used informal language in a research paper? Should I teach them a more formal style? If so, how?

In many languages, there may be little or no distinction between formal and informal words - the informality may be expressed by using a dialect rather than the standard / official language.

In my experience, the students who are most likely to use inappropriately informal language are i) native speakers (i.e. those who have spent more time writing blogs and using social networks than writing up research), and ii) non-natives who have spent a lot of time around native speakers.

So I wouldn't devote too much time to teaching students how to identify formal and informal expressions. Just focus on a few conjunctions, adverbs and adjectives (those listed in the previous subsection) and say that - generally speaking - phrasal verbs are avoided (with notable exceptions, e.g. *carry out*).

Instead, I would deal with the issue of informality / non-academic style as it comes up. For example, if a student writes:

> Around 70% of the people interviewed about whether they owned a car or not replied that they did.

With the help of suggestions from the class you could come up with more appropriately academic equivalents:

> Around 70% of interviewees reported that they owned a car.
>
> The level of car ownership among interviewees was around 70%.
>
> The percentage of interviewees that were car owners was found to be 70%.

I think it's important to provide at least two ways of saying the same thing. Particularly in the Results section, students will need to avoid repeating the same structure again and again. Repeating the same construction again and again can make for very boring reading and some readers may simply be tempted to stop reading.

Areas where distinguishing between levels of formality that are instead worth teaching are:

- emails to editors, referees, and professors (see Chapters 4 and 13 in *English for Academic Correspondence*)

- face-to-face relations with professors (see Chapters 3 and 4 in *English for Interacting on Campus*)

For emails, get students to bring in their own email examples to the lesson and then analyze them together. For relations with professors, role play typical prof-student dialogs such as:

- making an appointment

- discussing the progress of a thesis

- asking for postponements of deadlines

- asking for repetition during a lecture or seminar

- clarifying a misunderstanding

4.9   Insistence on the passive voice (but the passive <u>is</u> useful in many circumstances)

There is, I believe, a big myth surrounding the use of the passive voice. The myth is that the passive voice makes scientific writing more objective.

To the best of my knowledge, there has been no research to prove that the passive makes a text more objective. Heavy - yes. Ambiguous - yes. But objective? No.

A typical reason given (for example, in the *Cambridge Academic English* course - see reference on page 226) is that it "allows the writer to write without personal pronouns or the names of particular researchers as subjects of the sentence". This is true but, in reality, it is extremely dangerous and is one of the main causes of ambiguity in scientific writing. As a result, the reader has no clue as to whose findings the author is talking about - their own or those of another research team. This incredibly important aspect is dealt with in Chapter 7 of *English for Writing Research Papers*.

Yet academics, particularly physicists, will justify their use of impersonal forms. Patrick Junot of CERN (see 1.3), eloquently argues the case against *we* by saying that in his projects

… more than 3000 physicists are collaborating together, and it is not easy to give the sole recognition to a particular individual. Should it be to the analyst, who made the plot from the recorded data ? Should it be to the software engineer, who wrote the code needed to interpret the raw data? Should it be to the detector expert, who built the hardware necessary to record the raw data? And beyond, would the result have been different if another person had done the work?

The answer to the last question is "probably not", because "Physics", i.e., "Nature" provided, and "we" human beings are just here as observers. That's why I prefer "the Higgs boson has been discovered" over "we have discovered the Higgs boson". It has been discovered because it exists, period. The fact that somebody saw it is largely irrelevant for science, and the name of this somebody is doubly irrelevant.

I think the above explains both the lower profile concept, and the use of the passive form.

The reasoning would be totally different for a publication from a theorist: a theorist invents a theory, which might or might not be upheld by reality. It is a personal production, not given by Nature. (Only the theorist's brain waves are given to her by nature.) The theorist is therefore bound to use "I" or "we" in her publications.

In the end, it doesn't really matter who is right, the fact is certain journals, like the one Patrick edits, require the passive form.

In any case, the passive does have its uses, which are essential in scientific writing. Typical cases where the passive is used and where there is generally no ambiguity is in the Methods section of a paper (see 16.3 in *English for Writing Research Papers).*

Note, for instance, how the passive is used in 4.10 below (*it has been claimed, is aimed at, audience is engaged*). And it is these uses that your students should focus on. Here are some more examples:

> *Electroconvulsive shock therapy was first used in 1937 to …* [Imagining a context where we are not interested who did it. Rather, we're talking about a historical context where the action itself, and not when it happened, is more important than who did it].
> *Samples were collected using the same experimental system.* [Imagining that this is the Methods section and it is thus obvious that it's the author who did the collecting].

4.10   A few more myths about academic writing and presenting

It has been claimed that whereas business / commercial writing is aimed at a general public of non experts, academic writing is aimed at fellow experts.

This is actually not always the case. Some academic areas have an audience of only a handful of other researchers in the same field. Others, for example theoretical physics, may have a slightly wider audience but actually want to appeal to those outside their field, i.e. those researchers who might be able to apply the theories of theoretical physicists in practical contexts.

The prestigious journal, *Nature*, is aimed at readers of all scientific disciplines. Thus, if you want to be published in *Nature*, you need to write clearly. The instructions to authors on the Nature website state:

> Nature journals are international so in writing a paper authors should consider those readers for whom English is a second language. The journals are read mainly by professional scientists so authors can avoid unnecessary simplification or didactic definitions. However, many readers are outside the immediate discipline of the author(s) so clarity of expression is needed to achieve the goal of comprehensibility.

This means that the 'economy of expression' that you might find is vaunted as a key quality of academic writing is not necessarily a good approach for your students, particularly if this means stacking nouns together in an unintelligible form and writing in an arcane way.

Economy of expression in the form of noun stacking is also certainly not what an academic is after when delivering a presentation at an international conference. Today audiences prefer a non-obtrusively academic style where the audience is engaged (possibly entertained) and informed with useful and stimulating information, couched in a language that they can readily assimilate - this is no place for the ponderous pontificating common to much so-called academic masturbation.

4.11   Moral of the story of this chapter

Academic writing certainly has particular features – nominalization, use of passive, inversions etc. However, just because it has these features is not in itself a reason for you to teach such features.

I find that a good rule for deciding whether to teach a grammar item is 'will I be able to explain the importance of this grammar item, i.e. why is it important for students to be able to use this particular grammar feature?' If I can't think of an importance, then I usually conclude that it isn't worth teaching. For example, why waste time trying to explain the difference between *try to do it like this* and *try doing it like this*?

Students will tend to automatically use nominalization as it is a feature of many languages. So I personally don't think you need to encourage them and it is a minefield trying to explain when and where nominalization is not possible.

Yes, inversions are actually a common feature of English. And they are something that students need to recognize when they are reading a text. But do students actually need to learn how to use them when there is always a way that avoids such use (and thus avoids the typical mistakes that students might make)?

Finally, students should be writing to inform, not to impress (not that, in my opinion, using nominalizations and inversions is particularly impressive or elegant).

So I suggest you keep your life and your students' lives simple. Just teach them what they really need to know, i.e. only those aspects that are really going to help them be published or which will make their oral presentations more effective.

Chapter 5
Using Google Translate and Analysing Student- and GT-Generated Mistakes

5.1   Should I encourage students to use Google Translate?

Google Translate (GT) seems to have a bad reputation.

Gavin Barrett, a writer and communications expert at Barrett and Welsh told me: *I completely reject what is called machine translation as it entirely brutalizes nuance and charm and utterly mangles persuasion.*

Gavin's comments are widespread and for good reason: often GT does do a mangled job. It fails hopelessly when translating certain types of documents, e.g. restaurant menus, promotional materials, anything colloquial or proverbial, and anything literary.

However, no one seems to mention that GT actually does a pretty good job with technical / scientific documents. These tend to be couched in reasonably standard language, and are often very similar to previous documents on the same subject. This works very well in GT's favor as it scans the web looking for identical or similar sequences of words.

GT is improving continuously. I believe that it is likely to change the means with which non-natives write technical / scientific documents in English. As the service gets better, it makes more and more sense to i) write in one's own language, ii) GT it, and iii) correct / revise GT's output. Thus, in the future, teaching students how to spot mistakes and revise already written texts could become as important as teaching them how to generate a text from scratch.

I personally think you should explain to students that Google Translate might be a useful aid in certain circumstances. The key thing to note is that if the original work is expressed badly in the student's native language, the resulting translation into

English will not miraculously improve the original - in fact, it is likely to be even less comprehensible. So it makes sense for students to work on their original text (i.e. the one in their own language) before submitting it to GT - how to do this is explained in 12.4 in *English for Interacting on Campus*).

5.2   How good is Google Translate?

On the next pages are some examples of GTs from German and Chinese into English. Note the following:

- GT is not static. You can insert the same text in different periods and get very different translations as highlighted by my examples from 2010 and 2016.

- The quality varies massively from language to language. The German GT translations are completely intelligible and the 2016 version seems to be an improvement on the 2010 version. On the other hand, neither the 2010 or 2016 versions of the Chinese original seem to make much sense (not helped by the lack of punctuation).

- The GT translations of the German original (right-hand columns) use far fewer words, whereas the manual version (bottom left-hand column) uses more. However, this has something to do with German using many compound nouns that need to be split when rendered in English. The manual version was written by an ESP native-English speaking teacher, starting from scratch (i.e. it is <u>not</u> a revision of the GT version).

- The English version (written by a Chinese PhD student) of the Chinese text is still difficult to penetrate and would still need a lot of further work. Her version <u>is</u> a revision of the GT version rather than starting from scratch. It may also be that the original Chinese text was fairly obscure, thus, any translation is likely to be even more obscure.

- In the German example, ABC stands for the name of a company. In the Chinese example, TPL stands for third party liability.

Of course, GT can't perform miracles: it very much depends on how good the original text is (i.e. garbage in, garbage out). But if there is a moral to the story and if my examples are in any way representative, then GT does a pretty good job with major European languages. In fact, it may well be much faster for your students to write in their own language, then translate it using GT and then revise it, than for them to write directly in English - I am well aware that this statement is likely to horrify many teachers but I am convinced that this is the direction we are heading in.

ORIGINAL GERMAN

Weil sich die Dinge verändern

Rasante Veränderungen prägen das heutige Berufsleben. Die moderne Wirtschaftswelt verlangt täglich sich den komplexer werdenden Unternehmensprozessen anzupassen und vorausschauend zu planen. Mitarbeiter müssen flexibel, schnell und zuverlässig reagieren können. Der Wissenstransfer wird zu einem entscheidenden Faktor in der Wertschöpfungskette. Sie bei der Analyse, Ausarbeitung von Lösungen, der Umsetzung und Betreuung geeigneter Maßnahmen zu unterstützen ist das Kerngeschäft und die Kernkompetenz der ABC. Die Lösung wird immer individuell auf Ihre Bedürfnisse zugeschnitten sein und bei kontinuierlicher Veränderung entsprechend weiterentwickelt. Sukzessive können Qualifizierungsmodule ausgebaut und miteinander verknüpft werden. Im Rahmen einer ganzheitlichen Personal- und Organisationsentwicklungsstrategie erhalten Sie von uns bewährte Lernmanagement-Systeme gebündelt und auf Abruf. Alles aus einer Hand. Wir machen Bildung. Modular. (*111 words*)

MANUAL TRANSLATION DONE BY NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKER

Because Change Happens

Modern day professional life is subject to rapid changes. Today's business world requires us to adapt to increasingly complex corporate processes and to plan for the future almost on a daily basis. Employees have to be able to react flexibly, quickly and reliably. Knowledge transfer is becoming a crucial link in the value-added chain. Supporting them -- and you -- in analysing needs, developing solutions, and implementing and accompanying appropriate measures is ABC's core business and core competence. Solutions will always be tailored to your individual needs and developed further in line with ongoing change. Qualification modules can be expanded and interconnected with one another. As part of our holistic personnel and organisational development strategy, you will have access to tried and tested learning management systems, bundled and available at the touch of a button -- all under one roof. Education and Training is our business. Delivered modularly. (*147 words*)

GOOGLE TRANSLATE 2010

Because things are changing

Rapid changes characterize today's professional life. The modern business world demands every day to adapt to the increasingly complex business processes and to plan ahead. Employees must be able to respond flexibly quickly and reliably the knowledge becomes a decisive factor in the value chain. Assist you in analyzing developing solutions implementation and maintenance of appropriate measures is the core business and core competence of ABC. The solution will be tailored more specifically to your needs and continuous change with this. Successive training modules can be expanded and linked. As part of an integrated human resources and organizational strategy you will receive proven learning management systems are bundled and on-demand. Everything from one source. We make education. Modular. (*118 words*)

GOOGLE TRANSLATE 2016

Because things change

Rapid changes characterize today's working life. The modern economic world requires daily to adapt to complex business processes and to plan ahead. Employees must be able to react flexibly quickly and reliably the transfer of knowledge is a decisive factor in the value chain. When analysis to support development of solutions the implementation and maintenance of appropriate measures is the core business and core competency of ABC. The solution is always to be tailored to your individual needs and developed in accordance with continuous change. Successive qualification modules can be expanded and linked. As part of a holistic human resources and organizational development strategy you will get proven learning management systems bundled and on-demand. All from one hand. We do education. Modular. (*122 words*; *46 changes with respect to the 2010 version*)

ORIGINAL CHINESE

在本文,我们试图研究了存货质押融资业务中银行激励和监督TPL的问题。尽管对存货融资问题的研究在很

久以前就已出现,但是有关银行激励和监督TPL的研究和文献还很少。我们相信本文是较早利用委托代理模

型来研究银行如何使TPL更加努力的文献之一。在本文,我们特别关注了在中小企业参与下的TPL报酬和努

力水平的变化,并从简单的激励和激励监督两个方面研究了这种变化。并且,在中小企业的参与下,我们

介绍了两种参与方式:协助参与和合作参与。

ENGLISH TRANSLATION BY CHINESE PHD STUDENT

In this paper we attempt to study the incentives and supervision mechanism between a bank and TPL. Although research on inventory financing began a long time ago, there is little research and literature on how a bank should motivate and supervise the TPL. We believe this is an earlier model used to study how the bank makes TPL more efforts. In our research we paid particular attention to the change of the TPL's rewards and its effort level with SME's participation and displayed the changes from two aspects: simple incentive measures and incentive-and-supervision measures. Moreover, we introduced two ways participation: Assisted participation and cooperative participation.

GOOGLE 2010

In this article we attempt to study the inventory financing business incentives and supervision of Bank TPL issues. Although the research on inventory financing had already appeared in a long time ago but the motivation and supervision of banks TPL little research and literature. We believe this is an earlier model used to study the agent bank how to make more efforts to document one of the TPL. In this article we paid particular attention to the participation of SMEs in the TPL return and the effort level changes and simple encouragement and motivation from the supervision of the two aspects of this change. Moreover the participation of SMEs we introduced two ways to participate: participation and cooperation to help participate.

GOOGLE 2016

In this article we attempt to study the problem of inventory financing business incentives and supervision TPL's banks. Although research on inventory financing issues in a very It had appeared long ago but the bank incentives and supervision of research and literature TPL little. We believe this paper is the use of agency earlier mold How to type to make one more effort to research bank documents TPL. In this article we are particularly concerned about the participation of SMEs in the TPL remuneration and effort Changes in force levels and studied the change from simple encouragement and incentives supervise two aspects. And with the participation of SMEs we It describes two ways to participate: Assist the participation and cooperation participation.

5.3   How well does GT compare with a typical student's translation?

To understand the benefits of GT, it helps if your students know what kind of mistakes they might make when translating from their language into English. They will then be able to judge how well GT does in comparison.

The abstract below was written by a PhD student of mine. She wrote directly into English but was mentally translating from Italian.

> Aim of the present paper is to present a confrontation between the syntax of the Italian language and the Inglish language. The Italian system of syntax derives form what is known in literature as the "periodical style" with many subordinate and incisive clauses whereas the Franco-English tradition was dominated by the "european style." It was founded that contrary to what is the commonly thought that Italian and the English languages demonstrate a similarly complex structure. The unique difference is the fact that the English rigorously imposes that the subject be before the verb instead in Italian can come before the verb and then the object.

If the student had written directly in Italian and then used Google Translate, she would have made far fewer mistakes, as you can see on page 60. She would have also saved a lot of time!

The differences between the correct version, her original version, and the Google version are highlighted in italics.

ORIGINAL VERSION GENERATED BY ITALIAN STUDENT FROM SCRATCH	ITALIAN-ENGLISH GOOGLE TRANSLATE	EDITED VERSION OF THE GT
Aim of the *present* paper is to present a *confrontation* between the syntax of the Italian *language* and the *Inglish language*. The Italian system of syntax derives form what is known *in literature* as the 'periodical style', with many subordinate and *incisive* clauses, whereas the Franco-English tradition was dominated by *the* 'european style'. It was *founded* that, contrary to the *informations* that *are* available, that Italian and the English languages demonstrate a similarly complex structure. The *unique* difference is the fact that the English *rigorously imposes* that the subject be before the verb, instead in Italian *can come before the verb and then* the object. (15 mistakes)	The purpose of this paper is to make a comparison between the syntax of Italian and English. The syntax of a sentence in the Italian system is derived from what is *called in literature magazine style*, with many subordinate *and very sharp* clauses while the Franco-English tradition *that has dominated call* "European style". It was found that, contrary to the information that *are* available, the Italian language and English show a similarly complex structure. The only difference is the fact that English requires that the subject comes before the verb, while in Italian *can be placed before the verb*, *then* the subject. (5 mistakes)	The purpose * of this paper is to make a comparison between the syntax of Italian and English. The syntax of a sentence in the Italian system is derived from what in *the* literature *is called the periodic* style, with many subordinate *clauses*, while the Franco-English tradition *was dominated by the* "European style". Contrary to the information that *is* available, *we found that* [the] Italian [language] and English show a similarly complex structure. The only difference is the fact that English requires that the subject comes before the verb, while in Italian *the verb* can be placed *before* the subject. * *aim* would also be correct

5.4 What kind of grammar and vocabulary mistakes do students make?

Most of the mistakes in the abstract in the previous subsection (first column) are influenced by mother-tongue interference: the student was thinking in her own language—Italian.

- USE OF DEFINITE ARTICLE—the first word (*aim*) should be preceded by *the*. The word *aim* itself is fine; an alternative would be *purpose*

- SPELLING MISTAKES—some of these are simply wrong (*Inglish* instead of *English*), others are typos (*form* instead of *from*—see second line)

- CAPITALIZATION—*European* has an initial capital letter

- VOCABULARY / FALSE FRIENDS—*Confrontation* looks similar to the Italian word for "comparison" (*confronto*) and *periodical* (which should be *periodic*: a *periodical* is a magazine) is probably due to the fact that the author has noticed that many English words in her field end in -*ical* (e.g. *classical*, *metaphorical*). *Unique* in English has a very specific meaning: it means "like no other"—for example, a diamond can be unique. The right word would be *only*

- IRREGULAR VERB ENDINGS—the past tense of *find* is *found* not *founded*

- REDUNDANCY—the words *present* in the *present paper* and the words *the* and *language* in the phrase *the Italian language* add no value for the reader

- WORD ORDER—*in Italian can come before the subject and then the object*—this should be: *the subject can come before the object*. In English, the subject must come before the verb

Your students will likely make similar mistakes. Firstly, your students need to know if some mistakes are more "serious" than others, i.e. they need to prioritize their learning. Secondly, they will want to learn how to avoid such mistakes.

Misusage of the DEFINITE ARTICLE is incredibly common. Many languages don't have definite or indefinite articles and those that do have them use them in a very different way from English. In any case, a paper will never be rejected just for a few mistakes with articles. However, if an author consistently makes mistakes throughout the whole paper, referees are likely to ask for a revision of the English. On the other hand, in an email, misuse of the articles will rarely cause problems of comprehension.

Some of the SPELLING AND CAPITALIZATION mistakes, e.g. *Inglish* and *european*, can be resolved simply by using a spell check. Typos such as *form* instead of *from* are commonly made by native speakers too; the only way to avoid this type of typo is by encouraging your students to read their documents aloud very carefully. Poor spelling gives the idea that the writer was too lazy even to turn on the spell checker and that if he / she is not attentive to such detail in their writing, the same may be said about their attention to detail in their research.

VOCABULARY problems generally concern words from general English rather than technical English. Normally, your students will know the correct technical words for their field. They are more likely to make mistakes with non-technical words. Such mistakes are not incredibly serious but can be a little confusing. For example, a *confrontation* generally means a face-to-face clash of ideas and has nothing to do with making a comparison. The solution here is to use a good bi-lingual dictionary or a site such as context.reverso.net or linguee.com.

Dealing with IRREGULAR VERBS implies that your students actually know that a verb is irregular. In some cases, a spell check will find the mistake simply because the word is not in its dictionary because it does not exist (e.g. *setted* or *broadcasted* which should be *set* and *broadcast*). In other cases, your students will simply have to know the correct form. However, problems of this kind are not likely to bother their readers.

REDUNDANCY is a major problem. Referees frequently refer to it when rejecting a paper and in an email it may cause the recipient to stop reading.

Putting the WORDS IN THE WRONG ORDER is the most serious mistake in this abstract. For a native English speaker, if the parts of a sentence (e.g. the subject, verb and object) appear in the wrong order, it has a similar effect to a dinner where the dessert is served first, followed by the main course, and finishing with the starter.

What effect will such mistakes have on readers? One way to help your students understand this effect is to take a paragraph written in English and translate it literally into their language. It will sound rather strange, even comical.

5.5   What kinds of mistakes does GT make?

The typical areas where Google Translate may make mistakes in English are detailed in 12.3 in *English for Interacting on Campus*. The main ones are: word order, failing to put the plural -s on acronyms, making uncountable nouns countable, and misuse of tenses. All these mistakes are directly due, as with a human, to mother tongue interference. Others, such as inexplicably translating names like Enrique to Henry, or messing up with punctuation, seem to be bugs in the software. All these mistakes may seem pretty major, but in reality they are often easier for your students to spot than their own mistakes.

In any case, the table in the previous subsection clearly highlights that the student made three times more mistakes than GT. So yes, GT makes mistakes, but generally fewer than a non-native would make.

Let's analyse the errors GT made (see second column in the table).

> Error 1: called in literature magazine style
> Error 2: sharp
> Error 3: that has dominated call
> Error 4: can be placed before the verb, then the subject

I conducted various tests with my students, and I found that they

- recognized that the word order was wrong in Error 1, but failed to insert the definite article before 'literature'

- recognized that *sharp* was wrong, but few were able to come up with the correct term until I suggested that they try inserting 'incisivo' into context.reverso. net - they then got the correct translation

- rearranged Error 3 so that it made sense

- failed to see the mistake in Error 4

Moral of the story: a combination of GT and context.reverso.net can produce a significantly better translation than a student doing the translation from scratch. However, this very much depends on:

- the language (the major European languages work the best)

- the type of text (generally speaking, the more technical the original text, the better the translation)

- whether the original text was written well or not

5.6   So how should I use Google Translate in lessons?

First of all, raise awareness in your students that GT is probably better than they think.

You can try out two experiments.

The first experiment is to get them to write an email directly into GT. For example, if they are Portuguese speakers, suggest that they write directly into the Portuguese box using English words and expressions if they know them, and any words or expressions that they don't know they can write in Portuguese. This means that they

will write in a mix of Portuguese and English which will be rendered just in English in the English box. Below is an example:
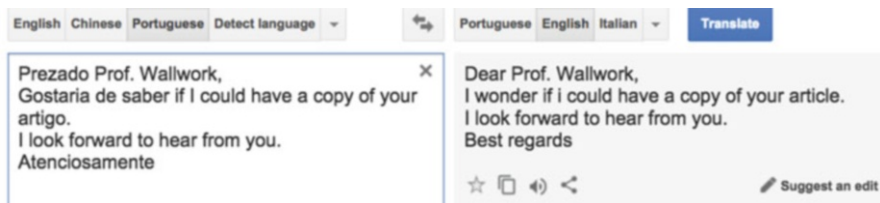
The above example produces a pretty good English version but inexplicably returns a lower case *i* (*i could*).

Of course, if there is a mistake in the English that the Portuguese writer types in, then Google will not miraculously correct (so *to hear* doesn't change *to hearing*).

Below is a version with a straight Portuguese / English translation with a major mistake: *if you can get* rather than *if I can get*. However, this is the kind of mistake that is relatively easy for the student to identify - as is the *i* in *i could* which would be picked up by a spell checker.
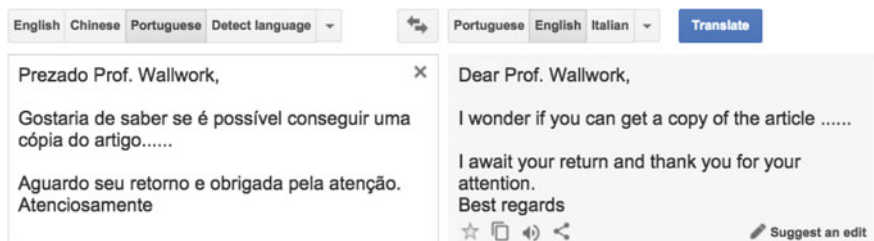
The next step in the same exercise is to get the students to check the individual parts of the English versions of their email on google.com. For example, if they type in "I look forward to hear from you" (note that the searched for phrase must be typed in with inverted commas before and after), they will get this return:

Note that although the phrase gets 118,000,000 results, the first three are a clear indication that there is something particular about the phrase "I look forward to hear / hearing from you". In fact, the first returns are all from grammar and vocabulary sites rather than real examples in use.

So the next step is to verify the authenticity of the sites. The first is a famous international site (wordreference) and can therefore be trusted. The third and fourth also look reliable. But, at least to a native-speaker's eyes, the second looks a bit dodgy - 'jakubmarian' doesn't sound English at all: in fact, Jakub turns out to be a Czech living in Germany! Jakub does actually get it right in his explanation but students do need to learn to distinguish native from non-native sites.

Now let's try the phrase "I await your return"

These first three returns should sound alarm bells and hopefully will alert the Portuguese student that the Google translation is not correct.

And so on … the student could also look up "thank you for your attention" and discover that, while this sentence is correct English, it tends to be used at the end of a presentation, rather than at the end of an email.

So the student then has to decide what to do next, i.e. to find an equivalent to "I await your return" or simply delete the phrase. Finding an alternative is not difficult if they use context.reverso.net or linguee.com.

The next example regards the translation of an abstract.

Follow this procedure:

1. Ask students to prepare an abstract in their own language (or use an existing one). Then they should translate it into English noting how many minutes it takes them.

2. Students go through their version (or the version of a fellow student with the same native language), identifying as many mistakes in their abstract as possible.

3. Students submit the original version to GT and correct the resulting version again, noting how many minutes it takes them.

4. Finally, you need to count the number of mistakes in i) their original manual version ii) the GT version iii) the GT version corrected by them.

This exercise should either prove or not prove (there is no certain result either way) one or more of the following:

- GT is as good at translating - if not better - than the student

- It's easier to spot a mistake made by GT than one's own mistakes. In fact, the human eye tends to be more alert to other people's mistakes. We don't actually seem to be able to 'see' some of our own mistakes

- it's generally a lot quicker to do a GT and then revise it than translate 'manually' (and then still have to correct it)

- GT throws up ways of translating phrases that you may not have even thought of and which may even be better than your own ideas

5.7 How can Google Scholar help students to correct their English?

Google Scholar does not necessarily give as reliable results as an Advanced Search using the standard Google search engine. However, Scholar does have other advantages. You can decide to search

- just titles of articles rather than whole articles

- specific journals or all journals and in specific fields

- articles written by specific authors

- articles written in specific years

This means that Scholar is not just useful for students to check their English, but also for literature searches and to enable them to compare various styles of writing.

The fact that Google Scholar gives you the option to search for articles written by specific authors means that you can filter out articles that have probably been written by non-native English speaking authors. You can do this by inserting the name Smith in the field 'Return articles written by'. Smith is the most common surname in the English language (over five million worldwide) and thus should give you a substantial number of returns. Other names your students could try are Johnson, Williams, Brown, Jones and Davis. But do not use these names in combination, just individually. If not, students will get returns where the authors of the paper were, for instance, both Smith and Johnson, thus considerably reducing the number of useful returns.

5.8 So what is the moral of the story regarding whether teachers should encourage students to use Google Translate?

I am not suggesting that you should encourage your students to rely exclusively on GT and never write anything in English from scratch. What I am suggesting is that you and they should at least be aware of the pros and cons of a tool that they will certainly use on and off during their academic career and later work life.

I am certainly encouraging you and them to check out context.reverso.net, which I think is a fantastic tool.

Chapter 6
Teaching Students to Recognize the Pros and Cons of Short and Long Sentences

6.1 Do native speakers write in long sentences?

In my Scientific English courses I always tell my PhD students to write short sentences. After the lesson, I often receive emails from my students containing examples of very long sentences written by American and British researchers. This usage of long sentences is confirmed by a survey of biomedical literature which showed that native English speaking writers construct sentences that are generally no shorter than their non-native counterparts. Both native and non-native writers write sentences with an average length of between 23.5 and 28.5 words (with Malaysians writing the shortest and Italians the longest). The authors of the survey which was presented in their paper *The way we write - Country-specific variations of the English language in the biomedical literature* found that:

> Anglo-Saxon scientists write longer sentences—an average of 27 words and 3.8 verbs per sentence for the UK—as would be expected from their familiarity with English.

However, the survey gave no idea about the actual clarity of the sentence or the amount of redundancy it contains - it was simply based on a statistical word count. The key point is the native speaker's 'familiarity with English'. This means that, hopefully, although their sentences are long, they are constructed in a logical order and do not contain grammatical mistakes. If you are a non-native speaker, the longer the sentence you write the more likely you are to make grammatical mistakes and the more likely your sentence will be difficult to read.

6.2 But doesn't academic English have a style of its own? Aren't the French, Spanish and Italians right: surely short sentences are inappropriate in a paper?

One of the reviews on Amazon that I received for *English for Writing Research Papers* was written by a native speaker who commented:

> … the only negative comment I could make is just a suggestion to see more *examples of advanced language* which would be needed or could be used to *create more academic sounding and flowing report papers*.

So why would he want to 'sound' more academic? Two surveys from *Yes! 50 Secrets from the science of persuasion* may help provide the answer.

The first survey, conducted at Stanford University, found that nearly 90% of students admitted to using complicated language in order to make themselves sound smarter. There seems to be an expectation that academic writing should be couched in 'advanced language' (whatever that is) and that this will automatically convey a sense of credibility. No research, as far as I am aware, has ever proved that complex language leads to a better-flowing paper. However, much research has proved the opposite - i.e. that readers actually prefer simple language even if they have the intellect to understand complex stuff.

So yes, academic English does have a style of its own, and yes, it is often complex (and pompous and unreadable and sometimes actually quite hilarious), and yes, many native speakers adopt this style.

However this kind of style may have four major downfalls for your students:

1. It leads to long-winded phrases which typically native speaking referees flag as needing changing and which readers (if the paper actually manages to get published) will simply stop reading due to the mental effort involved - see Point 3.

2. It opens up a minefield of potential mistakes - the more complicated the grammatical structures the longer the sentences and typically the more mistakes a non-native author will make (native authors at least don't normally have the problem of being grammatically correct or using the right words).

3. It quickly bores the reader (in inverse proportion to how much it delights the author). Tracy Seeley, an English professor at the University of San Francisco, noted that after a conversation with some of her students she discovered that "most can't concentrate on reading a text for more than 30 seconds or a minute at a time. We're being trained away from slow reading by new technology." In an email to me she added that "papers need to get to the point quickly" and that "good writing is even more important now in order to hold readers' attention".

Another survey reported in *Yes!* relates the finding from a UK-based consulting firm that 56% of employees thought that managers and supervisors didn't communicate clearly with them, and often used incomprehensible language that confused the messages. And this leads into the fourth downfall for your students:

4. Supposedly 'advanced' language is often used by students who do not have a clear idea of what they want to say. They thus hide their insecurity behind a veil of apparent cleverness. But referees are quick to see through this veil and reveal it for what it is - incomprehensible language that confuses the message of the paper.

6.3   But are short sentences always a good idea?

Your students' natural tendency is to think and write in long sentences. If this wasn't so, they would automatically write in short and simple sentences. In reality, writing in short, simple sentences requires much more effort as the writer has to really think about what they are trying to say.

Difficulties arise when students try to break down their long sentences into shorter sentences. The quickest way for students to achieve this is by looking for natural break points in their long sentence and starting a new sentence there. This only works if the multiple clauses in their original long sentence are in a logical order (in terms of an English pattern of logic).

One of your jobs is thus to help students understand how to disentangle their long sentences in order to produce acceptable and shorter English sentences. This may also involve cutting bits out of the original long sentence.

The sentence below from Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* was written in 1859. It is 73 words long. Where would you divide it up into shorter sentences?

> When we reflect on the vast diversity of the plants and animals which have been cultivated and which have varied during all ages under the most different climates and treatment, I think we are driven to conclude that this greater variability is simply due to our domestic productions having been raised under conditions of life not so uniform as and somewhat different from those to which the parent-species have been exposed under nature.

Don't forget that just because a sentence is long it doesn't mean that it automatically has to be cut into shorter sentences. I personally can't think of how to divide up Darwin's sentence. This is because it is well written and progresses in a completely logical fashion, and is therefore not difficult to understand (long does not always mean difficult). The only thing I would do if I was editing it today would perhaps be to make it a bit more concise, but I don't think I would split it up.

A very different case is the sentence below (ORIGINAL VERSION). Splitting it up into shorter sentences without changing the order of those sentences (CHOPPED UP VERSION) would lead to a very choppy ride for the reader.

ORIGINAL ONE-LONG-SENTENCE VERSION

> The changes in the Italian fashion business in the few last years marked by a long list of acquisitions of well-known and long established Italian companies such as Bottega Veneta, Brioni, Ferrè, Loro Piana, Krizia and Versace by foreign holdings such as LVNH and Kering and private equity funds on the one hand, and on the other a boom of Initial Public Offerings (listings on the stock exchange) by several Italian fashion companies such as Prada, Salvatore Ferragamo, Brunello Cucinelli and Moncler, demand a critical insight into the recent evolution and transformation of the Italian fashion industry and business models facing the new market challenges and economic crisis. [108 words]

CHOPPED UP NO-LOGICAL-FLOW VERSION

> The changes in the Italian fashion business in the last years have been marked by a long list of acquisitions of well-known and long established Italian companies. These companies include Bottega Veneta, Brioni, Ferrè, Loro Piana, Krizia, and Versace. They have been bought by foreign holdings such as LVNH and Kering, and private equity funds. There has been a boom of Initial Public Offerings (listings on the stock exchange) by several Italian fashion companies. These companies include Prada, Salvatore Ferragamo, Brunello Cucinelli, and Moncler. This demands a critical insight into the recent evolution and transformation of the Italian fashion industry and business models. Such models are faced with new market challenges and an economic crisis. [115 words]

SPLIT-BUT-HARMONIZED VERSION

> There have been many changes in the Italian fashion business over the last few years. Foreign holdings, such as LVNH and Kering, as well as private equity funds, have acquired well-known Italian companies such as Bottega Veneta, Brioni, Ferrè, Loro Piana, Krizia, and Versace. Yet, at the same time, there has been a boom in IPOs by several companies such as Prada, Salvatore Ferragamo, Brunello Cucinelli, and Moncler. All these changes highlight the need for a critical insight into the recent transformation of the Italian fashion industry and its business models as they face new market challenges in this economic crisis. [101 words]

ALTERNATIVE SPLIT-BUT-HARMONIZED VERSION

> Changes in the Italian fashion industry in recent years have been marked by the acquisition of many well-known and long-established Italian companies, such as Bottega Veneta, Brioni, Ferrè, Loro Piana, Krizia and Versace, by foreign holdings, such as LVNH and Kering, as well as by private equity funds. At the same time, there has also been a boom in Initial Public Offerings (listings on the stock exchange) of Italian fashion companies such as Prada, Salvatore Ferragamo, Brunello Cucinelli and Moncler. There is a need for a critical insight into these recent changes in the industry as it faces new market challenges and the economic crisis [105 words].

Lessons to be learned here:

1. If the writer's ORIGINAL version is murky and disorganized he / she is going to have trouble to 'demurk' and reorganize it into a logical flow of shorter sentences. Thus, the problem is not just in the English version but above all in the version in the writer's native language (whether this be in his / her head or in a written version).

2. Breaking up a long sentence into a series of shorter sentences is a good idea but it has to be done in such a way that the result is not a series of poorly-connected sentences (CHOPPED version). A whole paragraph or section written in this style would have a negative impact on native English reviewers, who might deem the ideas as being poorly developed.

3. Breaking up a long sentence also involves i) rearranging the various parts and ii) shedding some of the excess weight of the original - note how the HARMONIZED versions have a lower word count (around a 20% reduction).

4. As highlighted by the two HARMONIZED versions, there is more than one way to re-write and divide up a sentence or paragraph. These two versions also show that the same long sentence can be made more concise in more than one way.

6.4 Do people write in short sentences in other languages?

Perhaps the question should be 'can people write?' rather than 'do people write?'. While researching *English for Writing Research Papers*, I asked professors and PhD students from around the world how people in their native languages wrote scientific papers. Everyone I contacted (Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Greek, Japanese, Russian and Turkish) all told me the same story about the complexity of scientific texts and how this was considered to be good style. One Greek student told me:

> Although we could easily divide up a long sentence by creating a series of shorter ones, Greeks prefer to join lots of dependent clauses with a huge variety of subordinate conjunctions, thus creating long complex sentences - we just love them. We write long sentences because our language culture is heavily based on subordinate sentences. By that I don't mean that there is no alternative but already at school we pay great attention to this aspect. Basically, in Greek academic texts, the reader is expected to put some effort into following the writer's ideas.

Kateryna Pishchikova who has a PhD in Linguistics relates similar issues with the Russian style of writing:

> Russians tend to use long and complicated sentences. They often follow a "detective story" logic according to which the reader has to follow the events or arguments as they unfold and will only learn what the author is trying to say at the end. In English, on the contrary, it is considered good practice to state upfront what will be argued in the article. Generally speaking, in Russian, complexity and not clarity is synonymous with good scientific or specialist writing.

The only exception was a lecturer in Finnish who said:

> Good writing needs to be clear and direct as Finns are. The main idea in the text should be directly and clearly understood and it should be simply expressed. Thus, long and winding sentences should be avoided. A period (full stop) is considered to be better than many semicolons. The reader should focus on the content not on the style.

What this all means is that non-native students tend to write in English in the same way as they would if they were writing in their own language. I believe that your job as a teacher is to say that in English long complex sentences were once the norm (and indeed still are in some fields), but that such a style will not help them to have their manuscript published.

In 25 years of revising the English of academic papers, I have yet to read a report in which the reviewers complained that the language / style of a manuscript was too simple. Very occasionally, they may ask for a series of short paragraphs to be linked together, but no reviewer is adverse to the use of clear short sentences (as long as this style is not used continuously). In contrast, many manuscripts are rejected for verbose language and verbiage in general.

6.5   Is English word order logical?

What is considered to be a 'logical word order' is clearly going to depend on what your native tongue is - no speaker of any language is likely to say 'yes, the way we construct a sentence in our language is completely illogical'.

However, part of your job is going to be to convince your students that English word order does have a logic, and it tends to present information in the way that a reader (well, a native English-speaking reader!) expects it.

Let's look at an example.

Ignoring the fact that you won't actually understand the key words, which sentence do you find easier to read?

S1) In Figure 8, the transport stream-function averaged over the whole simulation period is shown for EXP1 and EXP2.
S2) Figure 8 shows the transport stream-function for EXP1 and EXP2 averaged over the whole simulation period.

Now let's look at how the two sentences are structured.

S1) In Figure 8 // the transport stream-function // averaged over the whole simulation period // is shown for EXP1 and EXP2.
S2) Figure 8 shows the transport stream-function for EXP1 and EXP2 // averaged over the whole simulation period.

S1 reflects the order in many Latin-based languages: there are four parts to the sentence. These four parts cannot stand alone - they don't have a complete meaning in themselves; the whole meaning can only be understood when the reader has reached the end of the sentence.

S2 is normal English word order: there are only two main parts.

The order in S1 is: preposition + noun1 + noun2 + more info on noun2 + verb + noun3

The order in S2 is: noun1 + verb + noun2+3 + more info on noun2+3

The order in S2 reflects basic word order in English: subject + verb + object (see 2.2 and 2.3 in *English for Writing Research Papers*).

In conclusion, don't separate:

- the noun from its verb (*figure … shows*)

- the parts that make up a single entity (*transport stream-function … EXP1 and EXP2*)

So, yes, English word order tends to be logical (at least for us!) and tends to reflect the way someone would talk in their normal everyday life.

6.6   What about paragraphs? Are they structured in the same way from language to language?

No. Ask an Italian about the best way to read a newspaper article in an Italian newspaper and many will tell you that you should start from the bottom and read up!

But in the world of academic papers, paragraphs are expected to follow the same logical structure, whatever the journal and whatever the discipline.

Every paper has a title and the readers know where to find it, i.e. at the top of the first page of the paper. Readers know that the title will be followed by the Abstract and at (or towards) the end of the paper they expect to find the Bibliography.

Just as readers have certain expectations with regard to the structure of the entire paper, they also have expectations with regard to how a section, paragraph and a sentence should be structured. These expectations are less conscious or explicit than expectations regarding the position of a title and the abstract. However, they are based on how readers usually find and receive information in a section, paragraph and sentence.

Each paragraph is like a microcosm of a paper – it has its own title (the topic sentence), the intermediate sentences are like the sections of the paper and the last sentence is like the conclusions.

A well-structured paragraph in any other part of a section (i.e. not the first paragraph) is thus generally structured as follows:

- A topic sentence that tells the reader what the paragraph is about and in some way connects with the previous paragraph.

- From one to eight sentences in a logical sequence that develop the topic.

- A concluding sentence possibly referring back to the first sentence or forward to the next paragraph.

Students thus need considerable practice in writing clear paragraphs containing a logical sequence of clearly written sentences - see Chapters 2-6 in *English for Writing Research Papers.*

Chapter 7
Using Students' Own Materials

7.1   Why use students' own materials?

Students learn better from analyzing what they themselves have produced, rather than what some publisher presents them in a textbook.

Clearly, to retain the interest of all the class, you don't want to spend too much time on one student's work (unless the whole class has done the same work).

The rest of this chapter suggests ways of exploiting student-generated materials.

7.2   Removing redundancy from an Abstract

The example below (an Abstract) shows how to analyse a text that is full of redundancy and produce a version that sheds the redundancy and is thus more dynamic. Being concise is important not just in terms of reducing the number of words and potential mistakes but also in increasing readability and impact.

ORIGINAL VERSION	REVISED VERSION
ICT *technologies are expected to* hold the *ignition* key to the reduction of the greenhouse gases *produced worldwide which is a non-debatable global priority.* The importance of "greening of the Internet" therefore is *recognized as* a primary design goal of the future global network infrastructures. *Indeed* the Internet *today* already accounts for about 2% of the total world energy consumption but with the current trend of shifting offline services online this percentage will grow significantly *in the next few years* and it will be pushed further by *the forthcoming* Internet-based platforms that require always-on connectivity. *In this paper* we present … (101 words)	ICTs hold the key to *reducing* greenhouse gases. Greening the Internet is a primary design goal of future global network infrastructures. The Internet already accounts for about 2% of total world energy consumption and, *now that offline services are being shifted online*, this percentage will grow significantly and will be further fueled by the forthcoming Internet-based platforms that require always-on connectivity. We present … (64 words)

Below are the kinds of explanations you could use to explain where and how to reduce redundancy:

technologies - ICT stands for 'Information and Communications Technology', thus *technologies* is redundant and ICT should be made plural (ICTs).

ignition keys - *ignition* adds no extra information.

produced worldwide - unless the author states that the gases are only produced in one particular location then it is clear to the reader that this is a worldwide phenomenon.

which is a non-debatable global priority - this is firmly established information that all readers will be aware of (whether they agree with it or not).

recognized as - recognized by whom? Presumably by the scientific (and political) community. This information is implicit and is therefore probably not necessary.

indeed - this is an example of a link word that adds no extra information and, if the paragraph is structured correctly, such link words may be redundant.

today - unless stated otherwise, it is clear that the time reference is now so *today* is unnecessary.

in the next few years and *the forthcoming* - the use of *will* clearly indicates that this is a future event and, given that readers are likely to be ICT people, they will already know the time-scale. In any case, if the action was not in the very near future, presumably the author would have used a more accurate indication (e.g. *in 10–15 years*).

in this paper - given that this is part of an Abstract, the reader knows that the text refers to the associated paper.

The revised version also makes use of other tricks to make the original version more concise; again these are indicated in italics.

key to the reduction of becomes *key to reducing* - this is an example of using a verb instead of a noun (Sect. 5.4). In this case, the verb is in the *-ing* form because it comes after a preposition (*key + to + -ing*).

but with the current trend of shifting offline services online becomes *now that offline services are being shifted online* - this change is not strictly necessary but the present continuous already contains the idea of a current trend.

The abstract could also be restructured as follows:

The Internet accounts for about 2% of total world energy consumption and ICTs hold the key to reducing this aspect of greenhouse gases. Now that offline services are being shifted online, this percentage will grow significantly and will be further fuelled by the forthcoming Internet-based platforms that require always-on connectivity. Greening the Internet is thus a primary design goal of future global network infrastructures. We present …

The revised version is no less 'elegant' or 'scientific' than the original version. However, there is a 30% loss of redundancy (61 vs. 104 words) which translates into:

1. 30% more readability - I have yet to read a referee's report that complained that the English was too simple or too easy to read!

2. 30% less chance for making mistakes in English – clearly, the less your students write the fewer potential mistakes they can make

3. 30% more space available for your students to give the reader useful information

4. 30% less paper, ink and energy used - not only do we need to 'green' the Internet; we need to 'green' our writing too!

The take-home story that you can give your students is:

- It takes more than three hours to read 30000 characters. If you reduce the paper by 30%, you will spend one hour less reading / revising it.

- If you have your paper corrected by a scientific editor, the cost will strictly depend on the number of words. So if you write less, it will cost you less to have the paper revised.

- If you use 30% fewer words, it will take up to 30% less time to revise and proofread. The first few times you attempt to write in a concise way it will probably take you longer because you have to think more. But when writing concisely becomes a habit it will certainly take you less time.

7.3   Making a humanist text more cohesive and interesting

The following extract comes from a paper written by a researcher into the American Civil War. How could it be made more interesting to read? What are its principle problems?

> General Stonewall Jackson is probably the second most well-known Confederate commander. Jackson took part in a multitude of Confederate victories during the Civil War and in one of these he was the unwitting victim of friendly fire, i.e. he was accidentally shot by his own troops while returning after the assault under the cover of darkness. The Confederate general was hit by a total of three bullets: one in his right hand and two in his left arm later amputated. He developed pneumonia and died just over a week later. Despite dying at such a young age, his often unusual command style has contributed to his legacy as one of the most significant generals.

The main issue is that it seems like a series of disconnected sentences - probably the result of the student trying to follow your advice and to use short sentences (see 6.3)! It needs to be given more impact. In this case, you'd need to do a bit of your own research in order to find ways to improve your student's text. You don't want to do it too often or otherwise you'll find your students wanting you to (re)write their papers for them!

Now compare it with this version.

> The most famous case of friendly fire in the history of the United States was that of General Stonewall Jackson. This heroic leader is the most well-known Confederate commander after General Lee. In fact, Jackson was the commander of twenty Confederate victories during the Civil War, including: The First and Second Battle of Bull Run, Antietam, Fredericksburg, and the Wilderness Campaign. During the Battle of Chancellorsville, in 1863, Jackson was accidentally shot by his own troops while he and his staff were returning to camp - they were mistaken for a Union cavalry force. Jackson was hit by three bullets, two in the left arm and one in the right hand. Several other men in his staff were killed, in addition to many horses. Darkness and confusion prevented Jackson from getting immediate care. He was dropped from his stretcher while being evacuated because of incoming artillery rounds. Because of his injuries, Jackson's left arm had to be amputated. He then developed pneumonia and died eight days later at the age of 39. Jackson's sometimes unusual command style and personality traits, combined with his frequent success in battle, contribute to his legacy as one of the most remarkable generals of the Civil War.

Note that the revised version does not resort to a series of link words in order to gain coherence. The only linker used is 'in fact'. The coherence is gained by the logical links between one sentence and another.

Another issue with the original version is that it is not a very interesting read. By adding more details, the revised version brings the historical event to life and thus makes it more memorable for the reader.

7.4   Highlighting ambiguity

A typical problem with research papers is that they contain ambiguity (see Chapter 6 in *English for Writing Research Papers*). When you correct students' work, take a note of any ambiguous phrases and then compile them into an exercise.

For example, below are five ambiguous sentences written by the researcher on Stonewall Jackson (see 7.3). The class's task would thus be to make the researcher's real meaning clear.

1. The Confederates saw many dead soldiers riding across the battlefield at Chancellorsville.
2. One member of the regiment sustained a wound in the arm of no importance.
3. The military doctor reported: "This soldier's hand is so severely injured that unless the forefinger is amputated he will entirely lose the use of it".
4. The general then removed the medal from the chest of the soldier which he had given him.
5. A statue was erected to the memory of Generally Stonewall Jackson who was accidentally shot as a mark of affection by his troops.

Key

1. While the Confederates were riding across the battlefield at Chancellorsville they saw many dead soldiers.
2. One member of the regiment sustained a minor wound in the arm.
3. The military doctor reported: "This soldier's hand is so severely injured that unless the forefinger is amputated he will entirely lose the use of the hand".
4. The general then removed the medal from the chest of the soldier. // The soldier had been awarded a medal, which the general later removed from the soldier's chest.
5. As a mark of affection, a statue was erected to the memory of Generally Stonewall Jackson, who had been accidentally shot by his troops.

7.5 Emails

Students often send me important emails to correct, for example in relation to getting into a summer school, getting a position in someone's lab, or applying for a job. In the email below, the student's original is in normal script, and my comments to her are in italics. This example email is designed to show you that you will need to focus not just on correcting the English, but the structure and content too.

> Dear Sir / Madame *Always try and find out the name of the Human Resources manager or the person who is likely to read your letter. Think about what effect it has on you to see your name rather than an anonymous 'Dear PhD student'. NB: 'Madame' is a French word (Madam is the correct word).*
>
> My name is ABC *We know what your name is from the signature at the end of the letter*. I am a well educated person *How do we know?* who has relevant *Why is it relevant?* experience in blah blah blah.
>
> I have a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and a Master's Degree in Child Therapy *Make sure you know how to write/spell the names of your degrees* I have all the required skills - *What are they?* for this job and I want Why? to take this opportunity to work for this international organization *What exactly is the benefit for your future employer?*
>
> ~~I am sure I can do all my best for this job and at the same time consolidate my experience in blah blah blah.~~
>
> ~~I am kindly asking you to consider my candidacy for this position through the attached resume.~~
>
> ~~Thank you~~ *These phrases add no value to your letter*.
>
> *Best regards*

7.6 CVs

Any EAP course should include something on CVs. All the research that students will have done may never be broadcast to the world of work if it doesn't appear on an immaculately written and presented CV. So it is worth spending 2-3 hours in an EAP course on writing CVs (see my book *CVs, Resumes and LinkedIn - A Guide to Professional English*, Springer). It is fascinating to see how people from different parts of the world structure their CV and the kind of information they include on it. Below is an example from an Indian student (name and dates changed).

K.C.Anoushka	

D/o Mr. K. Chaudhary, 299b, Karpagam Illam, N.S.K.Street, Bethaniapuram
Madurai-625016, TamilNadu, India. Phone: **+91-0452-6579987**
Email**: goforit25@gmail.com**

Career Objective

    To pursue higher studies that exposes my fullest potential and abilities and opens opportunities for my interests

Academics

2017 - present **Post Graduation** (Soil Science and Agricultural Chemistry)	Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Agricultural College and Research Institute, Coimbatore
2015-2017 **Under Graduation** (Agriculture) **2010-2014**	**Percentage: 97.6** Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Agricultural College and Research Institute, Madurai **Percentage: 94.3**
Higher Secondary Madurai **2009-2010**	S.B.O.A Matriculation & Higher Secondary School, **Percentage: 90.7**

By using an example such as the one above, you can make a lot of comments, including:

- Layout: this one looks disorganized and does not follow a standard template

- Use of bold: seems a little random, and certainly not helpful

- Name: Anoushka is her first name, this is standard practice in southern Indian (the C and K refer to her father's and grandfather's names). Students need to be aware of how names are expected to be written for CVs that are going to be sent to an international company.

- D / o: this means 'daughter of' and her father is then named. Students need to be warned that some features of a CV are totally cultural and may not exist outside their country / region

- Email address: completely inappropriate (often email addresses are remnants of students' undergraduate days, it hasn't occurred to them that they need changing)

- Career objective: the sentence Anoushka has written could have been written by any student on the planet. Students need to learn to write very concretely with clear examples

- Headings: 'Academics' is not a standard English heading

- Scores: Outside her region, the scores won't necessarily mean very much. They need to be presented in an international format (see 7.5 in *CVs, Resumes and LinkedIn - A Guide to Professional English,* Springer)

- Schools: At a PhD level, it is probably not necessary to specify the names of one's high school.

Clearly, you need to get the student's permission before showing it to the class.

7.7   Adding a cross-cultural element

You don't need to limit yourself to drawing on students' own materials, you can also draw on their experiences and on their culture. If you have a multicultural class, then there are endless mini-discussions that you can have between one activity and another. One such case is telephone numbers and answering the phone.

There is considerable variation in the way people in various parts of the world say telephone numbers: some read telephone numbers in single or in double figures, others in groups of three numbers, for example 224 by saying "two hundred and twenty four". People answer the phone in many different ways. In Britain, many people answer by saying their number. In Italy, they say *pronto* meaning "ready". In the Philippines, they use the English word "hello" due to the influence of US soldiers and it is used in combination with the local language *hello sino po sila*? which means "hello who is this please?" In Japan, they use the same phrases *moshi moshi* to answer the phone when they can't hear the person very well, and to confirm that the other person is still on the line.

I said 'mini' discussions earlier because you are unlikely to have time for full-blown classroom discussions - students can have these over dinner. So you need to choose cultural areas that are not contentious and which can be dealt with quickly but which are in any case quite revealing of different habits around the world.

Finally, you don't want your students discussing anything too 'risky', so use common sense, and if in doubt, check before with other teachers whether they think the topic will be too sensitive or not.

Chapter 8
Showing How Skills Taught in Your Writing Course Are Also Applicable in Other Areas of Communication

8.1 Encourage students to transfer their skills from one area of communication to another

The table below shows how the same topic may be covered across three books in the *English for Academic Research* series. The rest of this chapter is designed to show you how to exploit this cross coverage.

	WRITING RESEARCH PAPERS	PRESENTATIONS	CORRESPONDENCE
Ambiguity	6, 16.12		5.7
Attention - gaining and keeping	8	12	1.2, 3.13, 5.5,
Conclusions	19	10	
Criticizing	10, 18.11		4.10, 10
Hedging	10	9.5	
Highlighting key info	8	4.7, 8.4, 8.6, 9.2	1.2, 3.4, 3.11
Paragraphs	3, 8.3		6.9
Readability and empathy	3-6	1.4, 1.5, 5, 12.9	1, 3, 5, 6, 13.2, 13.3
Redundancy / Being concise	3.16, 5, 8.10, 18.15, 20.4	4.7-4.16	5.4

The idea of this cross coverage is for

- you to underline the importance of what you are teaching. Students will want to know why they are spending time attending your course rather than getting on with their PhD research in the lab or on their PC

- students to see how what you are teaching them in one context is also applicable to other areas too

- students to assimilate what you are telling them by seeing it work in different contexts, i.e. the learning is reinforced

For example, writing papers is likely to be a relatively new area for many students. On the other hand, writing emails, presentations and CVs will be something very familiar. This means when you teach something in a writing papers course, your students are much more likely to take the concept on board if you can prove that the same problem is also found elsewhere or that the same skill can be applied in another area.

All the points mentioned in the rest of this chapter:

- are in alphabetical order, and thus not in any order of importance

- have corresponding practice exercises in the Grammar and Writing exercise books

8.2   Ambiguity

Many students will not be aware that a sentence which is perfectly clear in their own language becomes ambiguous when translated into English. This is particularly the case with pronouns, especially *it* and *them*.

If I say: *I bought some wine and some fruit, but I left it on the bus.*

The reader / listener is not sure if you left the wine, the fruit or both on the bus. But, if I was to say the same sentence in a language that has gender, for example, Italian, then the pronoun *it* would be clear because it would be masculine if it referred to the wine (*il vino*) or feminine if it referred to the fruit (*la frutta*). Obviously, it would be ambiguous even in their language if the preceding nouns were both masculine, or both feminine or both neuter.

Such problems with pronouns cause immense problems in papers and in emails. If you are teaching writing skills for papers, your students are unlikely to have even thought about the problem of ambiguity, but given that they write emails everyday (both in English and in their own language) then there is a greater chance that they have been a 'victim' of a misunderstanding as to exactly what a word such as *it, them* or *that* referred to.

8.3   Attention gaining, highlighting, paragraphing

Gaining (and keeping) attention, highlighting findings and dividing up blocks of text into shorter paragraphs are all related activities. In terms of writing, they are all intended to attract the reader's eye, and when speaking, to attract the listener. Variations on these skills are found in many areas. For example, for both CVs / resumes and webpages research has proved that readers stop reading if

- they can't get info quickly

- info is given in long paragraphs

Students will be very familiar with this concept in relation to webpages, which often tend to be read vertically (with the eye scrolling down the page) rather than horizontally. But it will also be easier for them to understand in a CV, where research with recruiters has proved that a recruiter spends an average of six seconds looking at a CV, but only a couple of seconds if there is little white space. By extension, the same is true of a reader of a paper - if it becomes tough to read because it is visually demanding (very long paragraphs), then readers will stop reading. And if the author's key findings are buried in a long paragraph, then these findings may not even be 'seen' at all. The equivalent of long paragraphs and blocks of text in a presentation, is a slide containing too much text.

From the above, I hope you can see how showing students various examples of the same type of 'error' is going to be much more interesting and memorable for them, than simply dealing with the issue in isolation.

8.4   Conclusions

How much does a Conclusions section in a paper mirror the Conclusions slide in a presentation? Do the section and slide both have the same aims?

You can get your students to compare an author's (or the student's own) conclusions in a paper with the related conclusions in a presentation. Often, presentations are uploaded by authors onto a conference's website and papers are often found online, so students should be able to access both, and then compare them. Or you can get them to use papers and presentations that they themselves (or their professors or colleagues) have created.

The idea is to show that the conclusions of a paper and presentation share some common ground:

- very brief summary of key points

- implications and applications (what does all this mean and how can it be used?)

- future work (what next?)

A conclusions slide also has a very different objective - it can be used as a call to the community for collaboration (see 10.5 in *English for Presentations at International Conferences*), it is a way of attracting interest in a research project, and possibly of soliciting extra funds. A presentation is thus more of a 'product selling' activity than a paper.

You can even extend the idea further: Does an email need a conclusion? Does a cover letter for a job application need a conclusion? Does a CV need an Abstract (yes, it does, it's called an 'executive summary')? What is the equivalent to an Abstract in a presentation? What is the difference between an Abstract and a Conclusions section?

So a good idea with your students is to set them questions to get them thinking about the different aims and common connections between different forms of communication.

8.5   Criticizing

Criticizing imbues our daily lives. Thus, there is massive scope for comparing criticism (either implicit or explicit) in the Discussion section of a paper (i.e. when discussing the limitations of works in the literature) with other forms of criticism. Students are unlikely to be able to associate discussing the limitations of a procedure, protocol, piece of equipment, as actually being a form of criticism. So you need to make them aware that they really need to be careful how they couch any comments about the possible deficiencies in the current literature. But if you give them a few email tasks, where they have to criticise a colleague, then the dangers of being negative rather than constructive will soon be highlighted. And these dangers can be catastrophic when criticizing a referee's report.

So the idea is that, before introducing a difficult topic (e.g. discussing others' limitations in a Discussion section), it makes sense to first make a similar point in an area of a student's life where they commonly meet criticism.

Another example is where you are a foreign student and you come up against criticism against your own country (see 1.12, 1.13, 2.8 in *English for Communicating on Campus*). You could ask students:

1. how do you feel when your country is criticised?

2. how fair / valid do you think the comments are?

3. how do you react?

4. now, from your discussion of the above three questions, what do you need to be aware of when writing about the limitations of another author?

8.6 Hedging

Hedging means couching a possibly grand sounding claim in a way that leaves the claim open to interpretation by others. Hedging is pretty much a convention in Anglo academic writing and is used in order to:

- not sound arrogant

- limit opposition from peers

- tone down a claim that may not be justified by current evidence

- protect the writer from any predictions that may turn out to be wrong

Here is an extract from a referee commenting on an Italian computer scientist's overly forthright claim:

> When comparing to related work, I would recommend to stay away from statements such as "Overall, our model is simpler but more powerful than others that are found in the literature." Unless you provide a concrete measure that shows that it is more powerful, I would soften the statement to say that it provides advantages or increased X.

Alistair Wood explains the concept of hedging in his excellent article *International scientific English: Some thoughts on science, language and ownership* (see 11.3 in in *English for Writing Research Papers*).

> At the same time, however, such hedges would seem to be more in line with the English habit of understatement often commented on and even made fun of by foreigners. Certainly, the careful hedging of conclusions by the appropriate use of the correct verb would appear to be a very 'English' thing to do. Witness the famous remark by Watson and Crick: "*It has not escaped our notice that the specific pairing we have postulated immediately suggests a possible copying mechanism for the genetic material*". Could you imagine, say, a German scientist writing in the same style such an important conclusion ? Hedging, it would seem, then, although it has its origins in the requirements of the scientific argument, is reinforced by the cultural preference of at least British English for understatement.

> The syntax of the language also tends in the same direction, as English has a highly developed modality system which makes it relatively easy to express nuances of meaning in these areas. Thus it makes a considerable difference whether the author uses, for example, 'can' or 'could', not to mention 'should' compared to 'must' or 'will' or 'may'. In other languages, e.g. Malay, writers often do not use such a nuanced range, even if they are available, to express possibility, and would find it difficult to generate such distinctions so simply because of the differences in modality. Of course, they could if necessary, but these methods of hedging do not come so naturally to the writer in that language and, *a fortiori*, in English.

This means that sentences such as "These results prove that ..." would be considered unacceptable in many circumstances in a research paper. But the problem is to get students, who have no concept of hedging in their language, to see that such statements need to be hedged.

Although students might not be able to see the advisability of hedging in a paper, they might be able to see it in a presentation. In a research manuscript, the author is protected from any direct contact with the reader (much like an irate and abusive driver is protected by their car from other drivers). But when you are face to face with an audience of peers, many of whom will be much older and wiser than you, then you don't want to come across as a jumped up 20-year-old. Likewise, in a CV or in the accompanying letter to a CV, one would hope that students wouldn't want to blow their own trumpet too much.

If students still can't get the point, then get them to imagine that they were meeting a fellow student for the first time. Would they go on and on about their great achievements, and if they did, what would be the likely consequence of this? For a fun example of hedging, see 15.8.

8.7   Paragraphing

If you show your students a slide that is crammed with text, they will all move slightly back in the chairs when they see it. No one likes to see a mass of text.

There's a great example of this concept at businessinsider.com where an article entitled *What recruiters look at during the six seconds they spend on your resume* reports on some research carried about by TheLadders. I thoroughly recommend you access the article and show your students the two CVs. The photo of the two CVs highlights that one receives more attention from recruiters simply because of its clear and concise format, which makes strategic use of white space and in which there are no big blocks of text. The other CV, which instead features big blocks of text, gets less eye contact from recruiters.

Students have no problem understanding the concept of the need to divide up blocks of text when it comes to a slide or a CV. However, they do have difficulties in actually 'seeing' (literally) the problem in their papers. This is because they may not print their work, so when scrolling down the page of their laptop they don't notice any excessively long paragraphs.

8.8   Readability and empathy

I often begin my courses on writing scientific papers with a discussion on readability. I show students the following email that I once received from a student (the only thing I have changed is the name and I have also removed the salutations). I then elicit reasons for why the writer has not shown empathy towards me.

My name is Pinco Pallino and I am enrolled in the first year of the PhD course in Terrestrial Vehicles and Systems of Transport. Since it is only now that I have made my online enrolment to the course "Scientific English", I am not in the list of students of either the first course or the second course of lessons. I would like to know whether, despite my delay in enrolling, I can still participate in the first course: if possible I would like to follow the first session. However, for reasons that unfortunately I cannot change, which are related to my activity as a PhD student, I will not be in Pisa in concomitance with the first lesson of the first session.

PS My girlfriend wants to do an online English course, please could you send me recommendations … and also for a good English grammar (preferably with Italian explanations).

Students tend to come up with various examples of non-empathy:

- The main point of the email is not clear

- Long sentences

- Verbosity

- Too much detail

- Too many requests

But what they fail to come up with is the fact that the email is a waste of my time and may irritate me to the extent that I don't even bother replying. I then show them a rewritten version of Pinco's email which simply says:

Dear Professor Wallwork, Am I too late to enroll for the first course in "Scientific English"?

I explain that the advantages of the revised email are:

- It takes two seconds to read and understand.

- My reply can be simply *yes* or *no*, i.e. less than a second to compose.

The idea is that students immediately see the benefits of writing from the point of view of the reader: i) the text (paper, email, whatever) is more likely to be read, ii) the recipient is more likely to reply (and in a shorter time frame - many recipients who receive long emails delay replying due to the effort involved, and may in the end simply not reply). 'Effort' is a key word. Students need to learn to write such in a way that the effort involved for the reader is minimal.

Next, I get students to write an email on the basis of the following instructions.

> You submitted / uploaded your paper for publication in a journal several months ago. The editor has never replied even though you have written her two emails.
>
> – Think of a subject line.
> – Explain the situation and find out whether your paper has been accepted or not.
> – Use appropriate salutations at the beginning and end.

A typical email that my students write is:

Subject line: Paper submission

Dear Sir

My name is Pinco Pallino and I submitted my paper to you several months ago and I am still waiting for your judge.

This is the third email I write to know if my paper was admitted or not. Please answer me in any case.

Best regards

I show the above email on a slide and get students to understand what is wrong with it. Most students fail to understand that the email is actually offensive, it presumes that the editor is an idiot for not having replied. Empathy also means understanding the circumstances of the reader. While writing this book I chased (politely) my editor in India who hadn't replied to one of my emails. His reply explained that he and his office were just recovering from extensive flooding. Another person I had to chase replied that his mother had just died. In both cases, I felt awful. But it

confirms that in all dealings one should be aware that we cannot always know the circumstances of the other person.

Clearly, Pinco's email has other problems: generic subject line, hasn't taken the trouble to find out the name of the editor, poor English … none of which are going to endear the editor to his plight.

Readability is not only about the words used or the length of a sentence, but also how (and the order in which) information is presented. These aspects are dealt with in Chapter 3 of *English for Writing Research Papers*.

Readability and empathy not only affect research manuscripts and emails, but also presentations. So you can make similar points about the way slides look - the amount of text, fonts and color, use of graphs etc. Empathy reveals itself in the presenter's style: speaking clearly, only giving relevant information, involving the audience etc. Although readability means thinking about the <u>reader</u>, the concept can be extended to thinking about the <u>audience</u>.

Readability and empathy are key elements that students must understand right from the beginning of any writing course.

8.9 Redundancy

Go through your emails and find some that are clearly ridiculously long. Get students to say what they think that you think is the problem with the email. Yesterday, for example, I received a 375-word email from a fellow teacher who simply wanted to know if he could have permission to use one of my books in class. He wrote 278 words before he finally got to the point (a long description of the institute where he worked - a hyperlink would have been enough).

Students can easily relate to such examples because they have all been 'victims' themselves. They've also been victims of verbose sleep-inducing presentations where, like a politician, the presenter said 100 words where ten would have been more than sufficient. So if students can get the point in an email and presentation, then their eyes should be more open to the kind of redundancy that they inflict on their readers in their papers.

Part II
Academic Presentations: What They Are and How to Teach Them

Chapter 9
Teacher's Preparation

9.1 How important are presentation skills for my students?

Very.

One good way to start a course on presentations is to brainstorm the class on why they should give a presentation at an international conference.

Apart from being an excuse for 'scientific tourism' and spending a few days in an exotic location, there are many benefits of giving presentations at conference. For example, if you are a researcher, you can:

1. gain visibility and inform others of the results you have achieved – this may enable you to increase your chances of establishing new contacts, collaborating with other research groups and maybe of even getting more funds to enable you to carry out better research

2. include the presentation you have made in your CV in applications for grants and in grant progress reports

3. exploit the review process that takes place before the conference

4. have a platform for using the results of your work to suggest policy changes either by local or national governments in industry or in the scientific community in general

5. talk about factors that you probably wouldn't mention in your paper, e.g. ideas and conjectures, negative results, unfinished work - all of these might stimulate useful questions and feedback from the audience

6. enable existing readers of your papers to gain an insight into your personality, for example through anecdotes about what happened during the research process, i.e. information they cannot get just by reading your paper

7. prepare yourself for a career in industry - in the future, if you work for a company you will certainly have to make presentations for products and services, proposals and progress reports

8. find out what the hot topics are and what other researchers are working on and keep up to date regarding technical progress. This is important if you are a member of an international technical working group or if you wish to set up a cooperation

9. get new ideas while listening and talking to other people

10. network and meet up with old friends, colleagues and people who - until now - you may have only contacted via email or phone

Whenever executives, professional society leaders and university professors are quizzed with regard to the relative importance of the different topics studied at university, technical skills tend to be ranked after communication skills in importance. The same executives also mention the importance of how you come across as a person.

9.2 How can I help someone with their presentation when I have zero understanding of their topic?

You will quickly find that not understanding their topic does little or nothing to impair your ability to improve their presentation skills. Their main problem is rarely their English level: in fact, a low English level does not constitute a barrier to giving a good presentation (see 11.6).

The problems students have tend to be non-language related. For example:

- poor body language and speaking too fast

- reading / repeating text on their slides rather than interpreting the text

- too much text on their slides

- too much detail: no big picture

- poor structure - audience has no idea where the presentation is going

- audience is given no sense of why the topic is important

- no eye contact with the audience

- diagrams that are either impossible to see or to interpret

- no enthusiasm

- no connection with the audience

- no conclusions

Again, the real is issue is empathy and communication: two skills that as an EFL teacher you are well-equipped to teach.

9.3   What can I do to find out about presentations?

First, I think you need to start off by watching a lot of presentations on TED - see Chapter 11 in this book and Chapter 2 in *English for Presentations at International Conferences*.

Second, examine the pros and cons of the various presentation software tools. Find out which ones you like and don't and why. And find out what others think about such tools. For example, if your students are using PowerPoint to do their presentations, you should really find out the pros and cons of this software. One of the cons, for instance, is described in a Guardian (one of the UK's leading daily newspapers) article whose subtitle is: *the bullet point-ization of information is making us stupid and irresponsible*.

If you want to find out what it might it be like for a seasoned conference-going native-speaker to watch a presentation given by one of your students, you could try reading *Bum Raps: Daydreams of a Weary Conferencer* by Professor Barry Wellman of the University of Toronto. Wellman's article first appeared in 1993, and much progress has been made since then, but it still makes a fun and interesting read, and may alert you to some traps that your students may be falling into.

9.4   What questions do I need to think about before starting to teach my students how to do presentations?

Questions to ask yourself include:

- What are the different kinds of presentations?

- In what ways should a speaker be prepared for an oral presentation?

- What are three ways a speaker can support an idea?

- How does eye contact aid the speaker to capture the audience's attention?

- What is the biggest obstacle to a successful presentation?

- To what extent should the presenter take into account the audience and how can he / she find out about the audience beforehand (e.g. in terms of who they are, level of expertise, expectations)?

- What should be the outcome of a presentation? Should the audience be expected to do something? What are the most important things that an audience should take away with them?

If you've taught business English, you might also like to think about the differences and similarities between a commercial and an academic presentation.

I would say the key issue is to help your students understand for themselves why:

- their research is important and what would happen if it was not carried out

- what they like about their research

- what audiences generally like to see in an academic presentation

9.5   How much theory should I give my students?

Focus on practice not theory.

The aim of your course should be to hand over as much of the lesson to the students as possible. This means minimal theorizing by you and maximum presentation time for them.

So, right from the first lesson, get students to present and then draw the 'theory' out of the 'mistakes' the students make.

You should find that you don't in fact need to do massive preparation yourself, apart from a few summary slides and maybe a mini presentation by you on the benefits of writing out the speech of their presentation (see Chapter 3 in *English for Presentations at International Conferences*).

By 'summary' slides, I mean slides that you have prepared in advance that summarize the feedback that you are likely to get from your students. For example, in the first lesson, I recommend that students brainstorm what they dislike about other people's presentations.

After you have got their feedback, you can show them a slide listing what you think are the things that audiences typically dislike. Such a slide acts as confirmation that students were on the right track in their brainstorming sessions. It also enables you to add any additional points that you think are worth mentioning.

9.6   What objections am I likely to encounter in terms of the approach presented in *English for Presentations at International Conferences?*

You may well encounter resistance to some of the presentation methods suggested in *English for Presentations at International Conferences*. Particularly near the beginning of a presentations course, students may be reluctant to take on board one or more of the following. Note that *you / your* are used below to mean the presenter (i.e. your students).

- you should first write the text of your presentation (i.e. everything you are going to say) before preparing the slides. This means that the slides are dictated by what you want to say rather than you deciding what to say on the basis of the beautiful slides you have created

- introducing yourself may be a waste of valuable time - instead, go straight to the point

- your own professors are not necessarily good role models. Instead, watch the presentations on TED

- presentations can be both professional and informal. Being professional does not mean you have to adapt an academic tone and academic language

- the main objective of a presentation is not merely to inform the audience of what you have done, but instead to make a really good impression (i.e. be memorable and credible) so that people will be interested in working with you, giving you funds, publishing your research etc.

- audiences like practical examples and lots of statistics rather than a whole load of abstract words and theory

- audiences like a story

- use short, simple sentences - this does not mean that you yourself will be considered as being simple but it will enable you to remember what you want to say and it will help the audience to follow you (again, proof of this can be seen from a good TED presentation)

- cutting is key. Presenters tend to spend inordinate amounts of time preparing beautiful slides, using the latest software to the extent that they are reluctant to cut any slides given that they have invested so much time in them. Consider cutting some or all of the introductory slides (title, agenda, rationale etc.) so that you begin immediately with the meat, and then afterwards present the background that underlies the meat

- examples first, then theory

In my experience, resistance from the students is normal.

Chapter 10
Getting Students to Think About Presentations

10.1 What common misconceptions do students have about presentations?

According to Sally Koutsoliotas of Bucknell University and David W. Farmer of the American Institute of Mathematics there are three typical misconceptions that students (in their case native English speaking students) have:

1) THE PURPOSE OF A TALK IS TO IMPRESS. By 'impress' Koutsoliotas and Farmer mean that students think that they should show off their knowledge using discipline-related jargon. Students in fact are heavily influenced by the presentations they see by visiting professors whose main aim is evidently not to communicate with the audience but justify through their pontifications why have commanded such a high fee to appear in front of the students. In reality, the purpose is not to impress but to leave a good impression in terms of i) explaining a maximum of three key points clearly, ii) appearing credible, and appearing approachable i.e. someone who key members of the audience might be interested in inviting to work in their labs.

2) THE TALK SHOULD BE AS 'HIGH-TECH' AS POSSIBLE. You will quickly learn by watching your students' presentations that 'no tech' presentations are actually the most effective, because there is nothing to distract the audience. Key problems of high tech presentations are that the tech sometimes doesn't work (the presentation blocks), the animations add no value but actually confuse the audience, and the gimmickry overwhelms the content.

3) TALKS TAKE LITTLE TIME TO PREPARE. According to Koutsoliotas and Farmer, students may have seen well organized presentations that have been delivered apparently effortlessly by the presenters. This effortlessness fails to be equated with the massive preparation that underlies it. I personally would add that most

students enjoy the process of preparing the slides to the extent that that is all they do: they prepare the slides but not what they are going to say. And they are then left with no time to practise.

In my experience students have six other misconceptions:

4) EVERY PRESENTATION SHOULD BEGIN WITH THE PRESENTER SAYING Good morning AND THEN INTRODUCING HIMSELF / HERSELF AND / OR READING ALOUD THE TITLE OF THE PRESENTATION.

5) THE MAIN AIM OF A PRESENTATION IS TO IMPART INFORMATION. In reality, what people remember is rarely just what was said or shown during the presentation, but much more often how and what the presenter made them feel. In a big class (50 or more students), you can test this with your students. In the first lesson, get five or six students to introduce themselves and talk for 30 seconds about their research. A week later, bring the same people to the front of the class along with four others who have never been to front of the class as yet. Get the class i) to identify which students presented in the first lesson, ii) what these students are studying. Get feedback from the whole class and you'll find that there is a lot of discrepancy in what people remember, and that in any case they tend to remember the person rather than the presentation.

6) THE AUDIENCE WILL AUTOMATICALLY CONNECT WITH WHAT I AM SAYING If we can see a benefit in what is being said or it relates to our own personal experiences, then we might listen and act on what we've been told. Your job is to get students to verify that there really are connections between what they are saying and the audience's needs and experiences, and secondly to help the audience see these connections.

7) STATISTICS WILL EXPLAIN THEMSELVES. For details, see 12.4.

8) IT IS TOTALLY ACCEPTABLE TO TALK IN VERY ABSTRACT TERMS AND GIVE LITTLE EMPHASIS TO WHAT ARE ACTUALLY THE KEY POINTS.

9) A FINAL SLIDE THAT SAYS 'THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION' IS A GREAT WAY TO END A PRESENTATION.

If you've never done an EAP course before, then be prepared for points 7-9!

It is worth reading the whole article by Koutsoliotas and Farmer (see page 226) as they explain how they conduct a presentation course with their students.

10.2 What's a fun way to get students thinking about the typical bad things that presenters do?

When told that they have to write a presentation, many students just rush straight in to creating the slides without giving much thought to all the other aspects of a good presentation. They are often under the illusion that a presentation is slides and nothing else. This leads to some terrible presentations, and students need to be aware just as much of what makes a terrible presentation as what makes a really good presentation.

On the web you can find some great spoof rules of giving presentations, i.e. where the writer says exactly the opposite of what you should do. Some are in the form of commandments (e.g. *Thou shalt not write large, Thou shalt not make eye contact, Thou shalt not practice* from How to give a bad talk by David A. Patterson, Computer Science Division, University of California-Berkeley) others are videos (e.g. http://www.davidairey.com/how-not-to-use-powerpoint/). Some of are very old - the two I have mentioned so far are from 1983 and 2007 respectively, but this in itself can be a talking point - how have things moved on since then? Do we still make the same mistakes today?

10.3 How can I get the students to think about the structure of their presentation?

Here are three links to to web articles on giving a generic conference talk.

http://pages.cs.wisc.edu/~markhill/conference-talk

http://sydney.edu.au/engineering/it/~isys3207/readingsonpresentation/oral-presentation-guidelines3

http://www.uefap.com/speaking/pres/preslan.htm

Below is a step-by-step guide to how to exploit the info given in the above three sites.

1. Put your students into three groups and allocate each group one of the links above.

2. As a homework assignment they should access their allocated site and read the content (either all of it or specific parts that you want them to focus on). They should decide the three key points made.

3. Next lesson in their groups they create a 3-4 slide presentation to present the three key points.

4. Everyone in each group practises the presentation that they have created. This entails them practising in front of the other members of their group with the group giving feedback on how to improve the presentation.

5. Each group then finalizes their presentation.

6. Next lesson one person from each group gives their presentation in front of the whole class.

7. Put students into pairs by combining people from different groups. In their pairs they then analyse the three presentations and decide which one was the most successful and why.

8. As a whole class decide on the three most important points that came out of the three presentations.

These 'most important points' mentioned in Step 8 can relate to:

- three key elements to give in a presentation

- three take-home guidelines that they have gleaned from watching each other's presentations

- three key areas of presentations that they need to improve their skills in

Obviously you can customize the whole lesson / process by

- selecting different web articles from the ones I have suggested

- focusing on a different area (e.g. rather than the structure something more specific such as the best way to begin or end a presentation)

- increasing or decreasing the number of articles and groups

- missing out steps in the process or adding new ones

10.4   How can I help students who are reluctant to give a presentation?

Some students will be very reluctant to give a presentation. You need to identify these students straightaway - basically they will look down whenever it looks as if they might be asked to stand up in front of the class. Don't force them to do anything in the first couple of lessons, but make it clear that sooner or later they will be called upon. In the first couple of lessons they should in any case become aware that everyone finds presentations difficult or that even the most extrovert students in the class don't necessarily give a great performance and have something to learn.

When I have very large groups of students, i.e. 30-100, then there is in fact not time for everyone in the class to present, so you can simply avoid calling up any students who look terrified. But in smaller groups, you should really try to get everyone to present. The key thing is to make sure they don't feel humiliated. This means that it is OK to interrupt them if during the presentation they are showing signs of severe stress. I have had students cry during their presentation and even leave the classroom. But they all managed to pick themselves up (with a lot of encouragement from me) and re-do their presentation later in the course.

In fact, all students will be fully aware that sooner or later in their academic life they will be called on to give a presentation. You can explain to them that your class is a safe testing ground for them, where it is perfectly OK to perform badly.

Before getting shy students to perform in front of the whole class, get them to do their presentation to a maximum of two other people (see 10.5).

I also find that sending individual students emails of encouragement really boosts their confidence. In such emails I usually tell students that

- there were a lot of positive elements in their presentation (I list two or three points)

- that from the audience's point of view their nervousness was not particularly transparent

- I really admire their courage and that I know from my own experience that becoming a better presenter is simply a matter of time and that I am sure they will get there in the end

I also give them some suggestions on how to improve their slides.

10.5   How can students practise presentations without standing up in front of the whole class?

In some classes that contain a lot of students who are either new to presentations or are particularly anxious about standing up in front of the whole class, a good trick is to divide the class up into groups of three, and send them to various corners of the classroom or into the corridor.

The idea is that they do a 30 second presentation (e.g. just the introduction, or just the methods) in front of their two fellow students. Obviously they can't use slides, but just the fact of having other people's full attention on them is excellent practise.

While students are presenting to each other, go around the class and note down points for feedback. One thing you will notice is that the presenter tends to be looking at just one of the two students, whereas he / she should be giving eye contact to both students. This is an important lesson, because it is vital that presenters give eye contact to the whole audience, not just those, for example, to their right or in the first row.

When they have finished, they can give each other feedback. However to be able to give feedback, they need to first learn <u>how</u> to give feedback and what to say (see 12.1).

10.6   How important is their body language?

A frequently quoted statistic, often cited totally out of context, hold that the verbal element in a spoken communication (and the example given frequently is a presentation) only accounts for 35% of the message perceived, with the non-verbal element making up the remaining 65%.

I would say that there is only some truth in this statistic, particularly when applied to the context of presentations at international conferences. In such presentations words are incredibly important, scientists are heavily influenced by <u>what</u> someone says. The <u>how</u> is less relevant because often the words come through heavy accents, low voices, rapid fire speech etc.

Nevertheless, if you don't look at your audience, your audience will soon stop looking at you and start focusing on their mobile phone.

10.7   Is it better to set a limit on time or a limit on the number of slides?

When you want students to do a presentation, you should give them a time limit not a limit on the number of slides.

The reality is that conferences usually allow students to speak for ten or fifteen minutes. The number of slides is almost irrelevant, in fact limiting the number of slides could lead to a tedious presentation. The idea is to produce a dynamic presentation, where audiences don't have to look at the same slide for more than 30-60 seconds. Audiences quickly tire of having to look at the same slide and listen to a lengthy explanation. So tell your students that they have a finite amount of time in which they can show as many slides as they like.

10.8   How can I teach the useful phrases given in Chapter 20 of the Presentations book?

Chapter 20 of *English for Presentations at International Conferences* contains a list of useful phrases for use in various parts of a presentation.

First of all reassure students that they don't need to learn all the phrases listed in this chapter. They should just choose the ones they find easiest to say and remember.

They will learn how to

- use the most appropriate phrase in different stages of their presentation

- recognize and thus understand the typical phrases used in other people's presentations

Why is this important?

The idea is to give students confidence when they move from slide to slide and topic to topic. The phrases should also help them to know what to say in unexpected situations and in response to difficult questions that the audience may ask them.

Chapter 11
Using TED

11.1 What is TED?

The use of TED is discussed in Chapter 2 of *English for Presentations*. So your best introduction to TED is to read that chapter.

If you are new to TED (ted.com) first you will need to sign up (for free). You need to sign up to be able to see and use all the features.

When you sign up you get a welcome introduction 'Getting started with TED'.

TED is one of the best designed and most-user friendly sites there is, so you'll have no problem getting around.

11.2 What are some good and bad presentations that are worth showing students?

At the back of the book in the Sources you will find links to a real mixed bag of TED presentations. Some are excellent, some good, and some not good at all. The idea is for you to get a handle on what does and does not make a good presentation.

You can also use some of these presentations to highlight those elements that you (don't) want your students to adopt in their own presentations.

By the time you read this book some of the presentations that I have suggested may have become outdated. If you want a selection of supposedly the best TEDs, just search on the TED site for the 'most viewed' presentations. Also worth exploring are the 'hidden gems'.

11.3   How can I use the 'comments' feature?

If are logged in, you can read or leave comments on a presentation that you have just watched.

You can encourage your students to do the same:

- it will help them with their writing skills

- they will be motivated to see whether other viewers 'reply' and / or 'upvote' their comment

An obvious approach is to show a TED, get students to discuss the presentation together, and as a follow up (either in class or for homework), they can look at the 'comments'.

Note that many TEDs are also on YouTube, which has other features for commenting and voting. It might be interesting for students to compare the kinds of comments viewers of TED and YouTube make.

11.4   Is it worth using the 'rate this talk' feature?

TED viewers have the option to 'rate' presentations / presenters, not in numerical terms or best / worst, but with adjectives:

> beautiful, confusing, courageous, fascinating, funny, informative, ingenious, inspiring, jaw-dropping, long-winded, obnoxious, OK, persuasive, unconvincing

The above is a great list of adjectives in itself. Before rating a particular presentation, you can get students to go through the adjectives and decide together:

- which ones, if any, would not be appropriate for rating an academic presentation at university or at a conference, and why?

- which five (or whatever number you choose) do they think would be the best adjectives for judging each other's presentations?

- which three (or whatever number you choose) would be the most useful for judging a presentation at an international conference?

- what adjectives, if any, would they add to the list?

When students have watched a TED, they can rate it, justify their rating with each other, and then compare it with the percentage ratings given by other viewers.

11.5   How should I use the subtitles and the interactive transcript?

Don't be reluctant to use the subtitles and transcript.

Your aim, I believe, should be getting students to focus on the structure and content of the presentation and the performance of the presenter. I wouldn't use TEDs as listening exercises - at least not in a presentations course.

Three possible uses of the transcript:

1. The main benefit of the transcript is that readers can read it before they watch, either in English or in their own language if this is available. This means that they won't have to concentrate as much on listening or reading the subtitles while you are actually showing the presentation.

2. Students can read it during the presentation while they are watching at home. This means they can stop and start at will.

3. Finally, if they like a particular presenter's way of speaking, they can practice reading aloud from the script and see if they can imitate the presenter's intonation and general pronunciation.

Whether they have read the script or not, you can play the presentation with subtitles - deciding whether to opt for English or their native language (if you have a monolingual group). If they have already read the script, then I would go for English subtitles.

At home, I would let students be free to choose how they wish to use the subtitles and transcript.

11.6   Can students really be expected to imitate all these great TED presenters? Aren't they likely to be demotivated?

Not all TEDs are given by native speakers. One of my favorite TEDs is called *Design and Destiny* and was presented by Philippe Starck.

As you can read on his TED biography, Philippe Starck is a well-known French product designer. His designs range from interior designs to mass-produced consumer goods, such as toothbrushes, chairs and even houses. I have chosen to analyze him because he is a non-native English speaker with what most people might consider to be not a very good English accent.

Starck manages to hold his audience's attention for 17 minutes without using a single slide. He is able to do this not just because he is a dynamic person who obviously loves an audience but also because he has interesting things to say which he presents with a new perspective.

Another technique for retaining attention is that he moves around the stage. This means that the audience have to follow him with their eyes and this small bit of physical effort keeps them more alert. In addition, he uses his hands and often his whole body to give meaning to what he is saying.

But Philippe Starck is worth watching for another reason. He is the perfect proof to your students that even if they don't have a good English accent, it doesn't necessarily always matter. Starck's technique for dealing with his poor English is to immediately draw attention to it in a self-deprecating way by saying: "You will understand nothing with my type of English."

His pronunciation is terrible. At least 20% of his first 100 words contain pronunciation mistakes (e.g. *'ere* instead of *here, zat* instead of *that,* the *u* in *usually* pronounced like *the* u in *under* rather than the *u* in *universe*) and he consistently puts the stress on the wrong part of a multi-syllable word (e.g. *comfortable, impostor*). He makes a series of grammar mistakes: forgetting the plural *s*, using the wrong part of the verb etc.

But, because the audience are interested in what he is saying rather than how he is saying it, his poor English skills are not a problem. In fact, if you read the comments on his presentation, not one reference is made to his poor English. Instead, many viewers simply write: *Superb! Fantastic! Really the most brilliant talk I've heard on TED.*

However, note that Starck does speak slowly. If he had spoken very fast, this poor accent would probably have interfered with the audience's ability to understand him.

11.7   Can students use TED presentations as a model?

Note: The initial part of this section is taken from 19.5 in the Presentations book.

English Mania is the TED I most often use in my presentations courses. In this 4-minute presentation, Walker tells his native English-speaking audience why their language has become so important and how it is being learned throughout the world.

Let's analyze the opening minute of his speech:

Let's talk about manias. Let's start with Beatle mania: hysterical teenagers crying, screaming, pandemonium. Sports mania: deafening crowds all for one

idea – get the ball in the net. Okay religious mania: there's rapture, there's weeping, there's visions. Manias can be good. Manias can be alarming. Or manias can be deadly.

The world has a new mania. A mania for learning English. Listen as Chinese students practice their English by screaming it.

72 words. 10 sentences. 60 seconds. That's an average of 7.2 words per sentence - much less than 100 words per minute. Jay speaks incredibly slowly and clearly. Is he talking to a group of English learners? No, he is talking to people who speak English as well as he does and could probably still understand him if he spoke three times as fast. Yet, Jay chooses to:

- use short sentences (see Chapter 6)

- use simple language

- speak very slowly and clearly

Why? To ensure that his audience does not have to make any effort to understand him. Also, by using short sentences, it helps him to:

- remember what he wants to say

- speak clearly without hesitation

Are all Jay's presentations delivered in such a clear way with a slow speed? No. Jay varies his speed according to the importance of what he is saying. In the introductory part of another of his presentations on TED ("Jay Walker's library of human imagination"), he speaks far more quickly. In rapid succession, he shows the audience a few amazing artifacts from recent history. But when he begins talking about the main topic - the printing press - his voice slows down and takes on a more animated quality. He really wants his audience to understand what he is going to say.

Does Jay launch straight into his topic? No. He introduces the theme, i.e. manias but not the key topic, i.e. English. This gives the audience time to

- adjust from the previous speaker to this new speaker

- hear something interesting and relevant but not crucial

- tune into Jay's voice

It also allows the presenter to settle his nerves.

Finally, if you watch Jay's presentations, you may notice two things. One, he doesn't smile much. Two, he has notes. Although he may not be the most charismatic presenter on the planet he recognizes his own limitations. Even though he doesn't smile a lot, he is still interesting - he packs his presentations with weird and wonderful statistics (but always pertinent). OK, so he can't remember every word he wants to say, but he is confident enough to know that it is perfectly acceptable to take a quick look at this notes even at this level of venue.

You will also notice that his slides have no text. They are simply there to remind him what to say and to help the audience follow what he is saying.

11.8 Use TED to encourage your students to be more curious about the world

Many of the best presenters on TED use quirky facts about their topic and also fields outside their specific area. Suggest that your students could try to keep a note book of interesting things that they read and interesting experiences that they have had. Then they can use such facts and stories in their presentations.

I believe that it is also helpful for them (and you) to learn something about psychology and communication skills. Presentations are all about relating to audiences and the post presentation part is related to communicating well with the other attendees. Learning good communication skills and social skills entails knowing how the human brain receives information and how we perceive each other.

Chapter 12
Giving Feedback and Teaching Self Evaluation

12.1 The importance of giving positive feedback

There are few occasions in our lives where we get immediate feedback on something that we have just done. Students can feel very embarrassed and exposed when giving a presentation. It is absolutely imperative that you give everyone positive feedback and that everyone has the feeling that - sooner or later - they will be able to give a reasonable presentation. At the beginning of the course, you may find that some presentations are simply dreadful. In any case, no matter how dreadful, you still need to find something positive to focus on. For example:

- their title slide looked professional and included the right information

- how, although they don't speak great English, this did not prevent the audience from being able to follow them

- they didn't speak too fast

- they looked at the audience (or at least some of the audience) without just looking at the floor or ceiling

- there was a logical structure to their slides

- there was a nice and useful image / table / figure in one of the slides

- the slides looked professional

- they smiled

- they pronounced most of their key words correctly

- they controlled their hand movements (i.e. didn't touch any body parts that are best not touched!)

- to the audience they appeared less nervous than how they were feeling inside

In twenty years of training people to do presentations, I have always been able to say with <u>sincerity</u> one or more of the above. Sincerity is key, because otherwise you will lose all credibility with your students, and they won't know when to believe you and when not to.

12.2 Teach students how to give feedback on each other

Students should be able pick up directly from you how to give constructive feedback from the feedback that you give them on their presentations. In addition, 2.12 in *English for Presentations at International Conferences* contains a form for assessing a presentation. Students can use all or some of the items in the form to assess each other.

Ensure that they follow this formula

- start by giving some positive feedback on the things the presenter did well

- give negative feedback in a constructive way

- end with a final piece of encouragement

This 'sandwich' technique of critiquing someone else's work is dealt with in 3.12 in *English for Academic Correspondence* with reference to writing emails, but the philosophy is the same.

12.3 How can I teach my students to self-evaluate their own slides and those of their colleagues?

This aspect is dealt with in Chapter 15 of *English for Presentations at International Conferences*.

Firstly, you can give students a check list to check their own work. For example, in relation to slides, they could ask themselves the following questions:

- why is this slide necessary? if I cut it, what would change?

- how does this slide support the objective of my presentation?

- why did I include this info? is it relevant / interesting / clear? what impact does it have?

- could I express this info in a clearer or more pertinent way?

- is this series of slides in the best order? is there anything missing in the series?

- are these slides too similar to each other? will they really gain and keep the audience's attention?

Regarding students evaluating each other's work, you first need to teach them to be diplomatic and constructive. It is important for them to realize that the <u>way</u> they give their feedback is just as important as the actual <u>content</u> of the feedback. In fact, research has found that people tend to hear only about 50 per cent of what someone says to them and only retain about 10 per cent of that. In this case, more important than words themselves is how you say them and what you do while saying them.

Basically, students should be encouraged to first say something affirmative in order to create a positive feeling, on which they can then build ideas and introduce their criticisms and views, which may or may not be line with what the presenter has said. So, for example, with regard to the content of the presentation, students should give initial and sincere support for the presenter's ideas, whether they are in total agreement or not:

> What you said about … sounds really interesting.
>
> I really like what you are saying about …
>
> I think your ideas have real possibilities …

It is fundamental that the class learns to listen really carefully to the presentation of their colleague.

To facilitate both listening and constructive feedback, ask students to focus on different aspects in different presentations. If you give them a list of 20 things to focus on (see 15.12 in *English for Presentations at International Conferences*), they'll never manage to focus on them all. So divide up any evaluation sheets into manageable parts. I suggest that the following should be split up over several presentations. The items are listed approximately from the easiest to evaluate to the most difficult.

- Eye contact (or lack of) with audience and amount of text on slides.

- The actual content of individual slides.

- Organization, logical flow, dynamic flow.

- Beginning (and end) - how captivating?

- Means of holding (and losing) audience attention.

- Content of overall presentation: what was innovative (i.e. a departure from traditional approaches or another point of view from what is currently thought). This is something that your students may be able to judge better than you if they study the same subject area.

12.4   What's a good way to highlight the importance of putting statistics, facts, graphs etc. into context?

Audiences love statistics. Statistics are relatively easy for your students to find and include in their presentations. But the problem that I find is that students don't know when and how to use them.

Students often mention numbers in the presentations, but often without giving the audience the means to understand what these numbers mean. In addition, students don't necessarily know from a set of numbers which are the best to give an audience. To learn about this, see 6.7, 6.8 and 12.9 in *English for Presentations at International Conferences*.

Let's imagine you are British and a student asks you about the Royal Family and how many Brits would actually prefer to have a republic. You could say 'quite a lot of people would like to get rid of the royal family', which - being so vague - would give them no real information at all. Or you could give them an exact figure "8.2 million would rather have a republic". Another Brit would be able to make sense of that statistic and decide if it is a high number or a small number. But, if you're not a Brit, you will obviously need to have more information, principally the number of people who could vote on such an issue (around 45.6 million people).

But if you tell your class that around 18% of the population would vote to abolish the Royal Family, you are giving a much clearer picture.

Yet, even that 18% could be made much more interesting by telling your students that the percentage was the same in 1969, in 1993, in 2002, in 2011 etc. … basically, it doesn't seem to change.

However, you might be able to make the statistic even clearer if you compared how many citizens in other countries that have a monarchy would like to abolish it.

I suggest you find an area that will interest most of your students and get them to come up with their own statistics about it. This area could be: a local monument,

a building (museum, art gallery, sports hall, concert hall), a car / plane / train etc., a famous person, and so on.

Below is a possible procedure:

1. As a whole class, decide (preferably) on one item (for instance, I live and work in Pisa, so my choice could be the Leaning Tower).

2. In small groups, get them to choose what they think are five interesting facts and statistics about their item.

3. Get feedback from each group and write up their facts and statistics on the whiteboard.

4. As a whole class, decide what the top five most interesting statistics are.

5. Now get students to imagine that they have to compare their item with a similar item in order to provide more context for an audience (in my case, the obvious choice is the Eiffel Tower in Paris).

6. Finally, get them to think of the best format for comparing their two items (graph, table, images etc.).

There are various useful outcomes of this exercise.

1) THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WHAT STUDENTS (AND PRESENTERS IN GENERAL) <u>THINK</u> AN AUDIENCE WILL / SHOULD BE INTERESTED IN, AND WHAT AN AUDIENCE REALLY IS INTERESTED IN. For instance, in their small groups (Step 2 above), many of my students decided that the name of the architect who designed the Leaning Tower was important for the audience to know and the fact that it has 294 steps and is only 55.86 m tall. But in Step 4, when choosing the top five statistics, the number of suicides from the top of the tower was deemed to be far more interesting than knowing the name of the architect.

2) GIVING NUMBERS ALONE DOESN'T HELP THE AUDIENCE What does a height of *only* 55.86 m tall mean? It means nothing unless you compare it to, for instance, the Eiffel Tower at 320 m.

3) THE MEANS OF PRESENTING INFORMATION IS KEY TO RAISING AUDIENCE INTEREST. If I tell you that the Eiffel Tower weighs 10,000 tons, that doesn't tell you much. But what if I get you to guess which is the heaviest (we know which is the tallest) between the Pisa and Paris towers, you might be surprised then to learn that the Eiffel Tower weighs around one third less than the Leaning Tower despite being six times taller. So actually asking the audience questions and getting them to guess might be better than simply giving them information in a table.

Giving audience surprising or counterintuitive information also works well:

- there are actually three leaning towers in Pisa

- the Eiffel tower grows in height by 15 cm in summer

- the lift cables at the Eiffel Tower were cut when Hitler visited so he had to walk up the 1665 steps

- it costs about 10 euros more to go up the tower in Pisa than in Paris

And this last point can give rise to a class discussion on the value and appropriateness of quirky information at an international conference. This then leads into a discussion of what the purpose of a presentation is. Is it to impart new information to the scientific community, thereby advancing the state of the art? Or is it actually more important to leave a lasting impression on the audience so that they will be inspired to read your paper, contact you, and wish to collaborate with you? And can these objectives not be facilitated by providing both an informative and entertaining presentation?

Chapter 13
Working on Students' Pronunciation

13.1 Why do some nationalities speak better English than others?

A US expert on presentations in the 1980s wrote an incredibly non-PC observation on the talents of non-native speakers:

> *Have you ever been to an international conference where speakers from different nationalities were giving talks in a foreign language? Do you remember a presentation where it was only half way through that you realized it was actually in English? I certainly do.*

Fortunately, this kind of attitude rarely exists today but it does highlight some of the difficulties of understanding non-native speakers. Ironically, exactly the same words could have been said by a non-native about the presentation of a native speaker as these too can sometimes be hardly intelligible.

So why? In Scandinavia, Holland, and Portugal, for example, foreign language TV programs are always subtitled. The reason why so many people aged 50 and below understand spoken English so well (and in many cases also speak it so well) is that they have grown up hearing English on the television daily.

On the other hand, countries such as Spain, Italy, Germany and Poland tend to dub everything into their own language. This means that their understanding of spoken English will be quite low in comparison to Scandinavian countries. On the other hand, their spoken English may be of a much higher standard compared to their listening skills.

The English learned as a foreign language in schools and universities around the world is quite formal and different from the colloquial language that many native presenters tend to use - especially in their Introductions and the Q&A session.

Very often, non-native speakers understand each other better (speaking English) than they do native speakers. There are many reasons:

- non-natives tend to make more of an effort to speak clearly. They know how it feels not to understand

- non-natives tend to use a more standardized English pronunciation. This may not be the 'correct' pronunciation but it is generally easier to understand and tends to reflect the spelling of the word much more (*often* = *off ten* rather than *offen* or *Wed nes day* rather than *Wensday*)

- native speakers have a huge variety of accents, some of which may be almost incomprehensible even to fellow native speakers

- native speakers have rarely learned another language themselves and so have no idea of the difficulties involved

- native speakers use a lot of colloquial expressions and slang, not being aware that non-natives probably won't understand them.

An additional problem is that it is part of human nature to be reluctant to admit that you haven't understood something. Native speakers will thus carry on talking at great speed, mistakenly thinking that the non-natives are following them.

13.2   Why do students mispronounce English words?

In addition to the obvious reason that English pronunciation is a world unto itself, there are other reasons why students may mess up with their pronunciation.

When learning languages, we often meet a word for the first time when we are reading (rather than listening). As we are reading, we assign a pronunciation to any new words we meet without actually knowing whether that pronunciation is the correct pronunciation or not.

For example, many students in Europe go to study English in London and one popular district of London is called Shepherd's Bush. Anyone who has never heard *shepherd* being pronounced by a native speaker might assume that the *ph* is pronounced *f* (as in **philosophy**) and so they think the pronunciation is *sheferd*. In reality, it is pronounced *shep herd* because it means someone who *herds* (looks after) *sheep*. These students then look at the map of London, imagine the pronunciation of

shepherd (without thinking that they might be completely wrong), go to England and say *sheferd's bush*. They are lucky because the Londoners manage to understand them as the word *sheferd* is associated with *bush* so the two words together make it easy to decipher.

Typically, because these students think they have confirmation of their own pronunciation from the fact that they appeared to have been understood by the native Londoners, they come back to their native country and tell their English teacher that they went to *sheferd's bush*, still using the incorrect pronunciation. This reason is that they never listened to hear how the word is really pronounced even though they will have heard it being pronounced correctly many times (e.g. whenever they use the underground system). This is because the pronunciation they have in their head overrides (dominates) their ability to hear the correct pronunciation.

You might like to watch the guru of pronunciation Adrian Underhill, who I once saw in flamboyant action at International House in Pisa when he was launching the first edition of *Sound Foundations* (Macmillan), which I believe is the biggest selling pronunciation book in the history of EFL. Try watching him on YouTube.

13.3   Is there a standard English pronunciation that I should teach my students?

English is now an international language. It no longer "belongs" to the British, Americans etc. But the fact that it has no unique cultural identity of its own does not mean that there is no standard in pronunciation. Although there are many differences in pronunciation among native speakers (for example, not all native speakers pronounce the second *t* in *twenty*), no native speaker would pronounce the *gh* in *high* or *height*, the *b* in *doubt* or *debt*, the *w* in *yellow* or *write*, or the *d* in *Wednesday*. All such pronunciations are considered non-standard for both native and non-native speakers.

Having the right pronunciation in a presentation is probably more critical than in any other situation where your students will use English. In most other circumstances, if the interlocutor doesn't understand, they can simply ask your student to repeat what he / she said - this is not the case at a formal presentation.

If your student cannot pronounce the key words of his / her presentation correctly, the audience may not be able to follow the presentation itself.

13.4 How can I help my students discover what words they mispronounce so badly that the audience may not understand them?

USE ONLINE SOFTWARE

In 14.4 of *English for Presentations at International Conferences* I suggest various online resources that students can use. These consist of inserting text that students have written (e.g. from their presentation speech) into the software and then clicking to see how it sounds when said by a native English-speaker. This software is getting better all the time. A site I found recently is ivona.com. This site, like several others, lets you hear your text in many different English (and foreign) accents. The quality is pretty good and students can certainly use it as a model.

ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO FIND OUT THE CORRECT PRONUNCIATION BY WATCHING NATIVE SPEAKER PRESENTATIONS

Your students might not be conscious of the fact that they may not know the correct pronunciation of several key words. This could be because they have heard English words being pronounced by other non-native speakers from their own native country and they unconsciously think that that is the correct pronunciation.

An excellent way for your students to learn the correct pronunciation of words is to use transcripts of oral presentations. Many news and education corporations (e.g. bbc.co.uk and ted.com) have podcasts on their websites where students can hear someone speaking and read the exact words in the transcript. Students could try practicing reading the transcript themselves with the volume off. This will motivate them more strongly to listen to the correct pronunciation when they turn the volume back on.

MAKE STUDENTS AWARE OF ANY IRREGULAR PRONUNCIATIONS OF WORDS THEY MIGHT NEED

Most students will work on the principle that two words that look the same are likely to have a similar pronunciation such as *hat / cat*, *gives / lives*, *telling / selling*, *example / sample*, *biology / zoology*. But, as we know, this isn't always the case. For example, if you have some researchers in plant life and irrigation, then the word *drought* may be a key word for them. They would naturally associate it with other words such as *thought* or *bought* which rhyme with *sort*. As you know, in reality, *drought* rhymes with *shout* but if your student pronounces it so that it rhymes with *thought*, many in the audience will not understand him / her.

So it is essential that you encourage students to create a list of key words that

- are contained in their speech / slides

- might be used in questions from the audience

and then to learn the correct pronunciation.

You can tell students that the main problem is with vowel sounds, e.g. *hoard*, *heard*, *hired* and *hard* sound very similar and could be confused or simply not understood at all. Mispronouncing multisyllable words is less problematic. Even if a student says *interESting* instead of *INTeresting*, no one is going to have difficulty understanding them (though the audience might find it annoying if the mistake was made repeatedly). So one suggestion is that, given the choice of two synonyms, students should opt for the longer word: so *difficult* rather than *hard*.

13.5 Are there others ways of teaching students to improve their pronunciation?

A simple device is to teach students to use synonyms for words that they have difficulty in pronouncing. No Italian that I know of is able to pronounce *innovative* correctly: they tend to put the stress on the second syllable. It's not difficult for them (with your help) to come up with alternatives: *novel, new, creative, state-of-the-art, interesting, experimental, inventive, ingenious, unorthodox, fresh* etc.

But sometimes synonyms cannot be used.

Imagine your student wants to say the following sentence but she regularly mispronounces the three words underlined: *Then I'll take a brief look at the related litera-ture on methane and the methods we used.* Also imagine that she cannot find synonyms for those three words.

One solution is to break down the word and identify which part is causing problems. Let's imagine she is having difficulty with the last part of *literature* and she is pronouncing *-ture* as *tour ray*. Elicit other words ending in "-ture" that she knows how to pronounce and that end in those letters: *picture, nature, culture, feature*. If she knows how to pronounce those words, then she should also be able to pronounce the *-ture* in *literature.*

Obviously, she also needs to be able to pronounce the first part of the word too. In this case, it is useful to listen to the pronunciation given in an online dictionary (e.g. howjsay.com) that pronounces the word for you. Help her to notice that

literature really only has three syllables. She could try to transcribe the sound in a way that is meaningful for her: *li tri cher* or use the phonetic transcription: 'lItrət∫ə(r).

Now let's look at *methane* and *method*. The problem with these words is typically in the first syllable. In this case, a good trick is to create a series of familiar words that will lead students to the correct pronunciation: *get > met > metal > method; see > me > meet > methane.* Students can then practice the difficult words by reading them in association with the familiar words.

You'll also need to make students aware that the same combination of letters may have different stress or pronunciation e.g. *method, methodology, methodological*; *photograph, photographer, photographic.*

Other typical exercises that you can find in many general English course books as well as books specifically on pronunciation include:

- recognizing and discriminating between sounds

- identifying reduced forms in fast speech (e.g. elision and assimilation)

- identifying stressed syllables when following a transcript

- recognizing intonation patterns (including the degree of enthusiasm shown by the speaker)

13.6   How can I teach sentence stress?

English is a stress-timed language. The way we stress words should help to distinguish the non-essential (said more quickly and with no particular stress) from the important (said more slowly with stress on key words).

Stress also indicates the meaning we want to give. You could get students to say the following sentences putting the stress on the words in italics.

Please *present* your paper next week.	(present rather than write)
Please present *your* paper next week.	(your paper not mine)
Please present your *paper* next week.	(paper not report)
Please present your paper *next* week.	(not this week)
Please present your paper next *week*.	(not next month)

Although the sentence is exactly the same, students should note that they can change the meaning by stressing different words. And the stress helps the listener to understand what is important and what isn't.

Good strategies for sentence stress for your students are for them to

- say the word more slowly than the ones before and the ones after

- raise the volume of their voice a little

- give their voice a slightly different tone or quality

They should never put the stress on alternate words or always at the end or beginning of a sentence.

Chapter 14
Students' Progress

14.1 How should the quality of a student's slides improve over the course?

To give you an idea of the kind of progress students can and should be making over the duration of a course, below are the second, third and fourth slides from one of my PhD students who is studying technology transfer.

Their task in their first presentation was to deliver a 3-4 slide presentation explaining to the rest of the class

- what their research topic is

- why this topic is so important

- why they are passionate about their research

In fact, one of the key elements of a credible and authoritative presenter is someone who is really passionate about their work. The secret is to get students to delve inside themselves and find this passion.

The slides on the following pages are identical to the originals, though I have changed the student's name. Her research is aimed at connecting people in research with people in industry. She is friends with a group of researchers (the ones in the photo in the third slide in Version 2) who have developed a kit for the early detection of breast cancer in women. She wants to help them get their product on the market.

VERSION 1

The main point to realize is that the three slides look virtually identical, all contain complete sentences, and have no images.

SLIDE 1

> **Research Topic**
> Technology Transfer in the LifeScience
> Technology transfer works to complement academic research by pushing innovations out the lab door and into the hands of industry partners who will develop them into products for the benefit of the general public. If you believe: - you have discovered something unique with research value;
> - you have an idea innovative and unpublished; it's important to protect it through Intellectual Propriety!

SLIDE 2

> **Why it is so important**
> Publishing your research will not guarantee that someone will notice your discovery and continue developing it into a tangible product.
> For example: the development of a new drog.
> The university must support technology transfer activities to ensure that scientific research and the work of researchers will be enhanced.

SLIDE 3

> **Why I'm so PASSIONATE about it**
> I believe that innovation generated by students and researchers should be supported because innovation is beneficial to the community.
> For this reason it is important to give these persons the right tools to develop their ideas.

Below were my thoughts on her slides while she was presenting them. Obviously, I only mentioned a few of these points when giving her feedback, as my aim at this point in the course is to boost students' confidence rather than putting them off presentations completely.

Slide 1 (Research Topic)

All text - looks like a cut and paste from a website (which it is!) and thus contains expressions that are inappropriate for a presentation (e.g. *out of the lab door*) or which in any case would sound strange coming out of the mouth of a non-native speaker

Long sentences - what can she do other than read it out loud?

Misspellings and spacing: *LifeScience, Propriety*

Slides 2 (Why it is so important) and 3 (Why I'm so passionate about it)

What info does this slide actually give?

What can Giovanna say when she puts up the slide?

After the third slide, the audience will have the nagging doubt that all the slides in the presentation are going to have the same format and they might well become victims of 'death by Powerpoint'!

Vague statements: *innovation is beneficial to the community*. What does this mean?

Misspelling: drog

As a class we also decided that her presentation needed:

- a human touch, some concrete example that clearly indicated her connection with her research, and why she felt it was important; at the moment it all sounds a bit too theoretical

- some pictures

VERSION 2

S<small>LIDE</small> 1

Giovanna still hasn't got the title sorted out (*Life Science* needs the plural *s*)

Apart from the photo in the third slide, all the images have been cut and pasted from elsewhere, and while they look professional, in reality, they add no value.

The image in Slide 1 just seems to be there for the sake of it. It may attract the audience's attention, but they are going to be asking themselves why Giovanna wanted them to look at it.

S<small>LIDE</small> 2

The image in Slide 2 is there because Giovanna was copying the style of a fellow student who used the same technique, but rather more successfully. Weaker students often introduce features of better presentations but without thinking why such features had originally been used and whether they are appropriate in a different context.
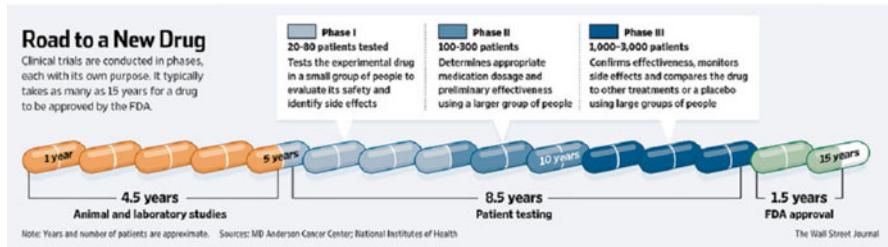
The third slide looks like two slides merged together. Students need to get into the habit of thinking 'one idea per slide'. The contrast in quality and type of the two images is also negative. The first looks very professional, though is again a cut and paste. The second looks like and is a normal photograph taken with a normal camera. This would be fine if it was on a separate slide, then it would not clash with the other image.

VERSION 3

SLIDE 1

Giovanna combined Slides 1 and 2 from Version 1, but she clearly hadn't taken on board that a slide full of related words doesn't really serve much purpose. By this time, this kind of slide was like a virus running through the class - all the weaker students were using it! In any case, I tried to make the whole class understand that audiences are not interested in seeing a similar slide in a sequence of presentations.
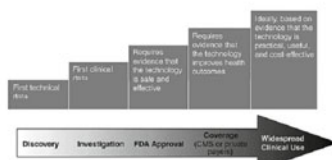
SLIDE 2

Slide 2 is still there, but the top part has changed. Important: you can tell students two or three things about their slide, but they're only likely to take on board (and implement) one of those things. So you might have to tell them about the same issue more than once (i.e. one slide, one idea).

Slide 3
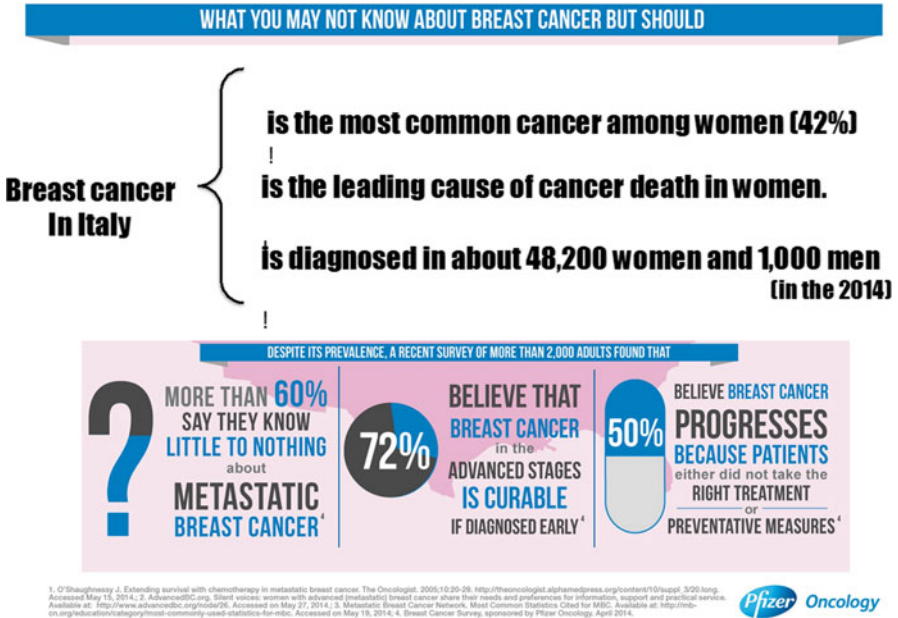
In the third slide, Giovanna has finally introduced some hard facts about the topic of her research - transferring innovation gained in the field of the early diagnosis of breast cancer to outside the scientific world and into the commercial world.

There are three key issues in this third version:

- the slides are in the wrong order. It would be much better to start with the third slide (i.e. the hard facts rather than the theory) and this itself would probably mean that the first (and maybe the second slide too) could then simply be deleted

- there is too much going on in the third slide. You really have to drum it into students that too much information or too many images can be really distracting. Some students get it first time round, but not all do - so don't worry about repeating yourself

- Giovanna hasn't used the breast cancer statistics in the best possible way. She has simply given the audience the statistics without involving them. A better approach would be just to have the numbers with no text, then she would have the full attention of the audience. In the case of statistics that are less dramatic / upsetting, a presenter could set up a quiz, or some true / false questions - again the idea is to get the audience alert

My course ended before Giovanna could have another attempt. But the three versions shown above should give you an idea of the kind of progress you can expect, the pitfalls along the way, but most of all, the immense satisfaction when the students really 'get' what you are trying to teach them.

14.2   What can I do to get students to hone their speeches?

If you and your students have followed my suggestion in Chapter 3 of *English for Presentations at International Conferences*, then you will have plenty of opportunities for improving the exact words your students use during their presentations.

Here is the beginning of the original version of Giovanna's speech (see previous subsection).

> Technology transfer works to complement academic research by innovation out of the lab door into the hands of industry partners who will develop them into products for the benefit of the general public. If you believe you have discovered something unique - you have a new idea - it is important to protect it.
>
> For example, the value of any new technology must be demonstrated through a series of increasingly stringent steps and requires a long time.

Giovanna's opening words a typical of many academics: a long series of generic abstract statements with no examples or statistics to get the audience focused. Basically she has said nothing. The result is that a lot of presenters lose the interest of the audiences within the first 30 seconds of their presentations.

Your job is to encourage students to get to the point immediately, to eliminate any unsubstantiated claims, and to replace abstract terminology with concrete words and examples.

A much better script would be to eliminate the above introduction completely and go straight to the point by starting at Slide 2 in Version 3 (see 14.1). Here Giovanna talks about the photograph:

> These are some friends of mine. They want to develop a kit for detecting breast cancer in a non-invasive way. They are part of a team of researchers studying genomics. The problem is that their technology could remain unknown if no one funds their research. And this means that around 3000 women per year here in Italy could fail to have their breast cancer diagnosed. Breast cancer is the most common form of cancer among women - 42% of cancer cases. It is the leading cause of cancer death amongst women. Interestingly, breast cancer also affects men - one in a thousand in Italy.

The new version is much more personal. It will enable Giovanna to inject some passion into her voice. The audience will understand why she is studying technology transfer and how important it can be. She also manages to get all the audience involved by referring to male breast cancer too.

Note how in Giovanna's revised version the sentences are much shorter. Let's analyse this aspect with another example. Imagine that the sentence below is part of a speech for a presentation. What problems do you think your students would have if they had to say the original version aloud? And what problems would the audience have in understanding?

ORIGINAL	REVISED
The main advantages of these techniques are a minimum or absent sample pre-treatment and a quick response; in fact due to the relative difficulty in the interpretation of the obtained mass spectra, the use of multivariate analysis by principal component analysis, and complete-linkage cluster analysis of mass spectral data, that is to say the relative abundance of peaks, was used as a tool for rapid comparison, differentiation, and classification of the samples.	There are two main advantages to these techniques. First, the sample needs very little or no pre-treatment. Second, you get a quick response. Mass spectra are really hard to interpret. So we decided to use two types of analysis: principal component and complete-linkage cluster. We did the analysis on the relative abundance of peaks. All this meant that we could compare, differentiate, and classify the samples.

If you as a teacher would find it hard to say the original sentence all in one breath, imagine your students. Thus, one of your aims is to get them to write in short chunks that are easy to say.

Part III
Strategies for Teaching Writing and Presenting

Chapter 15
How to Inject Some Fun into Your Lessons / Making Comparisons with Other Areas Outside Academia

15.1 What is the point of this chapter?

You and your students will find your course much more rewarding if you don't continually focus on the academic world. Students spend most of their day buried in their research, so doing a language course is an opportunity to break away from this for a while. This chapter and the previous chapter are designed to show you ways to teach what you need to teach, but in ways that deviate from those traditionally used in EAP / scientific English courses.

This is why I included the various factoids and quotations at the beginning of each chapter in four of the books in the English for Academia series. My personal favorites are those in the factoids and quotations at the beginning of the following chapters in the following books:

Presentations: Chapters 12, 15
Writing: Chapters 9, 11, 12, 13, 20
Correspondence: Chapters 4, 11
Campus: Chapters 4, 6,

<div align="center">*****</div>

The sections in this chapter are ordered approximately in relation to the sections that appear in a paper: Abstract, Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion, Conclusions. With the exception of the Abstract, these sections also usually make up the backbone of a presentation.

15.2   Abstracts: Following a clear structure

In 13.23 of *English for Writing Research Papers*, I give the following example of an Abstract:

> Three red flags were identified that indicate that the time to leave him has come. These red flags are: five burps per day, two sitting-zapping sessions per day, and five games on the PlayStation with friends per week. A large number of women have doubts about the right moment for leaving their partner. Often, women wait in hope for a change in their partner's habits. One hundred couples were analyzed, recording their daily life for six months. Women were provided with a form to mark the moments of annoyance recorded during the day. Burps, sitting-zapping sessions and games on the PlayStation with friends produced the highest index of annoyance. The probability of eliminating these habits was found to be significantly low when the three red flags had been operative for more than three months. Thus, these numbers provide a good indication of when the time to leave him has come. With these red flags, women will no longer have to waste their time waiting for the right moment.

The above abstract fits a typical structure required by many journals: key result, background to explain key result / methodology, methods, more info on results, implications.

The abstract is clearly fictitious. It was written by a PhD student of mine, Estrella Garcia Gonzalez, who was studying cosmetics. I had asked all students in her group to email me an abstract for homework. She was in her first year and her research was barely off the ground. She was a bit lost at the university where she was studying - she was Spanish studying in Italy - and basically she told me she had nothing to write about. So I said "No worries, just invent something."

You can do the same with your students. Get them to invent some research (e.g. something funny, or some research that they wish could be done). The important thing is that the structure is clear and that the abstract contains all those elements that reviewers (and readers) will be looking for.

15.3   Introduction: Paraphrasing and plagiarism

In the Introduction to their paper authors often have to quote other people's work. It is important to do so without plagiarizing these other authors' works. The same skills are also required in the Discussion section.

The importance of not plagiarizing other people's work is highlighted in Chapter 11 of *English for Writing Research Papers*.

Paraphrasing is one of the skills required in order to avoid (to some extent) plagiarism. Most of the exercises I have come across on paraphrasing are spectacularly boring, so I decided to come up with something which I consider more fun. By the way, I teach in Italy, which explains the choice of the example to paraphrase.

I show students a slide with a photo of Madonna Louise Ciccone, the American singer and actress, with a T shirt on proclaiming *Italians do it better*. I tell my students to imagine that Madonna was an 'expert' and had done some research published in 1998 which proved her claim. I then inform my students that another academic has quoted Madonna in their paper saying: *Ciccone claimed that Italians do it better (Ciccone, 1998).* The students' task is to come up with other ways to paraphrase Madonna's claim.

Below are some of the examples that some of my more inventive students have come up with.

SYNONYMS

verbs: Ciccone proposed / suggested / stated / found / revealed that … (1998).

nouns: Italians perform preliminary reproductive activity / execute the coital task … (Ciccone, 1998).

ACTIVE TO PASSIVE

It has been claimed / proposed / suggested / stated / found / revealed that … (Ciccone, 1998)

DIFFERENT WORD ORDER

According to (Ciccone, 1998), Italians outperform the rest of the world in terms of pre-natal penetrative spermatoza production.

The Italian race tends to perform the fornicatory act in an enhanced manner (Ciccone, 1998).

Clearly, this exercise might not go down well with certain groups. But there are many alternatives, quotations from politicians, slogans from adverts etc.

15.4 Materials and Methods: Explaining a process or strategy

Generally speaking, you will have students from many disciplines in your class. Even if, for example, they are all from the same faculty, they will still be studying different subjects, e.g. in the engineering faculty, you will have information engineers, civil engineers, aeronautical engineers etc. This means that if you set your students an exercise in which they have to describe their methods, you will not easily be able to make comparisons between their descriptions when you discuss them as a whole class during the next lesson.

Instead, you could set them a common task that is outside their field of study. In reality, we make use of methods every day. Here are some that students could write about:

- How to cook a perfect meal in 10 minutes

- How to choose a mobile phone

- How to decide where to go on holiday

- How to dramatically improve your English in 10 days

- How to choose a boyfriend / girlfriend

- How to please / aggravate your professor

Students can then practice describing their methods aloud, as if they were giving a presentation. They don't necessarily need any slides to do this, but of course can create some if required.

15.5   Results: Statistics for use in presentations

A key element in many (but certainly not all) presentations at congresses is a judicious use of interesting statistics. Below is an exercise that you can give your students. Their task is to match the event with the chances of the event happening.

What are the chances of something happening?

Match these ratios with the eight events below:

a) 1 in 14,000,000 b) 1 in 40,000 c) 1:100,000 d) 1:3332 e) 1:30 f) 1:10 g) 1:6 h) 1:2

1. Being in the toilet when your professor calls you.

2. Getting a cold in the space of 12 months.

3. Getting on a plane with a bomb onboard.

4. Guessing the four number PIN on a stolen code in the allocated three attempts.

5. Having an affair if you are a married or cohabiting with a male university graduate.

6. Medical tests yielding useful results.

7. Meeting your ideal partner if you met five new people a day, every day for the rest of your life.

8. Picking the winning lottery number.

When they've done the exercise, ask students how they could incorporate such an exercise into one of their presentations. The idea here is to help students understand that you can use statistics in many different ways. At the beginning of a presentation they can be used to elicit interest, by getting the audience to think about the answers before you actually give them the answers. Clearly, you - as a presenter - have to plan this carefully, so various adaptations would need to be made to the exercise they have just carried out. The most important would be to reduce the original eight events to just three. This means that:

- the exercise is quick to do - just a few seconds, as opposed to possibly several minutes

- some of the audience are likely to get the right answer - you don't want to create any negativity in the audience by setting them an impossible task

- you can remove any points that might be inappropriate for a particular audience

The above three points apply not just to giving presentations, but to any kind of teaching / training - keep everything simple and manageable. Another alternative entails not reducing the number of elements (in our case, the eight events) but in making the task simpler, e.g. match the top three numbers to three of the tasks.

Clearly, I am not suggesting that students use the specific 'test' I have given them. The idea is to get them to think about how they could use their own statistics in a similar way.

KEY

1) e (the original referred to the 'boss' not a 'prof') 2) h 3) c 4) d 5) f 6) g 7) b 8) a Note, the chances refer to UK statistics.

15.6   Results: using sports as an example

In 17.1 of *English for Writing Research Papers*, I make a comparison between scientific results and football results. Students are asked to decide which of the following results from the World Cup are the most interesting.

Vatican City 0 Vanuatu 1   Germany 7 Brazil 1
Malta 2 Liechtenstein 1   Italy 4 Senegal 4
Monaco 0 Maldives 2   South Korea 2 England 1

The idea is that most audiences are only interested in key football results (especially the result of their team) rather than hearing about every single result of every single match played on that day. The same is true in a paper, and even more true in a presentation. Students should be encouraged to discuss just their key results, not all the results. They should focus on:

1. the most important results

2. any results that were surprising

3. any results, not covered by points 1 and 2, that in any case an audience at a conference (but not necessarily a reader of a paper) might be interested in - i.e. they might be particularly topical on the day / week of the conference

So, in your lesson you could put a slide with football results that relate either to the geographical area where you are located, or which directly relate to the various nationalities in your class. Create a mix of relevant and irrelevant results, and get students to draw their own conclusions. Alternatively, you can use the procedure suggested in 7.1 in *English for Writing Research Papers*.

15.7   Discussion: Interpreting findings

In the Discussion section of their paper, students will have to discuss their findings (see Chapter 18 in *English for Writing Research Papers*). This can be quite a tough and dull exercise, so you can reward students by giving them other people's (interesting) findings, and in small groups they can attempt to explain the findings. Here are four interesting findings:

1. Poor people in Honduras were found to be happier than poor people in Chile (who, although still relatively poor, had better homes and ate better food).

2. Around a third of highly successful people are dyslexic.

3. Ten day-care centers in Haifa (Israel) introduced a policy whereby if parents were late picking up their child, then they (the parents) would be fined. The result was that the number of parents arriving late increased twofold.

4. National parks often have signs asking visitors not to take flowers, stones, pieces of petrified rock etc. Experiments proved that having no sign led to a decline in such visitor theft, rather than an increase.

I suggest that you make your own collection of interesting findings / statistics for use in class.

KEY

1. The average level of income of a country is not the important factor here, but the distance between one class of people from another. The distance between the poor and the middle class in Chile is much greater than in Honduras, so the poor in Honduras do not see themselves as being in such a bad position as their counterparts in Chile.

2. Dyslexics tend to compensate for their 'disability' by pushing themselves and excelling in other areas.

3. The cost of the fine ($3 per child) was cheaper than paying for extra day-care, so parents simply left their children at the center for longer.

4. The signs actually encourage visitors to do something that they might not have otherwise thought of.

15.8   Discussion: Hedging

1973 saw the launch of Carlsberg's "Probably the best beer in the world" advertising campaign in the UK. It was created by the ad agency Saatchi and Saatchi and, by 1980, had spread around the beer-drinking world, before being replaced in 2011 by a new tagline "That calls for a Carlsberg". In 2015, the *Probably* slogan was then briefly brought back again.

So what has this to do with the world of scientific English, and more to the point, with 'hedging'?

Before Saatchi and Saatchi invented their slogan, Carlsberg had been using decidedly less modest claims:

Lager at its best.

Unrivalled quality and flavour.

The world's best.

In the world of science, words such as 'unrivalled' and 'best' don't always go down well, whereas strategically locating a 'probably' removes much of the directness and arrogance that the author could be accused of.

Clearly, when Carlsberg wrote 'probably', they actually meant 'definitely' or 'without any doubt', and that was the humor of it all. Their ads in the 1970s were incredibly popular and featured a bottle of Carlsberg on the right of the ad with the usual slogan 'Probably the best beer' underneath. But on the left would be a picture of an everyday object such as a banana, rabbit or football, with the tagline "Probably a banana", "Probably a rabbit" underneath.

The idea is for you to show your students the original Carlsberg slogan and ask them to work out why Carlsberg chose to change slogans, and how this relates to the concept of hedging. Then you can show them a selection of Carlsberg, banana, rabbit etc. ads - these are easy to find in Google Images or you can access: carlsberg.com

But you need to warn students that they can 'over-hedge', i.e. be too modest and thus lose the reader's faith and interest.

15.9 Discussion: Getting students to think about the importance of their research

In my scientific English course, I show students the following text:

> Smith et al (2016) found that PhD students in medicine, economics, engineering, robotics, biosciences, agriculture and veterinary sciences had above average intelligence. Our study totally contradicts Smith's finding. Our experiments proved that such PhD students have very limited intelligence, and would in fact be more suited to cleaning toilets. This radical finding may help governments reduce the amount of funding given to university education.

I invented the text - obviously - but the disciplines mentioned in the first two lines are the typical disciplines of the students I teach. The aim is to make a connection with the students - again obviously. The students then have to do the following exercise:

i) What is your most important finding? ii) Why is it so fantastic? iii) How does it compare with similar findings made by other researchers?

Write one paragraph highlighting your finding.

This is not an easy exercise for students to do, but I find it really does make them think about their research and why they are doing it. When they have completed the task, they show it to the person sitting next to them, who has to decide how convincing their fellow student has been.

15.10 Discussion: Highlighting the author's unique contribution

Highlighting one's findings and unique contribution involves 'showing, not telling'. In my scientific English course, I have a slide that shows a T-shirt that says: "Mine is bigger than yours" - students then understand that merely stating something is not enough; they have to demonstrate it too. My next slide shows the town of San Gimignano in Tuscany (Italy), which is not far from where I teach. In the middle ages, rich families in San Gimignano built towers to show how rich and important they were - rather than just saying 'mine is bigger than yours', they demonstrated this fact by the height of the tower. Interestingly, art history books will tell you that these towers are actually phallic symbols which thus ties in nicely with the T-shirt concept. Obviously, the choice of San Gimignano makes sense to me because I teach in the same region in Italy. But you can use the same idea by showing the tallest towers in the world and what they mean in terms of propaganda for the country

where they were built - isn't the Burj Khalifa in the UAE telling people "hey, we're the biggest and the best", and what about the Tokyo Skytree and the various towers that are springing up in China? They are concrete (excuse the pun) symbols of the country's economic status.

The message is that a sentence such as *The large difference in mean size between X and Y is particularly interesting* is not enough. Why is it *interesting*? In fact, authors often try to get away with not explaining the importance of something by using adjectives and phrases such as *interestingly, intriguingly, it is worth noting that,* but without actually explaining why. Instead, they need to say something much more concrete: *X showed a massive increase, almost ten times that of Y. This means that …*

15.11 Conclusions: Discussing limitations and future research

Within the Discussion or Conclusions sections, most authors dedicate a few sentences to outlining the limitations of their work (see Chapter 9 in *English for Writing Research Papers*). Authors also typically mention how they plan to continue any ongoing research.

However, you may be teaching students who, for example, are in the first year of their PhD and may not have encountered any limitations so far in their research or are at least unable to see them, and moreover have no idea where their research may take them in the future. So I ask such students to describe the limitations of something else, including for example, themselves. Below is what one of my students, Jacopo Cerri, wrote:

> In my entire life I have been unable to develop decent organizational skills. However, it is well known that an encouraging number of amazing people are also afflicted with such a personal drawback (Jovanotti. 1994; Sheen at al. 2015). Therefore, I still have high hopes about my future life quality. My future research lines will focus on sustainable strategies for living without clocks and the interplay between untidiness and long-lasting sentimental relationships.

The above extract matches the following typical structure:

- declares limitation

- justifies it by the fact that others have suffered the same limitation

- suggests future worked aimed at better overcoming the limitation

So the idea is that the student fulfills the criteria / structure, but is not forced to write about their own research.

15.12   Conclusions: Avoiding a cut and paste from the Abstract

Authors don't like writing Conclusions. Consequently, the shortest and simplest solution is to do a quick cut and paste of the Abstract, change a few words, and hope that the editor and reviewers don't notice.

To prove this point to your students, you can show them a slide of a 'spot the difference' picture, which you can find by doing a search on Google images. Just show the slide, and students will immediately try to find the differences (without asking you or each other why they are doing the exercise!). When they've found a few differences, ask them why they think they have been doing the exercise. Immediately answer your question by saying that often an Abstract and the Conclusions don't look much different from the image in front of them - it's hard to see the difference. Next, show them a slide of two similar pictures but which have very very clear differences. You can invent this slide yourself by juxtaposing, for example, a photo of a PhD student and the photo of a chimpanzee, both in a similar pose! Explain that an Abstract and the Conclusions may have some overlap but serve very different purposes. This visual approach seems to get the message across effectively.

15.13   Final check: papers and presentations

A key skill for students to learn is to review their work when they have finished it. Particularly in the case of presentations, a few spelling mistakes can look really bad (the misspellings may be a meter tall when projected to the audience!).

Here are some extracts from real cover letters and CVs. Can your students find the typos?

1. I demand a salary commiserate with my extensive experience.
2. I have lurnt Word Perfect 6.0 computor and spreasheet progroms
3. Instrumental in ruining entire operation for a Midwest chain store.
4. I received a plague for Salesperson of the Year.
5. Reason for leaving last job: maturity leave.

Chapter 16
Giving Students Advice, Dealing with Their Resistance, Handling Different Nationalities

16.1 Pepper your lessons with useful advice. Don't be afraid of repeating the same advice

I am a firm believer that your job as an EAP teacher - and the same is true of Business English or any specialist area - is not only to teach English but to give your students strategies to enable them to do their work better (irrespective of whether a task is language related or not).

So give them clear rules that they can identify with.

For example, with regard to writing, you could occasionally put this summary (or something similar) on the whiteboard or on a slide:

> Your writing needs to be
>
> - Clear – this means organizing the information in the easiest possible way for your readers to assimilate. But only give them the information that they really need or that you think they may not know but which will help them understand what you are saying.
> - Relevant – don't deviate from your topic.
> - Accurate – only tell your readers what you can provide evidence for.

Or with regard to having successful conversations:

In a conversation (or discussion)

- take equal responsibility for keeping the conversation going
- introduce new topics naturally – don't jump from one topic to another
- link what you say to what the other person has just said
- show interest
- maintain eye contact
- learn to be curious. Be curious about your interlocutor. Be curious about everything.

And don't worry about repeating yourself. The more often you repeat things the more your students will remember. And most people appreciate (or don't even notice) being told the same thing twice or more.

16.2   Be aware that students tend to take any advice, guidelines or rules that you give them very literally

Particularly in a multicultural class, your students may not be used to critically evaluating what their professor tells them. In the West, students may perhaps be a little more wary of what their professors tell them, and may even take to questioning the prof during lectures and seminars. In other parts of the world, students may take on what the professor says as being gospel.

So make it clear, that often what you are telling your students is advice, not a rule.

Another issue is that some students, whatever their nationality, may simply take things literally. If you tell them to write in short sentences, they will write in short sentences but perhaps not taking into account whether they have produced chop suey or a logical sequence of ideas. Another typical situation is when you give them guidelines for presentations. Typically, their first presentations are full of text, so you tell them to cut down on the text and use more images. In their next version, you will suddenly find images everywhere, often totally irrelevant images that seem to have been pasted at random in various slides. This is fairly common and should not be a source of concern for you. Simply re-explain: "yes, I did recommend more images, but the images must be pertinent to what you are saying, they are not simply there for effect".

16.3 Dealing with resistance: give students external evidence of what you are telling them

Your students' aim will generally be to please their professors rather than you. For them, it is unacceptable not to follow the example of their professors (lots of text, long complicated explanations, sleep-inducing presentations). However, if you stick to your guns and show that there is another way to do a presentation, by the end of the course you will have converted the whole class. This is because, as soon as they start making comparisons between those students who take up the challenge and go for a more dynamic style and those students who opt for the usual academic, agonizingly dull style, it will quickly become apparent to them which style is most effective.

You can also give your students concrete evidence that they might be wrong. Below are three examples.

EXAMPLE 1

If students are resisting your attempts to encourage them to go against accepted opinions in their department, university or country, then you could quote an expert. Fred Hoyle (1915-2001), the British astronomer, reached several mistaken conclusions while carrying out his research, including rejecting the concept of the Big Bang - a term which he himself coined. Yet, he still managed to achieve greatness in his theory of stellar nucleosynthesis. He once famously wrote:

> *To achieve anything really worthwhile in research, it is necessary to go against the opinions of one's fellows.*

Obviously, your students are not at the level of Fred Hoyle. But the idea that they can actually go against the opinion of their professor or fellow students may be liberating for them to hear.

You could also remind students that some of their taboos are not really any better than folklore beliefs and superstitions. Just because they have been told something at school or believe in something, doesn't mean they can't question these 'rules' and beliefs. A poll of Americans carried out in the 1970s revealed that half of Americans believe in angels. The poll also found that 39% believe in the devil, 37% in precognition, 29% in astrology and 10% in ghosts and witches. Just because the percentages are high doesn't mean that the beliefs held are correct!

EXAMPLE 2

If you are having a hard time convincing your students to write less, then a good solution is to show them examples from referees' reports that prove your point. Here is the referee's report that one of my PhD students had received (before she took my course!).

> The paper was extremely long and must be massively reduced in length. … It was packed full of vague statements …. The abstract was far too long. …The opening sections were superfluous … I would like to see some concrete examples rather than the somewhat long-winded technical explanations that were not very clear. The author could easily reduce the length by 25%. This can be achieved without removing any real content and I believe that the result would be that the paper would read more fluently and the pace would be quicker.

You can comment to your students that the reviewer's remarks were not directed at the level of the author's English (which is very high) but simply at her style of writing.

EXAMPLE 3

A common fault with many student CVs and cover letters is that they seem too good to be true - the students seem to have concocted the perfect CV, which appears to demonstrate that they have all the skills that could be required for any job on the planet, no matter how difficult. No weak points are mentioned, only strong ones. In some cultures, this may be acceptable, but in Anglo cultures where hedging rules, it is not necessarily the case.

To convince my students otherwise and to take them along what, for them, is a counterintuitive path, I spent quite a bit of time searching for statistics to prove my point. My suspicions were confirmed when I read that recruiters tend to be suspicious of CVs that only contain positive references and invite for interview more candidates whose CVs or cover letters reveal that the candidate has weaknesses and limitations (i.e. not just strong points).

16.4   Use advice and examples from ex-students

You may encounter resistance from students who simply don't believe you or don't see the point of what you are saying. A case in point is hedging (see 15.8). Most cultures / languages simply don't have an equivalent. I remember one second-year PhD student in architecture who assured me that hedging was not a device that she was ever going to need. The following year, I emailed her to ask

permission to use an extract from her paper in the Writing book. In her reply, she mentioned:

> The referees' reports that I received for my first papers commented that I needed to be more 'humble' and less 'presumptuous'. This means I have had to learn to hedge when I write in English. Initially, this was quite hard. However, I have now realized that basically all I have to do is to precede any strong statement with a few soft introductory words that I have learned by reading other archeological papers in my field. It is actually easier than it looks!

This was great, because I could then show the 'evidence' to my current students.

Another typical situation is in the courses I give on how to write a CV. One of the most contentious issues seems to be on whether to put a photograph or not (see Chapter 5 in *CVs, Resumes and LinkedIn - A Guide to Professional English,* Springer). I say that the decision doesn't really depend on them but on what their readers are going to expect. Many recruiters, rightly or wrongly, wish to see a photo. Those who are indifferent certainly won't mind if they too see a photo. So it makes sense to include / use a photo. Some students will object - fair enough. But then I ask them to see what the colleagues from the previous year did with their CVs or to look on LinkedIn to see what ex-students have done. LinkedIn works well because the blanks with the missing photos immediately strike browsers as negative. If that isn't enough, I quote some statistic to prove my point. For example, if you compile your profile on ResearchGate, it informs you that, by including a photo, you help your peers recognize you and increase the visibility of your research by up to 30%.

16.5   Reassure students about their English with evidence from your own life

In 6.7 of *English for Interacting on Campus* I mention to my readers that my wife and I are both from Manchester in England and that, when we watch DVDs of US television series, we watch with subtitles. If we don't have subtitles, we miss about 30% of what is said. However, even if we don't turn on the subtitles and thus miss 30%, we still understand enough to follow the story.

Sometimes I don't understand some North Americans even when we are face to face. I once told a colleague from Texas that I had just come back from a seaside holiday in Corsica and had stepped on a sea urchin while swimming. His face filled with shock and horror. He was clearly very concerned and asked me if I had had blood tests done at the local hospital. I couldn't understand his extreme reaction until I realized that he thought I had stepped on a syringe. The words *sea urchin* and *syringe* sound quite similar. Neither of us felt inadequate or stupid we both just laughed about it.

I find it very useful to give students experiences from my own life that prove that, as native speakers, we often fail to understand each other. This kind of information should help students, as it takes away some of their responsibility if they are unable to understand what is being said by a native speaker.

You can also show your students emails written by native speakers that you yourself were unable to understand. Often, students get a sense of inferiority, stupidity or frustration when they don't understand an email - and they take full responsibility. Somehow, it doesn't seem to occur to them that i) the native speaker may be making no effort to make himself / herself understood, and ii) what the native speaker is writing may be partially gibberish anyway; for example: *If this was a one-off, then worry not. So far, I'm pretty much relying on the Jira integration to do what it says on the tin.* Students may think that they should know what "what it says on the tin" means or what a "one-off" is, and how "worry not" fits into the equation.

16.6 Remember that teaching EAP / scientific English is very different from preparing students for a Cambridge English exam

Another form of resistance may come from students who have learned English in exam courses (e.g. Cambridge, TOEFL, IELTS, Trinity) or with a particularly diligent English teacher. Such students will have learned writing (and oral) techniques designed to get them to sound smart and pass exams. Such a writing style is not always appropriate in science.

When I used to teach general English, much of my work was in preparing students for the Cambridge First Certificate Advanced and Proficiency exams (http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams/). When focusing on writing skills, I remember telling students that they would score extra points from the examiners if they linked phrases together using words such as *nevertheless, in particular, as a matter of fact, furthermore, specifically* etc.

Much of the time, many of these linkers are not necessary.

While watching a film, we unconsciously make hundreds of logical connections that enable us to follow the story line easily. We certainly don't think about the hours of film which have been cut out. Readers too make connections as they move from sentence to sentence and from paragraph to paragraph. When papers reflect a clear, logical progression of ideas, the reader follows the argument without excessive promptings like:

It is worthwhile noting that …
As a matter of fact …
Experience teaches us that …

The overuse of such words and expressions as *hence, therefore, thus, it follows that, in fact, indeed,* and *namely* can be tiresome.

Why do so many writers use long empty phrases instead of short clear ones? Perhaps it is because, as George Orwell suggests, "it is easy." Orwell goes on to explain that it is easier - even quicker once you have the habit - to say *In my opinion it is not an unjustifiable assumption that* than to say *I think*…When you are composing in a hurry, it is natural to fall into a pretentious Latinized style. Tags like *a consideration which we should do well to bear in mind* or *a conclusion to which all of us would readily assent* will save many a sentence from coming down with a bump. By using stale metaphors, similes and idioms, your students are probably saving themselves much mental effort at the cost of leaving their meaning vague, not only for their readers but for themselves too.

Of course link words do serve a purpose: to alert readers to a contrast, to an alternative etc. To learn how link words are used in academic English, see Chapter 13 in *Grammar, Usage and Style*.

16.7 Academic writing and academic life in general differ from country to country

John Donald Redmond, Head Instructor at Richmond Campus Learning Centre of Kwantlen Polytechnic University in Vancouver, Canada, told me with reference to the early 2000s:

I recall a group of scholars from the People's Republic of China who wished to attend a graduate seminar. During the coffee break, I asked them what they thought about the seminar. They responded that it was very interesting but they

had one 'serious' question "Who is the professor?". Due to the informal nature of the seminar and the age of the participants, they had been unable to identify who was 'in charge'. In China, a professor looks and acts like one is expected in that culture and classes and seminars are arranged in a manner that allows easy identification of the participants' roles.

However, another Chinese contact wrote to me in 2015 about relationships with professors:

I had a Chinese supervisor for two years as a Master's student but he was very hands-off and pretty westernized and thus may not represent traditional Chinese professors. In fact, nowadays in premium Chinese universities, most professors have had training in Western countries so it's difficult to set a clear border.

Of course, in a country of more than 2000 years of authoritarian culture, subduing to superiors demands and the fear of challenging authority exist to various degrees but, on the other hand, people are more dedicated to their work. I would say, statistically, the stereotypical opinion still holds true but, in modern days, the difference is not so drastic and, very often, it's a case-by-case situation.

16.8   Learning styles and cultural issues in multicultural / multinational classes

EAP throws up challenges that other forms of English tend to encounter more rarely. Multilingual / Multinational classes are obviously common if you are teaching English in your home country. However, even if you are not teaching in an English-speaking country, you may well find many nationalities in your classes at university or other research institutes.

An EAP teacher from Vancouver told me about the differences she perceived between Chinese and Arab students (specifying that these are just generalizations to which there are always exceptions):

My Chinese students have a hard time with inferencing and critical thinking. They tend to be very good with concrete skills like comprehension of a reading or listening text or formatting or structuring a piece of writing or a presentation according to a prescribed set of guidelines. If I ask these students to look a little deeper, perhaps at the subtext, or to be more creative in what they are producing, this creates a lot of anxiety in the student - they don't want to make a mistake / do something wrong so they want to be told exactly what to do and how to do it.

My Arab students tend to be more relaxed. I've been told by them that, in academic studies in Arabic, they are required to infer the subtext in whatever they are reading / listening so they are very comfortable also doing this in English. They also seem to be more successful at analyzing texts and evaluating the information to use in whatever they are producing. Where they tend to lack in skills is how to organize those ideas. The structure becomes cyclical with the general ideas never really narrowing to anything specific.

But, as the teacher says, she's only making generalizations and when she says something like "I've been told …", that's exactly what she means: she's been told but doesn't have any first-hand experience. So, go into every new class with fresh eyes.

The rest of this subsection is made up of a series of quotes from John Donald Redmond, who kindly wrote to me on the subject of teaching multinational groups.

In one class I discovered on the day prior to the first class that I had one student from Israel and one from Syria. This is not a mix I would encourage despite my wish for peace in the Middle East. On the first day, I intercepted each student and apprised each of the situation, leaving the decision to transfer or declare war to the individuals. They both wished to remain in the class but hoped that I would not pair them nor put them in the same group. As a result, they participated in the class but ignored the existence of each other. As this was at the time of one of Israel's incursions into Lebanon, it was the best that could be hoped for.

Some teachers who do not investigate their students' cultural expectations can get themselves into trouble. Instructors (especially females) who sit on tables while teaching run the risk of losing the respect of students from cultures where that is taboo. Similarly, dress can lead to unwanted results. I know of one instructor who always wears a t-shirt and jeans regardless of the weather and oblivious to the occasion. He is also one of the least-admired instructors I know, as the vast majority of his students are from China and Saudi Arabia where a certain degree of formality is expected of teachers. When I advised him of this, his response was "When in Rome……". My response to that is that, while cultural adaptation is necessary, assimilation is not and adaptation is a two-way street.

Conversely, teachers should not expect all students from a particular culture to act in a pre-determined manner. Those expecting all Chinese students to be diligent studious young scholars are in for an unpleasant surprise. First, over-generalizing as mentioned above leads to stereotyping and ignoring the individual. Secondly, over-generalizing based on obsolete data can lead to false expectations. Whilst the parents of most (mainland) Chinese students were and are undoubtedly hard-working, their single children are quite often not. The answer lies in both the single-child policy and in human nature ('rags to riches to rags in three generations' is common to most cultures).

Therefore, a teacher, while being aware of (accurate) cultural generalities, must beware of over-generalizing and not recognizing that in the quietest of cultures there are noisy people, and vice versa, to over-simplify the case.

So do students from different cultures behave differently in class? Yes, in general they do. Do some make more progress than others? This depends on what skills are being measured within what parameters and over what length of time. It also depends on the individual, the instructor and a whole host of other variables. Naturally, the student who comes from a culture that values verbal skills is more likely to participate in a class in which English verbal skills are taught. A student from a culture that values writing over speaking is conversely more likely to focus on that aspect of a language. This correlates to other skills that may or may not be cultural, such as admiration of reading (lacking in some subcultures, such as teenaged Canadian males). As participation is a key element of academic success, those who participate are more likely to succeed than those who don't. However, a caveat might be that what constitutes participation varies depending on the mode of instruction and the subject being learned.

Given what I have said above, it stands to reason that students from a culture that focuses on group activity and vocal participation can be easier to teach in a listening / speaking class than those from a culture that values student silence. Nonetheless, some cultures can value verbal interaction to an extent that a Canadian instructor might have difficulty managing the class.

Two examples leap to mind: Libyan and Venezuelan students sharing a class with Japanese learners. Both the former are from cultures that are highly vocal, the Libyans being given to group talk (everyone speaking at the same time, focusing on the teacher and not on one another), the Venezuelans being given to interrupting each other, an activity not considered a problem in their culture. The Japanese on the other hand have a classroom culture that almost dictates silence when someone else is talking, making it very difficult therefore to get a word in edgewise when either a Libyan or Venezuelan is speaking. Conversely, the Venezuelan might find talking with a Japanese person physically tiring as they are given no chance to rest without anyone interrupting them.

Part IV
Syllabus and Lesson Plans

Chapter 17
Creating a Syllabus

17.1   What do I need to think about when deciding on a syllabus?

Academic / Scientific English courses do not follow the same standardized approach as, for example, an exam course within a general English course. The objective of a general English exam is the same for everyone - to pass it - and all the coursebooks involved cover pretty much the same ground and path.

Academic / Scientific English courses are <u>not</u> normally specifically oriented to passing a recognized examination. Instead, they are practical courses designed to help students learn specific skills. For our target students - PhD students and researchers - these skills are primarily writing papers and presenting research. Often, this means that these two skills are taught in separate courses at different times.

The institute where you teach may historically have always had separate courses for writing and presenting. In such cases, your task will be simplified (but not necessarily enhanced) as you will use the writing and presenting books separately. What you will cover, will obviously depend on how many hours you have available.

In Chapters 19 and 20 there are outlines for a Writing course and a Presentations course, i.e. two separate courses. However, you could easily integrate the two courses together. The advantages of this integration are:

- variety - doing a presentations course on its own is fine, but doing just a writing course is quite heavy both for you and your students. I generally do 2-3 hour lessons, with the first part on writing (i.e. the tough part) and the second part on presenting (the lighter part, or at least lighter for you, the teacher!)

- you can show how skills from one area are equally applicable in another (see Chapters 8 and 15 in this book). For example, one key area of writing the Discussion section of a paper is to highlight the novelty of your (i.e. the author's) findings. You need to do exactly the same when presenting your results at a conference. A similar skill is required when writing an email. In this case, you are not highlighting your findings but making sure that your requests or answers to requests are highlighted clearly. And again, when writing a CV, there are various tricks students should learn for highlighting their key achievements. In summary, when you are explaining a specific skill, it makes the learning process far more memorable if you show how the same skill can be applied or adapted to different areas.

- you can fill the time better, e.g. if you have ten minutes to spare at the end of a lesson or before a break, you can always get a student to do a mini presentation

I would also integrate any scientific writing course with a couple of lessons on writing emails (particularly to editors: researchers often write very angry emails to their editors when their papers have been rejected), CVs and cover letters.

I give my students the syllabus in advance - but only what I am going to cover, not necessarily the exact order or timing. This means you can be far more flexible and adapt the course to their needs, or account for days when half the class is missing due to a rival lecture given by some top nob professor!

17.2 What sections of the core books were specifically designed for in-class use?

Each unit of the four core books in the *English for Academic Research* series (writing, presentations, correspondence, and campus) begins with some interesting facts and figures or with some quotations - some serious, some humorous. These are followed by a subsection called *What's the Buzz?* which was deliberately designed for in-class use rather than for self-study.

The rest of the subsections were originally designed for self-study. They can then either be exploited in class (accompanied by exercises from the three exercise books) or simply read by the student.

17.3 Why are there only syllabuses for the Writing and Presentations courses in this book? Why not for the Correspondence and Campus books?

I think it is unlikely that your university or research department will have the funds to sponsor courses related to campus life and writing emails and letters. Moreover, these two aspects can easily be integrated into a Writing or Presentations course.

Elements from these books that are worth covering in your lessons are (please note, this is a very restricted set):

ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC CORRESPONDENCE

Chapter 3 Structuring the content of an email

Chapter 4 Building a Relationship and Deciding on the Level of Formality

Chapter 6 Requests and Replies

Chapter 7 Cover letters for summer schools, internships, placements, Erasmus, PhD / MA / Postdoc programs

Chapter 12 Writing a Reply to the Reviewers' Reports

Chapter 13 Communicating with the Editor

ENGLISH FOR INTERACTING ON CAMPUS

Chapter 3 Communicating face-to-face with professors

Chapter 4 Communicating with professors via email

Chapter 5 Participating in Lectures, Tutorials, Meetings, Workshops, and Seminars

Chapter 9 What to say when you don't understand what someone has said

Chapter 12 Automatic Translation: Pros and Cons

You might also like to integrate sections from my book *CVs, Resumes and LinkedIn* - particularly given the importance of CVs for students.

17.4   Given the choice, should I opt to do the Writing and Presentations courses separately, or integrate them into one course?

Doing the Presentations course alone is fine. There is plenty of variation in activities and it is a fun course both to teach and to participate in. You can easily do the course very intensively, i.e. over a couple of days.

A Writing course is much heavier, particularly for the students. It can certainly be done alone, and the lesson plan in Chapter 19 explains how. But I wouldn't do a Writing course too intensively. There is a mass of information for students to absorb, so it makes sense to do it over several weeks or months.

However, if you have the option, I would certainly do the two courses at the same time. Here's how you could divide up the time, imagining that you have lessons of:

- two hours: do the first hour on Writing and the second on Presentations. This is because, typically, students lag in the second hour, and Presentations should help to revive their attention.

- three hours: alternate 30 minutes of Writing with 15-20 minutes of Presentations. Again, you need to keep your students' attention and you can achieve this by continually changing the pace and activity.

- five hours (e.g. three in the morning and two in the afternoon): make sure you do Presentations at the critical points where students get tired (e.g. mid-morning, before lunch, and the last hour of the afternoon)

17.5   Are there any PPTs or PDFs of some teacher's slides for writing courses and presentations courses?

You can certainly find plenty of examples on the web.

You can even look at mine, which are available from: https://adrianwallwork.wordpress.com/courses/downloads/

Please note that my presentations:

- were created for my students (primarily for courses held in Italy, where I live and work) and they very much reflect my style of teaching, which is very informal

- are very much homemade and do not follow a particular format

- have nothing to do with my publisher - Springer, and Springer is in no way responsible for any of the content

- contain some language and photos that you and some of your students might find inappropriate

- contain personal stories about me and some members of my family

- contain references to exercises that students do during the class - this exercise file is only available to my students

- are - at least for the moment - only available in pdf format.

I agree that it would be great if the syllabuses and lesson plans suggested in this book were accompanied by a professional set of slides, and one day I hope to be able to do this. If anyone else would like to take on the task, please let me know.

In any case, these pdf files should give you an idea of how you could create your own slides and hopefully will occasionally make you smile!

17.6 What do I need to know about my students before the start of the course?

In my experience, it helps if you know the following in advance

- What they are studying: this affects mainly abstracts and methods, as the way these are written varies from discipline to discipline. If you are doing a combined writing / presentations course, the type of presentation students give will also be dictated to some extent by their subject area.

- Nationality - having a multinational class is very stimulating

- Age / Position - if any non-PhD students are attending (e.g. older researchers or profs), as this may affect the style of your lessons

This information is usually contained in an enrolment Excel file, which contains the name of the student, their email, their department, their topic. From this information you should also be able to infer if any non-students are going to be attending your course.

17.7   What explanations do I need to give in my first lesson?

In the first lesson, you will need to give your students some key information, which may or may not include:

- why you are qualified to give the course (e.g. your background, any writing or presenting experience you have had)

- how the hours of the course are going to be divided up - if this has not already been established in an official syllabus

- how much writing and presenting students will be expected to do during lessons

- how you will be communicating with them via email - you need to have some kind of email policy (see, for example, 4.2 in *English for Interacting on Campus* for some ideas on what a good email policy looks like*)*

With regard to a writing course, I think you need to explain that you will aim to only do short writing exercises during class, as your time is wasted if they are writing and you are sitting twiddling your thumbs. Instead, you will be setting them a few specific writing tasks for homework.

For the presentations course, my suggestion is to

- tell students that everyone will give a presentation. Initially, these presentations will be about 30 seconds long and then, as the course progresses, these will become longer

- begin by getting students to present / introduce themselves and their topic without any slides

- explain that the idea is to give the presenter <u>constructive</u> feedback on his / her performance. I suggest that, in the first few lesson, <u>you</u> focus on the positive aspects, and that, in pairs, they discuss areas where the presenter needs to improve

17.8 What can I do as a warm-up activity in my first lesson?

A good first lesson in a multilingual class is to get students to discuss their names with each other by asking some or all of the questions below. You will get a much better and collaborative atmosphere in class if everyone knows each other.

1. What is your full name? How do you pronounce it?
2. Do women in your country take their father's surname or their mother's? Do they change surname when they get married?
3. How did your parents choose your given name?
4. What is the reason for the order of your names?
5. Do many parents in your country give their children English names?
6. Does your surname have an English translation? Does it actually meaning something?
7. Do you know how to pronounce the names of your professors, the names of the buildings on campus, and the names of the streets, villages and towns nearby?

Procedure: Put students in groups of three or four. Dictate the questions. Explain the terminology: given name = first name, family name = surname. Ask them to discuss the questions. Then rearrange the groups (the idea is that they need to learn as many of their names as possible) and repeat the procedure. Then get feedback on the most interesting story behind a name.

Another way to start a new course is with a quiz that relates to the students' experience. The one below is about dishonesty in general and in academia.

Rate the following statements: 0 = not dishonest at all, 3 = very dishonest

1. Downloading copyright materials (books, music, movies etc.) without paying for them.
2. Exaggerating your qualities in a CV.
3. Finding a wallet with 50 euros in it and identification and not returning it.
4. Telling someone you love them when you don't.
5. Stealing things that fellow students have left behind in the lecture room.
6. Inventing an excuse to your prof explaining why you haven't completed an assignment that was due today.

7. Cheating in a written exam.

8. Plagiarizing in a written assignment.

9. Buying an essay or a paper from an essay / paper-writing service.

10. Doing someone else's examination for them.

17.9 Why doesn't the syllabus outlined in Chapters 19 and 20 follow the same order as the chapters in the *Writing* and *Presentations* books?

Both the *Writing* and *Presentations* books were written primarily for self-study. They are not coursebooks and were never intended to be. The structure of these two books is based on first discussing the theory and then showing how this is put into action. In contrast, the two syllabuses I have created are based much more on the practical side and on creating variety within the course and within each lesson. This means that I have drawn on various chapters from the two books following an order that I think works best in the classroom (rather than for self-study at home).

17.10 How can I ensure that I don't go into lecturing mode?

When preparing a syllabus, you need to ensure that your lessons do not turn into lectures, i.e. where you are doing nearly all the talking. Instead, you need to introduce activities for your students at regular intervals.

This is not difficult when doing a presentations course, as the main student activity will be presenting their work.

It is more difficult to achieve in a writing course, where there is a lot more 'theory' for you to explain and, thus, you are often the main focus of attention. Given that you are giving a writing course, the obvious solution would be for students to do lots of writing activities. However, you need to be careful that they don't do too much writing as this is not good use of your time. So my suggestion is to give students a series of short written exercises (requiring no more than 5 minutes each) at regular intervals during the lesson.

Another way to remove the focus from you, is to give students discussion exercises again, these should be around five minutes long, given that this is a writing course and not an oral skills course.

In the syllabus I have created for the writing course, I have tried to indicate where you could introduce student-focused activities - both written exercises and discussions.

17.11 How long are the courses and individual lessons designed to last?

As with all syllabuses, a lot will depend on

- the number of hours you have available for the course, and how these hours are distributed (intensively or over a long period)

- the number of students in the class

The two syllabuses I have created consist of ten lessons each.

Each lesson is around 90-120 minutes long, taking into account a ten-minute break in the middle. But the lesson length could vary massively depending on how much explaining you need to do, how receptive the students are, and the number of exercises you set.

17.12 Given that I cannot be sure in advance how long my courses are going to last, how can I plan in advance which lessons I could cut?

If early in the Writing course you have an inkling that you might not have enough time to cover everything, then cut Lesson 7 (Methods and Results) or Lesson 8 (Ambiguity), but not Lessons 9 or 10.

For the Presentations course, you could cut Lessons 8 and 9.

17.13 Do I need to ensure that students do all the exercises recommended in the syllabuses?

No. You need to select which exercises, and which parts of the exercise, you want your students to do.

17.14 How much homework, if any, should I give my students?

The amount of homework you give, if any, will depend on how much time your students have available. I find that students at this level have very little time available, so I only set homework when I think it is strictly necessary. In the syllabus given on the next pages, the grey area at the end of each lesson indicates possible homework that you could give. Sometimes, the homework suggested is to read a chapter from the Presentations book – clearly, you can tell them whether they should read the whole chapter or just subsections of it.

In any case, when setting chapters to read for homework, tell students not to read the factoids or the first subsection - you will be using these directly in the lessons.

I am assuming that you will <u>not</u> have given students any homework to do before the first lesson.

17.15 In the Writing course, is it a good idea to choose a paper and use this as a basis for all the lessons?

It may seem like a good idea to select a specific paper in your students' research field and use this as a basis for analysing all the aspects of writing a paper - style, structure, content etc.

However, this approach has serious limitations:

- you may have a group of exclusively engineering students or economics students. You may feel that this is a homogeneous group because all the students are from the same faculty or department. However, they will not be homogeneous, unless the group is only three or four students. This is because, within each scientific discipline, there are hundreds of sub-disciplines. Therefore, although the paper you choose may interest some students in your group, it may actually be totally alien to others, who will thus be demotivated from lesson one

- do you choose a published paper in order to show how a paper should be written or one whose English has yet to be edited in order to highlight the pitfalls? Students really need to see examples of both

- always analysing the same paper will lead to boredom, not just for your students but for you as well

So although choosing one paper for analysis may seem like a logical idea, and may be the solution proposed by the organizers / funders of your course, I suggest you rule it out as an option.

17.16 In the Writing course, is the aim for students to begin writing a paper in Lesson 1 and have it finished by the end of the course?

No. Like the idea outlined in the previous subsection, this seems like a very obvious approach.

However, again, it has serious limitations:

- Getting students to write a complete paper takes a massive amount of time, time that your students may simply not have.

- Even if all the students agreed to writing a paper during your course, it is highly unlikely that they would all do the task, so you would have students at very different stages of the writing process.

- Your course may be spread over a relatively short period - mine are often concentrated over a total of four days in the space of a month - so it would be impossible for students to complete a paper in that time.

- PhD students generally follow a three-year course. Your students are not likely to be in their third year, therefore, they may simply not be in a good position to write a complete paper in terms of having all the data they need.

So the solution is to give students short specific tasks. You are teaching them techniques that they will be able to apply later in their PhD program.

17.17 How much exposure to doing presentations will my students already have had?

If your students are at Master's level or above, they are likely to have already done a formal presentation of their work. In fact, when a student embarks on a Master's or PhD course, they normally have to do a short presentation of what they plan to do in their research. This presentation is conducted in front of a committee of professors and supervisors, and sometimes in front of the students' fellows. Some students may have even presented at an international conference.

In any case, it is highly unlikely that, during the course of their education, they have never done a presentation. Consequently, the syllabus in Chapter 20 assumes that they have had some exposure to presentations, both actively as presenters, and passively as members of an audience. The syllabus also assumes that, while they may have had some experience, they still need to improve the content and delivery of their presentations.

Chapter 18
What's the Buzz Sections

This section provides some notes on a few exercises in the *What's the Buzz?* sections of the various books.

This teacher's guide is intended for <u>experienced</u> teachers and I believe that in most cases it is obvious how you could exploit these sections. Consequently, below I only mention particular cases where I think you made need some advice, or where a key to an exercise is useful.

18.1   English for Writing Research Papers

2.1

Ex 1: The key info needs to be put at the beginning of the phrase.

- S1.   It is difficult / not easy / rare to find a candidate with all the right qualifications …
- S2.   A foreign language should be learned at a young age.

Ex. 2: S4 is better because most readers will want to know why they should do something before hearing the details of how it should be done. For instance, when explaining the rules of a game, you tell people what the aim is (to score a goal) before you tell them how this is achieved (you have two team of 11 players who …). S3 is fine, but if the sentence were much longer it would become more of a problem.

Ex 3: S5 is the least readable as it separates the subject from its verb. The other three are all fine.

Ex 4: all true

3.13

The paragraph could be divided up at the these points: *Firstly … Secondly … Thirdly … Fourthly … The maximum …*

4.1

Ex 2: d, a, c, d (Note that c is a description of a, *this aspect*; if c referred to both a and b, then it would say *these aspects*).

5.1

Ex 1: The quotes are all about making life easier for the reader. This entails maximum effort on the writer's part, but minimal effort by the reader.

6.1

Ex 1: They are all ambiguous / ridiculous. 1) seems like the vet starts mating a panda, 2) death of a fellow worker, not their own, 3) try = to put on trial, 4) the first time he / she was sentenced, he / she was not actually subjected to the death penalty, 5) red tape = bureaucracy, 6) gas seems to have a human origin, 7) obviously if it was too close it was going to crash [not really ambiguous, just ridiculous], 8) the kids did the cooking, they were not eaten, 9) the numbers were cut, not the dropouts, 10) teachers need training on how to teach sex education. Although these are designed to be funny, ambiguity is one of the key failings in scientific papers, and several cases of ambiguity can lead to a paper being accepted only 'subject to English revision'.

7.1

This is a key exercise. Very often, although the author knows what he / she did and what other authors have done, this difference is not clear to the reader. So the answer to all three questions is the same: "It is not clear."

9.1

Ex 1: The idea is to show students that even if they have limitations (both on a personal level or in terms of their research not providing what they hoped for), this is not a problem and in fact it can be turned into a benefit. Persistence is important, as highlighted by those people whose ideas were initially rejected. However, there is a limit - some scientists even end up dying to prove their point.

11.1

Ex 2: possible answers showing different approaches: a) Bertrand Russell claimed that that we as human beings can only know about our world through science. b) According to Bertolt Brecht it is a scientist's job to contribute knowledge to the community. c) US plant pathologist, Elvin Stackman, stated that it is not the role of scientists to delay their research by investigating ethical considerations. d) Western civilization has been developed at a much greater speed by science than by Christianity (Burroughs, 1880). e) As noted by Bronowski, asking challenging questions, which may not always seem relevant or appropriate, scientists can make important findings [9] (where [9] refers to the bibliography, in this case Bronowski J: The Ascent Of Man. Boston, Little Brown and Co., 1973, p 153).

12.1

Ex 1: suggested answers: 1 b [Cut the first eight words], 2 d, 3 c, 4 d, 5 b [Cut: *An observation on*], 6 a, 7 d

13.1

Ex 2: The results, i.e. did they actually manage to convert plastic into gold? This is a surprisingly frequent mistake that researchers make when writing their abstracts.

16.1

Ex 2: The principle problem is that some sentences contain more than one step, and that these steps are not always in chronological order - if you followed the steps correctly the bomb would explode immediately (if there was a trigger device on the lid) or just before the last step! The enumeration of the steps through the use of *first*, *second* and *finally*, is in this case not helpful as in fact there are six steps. The phrases are sometimes unnecessarily verbose (e.g. *the cutting of the green wire … be subjected to a cutting process*).

18.1

Ex 1: Discussion B is the most effective.

20.1

Ex 2: 1) In this **context** the **underlying** problem is that **from** an economic point the process is too **costly, which** would thus make it prohibitive to purchase. 2) This is the first time that such a result **has been** found in the **field** of **n**uclear **p**hysics. 3) The samples were **weighed** (av. 5 g) then subjected to Smith's method (**Smith et al.,** 2017) and each sample was associated **to** one of three categories. 4) **In addition, in the final phase** the micro-thin **strips** of tissue **were** examined under the **microscope**. 5) The influence of the *color* of the structure was found to have a greater influence **than** the type of **behavior**.

18.2   English for Presentations at International Conferences

3.1

Note that a script can be found in 3.15.

5.1

The factoids are all taken from reliable sources, but these sources do not explain how the statistics were established and how many studies have reached the same conclusion. The first second and seventh factoids to me seem quite random, i.e. very different percentages could have been given, and readers would still have believed them. The other factoids would seem to be more reliable as one can imagine how to set up a study to prove or disprove them.

15.1

The rather bizarre factoids are supposed to be on the theme of self-assessment, or in this case the inability we often have to understand our own weaknesses (Factoid 1), misguided beliefs (Factoid 2), and plain ignorance (Factoids 3 and 4). Students should be able to analyse such incapacity by answering the questions in 15.1.2

18.3   English for Academic Correspondence

2.1

4) Dear Saxon Baines 5) Dear Tao Pei Lin (both 4) and 5) are explained in subsection 2.4 of the Correspondence book)

4.1

Ex 1: Email 1: formal; Email 2: inappropriate mix of formal and informal, the salutation is wrong; Email 3: reasonably formal, but is asking a lot of Prof Smartars; Email 4: begins OK but ends very informally and inappropriately; Email 5: the writer already knows the recipient but the tone is a little too friendly for a student / prof relationship; Email 6: inappropriate salutation; unnecessary double salutation at the end, *waiting for your reply* is not a usual English expression, use of *You* wrong.

Ex 2: 1) With regard / reference to your … 2) I would like to inform you … 3) Please find attached … 4) I will telephone you next week to tell you what time I'll be arriving / to give you my arrival times. 5) Thank you for any help you may be able to give me. 6) I apologise for not having replied sooner. / Please accept my apologies.

6.1

The Factoids are a little strange and I cannot imagine that they represent reality but should be a possible discussion point for your lesson. In any case, they all come from the same source - see the notes to Chapter 6 in the Sources of the Factoids at the end of the Correspondence book.

Here are possible improvements to the two emails:

> Dear Professor Skrotun,
>
> How are you? You may remember that you were my supervisor two years ago. I am planning to apply for PhD in Management and I was wondering whether you could provide me with a reference letter. I have a deadline for submission of 30 March, so if you could kindly send it to me by 26 March it would be much appreciated.
>
> I very much enjoyed my time under your supervision, particular the advice you once gave me about writing research proposals - it has proved very useful, thank you.
>
> Best regards
>
> Dear Professor Skrotun
>
> I would like to apply for the Master's program in Business Informatics at your department for the next winter semester.
>
> The reasons I would like to apply are: …
>
> I also think I might be able to benefit your research team through my knowledge of …
>
> I look forward to hearing from you.
>
> Amit Khan

12.1

The two letters are not likely to enamor the editor because they both single out one reviewer for heavy criticism (letter A by implication, letter B explicitly). Students need to remember that i) by making such criticisms they are not helping their cause (i.e. to get their paper published), ii) the editor may have chosen the reviewers, so if the authors undermine the reviewers they are by extension casting doubt on the editor's ability to choose suitable reviewers, iii) they make annoy the editor so much that he / she will reject the paper anyway. The best way to improve the two letters is to delete the two paragraphs completely, and start from scratch in a positive way.

13.1

The solution to this exercise is explained in 13.2.

18.4   English for Interacting on Campus

1.1

The solution to Ex 1 is at the end of Sect. 1.1

3.1

How to address a professor is an important issue, which will also impact on how your students address you. Ex 2 is a good way of discussing this issue, and for you to let your students know how you yourself wish to be addressed face to face. The issue of how students address profs in emails is covered in Chapter 4.

4.1

Ex 2 1) written in inappropriate manner (too direct, use of imperatives); 2) email not right form of communication; 3) fine; 4) mix of rude and overfriendly; 5) fine; 6) cheeky approach but probably OK.

5.1

This unit deals with how students participate in class - so it is relevant for your own lessons too. Use the opportunity to outline how you expect your students to participate during your class, and the differences in approach between students from different cultures. Be careful with Ex 5, some students might find it too contentious.

6.1

I got the factoids from an email that went viral in the early 2000s. It was definitely written tongue in cheek, but I suspect that many of the comments are not far from the truth - I am British myself, so I recognize them! The key issue in this unit is that students take on board that the main reason that they do not understand native English speakers, is because they (i.e. the students) were simply not born in an English speaking country. More often than not it is the fault of the native speaker who speaks in a way that may even be incomprehensible to fellow native speakers (this is dealt with in Chapter 9).

7.1

Many people are inept at holding a conversation, even in their native tongue. Exercises 2 and 3 are designed to teach students how to converse successfully, irrespectively of what language they are speaking in.

9.1

Ex 1 point 2. The text is designed to imitate the warblings of a native speaker. Maybe I'm getting old, but I have minimal tolerance for this type of communication which seems to be exclusive to native English speakers. There is no equivalent of this, for instance, among native speakers of Italian, who sound much more eloquent. Ex 2: be careful of this exercise with students of certain nationalities.

10.1

The keys to the exercise are at the end of the section.

12.1

The answers are quite subjective and obviously depend on the student's native tongue. I am also assuming that if students use Google Translate (GT), that they will check the translated text. Text 1) manual (maybe GT), not literal because of set phrases that may not have an equivalent in student's own language (e.g. *would you mind, thanks in advance*). Text 2) literal or GT. Text 3) GT would probably be OK as it is quite formal language with no colloquialisms or strange terms. Text 4) This is a complex (grammatically) and rather bizarre text, so a manual translation would be best. BTW: Kudnt Givadam = I could not give a damn. I am obsessed by selfie sticks because I live very close to one of the world's most photographed buildings - the leaning tower of Pisa. The amount of litter dropped in the beautiful square around the tower increased massively when selfie sticks were introduced, as did the number of eyes that got poked and bodies prodded.

Chapter 19
Writing Course: Lesson Plans

The part in the box = what you need to read in preparation for the lesson. You can then select from the various exercises suggested.

§ *English for Writing Research Papers*

✪ *English for Presentations at International Conferences*

$ *English for Academic Research: Writing Exercises*

¥ *English for Academic Research: Grammar Exercises*

⌘ *English for Academic Research*

\# This book

§ 2.4 = Section 2.4 of *English for Writing Research Papers*

Ss: students

PW: pair work / group work

FB: feedback

19.1 Lesson 1 Preparation; Readability & Empathy; Breaking up long sentences

§ English for Writing Research Papers: Chapters 1 and 4

$ English for Academic Research: Writing Exercises - Chapter 3

This book: Chapters 2 and 6

1. Introduce yourself: see #17.7, 17.8

2. Factoids from § Chapter 1.

3. Introduce the concept of readability based on the content of a poor email (see # 7.5 for an example, or show your own example).

4. PW: Ss discuss how / why papers get rejected from an English point of view. Get FB and add your own comments (# 2.6-2.12).

5. One key barrier to readability is long unwieldy sentences (§ Chapter 4). Discuss why people tend to write in long sentences (# Chapter 6). Then show Ss how long sentences are typically created and underline the benefits of short sentences (§ 4.2).

6. So far in the lesson Ss won't have done any writing, and much of the focus will have been on you. So, at this point, you can set one or more exercises from $ Chapter 3.

7. § 4.1

8. If you still have time available, go through the various benefits of writing short sentences. You can summarize the points made in § 4.3, 4.4

Read the whole of § Chapter 4, or just § 4.16 and § 4.17.

19.2   Lesson 2 More on short sentences, Word Order

§ English for Writing Research Papers: Chapters 2 and 4

$ English for Academic Research: Writing Exercises - Chapter 2

¥ English for Academic Research: Grammar Exercises - Chapter 14

This book: Chapter 6

1. Get Ss to discuss together the three most important things that they learned from the previous lesson.

2. One of the three most important things is likely to be 'use short sentences'. It is crucial that Ss don't take this concept too literally, you don't want them to write every sentence just with 10-15 words! So ask them if they think it is acceptable to only write in short sentences and whether they think that short sentences are an intrinsic element of the English language. Give them your own FB by relating some of the info contained in # Chapter 6 (unless you already did this in Lesson 1).

3. Set one or more exercises from $ Chapter 3.

4. Introduce the topic of word order. In my courses, I show Ss a simple slide that says 'black and white' (see the fourth factoid in § Chapter 2). Then I ask Ss whether they say *black and white* in their own language or *white and black* (e.g. *bianco e negro*). By my reckoning, about half the world says *b&w* and the other half *w&b*. In any case, the idea is that a simple concept like *black and white* is not expressed in the same way all over the world, and that the order we put words in is by no means obvious.

5. Factoids from § Chapter 2.

6. §2.1.

7. Gradually go through the rest of § Chapter 2, with regular exercises from $ Chapter 2.

8. If you have time spare, then you might like to discuss the pros and cons of Google Translate with your Ss (# Chapter 5)

§ Chapter 13

19.3 Lesson 3 Abstracts

§ English for Writing Research Papers: Chapter 13

$ English for Academic Research: Writing Exercises - 10.1

¥ English for Academic Research: Grammar Exercises - Chapter 19

⌘ English for Academic Research: Vocabulary Exercises - 8.1-8.3

This book: 15.2

1. The first two lessons were on general writing skills (thinking about the reader, putting words in the most logical order). I believe that it is best not to overload Ss with too many writing skills at the same time, so in my third lesson I move on to something more concrete - Abstracts. You might think it would be more logical to start with the first item of a paper, i.e. the title. But titles tie in nicely with talking about conciseness and redundancy (Lesson 4).

2. Factoids for § Chapter 13 - Ss decide which one they find the most amusing / strange.

3. §13.1.

4. Much of how the rest of the lesson progresses will be dictated by the particular field that your Ss are in. As mentioned in §Chapter 13, the type of abstract your students write depends on their subject and on the journal. So, clearly, you need to find out this information before or at the beginning of the course. In any case, the main focus will be i) on the structure of the abstract and what readers expect to find, and ii) tense usage.

5. To practice tense usage in Abstracts, use exercises from ¥ Chapter 19, and to practice the typical phrases, use ⌘ 8.1-8.3.

Students email you an abstract based on the structure you have taught them during the lesson (the structure is summarized in $10.1). This abstract can either be written from scratch or be adapted from an abstract that they have already written. The abstract should preferably be on their research topic, but if they wish, they can invent their own topic (#15.2).

The abstract should also have a title (you can then use these titles in Lesson 5).

Inform them that you will be using a selection of the abstracts during your lessons, so that by sending you an abstract, they are implicitly giving you their permission to use it in class.

19.4   Lesson 4 More on Abstracts, Redundancy / Conciseness

§ English for Writing Research Papers: Chapter 5

$ English for Academic Research: Writing Exercises - Chapter 5

This book: 7.2, 8.9

1. Before the lesson, collate the abstracts that you have received from your students into one file. Choose two or three to discuss in class. NB: If there is one abstract that contains a lot of redundancy, keep this one for Step 5 in this lesson (you will need to think of ways to analyze it - see # 7.2). Use highlight colors to remind you of the points you want to bring to your students' attention. For instance, you could use yellow for vocabulary issues, blue for grammar, green for structure etc.

2. Go through the abstracts and mistakes that you have selected.

3. § Factoids Chapter 5 + § 5.1.

4. A key point to get across in this lesson is that reducing the number of words not only increases readability, but crucially, it also reduces the number of mistakes that your Ss will make - clearly, the less they write, the fewer mistakes they will make (§ 5.2). You can also tell Ss it is actually very satisfying to delete words and phrases (even entire sections) from one's written work!

5. Show one abstract written by your students that contains a lot of redundancy. Analyze it in the ways suggested in #7.2). Alternatively, go through an email that you have received (either from someone in the class or someone completely different - see #8.9)

6. In the rest of the lesson, go through the points made in § Chapter 5, making use of exercises from $ Chapter 5.

Not all students will have sent you their Abstracts, so encourage them to do so. Those who already have sent abstracts, but which you did not look at during the class, can have the opportunity to revise them and send them again.

19.5   Lesson 5 Titles

§ English for Writing Research Papers: Chapter 12

$ English for Academic Research: Writing Exercises 5.4

¥ English for Academic Research: Grammar Exercises - Chapter 18

1. At some point during this lesson, you should go over the abstracts that you have received, but this does not necessarily have to be done at the beginning of the lesson.

2. § Factoids, §5.1

3. Refer back to the previous lesson on being concise. Tell Ss that one area where they should not be too concise is when writing the titles. A title that is too concise (through the use of a string of nouns) may well be indecipherable to the reader. The best way to prove this is to show Ss examples of titles that are too concise and that don't make sense. You should be able to find some examples of such titles from those that your Ss have sent you with their abstracts. Go through the titles and, as a class, try to elicit what is missing in these titles. Typically, the missing features are: prepositions, articles and verbs.

4. Teach the points covered in §12.2-12.4, 12.6. This will involve teaching some grammar, particularly the usage of articles.

5. Get Ss to write their own title based on the points you have just covered.

6. If possible, as soon as Ss have finished their title, they should email it to you. If the email option is not possible, when you notice that a student has finished, get them to write their title on the whiteboard. Depending on the size of the whiteboard, several Ss can be writing at the same time. Six or seven titles should be enough.

7. Number the titles that the Ss have written. Get the class to vote on which they think are the best titles. Ask them to explain why. Don't focus too much on the poor titles, you don't want any Ss to lose face. In your analysis, focus on: i) comprehensibility (does it need more prepositions to become clearer? could it do with some verbs to become less stodgy?), ii) whether the title manages to encapsulate the purpose and results of the whole paper, iii) whether it contains pointless adjectives like *innovative* and *novel* (see §12.7), and iv) whether it contains any redundancy.

8. With regard to redundancy and usage of articles, get students to do $ 5.4 and ¥ 18.1-18-3.

Students send you their revised titles.

19.6 Lesson 6: Introductions, Review of the Literature, Paraphrasing and Plagiarism

§ English for Writing Research Papers: Chapters 14, 15, 10, 11

$ English for Academic Research: Writing Exercises - 10.2-10.5, 7

¥ English for Academic Research: Grammar Exercises - Chapter 20

⌘ English for Academic Research: Vocabulary Exercises - 8.4-8.5, 8.9-8.10

This book: 8.3, 15.10, 15.3

1. Writing the Introduction and Review of the Literature require various skills that you will need to cover during this lesson. The main issues are structure (§14.5 and §14.7), tense usage (§14.8, §15.7), comparing and contrasting (§15.1 and §15.6), and plagiarism and paraphrasing (§ Chapter 11). However, it is not (in my opinion) your job to talk about how to do a literature search and what literature to select for coverage in an Introduction. Nor is it your job to explain how to avoid plagiarism (except by teaching students how to paraphrase). These are 'technical' issues that are language independent (i.e. the student would have to make the same decisions whether they were writing in English or in their own language). I would just focus on those elements that you feel able to teach and which also lend themselves to being taught: tenses, comparing, paraphrasing. The amount you decide to teach will obviously determine the number of lessons that you will dedicate to this.

2. Factoids from § Chapter 14, § 14.1.

3. Introduce tense usage, focus on the difference between the present simple and present perfect. You can use your normal EFL explanations, as these also apply here. Begin with simple contrastive exercises: ¥ 6.2, before moving on to more difficult exercises: ¥ Chapter 20.

4. Factoids from § Chapter 16, §15.1.

5. Highlighting (see #8.3 and #15.10) what makes your research innovative by comparing it with the work of other researchers is a key issue in the Introduction / Review of the Literature. Ensure that Ss understand that they need to make it clear at all times whose work they are referring to (their own or someone else's) and that they should be constructive (i.e. not say anything damning about the works of others). Possible exercises: ¥ 10.5 and ⌘ 8.4-8.5, 8.9-8.10.

6. Factoids from § Chapter 11, §11.1.

7. Try the exercise in #15.3 or the exercises in $ Chapter 7.

19.7   Lesson 7 Methods and Results

§ English for Writing Research Papers: Chapters 16, 17 and 8

$ English for Academic Research: Writing Exercises - 8, 10.6, 10.7

⌘ English for Academic Research: Vocabulary Exercises - 8.6, 8.1

¥ English for Academic Research: Grammar Exercises - Chapters 10, 21 and 22

This book: 1.3, 4.9, 15.4, 15.6

1. The Methods and Results are the easiest sections for Ss to write. If you realize at this point that you are behind schedule in your course, then you could simply opt not to go into these two sections, and just tell Ss to read § Chapters 16 and 17.

2. You may need to begin this lesson by completing what you didn't manage to cover in Lesson 6.

3. Factoids for § Chapter 16 – NB: these factoids contain a lot of medical vocabulary.

4. §16.1 (but skip if you are short of time).

5. The main point to focus on with the Methods is the use of active and passive. And this is a great opportunity to discuss the use of the passive - deal with any claims that it must be used throughout the paper in order to obtain objectivity (see # 1.3, 4.9) and the opposite end of the spectrum with those who say it is never needed. In the Methods, the passive is definitely needed and does not create ambiguity. Select suitable exercises from the exercise books listed in the box. For a more fun and non-academic exercise on writing about methods see # 15.4.

6. Factoids for § Chapter 17 - Given that, in Point 5, students will have done quite a few exercises, these 'misleading results' will offer a bit of light relief.

7. The key point with the Results is the selection of the results, and § 17.1 highlights this point nicely (see also # 15.6).

8. Another key point is that your Ss must understand the concept of 'showing, not telling' - this means they don't simply recount their results but they explain their importance (though this may be done more in the Discussion). This concept is illustrated in §17.10 and dealt with extensively in § Chapter 8. This aspect is also covered in Lesson 9.

19.8 Lesson 8 Ambiguity

§ English for Writing Research Papers: Chapter 6

$ English for Academic Research: Writing Exercises - Chapter 6

¥ English for Academic Research: Grammar Exercises - Chapters 1, 3, 5

⌘ English for Academic Research: Vocabulary Exercises - 2.15

This book: 7.4, 8.2

1. Writing unambiguously is another general writing skill (like using short sentences, avoiding redundancy). I choose to teach it in Lesson 8 for two reasons: i) to break up the sequence of lessons on the various sections of the paper - I think it is important to create variety in the course, and ii) ambiguity typically arises in the Discussion (Lesson 9).

2. The factoids to § Chapter 6 explain the real dangers of ambiguity, so these factoids are definitely worth your students looking at.

3. § 6.1 - the examples given here show the lighter side of ambiguity. Follow up with the exercise shown in #7.4.

4. Ambiguity is a massive problem in research writing: the key issues are poor word order (§ 6.2), usage of pronouns (§ 6.3), and the use of synonyms (§ 6.4-6.5). So you absolutely need to teach your Ss these points, the exercises in $ Chapter 6 should help.

5. Ambiguity is also caused by a whole host of grammar misusages: relative clauses, the -*ing* form, uncountable nouns, and articles. These are grammar areas which both you and your students will already be very familiar with. But what you and they may not be aware of is the chaos that misuse of these forms can create in a paper. So your job in this lesson is to explain how things can go wrong (§ 6.10-§ 6.16) and then to set related exercises from $ Chapter 6, from ¥ Chapters 1, 3, and 5, and from ⌘ 2.15.

6. Point 5 involves a lot of grammar explanations and exercises, so it is best peppered with some light relief. You can use some of the factoids from *English for Interacting on Campus* in order to provide some very brief discussions between one explanation / exercise and another.

§ Chapter 18

19.9   Lesson 9 Discussion - part 1

§ English for Writing Research Papers: Chapters 7, 9

$ English for Academic Research: Writing Exercises - 3.2-3.6, 8.6-8.8, 9.1-9.9

¥ English for Academic Research: Grammar Exercises - 23.1, 23.2

⌘ English for Academic Research: Vocabulary Exercises - 8.9-8.11

This book: 15.9-15.11

1. In my opinion, the success of a paper hinges on how well the Discussion is written. It is undoubtedly the hardest section to write well and is where most students come to grief - from every point of view: content, clarity and grammar. It is not a section that you can deal with in one lesson and hope for the best! Lesson 9 deals with clarifying who did what, and discussing limitations. Lesson 10 deals with hedging. If, earlier in the course, you have an inkling that you might not have enough time to cover everything, then cut Lesson 7 (Methods and Results) or Lesson 8 (Ambiguity), but not Lesson 9 or 10.

2. Begin by telling Ss what the key elements of a Discussion are: 1) highlight your unique contribution; 2) be clear what you did and what other authors have done; 3) discuss limitations of your findings; 4) state what the applications and implications of your research are. Tell them you are going to deal with these four points one by one.

3. §18.1. You may have covered some aspects of 'highlighting your unique contribution' in the Results. In any case, one way to illustrate this is outlined in # 15.10. Exercises: $ 8.6-8.8.

4. Get Ss to write down 1-3 results that their research has achieved that have contributed to the state of the art in their field. See # 15.9 for a suggestion on how to do this.

5. Show Ss a slide that is completely full of text with no white space. The idea is to show how layout is crucial when you want to highlight the importance of something. Basically, the shorter the sentence and paragraph and the more surrounding white space, the more readers' attention will be drawn to what is shown. Exercises: $ 3.2-3.6

6. One of the most annoying things for readers of a Discussion is not being clear about whether the author is talking about their own work or someone else's (§ Chapter 7). It's very easy to tell Ss that they must make a clear distinction between their research and that of others, but to really bring the message home, you need to show them an example of where such a distinction is not clear - § 7.1 and § 7.6 show clear examples of this.

7. Discussing Ss' limitations and those of other researchers is not something students find easy - but it is quite fun to teach! Begin with the factoids in § Chapter 9 and then do § 9.1. As usual, you need to show model examples of this to your students (see § 9.5, 9.7, 9.8, 19.7). A fun way to get students to write about their limitations is illustrated in # 15.11.

§ Chapter 19

19.10   Lesson 10 Discussion - part 2, Conclusions

§ English for Writing Research Papers: Chapters 10, 19

$ English for Academic Research: Writing Exercises 9.10-9.16, 10.8-10.13

This book: 15.8, 15.12

¥ English for Academic Research: Grammar Exercises - 23.3-23.5, Chapter 24

1. Hedging is a key aspect in the Discussion (see § Chapter 10). Start with § 10.1 (for more details on the Carlsberg campaign, see # 15.8).

2. Exercises $ 9.10-9.16.

3. The Conclusions tend to be written at the very last minute and thus tend to be ineffective. Instead, you need to drum it into Ss that the Conclusions are a key element to the paper as they <u>may</u> be what the editor and reviewers read last (readers of the journal, on the other hand, may not even read them). Consequently, an editor's acceptance of a paper may be heavily influenced by the last words they read. Begin with § 19.1.

4. A typical problem with the Conclusions is that they look like a cut and paste from the Abstract. To learn how to illustrate this point, see # 15.12.

5. Exercises $ 10.10, 10.11.

6. The Conclusions are not just a summary, but should give a clear idea of the importance of the work, and where it might go next. Students may not have actually reached any conclusions about their research, so you need an alternative topic for them to draw conclusions about - see $ 10.13.

7. This is the last lesson of the course, so it needs its own conclusion. Ask Ss to write down the top three things they have learned from the course.

8. PW: Ss compare their top three.

9. Show a summary slide of what you consider to be the most important things that they should have learned, e.g. empathy, reader-oriented writing, clarity, no redundancy, key findings highlighted, good structure of each part of paper (particularly the Abstract), final spell check.

10. Thank the class.

Recommend that students read the final chapter in *English for Writing Research Papers* (Chapter 20) which covers all the things they should look for when they 'think' that they have finished the writing process.

Chapter 20
Presentations Course: Lesson Plans

The part in the box = what you need to read in preparation for the lesson

§ *English for Writing Research Papers*

✪ *English for Presentations at International Conferences*

$ *English for Academic Research: Writing Exercises*

¥ *English for Academic Research: Grammar Exercises*

⌘ *English for Academic Research*

✪ 2.4 = Section 2.4 of *English for Presentations at International Conferences*

Ss: students

PW: pair work / group work

FB: feedback

20.1   Lesson 1 Good vs bad presentations, the importance of presentations

> ✪ *English for Presentations at International Conferences:* Chapters 1, 2, 13
>
> # This book: Chapters 9, 10 and 12, 17.7, 17.8

Note: This first lesson covers a lot of ground, and there may in fact be enough material to cover more than one lesson.

1. Introduce yourself. To establish your credibility, tell Ss what experience you have had in teaching / giving presentations.

2. PW: discuss what you dislike about other people's presentations (e.g. too much text, no images) - (✪ 1.5).

3. FB: write their 'dislikes' on the board and add any of your own (✪ 1.5). Or show them a pre-prepared slide with a list of typical 'dislikes'. You will find that Ss are very good at identifying what is wrong with other people's presentations, so you can congratulate them and tell them that they don't even need to do the course! Of course what you will quickly find is that recognizing what is a poor presentation doesn't actually stop anyone from giving a poor presentation. By creating this list of dislikes, you will be able to refer to them when a student makes such a mistake and they will instantly know what you are talking about.

4. Tell them what you think makes a good presentation (✪ 1.4).

5. Explain how the course is going to work (# 17.7).

6. Ask 'why is it important to give presentations'. They can read ✪ 1.2 and 1.3.

7. Ask 'what fears do you have of giving presentations?' (# 10.4, # 10.5, and ✪ Chapter 13).

8. Ask do you like to give presentations?'. Then ask one or more Ss who responded 'yes' to come to the front and introduce themselves.

9. Give constructive feedback, focusing <u>only</u> on the positive (# Chapter 12).

10. PW: analyze the presentation/s you have just seen. Go around listening to their feedback, then summarize it without specifically mentioning the name of the presenter. At this point in the course, it is essential not to undermine anyone's confidence.

Last thing: Ask them if anyone watches TED and what the benefits are. Then tell them that before the next lesson they should investigate the ted.com website.

> Ss investigate ted.com, but <u>without</u> reading Chapter 2 in the Presentations book.

20.2   Lesson 2 TED

> ✪ *English for Presentations at International Conferences:* Chapter 2 and 19.5.
>
> # This book: Chapter 11

Note: the initial part of this lesson is dedicated to TED. But the idea is not to use all the presentations given in ✪ 2.2 - 2.6 (i.e. the chapter dedicated to TED) of the Presentations book. Instead, you can use these in future lessons (for example one every other lesson when you have extra time available).

1. 2.1

2. Show Jay Walker's TED talk: *English Mania* (✪ 19.5).

3. PW: impressions of *English Mania.*

4. FB ensure that you cover all the points made in # 11.7.

5. 2.8, 2.9: students either read these subsections or you summarize them.

6. Introduce the topic of giving feedback (# Chapter 12). Explain that, as part of academic and professional life, we are frequently required to give feedback (elicit examples). Then get them to read ✪ 2.12.

7. Note: You can actually generate an entire lesson around giving feedback (# Chapter 12).

8. Choose some more students to introduce themselves without slides. Ss then practice giving feedback on these presentations, first as PW, and then by you eliciting FB from the whole class.

> Ask Ss to email you the first three slides of a presentation or in any case not more than will take them 60 seconds to present. This can be either a presentation they have already given, or one created from scratch. Explain that you will choose a few students next lesson to present their slides. Don't expect everyone to email you a presentation. In my experience, about 1 in 4 students or less respond to this requirement in time for the next lesson.

20.3   Lesson 3 Writing a script

⊗ *English for Presentations at International Conferences:* Chapter 3

1. Choose students to present their work. Explain that you are going to interrupt them after 60 seconds (or less), and it doesn't matter whether they have finished or not. Make it clear that interrupting them does not mean that you think they are doing a terrible job!

2. As they present, if possible, write down what they are saying or at least parts of it. When they have finished, write these phrases on the board. Ss have to decide whether these sentences actually add value or not. What normally happens is that people tend to improvise their introductions and thus give a lot of unnecessary info using an incredible number of words.

3. Introduce the following ideas:

   1) it is best to write down what you are going to say

   2) it makes sense to start the preparation of a presentation by writing down what you want to say and then developing slides on the basis of this, rather than creating the slides and then deciding what to say about each slide.

4. Now explain that you are going to get them to prepare their presentations in a different way: i) deciding what is absolutely necessary to say, ii) writing slides for this.

5. Explain the benefits of writing down what they are going to say: ⊗ 3.2, 3.12, 13.6, 15.2.

6. If in their academic career your students have <u>not</u> prepared a presentation before or they haven't got a presentation which is suitable for this course, then ask them to read the Factoids and then to do ⊗ 3.1 and ⊗ 3.2 in pairs (a possible example of a script is in ⊗ 3.15).

7. If you opt not to do ⊗ 3.1, at least get your Ss to think about the questions in ⊗ 3.1.3.

8. If you have time, talk about marking up the script (⊗ 3.13). This will introduce the issue of pronunciation, stress, and intonation.

Read ⊗ 14.2-14.11.

Ask students to send you a script of the first 30 seconds of their presentation, they can consult the 'Useful Phrases' in Chapter ⊗ 20. If they have time, they can mark it up as suggested in ⊗ 3.13. Tell them that next lesson they will be presenting their 30 seconds either with or without slides, so they will need to prepare for the fact that you may get them to do their 30 seconds without slides.

20.4   Lesson 4 Pronunciation

✪ *English for Presentations at International Conferences:* 14 and 19.4

\# This book: Chapter 13

1. Show Ss how ivona.com (\# 13.4) works. Have fun by typing silly phrases in and getting students to listen!

2. PW: 14.1

3. Reiterate the importance of reasonably good pronunciation (\# 13.1).

4. Select one or two students to present their 30 seconds - either with or without slides. As you listen, note down any pronunciation errors.

5. PW: discuss presenters' performance.

6. Elicit general FB on the presenters' performance, but without focusing on pronunciation.

7. Now move the focus to pronunciation. Discuss ways that they can learn the pronunciation of individual words (in addition to using sites such as Ivona) - see \# 13.5 for a possible approach.

8. Ask Ss to write down 2-3 technical words that they will need in their presentations and whose pronunciation they are unsure of.

9. Go round the class and ask each student to say one of their words. If you understand the word, write it on the board, then devise a way to help them how to remember the correct pronunciation \# 13.5). Get the whole class to repeat all the words on the board. If you don't understand the words students say, ask the student to spell the word out.

10. Repeat Steps 4 and 5.

11. Show the first minute or so of Philippe Starck's 'Design and Destiny' TED talk (see \# 11.6). Elicit feedback on Starck's level of English, particularly his presentation (use the script available on TED to point out particular words that Starck mispronounces). Ask students to decide whether Starck's poor pronunciation has a really negative impact or not. Decide what makes Starck's pronunciation understandable even though it is clearly wrong – basically, he speaks reasonably slowly so that his mispronunciation is not so pronounced (so to speak). Also, highlight how his enthusiasm and humor clearly makes up for any mistakes in his English. Starck's presentation, in my opinion, is a vital part of your course because it highlights that you can still give a great presentation without speaking great English. This should be very reassuring for your students.

12. If there is time, repeat Steps 4 and 5.

13. Show Ursus Wehrli's presentation and point out the comments I have made in ✪ 19.4 (and on the TED site itself where I have commented on the structure of Wehrli's presentation and how it is actually a parody of a typical scientific presentation).

Read Chapters 4 and 5. Ask students to email you any complete presentations that they happen to have. Tell them to be prepared to present the first five to six slides.

20.5   Lesson 5 Slides

1. Choose three or four students to do the beginning of their presentations.

2. Interrupt a student when he / she has completed the beginning of his / her presentation. Move on to the next presentation without any comment.

3. PW: for each presenter, Ss analyze which type of beginning (see ✪ 6.3-6.13) the presenter used. Which ones were the most effective? Why were the other ones less effective? (This will be covered more in depth in Lesson 6).

4. PW: ✪ 4.1

5. Change the focus to the text of the slides. Show some slides from those students who presented in Step 2 above.

6. As a whole group, decide the pros and cons of each slide in the light of what they discussed in ✪ 4.1.

7. PW: ✪ 5.1

8. Repeat Steps 5 and 6, but this time focusing on the visual / aesthetic quality of the slides.

9. PW: Get Ss to upload their presentations onto their laptops. Ss swap laptops and go through their partner's presentation, looking for one or more slides that need improving in terms of the text and / or visual quality. Ss make a duplicate of the slides in question, and then they try to improve them. They can either work on their own slides (i.e. the improved ones suggested by their partner) or on their partner's slides.

10. Choose two or three students to present their 'before and after' slides, and see whether the class agree that the new slides are now more effective. You can do this either by getting your students to email their slides to you and then show them on your laptop or by them connecting their own laptop to the projector.

11. As a whole class, get students to discuss what presentation software they use (and would recommend) and what slide-producing / copying sites they use.

Ss revise their title as suggested in ✪ 4.2-4.6 and ✪ 12.2. They email you their revised slides.

20.6 Lesson 6 Beginnings

> ✪ *English for Presentations at International Conferences:* Chapter 6, 4.2-4.6
>
> # This book: 11.6

1. Get students to read the *Ten Facts or Fiction?* section at the beginning of Chapter 6. Elicit feedback on whether they are true or false. As explained in 6.1, they are all true.

2. ✪ 6.1

3. PW: discuss what you should and shouldn't do at the beginning of a presentation (✪ 6.2).

4. Select two or three Ss whose presentations begin in very different ways (you will obviously need to check the presentations you have received for homework). Get them to begin their presentations, but inform them you will interrupt them at a certain point.

5. Interrupt a student when he / she has completed the beginning of his / her presentation. Move on to the next presentation without any comment.

6. PW: discuss the pros and cons of the presentations you have just seen.

7. Show two or three TEDs whose beginnings are quite different, but none of which begin by the person introducing him / herself (which in any case is very rare on TED).

8. FB: discuss what the TEDs had in common, i.e. getting straight to the point without an introduction by the person, and in what ways they were different.

9. Decide whether Ss could opt for a TED style presentation at a conference (✪ 2.8). Deal with any objections to using the TED style (#11.6).

10. Discuss the content and style of any slides used by the TED presenters in Point 9.

11. Ask the class if they remember the titles of any of the presentations they saw earlier in the lesson (Step 4). Go over the points made in ✪ 4.2-4.6, and see if students can come up with an alternative title for their presentation, and alternative titles for their individual slides.

> Ss revise the beginning of their presentation by adopting one of the strategies outlined in ✪ 6.3-6.13.
>
> Read 10.2-10.8 and prepare one Conclusions slide (see 'Note' at the beginning of Lesson 7).

20.7   Lesson 7 Conclusions and Q&A

✪ *English for Presentations at International Conferences:* Chapters 10 and 11

Note: It may seem strange at this stage in the course to do a lesson on the Conclusions and the Q&A session. However, these are two critical elements that most students find difficult to handle. On the other hand, talking about their Methods and Results, and discussing them is the most technical part of the presentation, which Ss thus tend to be the most confident about and have less difficulty with. Thus, I would tend to leave the Methods, Results and Discussions to nearer the end of the course, so as to ensure that you will have already covered the Conclusions and the Q&A session, which are often key to a successful presentation. Of course, you may find this to be illogical and you may prefer to cover the various sections of a presentation in the order that they would actually appear in a presentation - this is entirely up to you.

1. Using their laptops, Ss do ✪ 10.1. 'Standard' (and I believe ineffective slides) are those that simply say 'Thank you' or 'Thank you for your attention'. Audiences will have seen hundreds such slides before, they thus have no impact. 'Standard and effective' may include the words *thank you*, but will also include an image (preferably something that summarizes the whole presentation or relates back to an early slide) plus the contact details. Slides that are 'original and effective' will tend to be anything that is not included in the other two categories, and which will act as a vivid reminder of the presentation and of the presenter as well as being an encouragement to contact the presenter during the conference itself. In any case, there are plenty of ideas for good Conclusions in ✪ 10.3-10.6.

2. PW: Ss present their Conclusions slides to each other and give each other feedback.

3. Choose some of the best Conclusions slides and get the corresponding Ss to present them to the rest of the class.

4. FB on Step 3.

5. ✪ 11.2.2

6. The biggest fear that Ss have is that they won't understand the question. You can simulate this yourself as follows. i) Say something fast but unintelligible in English. If you are good at imitating accents, say something using a strong regional accent. ii) Ask the whole group what they would say in reply. iii) Focus on a student who says 'Repeat please' and repeat what you said before in exactly the same way. iv) Ask for more solutions and focus on a who student who says 'Can you repeat more slowly please?' and repeat what you said before in a very slowed down but still unintelligible way. v) Ask for more solutions, elicit the type of response outlined in ✪ 11.7.

7. Brainstorm the class on how to predict the questions that they might be asked (✪ 11.7).

8. Get the class to write down two or three questions to ask you about your life / country / teaching experience etc.

9. Choose students at random to ask you questions. Use your answers to the questions to illustrate the strategies given in ✪ 11.4-11.10.

10. Choose a student who hasn't done a presentation recently to do their presentation. Give them a time limit of five minutes.

11. PW: students come up with two questions to ask the presenter from Step 10.

12. Pick random Ss to ask the presenter from Step 10 questions. The presenter should answer them following the guidelines given in ✪ 11.6.

13. Repeat Steps 10-12.

14. Throughout the course you should keep practicing the Q&A. One way to do this is if you have a multinational class. You can choose someone of a particular nationality and get the class to ask him / her questions about his / her country. This can be done either as a whole class activity, or in groups. The key thing is that the person being questioned (i.e. the presenter) is standing in front of the questioners, who should preferably be located as far as possible from the presenter in order to simulate what it's like at a conference in a big room. For an alternative way to do this see Step 7 in Lesson 8.

Read Chapter 11 for consolidation. Ask Ss to send you revised presentations.

20.8 Lesson 8 Methodology, Results and Discussion; Socializing at a conference

✪ *English for Presentations at International Conferences:* Chapters 9, 10 and 16

\# This book: 12.4

Note: This lesson can be done either earlier in the course (i.e. before Lesson 7) or later in the course.

1. Choose Ss to present their Methodology, Results and Discussion slides.

2. PW: Ss assess the presentations given in Step 1.

3. Group FB, including your own FB.

4. Discuss the presentation of statistics by giving your own examples (# 12.4).

5. Repeat Steps 1-3.

6. Do Steps 10-12 from Lesson 7.

7. Choose one or two Ss who are of a minority nationality (for example, if you are teaching in Germany and the majority of students are German, choose a couple of non-Germans). Get the rest of the class to write down five questions to ask the chosen students. The two 'minority' Ss can think of questions to ask Ss from their host country. For an alternative way to do this see Step 14 in Lesson 7.

8. Stop them after one minute and find out how many people have managed to think of five questions. What you may discover is that many Ss have little curiosity regarding the countries of the other Ss. Tell them that, later in the lesson, you are going to discuss why curiosity is so important. For now, ask the 'minority' Ss to stand at the front of the class, and ask the class to ask their questions. The 'minority' Ss should try and answer the questions as they practiced at Step 12 in Lesson 7.

9. Going back to the importance of curiosity, explain that the reason for going to conferences is not simply to present but just as importantly (if not more so) to network.

10. Factoids at the beginning of ✪ Chapter 16 and then ✪ 16.1.

11. PW: Role play possible meetings at a conference. You will need to divide the class into two groups: S1s and S2s.. S1s play themselves. S2s pretend to be an important professor who the S1s would like to collaborate / work with.

12. Choose one pair from Step 10 to do their role play.

Chapters 16 and 17, if you want to focus more on networking. Alternatively, Chapters 12 and 15. Encourage Ss to send you more presentations as you will need them in Step 10 of Lesson 9.

20.9   Lesson 9 Attracting and maintaining audience attention

> ✪ *English for Presentations at International Conferences:* Chapters 12 and 15
>
> # This book: 8.3

Note: If you want to work more on networking / socializing, repeat Step 10 from Lesson 8 (but with different partners) and Step 11. On the other hand, if you want to focus on keeping audiences happy and the importance of rehearsing, then start with Step 1 below.

1. PW: ✪ 12.1.
2. FB on ✪ 12.1.4.
3. Ask Ss to re-read ✪ 12.15 (a summary of how to keep the audience's attention). In pairs or groups, get them to decide on the top three ways that they themselves would feel comfortable using.
4. FB on Step 3.
5. Show two TEDs (e.g. ✪ 2.3 or ✪ 2.6, or any other TED that you think would be appropriate). I would show a max of four minutes of each TED, otherwise the whole exercise might take too long.
6. PW: Ss compare the two TEDs that you have shown in terms of how they keep, or fail to keep, the audience's attention. Get Ss to assess which of the points in ✪ 12.15 the TED speakers used.
7. If you feel you need to consolidate more on Step 6, try this exercise: Ss discuss their professors and decide which of the techniques in ✪ 12.15 their profs use or should use!
8. To create a parallel with writing a research paper, compare how findings are highlighted in the Discussion of a paper and what techniques are common to both papers and presentations (# 8.3).
9. PW: ✪ 15.1 - points 1 and 2.
10. Discuss the idea of using a smartphone during a presentation (✪ 15.2).
11. Choose some Ss to do their presentation.
12. FB on Ss' presentations with particular regard to ✪ 15.4-15.7 and ✪ 15.9.
13. Choose another student. When they are ready to start, disconnect the laptop from the projector and say that they have to do the presentation without slides (✪ 15.10). This is actually really good practice and proves that the presenter gets the audience's undivided attention (i.e. not divided between looking at the slides and looking at the presenter).
14. Choose more students to do presentations with slides.
15. FB using the form in ✪ 15.12 and ✪ 15.13.

> Chapter 18 - if you want to focus on Posters. Ask for volunteers to bring in posters for the next lesson. If not, ask Ss to send you the final version of their presentation.

20.10   Lesson 10A Posters

Note: Posters are a great way for a student to do their 'first' presentation at an international conference. The best solution is for Ss to bring in their posters and simply display them on the walls.

1. Factoids, ✪ 18.1

2. Students then go round the walls and assess the various merits of the posters exposed. Then, as a group, you can elicit what the various dos and don'ts of presenting posters are.

3. Get a volunteer to present their poster.

4. Ss ask the 'volunteer' questions about his / her research.

5. Get feedback on the whole process.

6. If the lesson dries up before the allocated time, then get one or more students to do their presentation, and then follow up with the usual feedback.

Ask Ss to send you the final version of their presentation.

20.11   Lesson 10B Final lesson

Prepare some summary slides outlining what you think have been the key things Ss should have learned during the course.

1. Ask Ss to write down the top three things they have learned from the course.

2. PW: Ss compare their top three.

3. Show your summary slides.

4. Call on Ss to give the final version of the presentation.

5. PW and FB: Ss assess the presentations on the basis of whether they meet the criteria of the top three points they wrote down in Step 1.

6. Repeat steps 4 and 5.

7. Call on the best student to give his / her presentation.

8. Give your own FB on why the best student was the best. The idea is that the course should end with a good example.

9. As an alternative / In addition to Step 8, show a TED presentation (# Chapter 11) that fulfills the criteria that you outlined in your summary slide (Step 3).

10. Tell the students that they have made massive progress (you could even show some selected 'before and after' slides to prove your point), congratulate them, wish them luck for their future, and wait for their applause for you!

Appendix: Table of course components

The table on the following pages is designed to show you how the same element is covered over the entire series of books. This should enable you to plan your own syllabus from scratch, or to integrate exercises into the lesson plans outlined in Chapters 19 and 20.

Legend: 15 = chapter numbers; 15.1 = section 1 in Chapter 15; **PL1** = presentations lesson No. 1; **WL2** = writing skills lesson No. 2

	THIS BOOK, I.E. TEACHERS BOOK	PRESEN-TATIONS	WRITING RESEARCH PAPERS	WRITING EXERCISES	GRAMMAR, USE AND STYLE	GRAMMAR EXERCISES	VOCAB EXERCISES	CORRES-PONDENCE	CAMPUS	CVs
Abstracts	15.2, **WL3**, **WL4**	6	13	10.1, 10.10, 10.11		19, 25	8.1-8.3			6
Acknowledgements		4.5, 10.6	19.9	10.14-10.15		26	8.14			
Acronyms, abbreviations		4.11, 14.8		13.6, 16.13	22, 23				13.9	
Adverbs, adjectives					14		1		15.2	
Ambiguity	7.4, 8.2		6, 16.12	6.1-6.6	15			5.7		
Attention – gaining and keeping	8.3, **PL9**	12	8					1.2, 3.13, 5.5,		
Bio (personal biography)										13
Bullets		4.18-4.21	8.5, 16.9					3.11, 6.11		
Capitalization					24					
Comparative and superlative					19	15			15.4	
Conciseness	7.2, 8.9, **WL4**			3, 5	15					
Conclusions	8.4, 15.11, 15.12, **WL4**, **PL7**	10	19	10.10-10.13		24, 25				
Conditional forms					8	9		15.14-15.16	15.5	
Conversations and discussions									2.7, 2.14, 5, 7	
Cover letters						27.4-27.6	9.4	7		12

	THIS BOOK, I.E. TEACHERS BOOK	PRESENTATIONS	WRITING RESEARCH PAPERS	WRITING EXERCISES	GRAMMAR, USE AND STYLE	GRAMMAR EXERCISES	VOCAB EXERCISES	CORRESPONDENCE	CAMPUS	CVs
Criticizing	8.5		10, 18.11					4.10, 10		
Cultural differences	7.7, 16.7, 16.8	12.13						2.3-2.4	1.11, 7.15	
Definite article			6.16, 12.4		4	2			15.3	
Discussion	15.7-15.10, **WL9, WL10**		7, 8, 9, 18,	10.8-10.9		23	8.9-8.11			
Editors	2.6-2.12		1.12, 13.29, 20.12-20.14			27.1	9.13-9.15	13		
Emails	7.5					27.8-27.10	9	1,2,3,4,5,6	4	4.8
Figures and tables	12.4	5, 8.11, 9.4	8.7, 17.6, 17.9-17.11	4.19	27		8.12			
Formality (emails)								4		
Genitive					2	3				
Google Scholar	5.7									
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