SOUNDING ACADEMIC:
Tone and Audience in
Academic Writing

By: Angelia Caro Monroig
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ABSTRACT:

Being able to identify your target audience is essential when addressing the public in presentations, writing professional letters and even networking emails. In this clinic, you will learn about style, tone, diction and voice which are crucial components in writing. Through hands-on activities, you will learn to quickly determine your target audience and assure the adequate approach.
OBJECTIVES

• Planning and Selecting your audience for oral presentations
• Designing Approach for oral presentations
• Understanding and applying concepts of tone, diction, style in oral presentations
• Integrating concepts learned for academic writing purposes
• Hands on activity to practice
ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Learning to deliver an effective presentation is necessary skill to master both in college and later endeavors

1) Planning
2) Practicing
3) Presenting
PLANNING
IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF PLANNING

Organize your information into 3-5 categories

Design your presentation:

✓ **Introduction:** opening remarks, overview
✓ **Main body:** clear explanation of your categories with sufficient evidence, use analogies and stories to explain complicated subjects
✓ **Conclusion:** Summarize your points, refer to future actions if needed and allow the public to ask questions
KNOWING YOUR AUDIENCE

- **Audience**: is the person that will read our paper or hear your presentation and it is key in communication
- Think about the **people** who will experience your talk or poster
- Identify the characteristics that **members** of your audience are likely to share.
- Anticipate your audience response
- Predict questions from parties who are either friendly or skeptical of your claims?
DETERMINE YOUR PURPOSE

PRIMARY PURPOSE

INSTRUCT
INFORM
EXPLAIN
ADVISE
ARGUE
COMMENT
PERSUADE
ANALYZE
REVIEW

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CHOOSING THE CORRECT WORDS

• Before writing for a particular field review publications on your topic.
• Having knowledge in the topic will allow single word or acronyms.
• When talking to an audience including non-specialists, use words and concepts they are familiar with.
ASSESSMENT: CHOOSE THE ADEQUATE AUDIENCE
Is this paragraph addressed to a friend or a business audience?

Photosynthesis is the way the plants in your garden get their food. Your tomatoes capture light from the sun—which is energy, right?—along with carbon in the air and water in the ground to create sugars. Plants use those sugars for energy, much like we do when we eat delicious tomatoes.”
Is this paragraph addressed to a friend or a business audience?

"Robert, your company makes some great training software. I understand you’re wondering if you should develop web apps to replace some of your tools that work without an Internet connection. Actually, both kinds of tools have their place, and they can be designed to work quite well together."
DESIGN APPROACH:
RETAINING YOUR AUDIENCE
STRATEGY 1: Visuals

- Visuals offer benefits that help communicate ideas to an audience.
- They support the audience's understanding of concepts, and they capture the audience's attention.
- In many cases, the use of visuals determines whether or not a message is understood.

Example diagram
STRATEGY 2: Argumentation

- Communication is almost always more than simply providing information.
- We want to evoke a reaction from our audience.
- To achieve these goals, you'll need to be persuasive.
- You'll need to make your claims clear and provide evidence to support them.
STRAINEGY 3: Cohesion

- Making the case
- Find common ground: define values your audience shares, their goals. You must find a way to enable them meet these goals
- Find 2-3 pieces of evidence to support your claim
- Identify data that could help you make your point
- Find graphs, charts, and visualizations that would make your case convincing
- Make a call to action. End with a strong and memorable take-away message
- Be personable, convey warmth and connect with your audience – they will be more likely to trust you and buy into your claim
I KNOW THE AUDIENCE I AM ADDRESSING...
WHAT NOW??????
CONCLUDING REMARKS ON ORAL PRESENTATIONS

- Recognized our Audience

- Chose correct language to address the public

- Designed the presentation using different strategies

- Challenged our audience and intrigued them
IMPORTANT FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN WRITING FOR ACADEMIC AUDIENCES
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STYLE

The way something is written
It influences the reader’s impression of the information itself
Includes 2 terms:

DICTION

TONE
**DICTION**

Diction is word choice

When writing, use vocabulary suited for the type of assignment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formal Diction</th>
<th>Casual Diction</th>
<th>Slang (very informal)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>are not angry</td>
<td>aren’t mad</td>
<td>ain’t ticked</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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PERSON: FIRST PERSON

First Person: The singular form of the first person is “I,” and the plural form is “we.” You constantly use these two pronouns when you refer to yourself and when you refer to yourself with others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Person (singular, plural)</th>
<th>Subjective Case</th>
<th>Objective Case</th>
<th>Possessive Case</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I, we</td>
<td>me, us</td>
<td>my/mine, our/ours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Person: Second Person

You use the **second-person** point of view to address the reader. The second person uses the pronouns “you,” “your,” and “yours.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Second Person (singular &amp; plural)</th>
<th>Subjective Case</th>
<th>Objective Case</th>
<th>Possessive Case</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>you</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>your/yours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EXAMPLE:**

Grandma,
Before you go to London, remember to leave your keys under the doormat. I’ll miss you.
Sincerely yours, Anna
Person: Third Person

The third person is the most common point of view used in fiction writing and is the traditional form for academic writing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Third Person (singular)</th>
<th>Subjective Case</th>
<th>Objective Case</th>
<th>Possessive Case</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>he (masculine)</td>
<td>him (masculine)</td>
<td>his/his (masculine)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>she (feminine)</td>
<td>her (feminine)</td>
<td>her/hers (feminine)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it (neuter)</td>
<td>it (neuter)</td>
<td>its/its (neuter)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FORMAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>INFORMAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Complex</strong> – Longer sentences are likely to be more prevalent in formal writing.</td>
<td><strong>Colloquial</strong> – Informal writing is similar to a spoken conversation. (may include slang, figures of speech etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective</strong> – State main points. (shows a limited range of emotions)</td>
<td><strong>Simple</strong> – Short sentences are acceptable and sometimes essential to making a point in informal writing.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Full Words</strong> – No contractions should be used to simplify words (in other words use &quot;It is.&quot;</td>
<td><strong>Contractions and Abbreviations</strong> – Words are likely to be simplified using contractions (for example, I’m, doesn’t, couldn’t, it’s)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Third Person</strong> – Formal writing is not a personal writing style. The formal writer is disconnected from the topic and does not use the first person point of view (I or we) or second person (you).</td>
<td><strong>Empathy and Emotion</strong> – The author can show empathy towards the reader regarding the complexity of a thought and help them through that complexity.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PASSIVE VOICE

- In passive voice, the target of the action gets promoted to the subject position

**Example:**
"Amy is loved by Steve."

- The subject of the sentence becomes Amy, but she isn't doing anything.

ACTIVE VOICE

- In an active sentence, the subject is doing the action

**Example:**
"Steve loves Amy."

- Steve is the subject, and he is doing the action: he loves Amy, the object of the sentence
Setting your tone in written documents
Most scientists use passive voice either out of habit or to make themselves seem scholarly, objective or sophisticated. Scientists have not always written in passive voice. First-person pronouns such as *I* and *we* began to disappear from scientific writing in the United States in the 1920s when active voice was replaced by today's inflexible, impersonal and often boring style of scientific writing. (Randy Moore, editor, *The American biology teacher*, here).
Scientific writing using Active and Passive Voice

The **active voice** emphasizes the **performer** (or agent) of the action:

**Example:**

*Wind disperses plant seeds.*

*We have analyzed the results.*

The active voice is **direct** (performer–verb–receiver), vigorous, clear, and concise. The reader **knows** who is responsible for the action.

The **passive voice**, in contrast, emphasizes the **receiver** (or product) of the action:

**Example:**

*Plant seeds are dispersed [by wind].*

*The relationship was investigated [by Smith et al]*

*The results have been analyzed [by us]*
Problems with passive voice in scientific writing

- Sentences written in the passive voice, if not constructed carefully, may contain grammatical errors such as **Dangling Modifiers**

- Modifier does exactly what it sounds like: it changes, alters, limits, or adds more info to something else in the sentence.

- A modifier is considered *dangling* when the sentence isn't clear about what is being modified.

- A dangling modifier is usually an “ing” phrase at the beginning of a sentence that is not attached to anything in the main clause.
Solution to dangling modifiers

Changing from passive to active voice corrects the error and strengthens the sentence:

- **Example of Dangling modifier:**
  
  *To investigate the source of nutrients, eggshell membranes were compared.* (incorrect passive)

- **Correction:**
  
  *To investigate the source of nutrients, we compared eggshell membranes.* (active voice)
The opening sentence of Watson and Crick's classic article is simple, direct, and clear. But suppose the authors had taken the passive point of view:

In this paper, a structure is suggested for the salt of deoxyribose nucleic acid (D.N.A.).

The emphasis is now on the receiver of the action (the structure), but at a price—the sentence has lost its clarity (who suggested?), energy (passive verb), and overall impact.

MOLECULAR STRUCTURE OF NUCLEIC ACIDS

A Structure for Deoxyribose Nucleic Acid

We wish to suggest a structure for the salt of deoxyribose nucleic acid (D.N.A.). This structure has novel features which are of considerable biological interest.
Dear Ms. Werthers:

I am a third-year law student at Edu-Tech Law School, enrolled in a joint degree program with the Walter J. Preston School of Government. I am particularly interested in pursuing a career in which I can employ my legal skills to instigate change on a broad scale in the area of women's legal rights.

This summer I will be in New York working with the Center for Reproductive Law and Policy. After completing my degree at the Kennedy School next year, I hope to litigate cases involving women’s rights with an organization in New York.

I am writing to ask if you would be willing to meet briefly with me to discuss your career path and the steps that you recommend for a starting lawyer with similar interests. I will call your office the first week of July to see if this would be possible and, if so, to find a convenient time to meet. Thank you in advance. I hope to have the opportunity to speak with you this summer.

Sincerely,

Rosa Chavez
Inside Address (Yours)
Location, B.C.
Postal Code

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am applying for the Richard Toynbee Award, given to a student with a high level of interest in a technical or vocational area.

I feel that I would be an excellent candidate for this award because my goal is to achieve a degree in Biochemistry with the hope of a career in disease research. This career appeals to me because I would like to work in an area which would benefit humanity. I am sure that I will find this work both fascinating and rewarding.

I have always had a deep interest in science, especially in the area of chemistry. I have completed Chemistry 11 and Physics 11 with grades of above 90%, and Biology 11. Chemistry 12 and Physics 12 are included in my current school program. I was chosen to participate in the University of Victoria’s Science Olympics in my grade 12 year, and have participated in the Technolympics at BCIT in grades nine and ten.

I hope you will consider my application for your most generous scholarship.

Yours sincerely,

Your Signature (make it NEAT & LEGIBLE!!!)
Your Name (Typed)
Encl (3)
SCIENTIFIC JOURNALS

- Active voice is preferred
- Passive voice may be used in discussion and results
- First person point of view, I and We is accepted
Review of the concepts learned

- We learned about style, tone, diction, and voice in oral presentations.
- We learned the importance of planning, acknowledging a target audience in order to properly select the writing style.
- We integrated these concepts into academic writing.
Questions???
Hands on practice worksheet
CLINIC:
SOUNDING ACADEMIC:
Tone and Audience in Academic Writing

Password : 2016
References


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