

## How to Improve Your Academic English

### Features of Academic English

- Rich detail and description
- Combine and link sentences: paragraph length discourse
- Narrate and describe using major time frames
- Handle challenges presented by complications
- Paraphrasing
- Multiple examples
- Consistent accuracy, clarity, and precision
- Without misrepresentation or confusion
- Can be understood by people unaccustomed to dealing with non-native speakers
- Variety of communicative tasks

### Improving Academic Writing By Reading

“All text represents content, which is what we want to get out of the text, but it also has a structure or organization.” Joanna Williams, professor of psychology and education, Columbia University.

- **Read for content first, read again for form & structure**
- Take notes on commonly used structures: descriptive, cause-effect, compare and contrast, etc.
- Look for key vocabulary and transition words/phrases
- Identify what you do not understand or what is confusing
- How does the author connect the central ideas to secondary topics?
- Keep a reading response journal

### Building Vocabulary

- When do you know a new word or phrase has been added to your vocabulary?
  - You know what it means (Definition)
  - You know how to say it (Pronunciation)
  - You know how to spell it (Spelling)
  - You know when and when not to use it (Context & Grammar)
  - **You can use the word/phrase with confidence**
- Pay attention to what you hear and read
- Note words and phrases you want to use
- **Write them down in an organized place**
- Look up the definition and usage
- Track how often you use a word or phrase
- Choose **NO MORE** than 3-4 to practice each week
- If you can use it five or more times in a single week move on to a new word/phrase

### Spoken Language

- **Speak English As Much As Possible**
- **Record Yourself**
  - Talk about academic topics as if you were talking to an expert.
  - **Listen immediately and again 24 hours**

- What do you notice about your own speech?
- Which sounds do you have difficulty hearing?
- Where do you pause or hesitate?
- What vocabulary are you using
- **Favor frequency vs. length.** You will improve more quickly if you record yourself 10 minutes per day than if you try to do 2 hours once a week
- Making Pronunciation a Habit
  - Practice **everyday** for 10-20 minutes
  - Practice in a quiet environment
  - Do a lot of listening
  - Self-monitor

### Second Language Acquisition

**"We believe that what the learner does to learn a foreign language is far more important than what the teacher teaches."** The ABCs of Languages and Linguistics: A Basic Introduction to Language Science" by Curtis Hayes, Jacob Ornstein & William Gage

- Goal Setting Best Practices
  - Take into consideration your personal time commitments and abilities.
  - Identify strategies to achieve your goals, create a plan with objectives and execute it.
  - Monitor your progress and refine your goals, objectives, strategies and plans as needed.
  - The more you put into your language the more you will get out of it.
- Example Goal: I want to improve my English pronunciation so I can communicate my dissertation topic to people unfamiliar with my accent.
- Make a plan for working on your academic English
  - Set realistic goals
  - Learn about the features of academic English
  - Record and listen to yourself
  - Read for more than just content
  - Build self-monitoring skills
  - Use your new vocabulary in your daily life
  - Gain confidence and comfort