

# *Comments on Linguistic Features of Academic Writing: Based on the Article “Testing a Model of Teaching for Anxiety and Success for English Language Teaching”*

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**Abstract:** Academic writing is an integral part of various academic pursuits, including publishing research papers, submitting official reports, and delivering professional lectures. This type of writing is characterized by specific features that set it apart from other forms of writing. These features include the frequent use of nominalization, which involves converting verbs or adjectives into nouns, the passive voice, which emphasizes the action rather than the actor, technical terms that are specific to the field of study, and complex sentences that contain multiple clauses and modifiers. This paper aims to delve deeper into these characteristics by analyzing examples from the article “Testing a model of teaching for anxiety and success for English language teaching”. By doing so, this paper hopes to provide readers with a better understanding of academic writing and offer insights on how to effectively employ these features in their own writing.

## 1. Introduction

Academic writing stands as the cornerstone of scholarly communication, embodying the formal, structured, and evidence-based dissemination of ideas, research, and analysis within the vast landscape of academic disciplines and scholarly communities. It is a skill that demands rigorous attention and refinement, as it is essential for any individual pursuing a career in academia. Academic writing requires learners to navigate a complex web of rules, formats, and structures, ensuring that their work adheres to the standards of their respective fields.

Despite the diverse range of topics and content explored in academic writing, there are certain linguistic commonalities that permeate through these papers. These include the use of precise terminology, the incorporation of empirical evidence, and the adherence to logical argumentation. These elements contribute to the overall credibility and authority of academic writing, making it a trusted source of information within scholarly communities.

One such example of academic writing that exemplifies these features is the article “Testing a model of teaching for anxiety and success for English language teaching”. This paper, published in the prestigious Cambridge Journal of Education, delves into the intricate relationship between anxiety levels and success in English language teaching. The paper serves as a valuable resource for those interested in understanding the psychological factors that influence language learning and

teaching.

By analyzing this paper, we can gain insights into the characteristics of academic writing. We can observe how the authors construct their arguments, how they present their evidence, and how they adhere to the linguistic conventions of their field. Such an analysis can provide valuable insights for learners who are striving to master the art of academic writing.

## 2. Nominalization

Nominalization, in its proper sense, encapsulates the process of transforming a verb, adjective, or other part of speech into a noun. This process not only refers to the actual linguistic transformation but also to the underlying cognitive processes or operations involved in making such a linguistic shift. Additionally, it refers to the end result of these processes - the noun itself [1].

According to Zou [2], the frequent and skillful application of nominalization in writing has a profound impact on the overall tone and style of the text. It tends to render the text more formal and objective, lending it a sense of authority and credibility. Nominalization plays a pivotal role in enhancing the information-carrying capacity of a text, as it allows for the concise and precise packaging of multiple ideas or actions into a single noun form. Furthermore, it promotes objective description by reducing the use of personal pronouns and subjective verb forms, thus minimizing potential biases and interpretations.

In practice, nominalization is observed in numerous examples. Simple verbs like “consume” and “demonstrate” can be transformed into nouns like “consumption” and “demonstration” respectively. Similarly, adjectives like “interpretive” can be nominalized to form nouns like “interpretation”. These noun forms not only convey the original meaning but also add a layer of abstraction and generality.

Moreover, there are noun phrases that are inherently nominalized, such as “educational implication” and “technical discourse”. These phrases combine multiple words to form a compound noun that encapsulates a specific concept or idea. By utilizing these nominalized forms, writers can convey complex ideas in a concise and precise manner, making their writing more effective and impactful.

The function of nominalization is that firstly, it shows a static state. In academic writing, the tone of the delivery is peaceful and calm.

Example 1: “Comparison of students’ scores from a foreign language classroom anxiety scale and first and second Mid-term Exam results pointed to a negative correlation”. [3]

In this sentence, the subject is “comparison of students’ scores from a foreign language classroom anxiety scale and first and second Mid-term Exam results”, which is a long noun phrase connected by “and”. Instead of using “The author compared students’ scores from a foreign language classroom anxiety scale”, the use of nominalization makes it more formal and informative.

Example 2: “Striving for success to achieve a better place in society brings anxiety to make things worse”. [3]

Instead of writing “people strive for success to achieve a better place in society, which brings anxiety to make things worse”, gerund form of strive make the intended idea more clear and precise.

The second function of nominalization is that it is less subjective. Noun phrase as a subject rather than person means it is not biased nor judged by some other stakeholders. It is thus more convincing for readers.

Example 3: “This study focused only on teaching grammar topics for two basic reasons”. [3]

The subject of the sentence is an object rather than a person. It tells audiences that this study has been implemented in a scientific way instead of by a certain person.

### 3. Complex sentences and word choice

The utilization of intricate sentences and sophisticated vocabulary is a defining characteristic that sets academic writing apart from other forms of communication. Unlike the spoken language, which often favors simplicity and directness, written language, especially in the academic realm, thrives on complexity, variety, and readability. This is because academic writing aims to convey complex ideas and theories in a precise and comprehensive manner. The employment of complex sentences, which often involve subordinate clauses and multiple layers of meaning, allows authors to thoroughly explore and elaborate on their arguments. Simultaneously, the use of advanced vocabulary adds depth and nuance to the writing, reflecting the author's mastery of the subject matter and demonstrating their professional proficiency. Therefore, in academic language, the incorporation of complicated sentences and advanced vocabulary is not just a stylistic choice; it is a necessity that helps to showcase the author's expertise and credibility.

Example 4: Önem & Ergenç wrote “it is suggested that students either have poor study skills or cannot employ these skills during exams because of their anxiety level and end up with failure”. [3]

“Employ” in this sentence similarly means to use and “use” is a simple word in daily life. The author chose employ rather than use to indicate his writing proficiency.

In terms of complex sentences, academic paper employs compound and complex sentences mostly.

Example 5: “First, it would be easier to limit and control the variables which were out of the control of the researcher”. [3]

In this example, both subject clause and attributive clause appeared simultaneously, showing the informativity and complexity of academic writing.

Example 6: “Activities and exercises created according to MTAS were employed with the experiment group while the control group did not receive any special treatment in terms of teaching apart from the traditional instruction methods”. [3]

It is also an example showing that this subject includes past particles and the whole sentence is a compound sentence connected by “while”.

### 4. Technical Terms

According to the dictionary, a technical term refers to a word that holds a distinct and specialized meaning within a particular field of expertise. The utilization of such terms in academic writing not only embodies the level of professionalism within the paper but also tends to strengthen the conviction of the readers. In this article, a range of technical terms have been employed, including English language teaching (ELT), learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), The Model of Teaching for Anxiety and Success (MTAS), State and Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI), Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI), and Electroencephalography (EEG). While these terms are routinely utilized and understood by experts within their respective domains, they may pose a challenge for readers outside those specific fields. Therefore, it is crucial to provide additional explanations and clarifications for these technical terms to ensure that a broader audience can comprehend and appreciate the content of the article. By doing so, it is sure that the message is conveyed effectively to all readers, regardless of their specific expertise or background.

### 5. Passive Voice

Passive voice sentences constitute a crucial linguistic component of academic writing, reflecting the objective and impersonal tone that characterizes this style of writing. As elucidated by Lu [4],

the passive voice involves a strategic rearrangement of clause elements, primarily achieved by placing the agentive subject at the end of the sentence or omitting it altogether. This rearrangement results in two variations: the long passive and the short passive. Both forms serve as significant linguistic tools for packaging information in a manner that is concise yet comprehensive.

The passive voice differs significantly from the active voice in its tone and style. By its nature, the passive voice is more indirect and impersonal. It focuses on the action itself, rather than the agent performing the action. This detachment from the subject allows for a more objective presentation of facts and data, which is particularly suitable for academic writing. In contrast, the active voice tends to be more direct and personal, often highlighting the agent or subject of the action.

In academic writing, the passive voice is often preferred because it avoids assigning blame or credit to any particular individual or entity. This neutrality allows for a more unbiased and objective discussion of the topic. Additionally, the passive voice can help emphasize the significance of the research or findings by focusing on the action itself, rather than the person performing the action.

Example 7: “As a result, MTAS is proved to be an effective variable on the relation between anxiety, cognitive interference and success in this research”. [3]

Instead of saying “We have proved MTAS is an effective variable on the relation between anxiety, cognitive interference and success in this research”, the author did not mention the agents of conducting this experiment, which indicates the authenticity of this research. In this level, the function of passive voice is similar with the use the nominalization.

Example 8: “As for the effect of MTAS on anxiety, apart from the results for different types of questions related with anxiety, the TAI scores and the presence of theta waves of both groups before and after the teaching phase were compared”. [3]

The author puts the subject as a compound noun phrase connected with the conjunction “and”. It demonstrates the emphasis of subject as it is in the beginning.

Example 9: “During these two lessons, learners’ awareness for differences in their affective learning styles was raised by informing them about visual, auditory or kinesthetic learner styles as well as presenting related exercises suggested by Frender”. [3]

In this example, the author explicitly puts the agent at the back.

## 6. Responsibility

In the realm of academic writing, authors hold a significant responsibility to showcase a profound comprehension of the source text. Not only are they expected to demonstrate this understanding, but they must also be accountable for substantiating and justifying any assertions or claims made within their papers. This validation process is achieved primarily through the art of paraphrasing and summarizing the information they have garnered from various sources. Additionally, it is imperative that authors acknowledge the origin of these ideas and information by employing a rigorous system of citations. In this particular paper, the quantity of citations and references is noteworthy, and each one provides comprehensive and detailed information. For instance, the author cites six references to support the claim that there exists a relationship between theta waves and anxiety, which not only demonstrates the thoroughness of the research but also the abundance of supporting evidence. Furthermore, at the conclusion of the paper, a comprehensive list of reference books and journals is provided, reflecting the extensive research undertaken. Moreover, the language adheres to strict guidelines, ensuring that the paper meets the required standards in terms of punctuation, spacing, font size, and other formatting elements.

## 7. Conclusion

It is an accepted fact that academic writing in English has become an indispensable ability. Students, professors, and researchers in every discipline use academic writing to convey ideas, make arguments, and engage in scholarly conversation. Academic writing is characterized by nominalization, complex sentence and words, technical terms, passive voice and responsibility. The employment of nominalization creates a more academic, abstract tone. Complex sentences and words enables the passage to be informative as well as economical. By using technical terms, it shows the professionalism and credibility of the author. Passive voice sentence is a good way to emphasize subjects and when writing paper academically, sources and citations must be listed in a clear and formal way. This article also lists examples from “Testing a model of teaching for anxiety and success for English language teaching” for English language teaching for further explanation.

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