MONASH University

GROUP OF EIGHT

Education

Writing a Proposal in Education

Academic Language and Literacy Development

2014

AUSTRALIA ▸ CHINA ▸ INDIA ▸ ITALY ▸ MALAYSIA ▸ SOUTH AFRICA

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The tasks in this booklet are designed to be used in our workshops and study groups.
If you require help doing them by yourself, please consult your Academic Language and Literacy Development Advisor. For more information on our services, please visit:
http://www.education.monash.edu/students/current/study-resources

1. Introduction

This booklet is designed to help you as you begin to write your research proposal. PhD, MEd and coursework minor thesis students must write a proposal early in their candidature. We write research proposals to convince others that we have a research project that is worthwhile and that we have the skills and the strategies to complete it.

Remember, your supervisor is your **first point of contact** for any questions related to your research. You should therefore discuss all aspects of your proposal with your supervisor(s) throughout your candidature.

If you need help with academic literacy issues, such as the mechanics of your writing (for example, cohesion and coherence, structure and transitions, voice and agency, referencing and citation etc.), you may consult Dr Raqib Chowdhury (9905 5396, raqib.chowdhury@monash.edu), or Dr Anna Podorova (9904 4346, anna.podorova@monash.edu) in the Faculty. Help is also available from Language Skills Advisors in the university libraries at Clayton, Peninsula and Berwick campuses[1]. Please note that the Faculty's Academic Language and Literacy Development Unit do not provide proofreading or editing services.

Also consider coming to our monthly **HDR Seminars**. A lot of these seminars are exclusively designed for first-year, pre-Confirmation HDR candidates who are working on their proposals. For more information and the time table, please visit: http://www.education.monash.edu/students/current/study-resources/hdr-seminars.html All resources used in these seminars can be found as self-access materials in the HDR folder in **Moodle**.

Research students in Education have access to a range of other resources which can be found here: http://www.education.monash.edu.au/research/degrees/resources/

2. Purpose of a Proposal

The purpose of the proposal is to help you (as a student) to focus and define your research plans. These plans are not binding, in that they may well change substantially as you progress in the research. However, they are an indication to your faculty of your direction and discipline as a researcher. They also help you prepare your presentation for the Ethics Committee.

The proposal is expected to:

- show that you are engaging in genuine enquiry, finding out about something worthwhile in a particular context
- link your proposed work with the work of others, while proving you are acquainted with major schools of thought relevant to the topic
- establish a particular theoretical orientation
- establish your methodological approach, and
- show you have thought about the ethical issues.

[1] http://monash.edu/library/skills/contacts/

3. Components of a Proposal (structure)

The proposal is likely to contain most of the elements listed in the table below, although your supervisor may require the inclusion or omission of certain parts. Check first with your supervisor.

It is suggested that you use the following table as a **checklist** of items and the order in which they usually appear in proposals.

COMPONENT	FUNCTION	CHARACTERISTICS
Cover page	▪ identifies topic, writer, institution and degree	▪ proposed thesis title (should be descriptive of focus, concise, eye-catching and preferably use keywords from international information retrieval systems) ▪ your name and qualifications ▪ department, university and degree the proposal is for
Table of Contents	▪ lists sections of proposal and page references	▪ use a hierarchy for titles and subtitles ▪ use the numbering system as follows: 1; 1.1, 1.2...; 1.1.1, 1.1.2...; 1.1.1.1, 1.1.1.2...etc. (don't use more than four digits)
Background (preferably a more descriptive name)	▪ provides background information relating to the social/political/historical/ educational (etc.) context of the study **Answers the WHAT question**	▪ may include historical, cultural, political, social or organisational information about the context of the research ▪ may include a theoretical starting point or policy ▪ may include personal motivation ▪ may problematise the current status quo
Need for the study/ Rationale *Usually this is combined with the previous section*	▪ follows from background to persuade the reader that the study is needed and will be useful/interesting **Answers the WHY question**	▪ may include reference to a 'gap' in the research literature, to the need to apply certain ideas in a new context, or to the significance of your particular topic ▪ the ways in which the study may be significant for the educational community may also be discussed

COMPONENT	FUNCTION	CHARACTERISTICS
Purpose and aims of the study	▪ states clearly and succinctly the purpose of the study ▪ outlines the key research questions and aims	▪ the purpose is expressed in terms of the broader context of the study ▪ the research question(s) (usually What, How, Why, or What if) - should be few, so that the focus is manageable ▪ the aims will be related to the purpose and the questions
Review of the literature	▪ shows your supervisor and Faculty that you are aware of significant writers/researchers in the field, and indicates which issues/topics you will focus on in your review (this may change later) ▪ shows that you can be judicious in your selection of issues to focus on and take an approach of critical inquiry ▪ situates your own research within the field	▪ this is not expected to be extensive for the proposal ▪ you should conduct an initial survey of the main theorists and a library information search to establish your directions and formulate a tentative list of readings ▪ you should demonstrate critical analysis ▪ your review should be shaped by your argument and should seek to establish your theoretical orientation
Research design **(methodology)**	▪ outlines and describes the research plans – ways in which it will be conducted **Answers the HOW question**	▪ includes your understandings of the nature of knowledge (paradigm) and how this affects your choice of research approach ▪ includes description of and rationale for selection of participants, methods of data collection and analysis, procedures you will use to ensure ethical practice, validity and reliability ▪ includes a statement about the delimitations (scope) of the study
Timetable/Plan ***(may be part of research design)***	▪ depicts the tasks proposed and the stages/times for their completion	▪ this may take the form of a chart, timeline or flowchart (or any other)
Proposed thesis structure	▪ describes the sequence and focus of each proposed chapter	▪ each chapter's proposed contents are described in a few lines or a small paragraph, or ▪ a proposed table of contents is presented

COMPONENT	FUNCTION	CHARACTERISTICS
Significance/ Expected Outcomes of the study	▪ predicts the significance of the study and expected outcomes. These may relate closely to aims **Answers the SO WHAT question**	▪ this is only a prediction, and may be excluded if the rationale for the study has been well developed earlier in the proposal
Glossary of terms	▪ lists specialised terms or words and their meanings (e.g., from another culture, acronyms, key concepts in a relatively new field)	▪ this is placed in a position which is easy to locate (e.g., before or after the main text parts)
Appendices	▪ displays documents which are relevant to main text, but whose presence in the text would disturb rather than enhance the flow of the argument or writing	▪ may include documents, pilot study material, questions for interviews, survey instruments, explanatory statement to participants etc.
References	▪ lists works that have been consulted thus far and appear to be useful	▪ Use the APA Style Guide or conventions recommended by your supervisor

4. Aspects of academic writing

In this part we discuss some aspects of good academic writing. Section 4.1 introduces a link which outlines some common rules of citation and referencing in academic writing. 4.2 looks at two types of in-text attributions, while 4.3 provides a list of common verbs and expressions of attribution. Section 4.4 discusses how to use attribution in critical analysis. Some examples of verb-tense use are presented in section 4.5. Finally, the basics of writing a list of references are explored in Section 4.6[2].

4.1 Acknowledging sources

The art of referring to the words and ideas of other writers (citing and referencing) involves many rules and requires subtle uses of vocabulary (such as words of attribution and evaluation) and grammar (such as verb tense - past and present).

A useful tutorial with reasonably detailed rules about the conventions and mechanics of citing and referencing can be found on the Monash Library website at:

http://monash.edu/library/skills/resources/tutorials/citing/index.html

[2] This paragraph itself is an example of an **advance organiser**, one such as commonly used in introductory paragraphs throughout the different parts of a proposal.

Also check section 4.6 of this booklet.

4.2 Information-prominent and author-prominent references

Swales (1990, pp. 149, 153) shows how you can decide whether to focus on the source of an idea or on the idea itself in your writing. He provides two categories of referencing: author prominent, where the author's name appears in your sentence, or information prominent, where the author's name appears only in parentheses (brackets). An adaptation of his examples[3] follows:

Author prominent	Brie (1988) showed that the moon is made of cheese.	The moon's cheesy composition was established by Brie (1988).	According to Brie (1988), the moon is made of cheese.	Brie's theory (1988) contends that the moon is made of cheese.
Information prominent	Previous research has established that the moon is made of cheese (Brie, 1988).	It has been shown that the moon is made of cheese (Brie, 1988).	It is currently argued that the moon is made of cheese (Brie, 1988).	The moon may be made of cheese (Brie, 1988, but cf. Rock, 1989).

It is important to be aware of the *effect* of your choice to use information- or author-prominent in-text referencing. If the focus is on the author, then the reader can see the ideas and discussion as clearly relating to that author's thinking. You can often give more details about a study. This can make it easier for the writer to see ideas as individual and discuss important ideas, facilitating a critical approach (whether positive or negative). An information-prominent way of citing and referencing can sound very authoritative and can also sound like 'truth-telling', even though you have no idea at all whether it is the 'truth'! If you use information prominent referencing, try to be aware of the effect on the reader. If the information seems to be asserting a 'truth' you are not sure of, try to use a different verb (see next section) to shed more doubt and give a little more detail. Try not to use categorical and generalising statements followed by a reference all the time.

TASK 1: Compare the following two boxes, identifying the substantial differences in meaning conveyed.

> Inclusion is the fairest and most productive approach to educating children with special needs (Smith, 1999; Tollington, 2000). The visually impaired achieve high levels of social interaction and intellectual development in mainstream schools (Johnstone, 2001).

And,

> Smith (1999), writing about schooling in Victoria, Australia, argues that inclusion is the fairest and most productive approach to educating children with special needs (see also Tollington, 2000). In a study of 10 young adolescent students with visual impairment, Johnstone (2001) found that all participants achieved high levels of intellectual development for their year level and that they perceived improved wellbeing in social interaction.

[3] These are also examples of the different ways of **paraphrasing** someone else's ideas

4.3 Verbs of attribution: words for the brain-weary

Below are some verbs and their synonyms for you to draw on when you want to talk about someone else's ideas or words – a thesaurus of verbs of attribution. Try to work out which verbs give a more *positive* view of the ideas you are reporting others as saying, which verbs are simply very *neutral* ways of restating what an author says or show that author's positive or negative attitudes to the ideas, and finally, which verbs express your own slightly *negative* attitudes towards the author's ideas.

Show:	demonstrate, establish
Persuade:	assure, convince, satisfy
Argue:	reason, discuss, debate, consider
Support:	uphold, underpin, advocate
Examine:	discuss, explore, investigate, scrutinise
Propose:	advance, propound, proffer, suggest (the view that…)
Advise:	suggest, recommend, advocate, exhort, encourage, urge,
Believe:	hold, profess (the view that…)
Emphasise:	accentuate, stress, underscore
State:	express, comment, remark, declare, articulate, describe, instruct, inform, report
Evaluate:	appraise, assess
Hypothesise:	speculate, postulate
Disagree:	dispute, refute, contradict, differ, object, dissent
Reject:	refute, repudiate, remonstrate (against), disclaim, dismiss
Claim:	allege, assert, affirm, contend, maintain

An argument can be:

- founded on
- based on
- grounded in a theory/view/set of data
- embedded in
- underpinned by

Note that the above words are all **value-laden**. Your choice of word will reveal to your reader your *stance* toward the author you are reporting on. It will show whether or not you consider her claims to be substantiated, even without explicit reference to yourself.

Arnaudet and Barrett (1984, p. 153-5) provide a useful resource on verbs of attribution reproduced in the box below:

Neutral verbs of restatement

Add	inform (of, about)	remind (of, about)
clarify	present	report (on)
describe	remark	speak / write of

Verbs of restatement with a positive or negative connotation

apprise (someone of)	explain	indicate
argue (about)	express	observe

Verbs of opinion to report the content of another writer's opinion (or conclusion or suggestions)

Positive opinions:		
affirm	agree (with)	applaud
concur (with, in)	praise	support
Reporting opinion *(usually neutrally)*		
assert	believe (in)	claim
determine	expound (on)	maintain
point out	think	
Verbs of uncertainty to report the content of another writer's expression of doubt or uncertainty		
challenge	dispute	question
disagree (with)	doubt	suspect (of)
dismiss	mistrust	wonder (at)

Some sentence **stems** to help you begin:

- *Much research has focussed on… (the benefits of inclusion in Australian primary schools) (Foreman, 2001; Lee, 1999; Li & Phan, 2003; Smith et al., 2005)*
- *Smith (2005) has headed the critique of…*
- *According to Jones (2001), the…*
- *In contrast with Li's (2002) view…, Smith (2005) argues that…*
- *It is clear from the literature that… (Foreman, 2001; Lee, 1999; Li & Phan, 2003; Smith et al., 2005)*
- *While many authors argue that… (Foreman, 2001; Lee, 1999; Li & Phan, 2003; Smith et al. 2005), others maintain that… (Johnston, 2003; Zavarce & Gonzalez, 2006)*

Keep your own list of stems from the articles you read!

4.4 Attribution and critical analysis

TASK 2 The following paragraph is an excerpt from an essay on approaches to intercultural education. Notice the words that indicate what the writer thinks about the ideas of the other writers she mentions. How does she use particular verbs of attribution to convey a particular attitude to the work of the writers she refers to? What words or phrases signal her own ideas?

> Clanchy and Ballard (1991) propose a continuum of attitudes to knowledge and specify learning approaches and strategies that correspond to these attitudes. Drawing mainly on anecdotal evidence, they suggest that their three learning approaches, namely the "reproductive", "analytical" and "speculative" (p.11) approaches, are characteristic of certain stages of schooling (in Australia) or of certain cultures. In their consideration of learning strategies, however, they have presented only a limited understanding of the ways in which the strategies assist learning. For example, they see memorisation as a way of retaining "unreconstructed" (p.11) knowledge. The work of Biggs (1996) demonstrates that memorisation serves the purpose of retaining ideas so that they can be considered and understood.

4.5 Verb tense

Verb tense in academic writing may exercise a greater influence on your reader's interpretation of your text than you bargained for. **Past tense** can give more than a time perspective; it can **distance** the reader from the ideas being expressed. The **present tense** on the other hand is often used to make generalisations – you need to be sure you wanted readers to feel this was a generalisable point. Below is a simplified description of the uses and possible effects of tense on the meaning made.

The tense you select for your verbs in your essay, report or literature review reveals a great deal more to your reader than just the time frame. It tells your reader whose idea is being proffered (yours or someone else's), something about your attitude towards the ideas you are reporting if you have attributed them to a researcher or theorist, and indicates how general or specific the point is. In brief – and note that this is a simplified description of the use of tense – the three tenses which appear most frequently are used in the following ways:

> ***The present tense*** is used for: generalisation (in overviews, statements of main points); a statement which is generally applicable or which seems relevant; a statement made by you as writer; or to report the position of a theorist/ researcher to which you feel some proximity, either in time or allegiance (e.g.. Piaget (1969) outlines the stages…).
>
> ***The past tense*** is used to "claim *non-generality* about past literature" (Ostler, 1981, cited in Swales, 1990, p.152); that is, it is used to report or describe the content, findings or conclusions of past research. The specificity of the study is thus emphasised. Past tense can be used in your methodology chapter to describe what *you have done* (rather than to describe reasons behind your methodological choices, which should use present tense).
>
> ***The present perfect*** is used to indicate that inquiry into the specified area continues, to generalise about past literature, or to present a view using a non-integral form of referencing (the name of the author does not appear in the text of the sentence; it appears only in the subsequent parentheses).
>
> ***The future tense*** is often used in the methodology section **in a proposal** to state intention. When you are describing what appears in your writing, use the present tense, not the future (it's not your intention, since you've already done it): e.g., "The sections below describe the process of …", not, "the sections below will describe the process of …"

TASK 3: Now consider the excerpt from the previous section. What subtle difference in message might you receive as a reader if it were written as follows?

> Clanchy and Ballard (1991) <u>proposed</u> a continuum of attitudes to knowledge and specified learning approaches and strategies that corresponded to these attitudes. Drawing mainly on anecdotal evidence, they <u>suggested</u> that their three learning approaches, namely the "reproductive", "analytical" and "speculative" (p.11) approaches, <u>were</u> characteristic of certain stages of schooling (in Australia) or of certain cultures. In their consideration of learning strategies, however, they <u>presented</u> only a limited understanding of the ways in which the strategies assist learning. For example, they <u>saw</u> memorisation as a way of retaining "unreconstructed" (p.11) knowledge. The work of Biggs (1996) in contrast demonstrates that memorisation serves the purpose of retaining ideas so that they can be considered and understood.

4.6 Referencing and citing conventions: the APA style

The most commonly used set of referencing conventions in Education is the American Psychological Association's (2010) Publication Manual (6th ed.), commonly known as the APA. The reference list of this booklet uses APA conventions. For a free interactive online tutorial on the most common types of citation and referencing, see: http://www.apastyle.org/learn/tutorials/basics-tutorial.aspx

Note some **very basic APA rules:**

- **Book titles** are in italics but only the first word (and the first word in subtitle) and proper nouns are capitalised
- **Journal names** are in italics and capitalised – the volume number also appears in italics
- **The titles of articles in journals and chapters of books** are in plain font and are not capitalised
- When a **chapter of an edited book** (one where the different chapters are written by different authors) is referenced, the chapter is treated in the same way as a journal article, but instead of the journal name, the book in which the chapter appears must also be referenced in the reference list entry. Note that the book is introduced by the word "In", which is followed by the initials of the author (first) and *then* the family name. This is the reverse of what you do in the rest of the list, where the family name comes first and then the initials of the given name.

TASK 4:

In the following list of references,

- find the chapter of an edited book
- find an article from a journal
- find a book
- find the electronic version of an article

Chowdhury, R. (2003). International TESOL training and EFL contexts: The cultural disillusionment factor. *Australian Journal of Education*, *47*(3), 283-302.

Foreman, P. (2005). Disability and inclusion: Concepts and principles. In P. Foreman (Ed.). *Inclusion in action*, (pp. 2-34). Melbourne: Thomson

Loreman, T., Deppeler, J., & Harvey, D. (2005). *Inclusive education*. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin.

De Muro, P., & Gabrysch, L. (2007). A survey of new developments in tax-exemption law: What compliance officers need to know. *Journal of Health Care Compliance, 9*(6), 15-61. Retrieved from http://health.cch.com/products/ProductID-2967.asp

Stanovich, P.J. (1996). Collaboration – the key to successful instruction in today's inclusive schools. *Intervention in School and Clinic. 32*(1), 39-42.

For more details, and more complex referencing, please refer to the website listed above.

Re:cite - QUICK LOOKUP

For a fast and interactive online lookup on specific referencing styles, please visit the following website:
http://www.lib.unimelb.edu.au/recite/index.html?style=0

5. Facilitating your writing process

Discussion, concept maps, questions, note-taking techniques may all facilitate your writing. Using certain software (e.g., Endnote, NVivo, MS OneNote, EverNote) can also help.

5.1 Letting your own voice be heard ('hedging')

How do you 'speak up' in your proposal without having to say, 'I think' or "It is my opinion that…' (rather inelegant expressions)?

TASK 5:

Read the following excerpt from Hyland's (1996, p. 477) article on 'hedging', a category of language use that helps to insert your very own voice.

NURTURING HEDGES IN THE ESP CURRICULUM

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ABSTRACT

There is a popular belief that scientific writing is purely objective, impersonal and informational, designed to disguise the author and deal directly with facts. But while ESP courses often provide the linguistic means to accomplish this invisibility, they often ignore the fact that effective academic writing always carries the individual's point of view. Writers also need to present their claims cautiously, accurately and modestly to meet discourse community expectations and to gain acceptance for their statements. Such pragmatic aspects of communication however are vulnerable to cross-cultural differences and L2 students are rarely able to hedge their statements appropriately. This paper argues that hedging devices are a major pragmatic feature of effective scientific writing and that students should be taught to recognise and use them in their own work. It examines the frequency, functions and realisations of hedges and discussed a range of strategies for familiarising students with their appropriate use.

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INTRODUCTION

The term hedging was introduced to linguistics by Lakoff (1972) to describe "words whose job it is to make things more or less fuzzy" (p. 195). It has subsequently been used by sociologists to describe a means to avoid face-threatening behaviour and by applied linguistics to discuss devices such as *I think, perhaps, might and maybe* which qualify the speaker's confidence in the truth of a proposition. In scientific writing these effective and propositional functions work in rhetorical partnership to persuade readers to accept knowledge claims. Hedges express tentativeness and possibility in communication and their appropriate use is a critical, although largely neglected, area of scientific discourse.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss how ESP teachers can help develop L2 learners' understanding of the principles and mechanics of the appropriate use of this critical pragmatic feature. First however, I will give a brief overview of hedging in academic writing, sketching its importance…

5.2 Imagining your audience

Try to find out the particular requirements of your audience in respect of preferred conventions. It is always useful to imagine your audience as an *intelligent person* who, however, is *not an expert* in this particular area of your field. This is not to say that you can get away with presenting inaccurate statements, but rather that you need to explain ideas or concepts and arguments clearly to your reader. You cannot assume that your reader always knows everything, nor should you feel that it is insulting to explain specialised concepts. Your reader wants to see how well you understand the issues you have chosen to discuss. Nevertheless, the reader does not want to wait for you to get along with your argument while you are showing him/her how well you know something else in the field (unrelated to your argument or main issue).

5.3 Signposting

It is a great help to your reader if you make a clearly signposted 'map' of your writing. You can do this by:

- using subheadings which indicate what you will focus on in that part of your writing. Brown (1993) recommends using verbs in headings and rewriting headings after sections are written. At all events, don't overlook the usefulness of headings in guiding your reader;
- stating explicitly the points you will focus on in the introduction of a chapter or (for a longer piece) at the beginning of a major section; and
- repeating key words or further developing propositions from an earlier sentence in order to make clear the connection between the ideas discussed earlier and those discussed later.

5.4 Mapping

The use of mapping or advance organisers is very important in a long piece of work. In such pieces of writing you may insert maps at strategic points (e.g. beginnings of chapters/sections) so that readers reorient themselves and know where they're headed. For example look at the opening paragraph of section 4.

5.5 Useful discourse markers

The ways in which parts of your writing are related to other parts can be made clearer by using discourse markers, which can be grouped according to their function in the discourse. Here are some groups of markers that might help you when you need a little variety.

Ordering points or sequencing

Firstly, …; secondly, …; finally,…

Adding something

Moreover, …; Furthermore,…; Further,…; In addition,…; Additionally,…

NOTE: "Besides" is mainly used in speaking

Comparing (similarity)

Similarly,…; … likewise,…; equally,…

Comparing (difference – establishing contrast)

However,…; in fact,…; On the other hand,…; …, rather,…; In contrast, …; On the contrary,…; Nevertheless,…; Nonetheless,…; …, yet …; Despite…; In spite of…; Notwithstanding…

Introducing a cause

As a result of…; Because of…; Because…; Owing to …; Due to…

Introducing a result

Consequently…; Therefore…; Hence,…; As a result,…; Thus,…; So …; Then…

Exemplifying

For example,…; For instance,…; Notably,…

Re-stating

In other words,…; that is,…; namely,…

Generalising

In general, …; generally,…; on the whole,…

Summarising

In summary,…; In conclusion,…

Adapted from Parrott (2000, pp. 301-307)

6. Common problems (grammar, style, conventions)

Below are examples of some commonly confused words/expressions in academic writing. Can you think of more?

- **Et al. (and others)**

Only one of these two words is abbreviated. **Et** is a whole word meaning *and*, while **alii**, a word meaning *others*, is abbreviated to **al.** (note the full stop/period mark). For example, "Held et al. (1999) confront the question of whether Western capitalism and institutions are the drivers of globalisation".

- **Use of the '&' sign**

The '&' (ampersand) sign in referencing appears only in brackets or in the reference list at the end of your thesis. Thus, you would write 'Carver **and** Gaines (1987) conducted the first study', or 'The first study that examined stress focused on identifying one's own emotions' (Carver **&** Gaines, 1987).

- **Plurals and singulars**
  - Datum/data (the data were categorised…)
  - Phenomenon/phenomena (… was understood to be a phenomenon)
  - Focus/foci (or focuses) (The foci of this study were…)
  - Criterion/criteria
  - Research/information (used as non-countable nouns in the singular)

Often confused spelling

- **Affect/effect:**

When these words mean influence, **affect** is used as a *verb* and **effect** is used as a *noun*.

e.g., Chocolate **affects** my skin badly.

The **effects** of chocolate on my skin are disastrous.

When the words mean something different from influence they are used differently grammatically. To *effect* (verb) something is to successfully complete it, while a person's *affect* (noun) refers to their feelings.

- **Practice/practise**

For Australian spelling, the verb uses an "s".
e.g., I would like to practise the skills I have acquired.
The noun is spelt with the c and contains another noun "ice"
e.g., The pract**ice** of leaving children alone in the car should be discouraged.

- **Its/it's**

Its is used when you are talking about something belonging to the thing you have already mentioned. **It's** is a **contraction** or a shortened form of "It is" or "It has" - the apostrophe stands for the letter omitted.
e.g., *The methodology appears in Chapter 3. Its approach is principally quantitative. (It's a pity it couldn't also be qualitative)*

- **That or which?**

In academic writing, **which** often needs to very specifically define the issues **that** it is discussing, while the word "that" is used more frequently than "which". Both these words introduce information **that** is related to a word or phrase **that** appeared earlier. "That" is used when you wish to specify more closely the defining characteristics of the word or phrase (the word or phrase **that** appeared earlier). "Which" is used to provide *extra information* rather than to specify or define. You need a comma before "which", but not before "that" ("that" must stick to the word it is defining).

- **'As' and 'that'**

Many writers use both 'as' and 'that' to introduce what other authors are saying. They both mean the same thing, so you must choose only ONE of these words.

e.g., As Strunk and White (1959) argue in their widely read study of language *that* simplicity in language use is best.

This should be one of the following:

- ***As*** *Strunk and White (1959) argue in their widely read study of language**,** simplicity in language use is best.*
- *Strunk and White (1959) argue in their widely read study of language **that** simplicity in language use is best.*
- *In their widely read study of language**,** Strunk and White (1959) argue **that** simplicity in language use is best.*

- **Parallel structures**

Note that the last problem sentence above is one that was caused by the failure to use parallel grammatical forms for the stem "the main factors that contribute". The sentence should read: *Cognitive bias is one of the main factors that contribute **to the confidence** we have in our decision making as well as **to the accuracy** of our confidence.* Both underlined terms are nouns and they are preceded by a "to". They are joined by words such as 'and', 'as well as', 'or', or possibly form part of a list, where items are separated by commas or semi-colons.

- **Hanging (dangling) modifiers**

In a sentence with two parts, the writer's intention might be to give the reader one piece of information that can enlighten us about the other (main) part of the sentence. This extra information seems to remain hanging or dangling if the writer forgets to indicate clearly who is doing what in both parts of the sentence.

e.g., *After fail**ing** the VCE test, **the teacher** helped the student*.
(Did the teacher fail the VCE test?)
This should read: *After failing the VCE test, the student was helped by the teacher*.

The rule is that if you have an –ing word at the beginning of the first part of the sentence, the action of that word must be carried out by the first word of the second part of the sentence. That is to say, the subject of the two parts should be the same, even if it is not explicitly stated in the first part. To put it in grammatical terms, when we use a present participle (an 'ing' word) in an initial clause, but do not state the subject (the person doing the action) we expect the subject to be identified at the very beginning of the second clause (after the comma).

TASK 6: The following sentences are very common examples of writing that may cause confusion due to grammatical, stylistic errors or referencing conventions. See if you can work out what the problems are.

- *Identifying the cause of stress, work-related stress is better understood.*
- *There are a number of areas will be researched.*
- *Holmes and Rahe's life events checklist was the first study on stress.*
- *The data is relatively old, yet useful.*
- *Carver & Gaines (1987) did one of the first studies which examined stress.*
- *Differences among individual's abilities to appraise and express their emotions are effected by their social learning.*
- *It is interesting in light of the criticism of the SOC as contaminated with emotionality (Korotkov, 1993) that Antonovsky is at pains to point out the cognitive nature of this perception despite its emotional sounding terminology.*
- *Cognitive bias is one of the main factors that contribute to the confidence we have in our decision making as well as being an accurate confidence.*
- *Having evaluated the curriculum, different teaching methods were introduced.*
- *As Strunk and White (1959) argue in their widely read study of language that simplicity in language use is best.*
- *There are many studies in inclusive education focus on socialization.*
- *We should all aware of how negative feedback affects students.*
- *Johnson et. al. (2003) reviewed many researches on gifted mathematical thinkers.*
- *These researchers undertook the study by first reviewing the literature on giftedness, then interviewing maths students with high grades and identified the traits of mathematical giftedness.*

7. Reporting with Style

TASK 7: A stylish reporter combines the virtues of clarity and good language sense. Try your hand at improving the style of the items below:

1. *Each and every good writer never ever uses tautological expressions or says the same thing twice (in the same sentence).*

2. *Each subject prefaced by 'each' use a verb in the singular.*

3. *A good writer should always remember to never split an infinitive (or at least not always).*

4. *There was a difference of opinion among the two teachers, even though the Principle had made every effort to create harmony between all staff members.*

5. *The GAT (General Achievement Test) was used for validation of results. While the VCE provided the main source of assessment.*

6. *"That' is the relative pronoun, which we use in a <u>defining</u> clause, while 'which' is used in a clause, which gives an extra bit of information, which is a parenthetical clause.* 'Which' is preceded by a comma, but 'that' isn't.

7. *The new policy which was introduced in 1999 was one of the most problematic policies for teachers that has ever been used.*

8. *And I thought to myself, "What a wonderful world …". Can we think to anyone else?*

9. *It is not everyday that you see such an everyday occurrence.*

10. *A good researcher must have stamina, which is necessary for accurately revealing what the data are trying to say. Moreover, clear criteria for good research is very important.*

11. *Our researches led us to the very important issue of the economical context.*

12. *The writing of complex ideas often involves the use of parallel structures, which build up a series of ideas, adds layers of meaning and acting as a kind of echo of the first structure(often a verb).*

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