LIN 405 - Writing in Linguistics

Summer 2021 - Scott Nelson

How to write like a linguist

Structure

- A quantitative paper will be structured differently than a non-quantitative paper
  - All papers should have an introduction and conclusion
  - Quantitative papers have method, results, and discussion sections
  - "Mirroring" is a good technique for figuring out how to structure your paper

Examples

- Usually allow you to get your point across better

- Provide supporting evidence for your argument

- Examples should only illustrate the point you are currently trying to make

  - Look for simple examples to start with and then build up to more complex ones if necessary

- See Macauley (2011, pp.58-62) for good practice on how to format examples.

  - Includes information on how to present data from another language in the form of a gloss

Citations

- Anything you include in your paper that is not your own original writing should include a reference.

- Most students learn MLA citation style but this is almost never used in linguistics.

  - In general style can vary from journal to journal. In my experience most linguistics journals use something similar to APA

  - LaTeX can handle citation style for you! :)

- Your citations should be accurate and complete so any person who reads your paper can track down the references if necessary.

Terminology

- The goal of scientific writing is to present your work to the research community

- Overusing "thesaurus style" (Macauley 2011) makes the writing distracting and imprecise.

- You also don't want to be too technical

  - Think about your audience when deciding whether or not to use certain jargon

Macauley's (2011) top 10 least favorite writing habbits

1. Excessive Verbiage
2. Hedging
3. Describing the Process of Discovery
4. Using Contractions
5. Citing Textbooks
6. Using Commas as Transitions
7. Misusing refer and referent
8. Afterthoughts
9. Splitting Sentences across Examples
10. Using Assume

The Process of Writing

A Place to work/Structure/Getting Started

- No single answer
- Find what works for you

Outlining

- Outlining the paper before you write it helps organize your thoughts
- Even just writing down the section names is a good start
- Can be as simple or detailed as you like

"Bird by Bird"

- Break your writing into smaller tasks and work on those

- You will be less overwhelmed and feel more accomplished

Nike Method

- Just do it

- Any worthwhile paper will have multiple drafts. It's better to write something and get your thoughts on the page.

Perfectionism

- "Don't let perfect be the enemy of the good"
- "You can always go back and edit, but how can you edit if there's nothing to edit yet?" (https://www.instagram.com/p/CKfRbj3n4wG/?hl=en)

Writer's Block

- Yes, writer's block is real, but it's not a good excuse to not write (see previous slides)
- "Writer's block is a bourgeois luxury." - John K. Samson

Draft Groups and Writing Buddies

- Getting feedback from your peers will help improve your writing

- Our Workshop sessions is a version of this

15

Submitted Questions

- Is creating a "roadmap" outlining each section redundant if each section is labeled anyway?

- Is it necessary to use in text citations as long as you cite everything properly in the reference section?

- Is it a bad idea to have someone read and comment on a draft of your paper if they do not have a linguistic background?

- How long do the subsections of your paper have to be and how long the the conclusion be in a linguistics paper?

- How many times on average do academic papers undergo redrafting and revisions until they are considered publishable?

- How do I include footnotes?

- How do make an outline?

- Is there such a thing as too many examples?

- Where do we insert tables if we have them?

- If we have a survey should we present it to the reader of our paper?

- What type of style should I use if it is not specified?

- What makes a pilot process necessary?

- To what extent do we have to cite a source if it is a common example?

- When you find yourself unable to write, what's the best way you've found to be most helpful in getting out of writer's block?

- Does anyone else in the class have some sort of ritual before writing a paper?

- What do you think is the best approach to getting work done?

- What would you recommend for creating structure for oneself for writing on projects during remote schooling?