

Odds and ends on writing research papers

Sources (see Booth *et al.* 2003, Ch. 6)

- Using sources
 - o Finding a *problem*
 - o Finding the *logic* of an argument
 - o Finding *evidence* for an argument

 - o Tips for using sources
 - Read with an open mind.
 - Avoid secondhand sources whenever possible.
 - Avoid emotionally charged language when discussing another's work.

- Misusing sources
 - o Plagiarism (see <http://www.wpacouncil.org>)
 - o Misrepresenting the source (context, importance of argument, etc.)
 - **Hands-on: verb choice**

[Original: *There are many reasons that protagonists leave palaces. For example, Cinderella left so that the Prince wouldn't see her dressed in rags, but Snow White was forcibly removed...*]

Stephens (2008) _____ that vanity drove Cinderella from the palace.

More on organization

- Results and discussion
 - o Does it make sense to have a separate results section? If so...
 - Avoid repeating all of the results in the discussion section.
 - Avoid making generalizations and discussing your analysis in the results section...*just the facts, ma'am.*

 - o Do you want to combine the results and discussion sections? If so...
 - Claim – Reasons – Supporting evidence (i.e. the data)

The current study is consistent with the research showing that children use linguistic devices to take different perspectives on an event (e.g. Clark 1990, Budwig 1990). Children are not only able to describe events from the perspective of an inanimate actor, but they are also capable of using both inanimate and animate subject transitives in describing the same event:

(14) **Sample conversation from the Kuczaj corpus**

Child (4;5.20): I'll show you some thing this could cut material

Father: those scissors?

...

Child: when I first cut it, it couldn't so I tried a different way

Hands-on: There are several problems in these passages. How can you improve them?

There wasn't much data, but I still found a very interesting trend. Specifically, nobody likes hearing his/her own voice in a recording.

When people are addressing other people, they are often making eye contact. One reason for this may be that people like to see that they have the attention of the person they are speaking to.

This study has many problems. For example, there was a major flaw in the experimental design. I made the mistake of telling the interviewees that I would be paying close attention to whether or not they used sexist language. That could be why there were so many tokens of "he or she" in the data.

Some useful words

- Verbs that take *that*-clauses:
 - o *Argue, show, demonstrate*
 - o *Hypothesize, propose, claim*
 - o *Mention, note, point out*
 - o *Indicate, imply suggest*
- Words referring to people:
 - o *Speaker, interlocutor*
 - o *Interviewer / interviewee*
 - o *Speaker / addressee*
 - o *Participants, subjects*
 - o *Individual, other, another*
 - o *Adolescents, college students, professors, authority figures*
- Words useful for critiques:
 - o *Limitation*
 - o *Disadvantage, drawback, shortcoming*
 - o *Insufficient, limited, inconclusive, doubtful, unlikely*
 - o *A more thorough/comprehensive/detailed analysis*

More on being concise

'Be what you would seem to be'; or, if you'd like it put more simply—'Never imagine yourself not to be otherwise than what it might appear to others that what you were or might have been was not otherwise than what you had been would have appeared to them to be otherwise.' ...

"Pray don't trouble yourself to say it any longer than that," said Alice.

— Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*

William's (1990, Ch. 7) tips on things to avoid (see attached page also):

- Redundant pairs
 - o *Full and complete, true and accurate, hopes and dreams, each and every, first and foremost, any and all, various and sundry, basic and fundamental, questions and problems, so on and so forth*
- Redundant modifiers
 - o *Past memories, various different, each individual, basic fundamentals, future plans, personal beliefs, terrible tragedy, end result, final outcome, initial preparation, free gift*
 - o *Return back, split apart, progress forward, continue on*
- Redundant categories
 - o *Period of time, pink color, shiny appearance, large in size, heavy in weight, round in shape, early in time*
 - o *In an accurate manner → accurately*
 - o *Athletic activities → athletics*
 - o *Grammatical systems → grammars*
- Meaningless modifiers
 - o *For all intents and purposes, I basically coded for the particular gender of each individual pronoun from every given sentence.*
- Belaboring the obvious
 - o *Imagine a picture of someone engaged in the activity of trying to code all the words that were pronouns for animacy.*
- Excessive detail
 - o *I coded every pronoun for animacy. In other words, I considered for each pronoun whether the referent of the pronoun was an animate entity or an inanimate entity.*

Criteria for evaluating term papers:

- *Does the paper present a coherent argument?*
 - o Is the thesis clear?
 - o Is the flow and organization clear and logical?
 - o Are the arguments clear and well supported?
 - o Does the paper stay on topic?
- *Is the paper original?*
 - o What does the paper add to the current body of knowledge?
 - o Are the ideas new and creative?
- *Is the writing style clear and concise?*
 - o Is the sentence structure easy to follow?
 - o Is the writing easy to read?
 - o Are the words appropriate and the meanings clear?
 - o Are there unnecessary words or phrases?

References

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. 2003. *The craft of research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Williams, Joseph M. 1995. *Style: toward clarity and grace*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

How to cite sources (LSA style, from <http://www.cas.sc.edu/LING/resources/lstyle.html>)

CITATIONS IN THE TEXT

Within the text, give only a brief citation in parentheses consisting of the author's surname, the year of publication, and the page number(s) where relevant: (Rice 1989) or (Yip 1991:75-6)

- a. If a cited publication has more than two authors, use the surname of the first author, followed by et al.
- b. If the author's name is part of the text, then use this form: Rice (1989:167) comments ...

REFERENCES

- a. Arrange the entries alphabetically by surnames of authors, with each entry as separate hanging indented paragraph.
- b. List multiple works by the same author in ascending chronological order.
- c. Use suffixed letters a, b, c, etc. to distinguish more than one item published by a single author in the same year.
- d. If more than one article is cited from one book, list the book as a separate entry under the editor's name, with cross-references to the book in the entries for each article.
- e. Do not replace given names with initials unless the person normally uses initials; Barker, M.A.R., but Lehiste, Ilse.
- f. Use a middle name or initial only if the author normally does so: Heath, Shirley Brice; Oehrle, Richard T.
- g. Each entry should contain the following elements in the order and punctuation given: (first) author's surname, given name(s) or initial(s); given name and surname of the other authors, year of publication, full title and subtitle of the work. For a journal article: Full name of the journal and volume number (roman type), inclusive page numbers for the entire article. For an article in a book: title of the book, ed. by full name(s) o editor(s), inclusive page numbers. For books and monographs, the edition, volume or part number (if applicable) and series title (if any). Place of publication: Publisher.

h. Some examples:

- Hale, Kenneth, and Josie White Eagle. 1980. A preliminary metrical account of Winnebago accent. *International Journal of American Linguistics* 46.117-32.
- Miner, Kenneth. 1990. *Winnebago accent: the rest of the data*. Lawrence: University of Kansas, ms.
- Poser, William. 1984. *The phonetics and phonology of tone and intonation in Japanese*. Cambridge, MA: MIT dissertation.
- Prince, Ellen. 1991. Relative clauses, resumptive pronouns, and kind-sentences. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Linguistic Society of America, Chicago.
- Rice, Keren. 1989. *A grammar of Slave*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Yip, Moira. 1991. Coronals, consonant clusters, and the coda condition. The special status of coronals: internal and external evidence, ed. by Carole Paradis and Jean-François Prunet, 61-78. Sand Diego, CA: Academic Press.