

# Academic Writing Handout

This file contains a number of resources that you may find helpful in your academic writing. They include:

- [Two sample introduction paragraphs written in contrastive styles: academic writing vs. a more casual essay style](#)
- [A sample of bad formal writing](#)
- [A list of online resources](#)
- [A sample MLA style academic essay and “Works Cited” page](#)
- [A short citation checklist](#)

Below are two Introductory paragraphs of essays based on the same thesis statement. The more formal example (academic, top) is more objective and less personal. The third person is used (no "I") and questions are avoided. There is less feeling of "you and I" between the writer and the reader; the writer is recedes into the background and lets the research (facts, examples, statistics, etc.) make the argument.

**Topic:** Japanese education system

**Thesis statement:** The current and recent changes made by MEXT will do little to improve foreign language education in Japan.

## Academic Writing Style

Every few years the media report on a new set of reforms proposed by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, and Technology (MEXT) to foreign language education, with promises of the improvements they will bring. Yet, the English ability of Japanese university graduates continues to lag far behind those of any other developed country. The substance of these proposals, their real educational value, and the reasons for their success or failure will be the focus of this paper. Given the cynicism and wrong-headedness of most of these proposals, the poor performance of Japanese English language students is unavoidable, and the responsibility for their failure rests with MEXT.

## Casual Essay Style

Why can't Japanese students speak English? Even though they study English for at least six years before entering university, and often for four years while studying at the university, why do they still find themselves unable to converse comfortably in English? This situation seems unique to Japan. Sadly, all the recent reforms proposed by MEXT will probably do little to make things better. I want to explore the various MEXT proposals and find out which ones may or not be beneficial.

Below is an actual announcement of the reading of a paper by an well-known ESL/EFL author. It is loaded with jargon (隱語) and is intentionally and unnecessarily complex in an attempt to sound erudite and literate, but in reality, is just difficult to understand. This is not the purpose of written communication. Writing that obscures meaning does not make you seem more intelligent or a better writer. It just makes it more difficult for the reader to understand what you are saying. Don't be afraid to write short, simple, clear sentences.

## **WHAT'S NEXT: A REVIEW OF TRENDS IN LANGUAGE TEACHING**

**Jack. C. XXXXXXXX (University of Yyyyyy)**

The field of TESOL has been influenced in its development over the last 30 years by its response to two issues. One might be called internally-initiated changes, that is, the teaching profession gradually evolving a changed understanding of its own essential knowledge base and associated instructional practices through the efforts of applied linguists and specialists in the field of second language teaching and teacher education. The emergence of such issues as reflective teaching and critical pedagogy for example, arose from within the profession largely as a result of self-imposed initiatives. At the same time the development of TESOL has also been impacted by external factors, for example by globalization and the need for English as a language of international trade and communication, which has brought with it the demand by national educational authorities for new language teaching policies, for greater central control over teaching and teacher education, and for standards and other forms of accountability. This paper will examine the nature and implications of both these sources of change.

## Academic Writing Resources

Levels of Formality

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/608/02/>

Purdue Online Writing Lab

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/1/2/>

Features of Academic Writing

<http://www.uefap.com/writing/feature/featfram.htm>

What is Academic Writing? Dartmouth Writing Program

[http://www.dartmouth.edu/~writing/materials/student/ac\\_paper/what.shtml](http://www.dartmouth.edu/~writing/materials/student/ac_paper/what.shtml)

Advice on Academic Writing - University of Toronto

<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice>

Secrets of Thesis Statements

<http://eslwriter.net/thesis-statement-secrets/>

The Thesis Statement

<http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/composition/thesis.htm#>

Citation Machine

<http://citationmachine.net/index2.php>

Make a Word Cloud

<http://www.wordle.net/create>

## Useful Books

***MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing, 3rd Edition***

Modern Language Association

ISBN 978-0873522977

***MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, Seventh Edition***

Modern Language Association

ISBN 978-1-60329-024-1

***The Elements of Style, Fourth Edition***

William Strunk, Jr. and E. B. White

ISBN 0-205-30902-X

Longman

***The Chicago Manual of Style, Sixteenth Edition (CMOS)***

ISBN 978-0-226-10420-1

The University of Chicago Press

## Explanation of Indirect, Direct, Extended Quotations in In-text and Final Citations (MLA)

When you write your paper, you will be using three kinds of citations: indirect quotations, direct quotations, and extended (long) quotations. You need to cite these quotations BOTH in the paper following the quote AND on the final “Works Cited” pages.

Indirect quotations refer to your use of someone else’s ideas, but not their direct words. For example, a writer or an author may explain something in great detail, going on for pages and pages. You might summarize his ideas in a sentence or two. For example, David Nunan discusses the nature of knowledge in foreign language education, and claims that different interpretations in the nature of knowledge account for different research methods and traditions (Nunan). Because I referred to his idea, I need to cite the source of that information. I put his name in parentheses right after the information AND include the full information of the source on the works cited page.

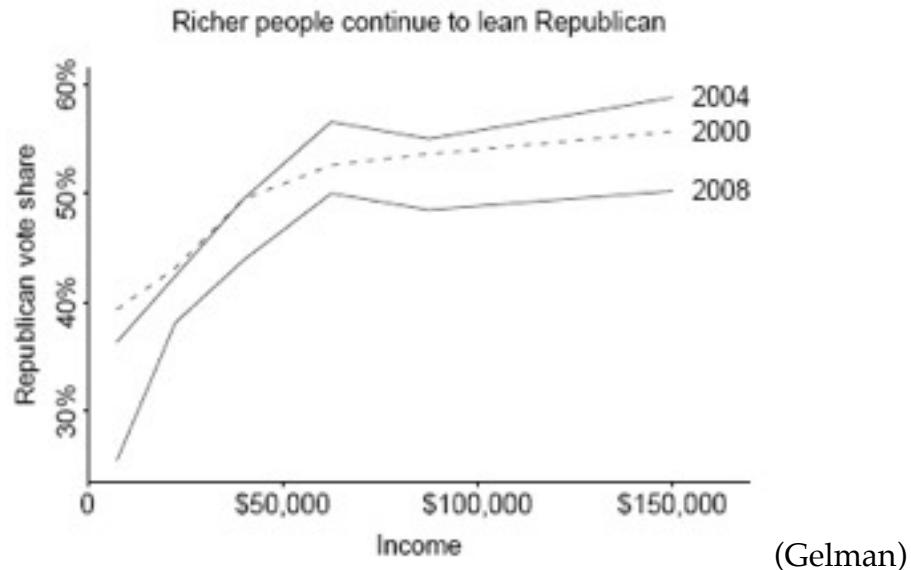
Sometimes, you will quote someone directly, usually a single sentence or phrase, only line or two in length. For example, I have a book that discusses the differences between men and women regarding language. In it, the author states that “Women’s speech is often described as more ‘tentative’” (Coates). The quotation marks (“ ”) tell us that these are her exact words. Her name follows the quotation in parentheses. Notice that I am also using italics and UPPER CASE letters to emphasize certain points. It’s OK to do this, but do it very sparingly (少ない) in a formal research paper.

Sometimes the quotation may be quite long. If that’s the case, you will want to type the quotation in a separate block and indent the entire quotation. No quotation marks are needed.

Since culture is learned, it also seemed clear that one should be able to teach it.

Yet in the past there had been singularly little success in this regard with the one important exception of language, one of the dominant threads of all cultures. The answer to this question is rooted in understanding the difference between acquisition and learning. Most of culture is acquired and therefore cannot be taught (Hall).

Basically, the same method is used for charts or graphs from other sources. Here is the example from last week:



The text following the chart can continue the same paragraph or begin a new one. Here, the paragraph has been continued.

Finally, there is a very useful web page that deals just with these kinds of problems, which may be a little difficult to use, but is very complete (Hacker). The works used appear on a “Works Cited” page at the end of the paper. Note that the citations appear in alphabetical order.

## WORKS CITED

Coates, Jennifer. *Women, Men, and Language*. 3rd. Harlow, England: Pearson Longman, 2004.

Gelman, Andrew. "Election 2008: what really happened." *Red State Blue State Rich State Poor State*. 5 Nov 2008 8 Dec 2008 <<http://redbluerichpoor.com/blog/>>.

Hacker, Diane. "Documenting Sources." *Research and Documentation Online*. 12 Dec 2008 <[http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/p04\\_c08\\_s1.html](http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/p04_c08_s1.html)>.

Hall, Edward T. *The Silent Language*. New York: Anchor Doubleday, 1959.

Nunan, David. *Research Methods in Language Learning*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Use this checklist to check your page of works cited for the most common errors.

**Brief Citation Checklist:**

- Are the authors' names listed family name first?
- Are the citations listed alphabetically, by authors' family (last) names?
- Are the second lines of each citation indented?
- Are titles of books, magazines, etc., underlined or in italics?
- Are the titles of chapters, articles, shorter works appearing in longer books in "quotation marks"?
- Are commas and periods in the correct places?

This web page will be a great help in getting your citations formatted correctly. Be sure to check its output carefully. It is not always 100% correct, but it's great time-saver.

<http://citationmachine.net/>