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THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY

FIRST  
EDITION



# Research Writing

Pariwat Imsa-ard



**1<sup>st</sup> Edition**

# Research Writing

**A student coursebook**

**Assistant Professor  
Dr. Pariwat Imsa-ard**

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**Pariwat Imsa-ard**

Department of English  
Faculty of Liberal Arts  
Thammasat University  
2024

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# Research Writing

Pariwat Imsa-ard

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## Foreword

Research writing often feels like a daunting task, filled with complex rules and high standards and conventions. However, the book you are holding in your hands turns this challenging process into a systematic and surprisingly fun journey. It's designed to make research writing not just manageable but also enjoyable.

The author has distilled years of experience into a guide that breaks down every step of the writing process. From building an argument to making implications of research, this book offers clear, practical advice. It makes even the most complicated parts of writing feel straightforward and achievable.

What makes this book special is its broad appeal. It's a fantastic resource for researchers and academics, of course, but it's also perfect for anyone who loves language or wants to improve their English research writing skills. If you are speakers of English as a foreign language, you'll find plenty of tips and exercises to help you write a research paper more fluently and confidently.

The author's friendly approach makes writing feel like a creative and enjoyable process rather than a chore. And just like its author, this book is witty, well thought out, and charming, bringing a delightful personality to the research processes.

In a world where clear and impactful communication is more important than ever, this book is an invaluable tool. Whether you're working on your first research paper or just looking to improve your writing, this guide will be your trusted companion.

**Assoc. Prof. Dr. Pattamawan Jimarkon**  
University of Stavanger (UiS), Norway



# Preface

This textbook, specifically designed for undergraduate students majoring in English, serves as a comprehensive guide to research writing. It aims to spark your interest in research problems and assist you in creating detailed research reports, supporting you throughout your 'research writing' course or research journey.

The primary goal of this textbook is to develop the essential writing skills necessary for successful research activities. It is ideal for those embarking on research for the first time or looking to enhance their existing research abilities. This accessible and practical resource establishes a strong foundation, even for students with limited previous exposure to research and research writing. I have carefully included valuable tips to help you navigate the complexities of research writing with confidence, aiming for exceptional results.

To facilitate you using this textbook, the journey through this textbook is structured to gradually build your skills and understanding of the research writing process and its integral components.

## **Chapter 1: Language in Research Writing**

This chapter introduces you to the essentials of academic writing, highlighting its distinctive language style and conventions in academic writing. It explores the grammatical and lexical features that characterize scholarly texts and discusses the critical issue of plagiarism.

## **Chapter 2: Writing a Research Proposal**

This chapter provides a comprehensive guide to crafting a well-structured proposal, detailing the essential components such as identification and outlining methodology and significance.

## **Chapter 3: Preparing to Review the Literature**

Building on the basics, this chapter guides you through the process of literature review preparation. It covers how to build arguments, use reporting verbs effectively, and employ essential expressions in literature reviews. In addition to writing, this chapter also assists you in identifying a research problem, defining



a purpose, spotting research gaps, and formulating research questions. The chapter concludes with a discussion on critically appraising literature and ensuring the quality of your sources.

#### **Chapter 4: Designing Research**

In this chapter, you will learn about different research designs—quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods—and their specific characteristics and components. Significantly, this chapter covers the entire process of writing the *Research Methodology* section, including detailing the participants, instruments, data collection methods, data analysis techniques, and ethical consideration.

#### **Chapter 5: Data Collection**

Here, the focus shifts to practical aspects of collecting data. This chapter discusses various sampling methods, types of data, and specific data collection techniques used in both quantitative and qualitative research. It also includes sections on ethical considerations during data collection, helping you understand the importance of ethics in empirical research.

#### **Chapter 6: Ensuring Research Qualities**

This chapter emphasizes the qualities that make research robust, such as validity, reliability, and the minimization of bias. Understanding these concepts is crucial for conducting and evaluating research studies effectively.

#### **Chapter 7: Data Analysis**

You will explore different techniques for analyzing data, whether quantitative, like descriptive and inferential statistics, or qualitative, like coding and thematic analysis. The chapter provides a clear distinction between various analysis methods and guides you on when and how to use them.

#### **Chapter 8: Reporting Research Findings**

This chapter teaches you how to report research findings comprehensively and transparently. It covers the nuances of reporting in different research paradigms—quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods—and introduces essential expressions used in reporting.

**Chapter 9: Discussing Research Findings**

Discussion of findings is a crucial part of a research paper. This chapter helps you learn how to highlight your findings, compare them with existing literature, question current views, and draw implications from your study.

**Chapter 10: Writing a Research Paper**

As the culmination of all previous chapters, this chapter walks you through the entire process of writing a research paper, from crafting a compelling title and abstract to writing the introduction, literature review, methodology, results/findings, discussion, and conclusion.

**Chapter 11: APA 7 Referencing Style**

The final chapter focuses on the APA 7 referencing style, detailing how to handle in-text citations and compile a comprehensive list of references. It also discusses the appropriate tenses to use when writing in APA style and summarizes key points for easy reference.

In conclusion, each chapter in this textbook builds upon the previous one, designed to equip you with the necessary skills to conduct and write up your research effectively. Through summaries and reflections in each chapter, this textbook encourages ongoing learning and critical thinking about the research writing process.

Finally, I am excited to wish you success in your research pursuits. May your research journey be enlightened by the joys of learning, the excitement of discovery, and the satisfaction of contributing to your field.

**Pariwat Imsa-ard**

## Acknowledgement

I wish to extend my sincere gratitude to a number of individuals whose contributions were indispensable in completing this textbook.

I am profoundly grateful for the inspiration and guidance I have received from Associate Professor Dr. Andrezj Cirocki and Dr. Bill Soden at the University of York. Their mentorship has been nothing short of transformative, and I owe them my deepest appreciation for their unwavering support in shaping my research journey.

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I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my co-instructors—Associate Professor Dr. Varisa Osatananda and Assistant Professor Dr. Kwanjira Chatpunnarangsee—for their invaluable insights and thoughtful comments. Their expertise in research writing greatly enriched this textbook, enhancing its effectiveness as a vital teaching and learning resource.

Furthermore, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the Faculty of Liberal Arts at Thammasat University for their generous grant, which made this project possible. Without your support, this textbook would not have come to fruition.

Lastly, due to paucity of space, I am unable to name everyone, but please know that I am profoundly appreciative of all the support received. Your contributions are deeply valued.

**Pariwat Imsa-ard**

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*This textbook is dedicated to those who have supported its creation.*

*To my **family**, for their unwavering encouragement...*

*To my **teachers** and **mentors**, whose guidance has shaped my journey...*

*To my **students**, who inspire continuous growth...*

*To my **other half**, for their love and steadfast support...*

*To **everyone** who has crossed my path, leaving their unique mark...*

*Thank you very much for being part of this work.*





# CHAPTER 1

## Language in Research Writing

### Chapter Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

1. understand the characteristics of academic writing;
2. realize grammatical and lexical features that are essential in research writing; and
3. know how to avoid plagiarism in research writing

### Pre-reading Questions

1. What do you think of when hearing the word 'academic writing'?
2. What are some qualities of academic writing?
3. What is plagiarism like? Why should we be aware of it?







critical analysis, whereas *literature reviews* focus on synthesizing and evaluating existing research. *Reflective journals*, while still formal, might allow for a more personal tone compared to the objective style of research papers.

**Table 1.1**

*Overviews of characteristics of general writing and academic writing*

Aspects	General Writing	Academic Writing	Research Writing
<b>Purpose</b>	<i>Mostly to inform, entertain, or persuade</i>	<i>To analyze and discuss knowledge</i>	<i>To present research findings</i>
<b>Language Style</b>	<i>Either informal or formal</i>	<i>Formal</i>	<i>Highly formal and objective</i>
<b>Tone</b>	<i>Conversational, narrative, or persuasive depending on the purpose</i>	<i>Objective and neutral</i>	<i>Objective and neutral</i>
<b>Structure</b>	<i>Flexible</i>	<i>Rigid, following specific conventions</i>	<i>Structured with sections of its convention</i>
<b>Content</b>	<i>Personal, anecdotal, or factual</i>	<i>Factual, and evidence-based</i>	<i>Focused on research questions</i>
<b>Source Use</b>	<i>May or may not use sources</i>	<i>Includes some sources</i>	<i>Extensive use of sources to support the arguments</i>
<b>Conventions</b>	<i>Less strict, varies by context</i>	<i>Follows academic conventions</i>	<i>Strict adherence to academic conventions</i>
<b>Grammatical Features</b>	<i>Simple</i>	<i>Complex sentences, passive voice often used</i>	<i>Use of complex sentences, nominalizations</i>
<b>Lexical Features</b>	<i>General vocabulary, less specialized terms</i>	<i>Technical vocabulary, field-specific terminology</i>	<i>Use of discipline-specific terminology, precise language</i>

## 1. Language Style and Convention

Academic writing is characterized by its formal tone, objectivity, and clarity of expression (Bailey, 2022; Giltrow et al., 2021). Unlike casual or informal writing, academic writing requires a structured approach with well-reasoned arguments supported by evidence. In this section, we examine the language styles and conventions commonly used in academic writing, providing you with the essential foundation for creating scholarly work. Academic writing involves five main elements of language style and conventions (see Fig. 1.1), namely formal tone, objectivity, clarity of expression, precise and specific language, and citing sources.

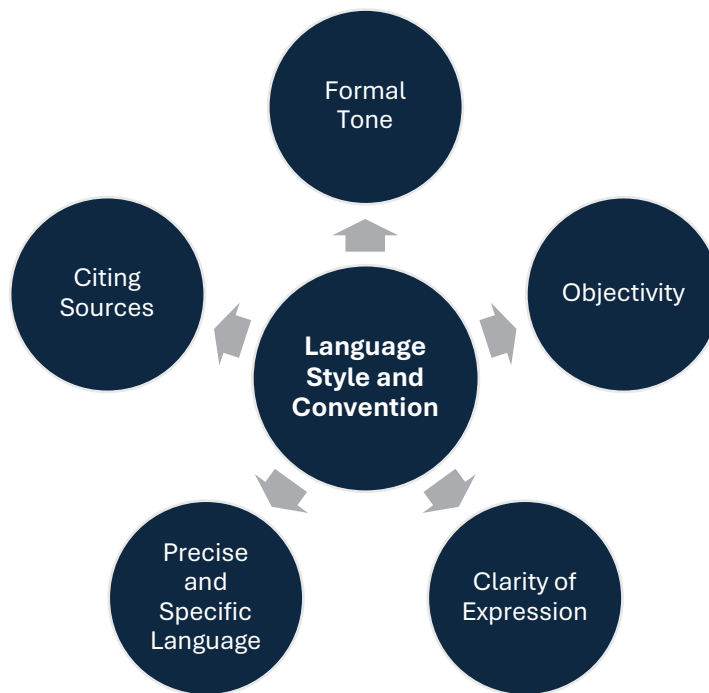


Figure 1.1 *Aspects of language style and convention*

## 1.1 Formal Tone

Academic writing requires a formal tone that conveys authority and professionalism. This means avoiding colloquial language, slang, and overly casual expressions. Instead, use formal language to maintain credibility and respectability in your writing. For example:

**Casual:** The teacher's methods are pretty cool.

**Formal:** The instructor's pedagogical strategies are innovative.

### Explanation

In the casual example, the phrase "pretty cool" is colloquial and lacks the level of formality expected in academic writing. This informal expression may diminish the perceived authority of the writer and undermine the seriousness of the topic being discussed. Conversely, the formal example employs language that is more appropriate for academic discourse. By replacing "pretty cool" with "innovative," the writer communicates the same idea using formal vocabulary. "Innovative" conveys a sense of creativity and originality, highlighting the teacher's forward-thinking approach to pedagogy. This enhances the writer's credibility and professionalism, contributing to a more authoritative and respectable tone in the academic writing.

## 1.2 Objectivity

In academic writing, writers should maintain objectivity by presenting information and arguments in an unbiased and impartial way. This involves using neutral language and avoiding emotionally charged language that could influence readers' perceptions. For instance:

**Biased:** The researcher's groundbreaking findings have revolutionized the field.

**Objective:** The scholar's research findings have significantly contributed to advancing the discipline.

**Explanation**

In the biased example, the phrase “groundbreaking findings” contains subjective language that elevates the researcher’s work to an exaggerated level. This expression implies a personal opinion rather than an objective assessment of the research. Additionally, the term “revolutionized” suggests a dramatic transformation, which may not accurately reflect the actual impact of the findings. On the other hand, the objective example maintains neutrality by using more restrained language. The phrase “research findings” is neutral and factual, focusing on the outcome of the study without embellishment. Instead of overstating the significance of the findings, the objective language acknowledges their contribution to the discipline in a measured and unbiased manner. This approach enhances the credibility of the writer and fosters a more balanced and impartial tone in academic writing.

**1.3 Clarity of Expression**

Clarity is essential in academic writing to ensure that readers understand the content easily. This includes using clear, concise language and organizing ideas logically. To enhance clarity, it is crucial to avoid ambiguity and unnecessary complexity in your writing. Here is an example:

**Unclear:** The results of the study were somewhat inconclusive.

**Clear:** The findings did not provide definitive conclusions.

**Explanation**

In the unclear example, the phrase “somewhat inconclusive” introduces ambiguity, leaving readers uncertain about the study’s outcomes. This lack of clarity hampers comprehension and may lead to misinterpretation of the findings. Additionally, the use of the qualifier “somewhat” weakens the statement, further obscuring the message. Conversely, the clear expression provides readers with a precise assessment of the study’s findings. When stating that the findings “did not provide definitive conclusions,” the writer communicates the uncertainty inherent in the results. This straightforward and direct language eliminates ambiguity. Clarity of expression promotes transparency and understanding in academic writing, fostering effective communication of research findings.

## 1.4 Precise and Specific Language

In language studies, precision in language is crucial for accurately conveying ideas. Employing precise and specific language enhances communication effectiveness while minimizing ambiguity. For instance:

**Vague:** The participants showed some improvement in language skills.

**Precise:** The participants demonstrated a significant enhancement in their speaking proficiency.

### Explanation

In the vague example, the phrase “some improvement” lacks specificity, leaving readers uncertain about the extent or nature of the progress observed. This ambiguity hinders comprehension and diminishes the impact of the statement. Conversely, the precise language in the second example clearly articulates the participants’ achievement by specifying the aspect of language skills (speaking proficiency) and emphasizing the significance of the enhancement observed. This precision enhances the clarity and credibility of the statement, enabling readers to grasp the exact nature of the participants’ progress without ambiguity. By using precise and specific language, researchers in language studies can effectively communicate their findings and insights with clarity and accuracy.

## 1.5 Citing Sources

Academic writing requires proper attribution of sources to acknowledge the ideas and research of others. Use citations and references according to the appropriate citation style (such as APA) to acknowledge the original authors and prevent plagiarism. Here is an example of citing a source:

According to Smith (2019), “language acquisition is a complex process influenced by various factors” (p. 25).

**Explanation**

In this example, the author (Smith) is acknowledged for their contribution to the understanding of language acquisition. A citation should contain the author's **last name**, the **publication year**, and the **exact page number** where the information was sourced and directly quoted. This enables readers to access the original source and verify the information presented. By adhering to proper citation practices, writers demonstrate academic integrity and uphold ethical standards in their research endeavours.

**Activity 1.1: Language Style and Convention**

**Directions:** Read the provided sentences. Then rewrite the informal sentences to adhere to formal language style and conventions and indicate why it is informal.

**Example:**

Sentence: The professor's lectures are super cool.

Rewrite: The professor's presentations are exceptionally insightful.

Reason: The word "super" is informal, and "cool" is a casual term. "exceptionally impressive" is a more formal and specific expression.

**Sentences to Rewrite:**

1. The book was really awesome.

---

2. This class is totally boring.

---

3. That experiment was kinda neat.

---

4. The study's results were pretty interesting.

---

5. The presentation was super boring.

---

6. The movie was kind of a letdown.

---

7. She's a really nice person.

---

8. The new policy is pretty confusing.

---

## 2. Grammatical Features in Research Writing

In research writing, adherence to grammatical rules is crucial for conveying ideas accurately and effectively (Hinkel, 2013). This section will explore key grammatical features essential in academic writing. By understanding and applying these grammatical principles, you will be better equipped to articulate their research findings clearly and professionally.

Since there are a number of grammatical features, this section will particularly focus key grammatical aspects essential in language studies research writing (see Fig. 1.2), including *subject-verb agreement*, *tense consistency*, and *sentence structure* (Romano, 2019).

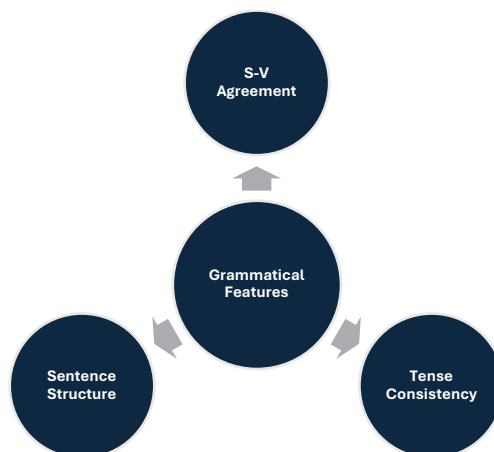


Figure 1.2 Essential grammatical features in research writing

## 2.1 Subject-Verb Agreement

Subject-verb agreement is a key grammatical rule that ensures the verb aligns in number with its subject within a sentence. In English, verbs must agree with their subjects in number, whether singular or plural. Here are some examples:

**Incorrect:** The data is inconclusive.

**Correct:** The data are inconclusive.

### *Explanation*

In the incorrect example, the singular verb “is” does not agree with the plural subject “data.” While “data” is often treated as a singular noun in colloquial usage, it is technically a plural noun, referring to multiple pieces of information. Therefore, to maintain subject-verb agreement, the plural form of the verb, “are,” should be used instead of the singular “is.” By correcting the sentence to “The data are inconclusive,” we ensure that the verb “are” matches the plural subject “data,” resulting in grammatical concordance. This adherence to subject-verb agreement enhances the clarity and correctness of the sentence, allowing readers to better understand the intended meaning without encountering grammatical errors.

## 2.2 Tense Consistency

Tense consistency is essential in academic writing as it maintains coherence and clarity by ensuring that verb tenses remain consistent throughout a piece of writing. The tense selected should reflect both the context and the nature of the research being described. Here is an example:

**Inconsistent:** The researcher examined language acquisition theories and concludes that...

**Consistent:** The researcher examined language acquisition theories and concluded that...



**Explanation**

In the inconsistent example, the past tense verb "examined" is followed by the present tense verb "concludes," resulting in a lack of tense consistency. This inconsistency can disrupt the flow of the sentence and confuse the reader about the timing of the actions described. By maintaining tense consistency throughout the sentence, as demonstrated in the corrected example, the past tense verb "examined" is followed by the past tense verb "concluded." This consistent use of the past tense provides clarity about the timing of the actions and ensures coherence in the narrative. Consistent tense usage enhances the readability and comprehensibility of academic writing, allowing readers to follow the sequence of events and understand the researcher's findings more effectively.

**2.3 Sentence Structure**

Sentence structure involves organizing words, phrases, and clauses to create sentences that are coherent and grammatically correct. Varying sentence structures adds richness and clarity to writing, enhancing its overall quality. Here is an example:

**Simple:** The students completed the language proficiency test.

**Complex:** After completing the language proficiency test, the students analysed their performance and identified areas for improvement.

**Explanation**

In the simple sentence, "The students completed the language proficiency test," the subject ("the students") and the verb ("completed") form a basic sentence structure. While simple sentences are concise and straightforward, they may lack complexity and depth. In contrast, the complex sentence introduces additional elements, such as a dependent clause ("After completing the language proficiency test") and a compound predicate ("analysed their performance and identified areas for improvement"). These additional components enrich the sentence structure, providing more detail and context to the narrative. Furthermore, employing complex sentences facilitates the expression of more detailed ideas and the relationships between various elements, thereby enhancing the overall clarity and coherence of the text.

Understanding and applying grammatical features such as **subject-verb agreement**, **tense consistency**, and **sentence structure** are essential for producing clear and coherent research writing in language studies. By mastering these elements, researchers can communicate their ideas and findings more effectively to their audience, thereby increasing the quality and impact of their academic work. Practice incorporating these grammatical features into your writing to improve your skills and elevate the clarity and professionalism of your research writing in language studies.

### Activity 1.2: Grammar Check

**Directions:** Read each sentence carefully. Then rewrite the corrected sentence in the space provided.

#### Example:

Sentence: The data is inconclusive.

Correction: The data are inconclusive.

#### Sentences to Correct:

1. The researchers has concluded their study.  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. After data were analyzed, the team conclude their results.  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. The study reveals some interesting insights about language acquisition.  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Each student have a unique perspective.  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. The experiments conducted by that scientist is exceptional.  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. He studies hard every night, but still do poorly on exams.  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. The participants who attend the event was asked to fill out a survey last week.  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. Sarah states she wants to go to college after graduation, but her poor attitude about studying do not show that she likes being a student.

---

---

---

### 3. Lexical Features in Research Writing

Lexical features play a crucial role in research writing, which can influence the clarity, precision, and professionalism of the text (Vögelin et al., 2019). This section explores key lexical elements commonly found in research writing within the field of language studies (see Fig. 1.3), including formal academic vocabulary, discipline-specific terminology, and hedging expressions. By mastering these lexical features, writers can effectively convey their ideas with precision and credibility.



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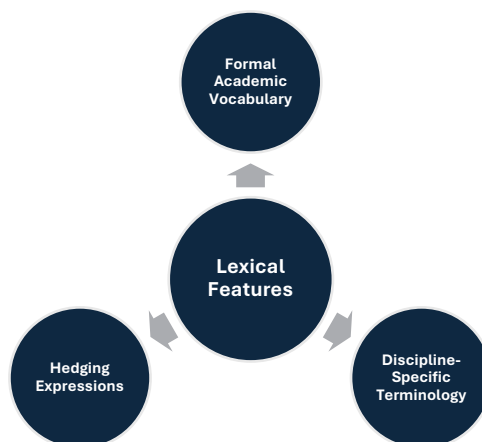


Figure 1.3 *Essential lexical features in research writing*

### 3.1 Formal Academic Vocabulary

Formal academic vocabulary comprises words and phrases specifically chosen for their precision and authority, essential for maintaining professionalism and credibility in scholarly discourse. In language studies, using formal academic terminology reflects a thorough understanding of the topic and enhances the scholarly quality of the writing. Here are some examples:

**Informal:** The teacher's methods are cool.

**Formal:** The instructor's pedagogical strategies are innovative.

#### *Explanation*

In the informal sentence, the term "cool" is colloquial and lacks the precision expected in academic writing. By contrast, the formal sentence employs the term "pedagogical strategies," which refers to the systematic approaches used in teaching and learning. This term is more specific and carries a higher level of academic authority, suitable for scholarly discourse in the field of language studies. Furthermore, the word "innovative" in the formal sentence conveys a sense of creativity and originality, emphasizing the forward-thinking nature of the instructor's strategies. Such precise language enhances the credibility of the statement and demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of pedagogy within the academic context. By utilizing formal academic vocabulary like "pedagogical strategies" and "innovative," writers in language studies can elevate the quality of their writing, establishing themselves as knowledgeable and authoritative contributors to the field. This adherence to formal vocabulary conventions enhances clarity, precision, and professionalism in academic discourse, ultimately strengthening the impact of the research.

### 3.2 Discipline-Specific Terminology

Discipline-specific terminology refers to specialized terms and concepts unique to a particular field of study, such as language studies. Incorporating discipline-specific terminology in research writing demonstrates expertise and familiarity with the subject matter (Nesi, 2012). Here is an example: