Further Key Language Challenges in Academic Reading and Writing & The Project Report

Lecturer: Ms. Mary Anne Puli

Date: 25th October 2025

21 ACADEMY

Undergraduate Diploma in Business Administration

During today's lecture,
-talk about how to go about writing the project report
-continue with the following topics regarding common language issues:

- Approaches to Vocabulary
- Abbreviations
- Verbs and Adverbs
- Conjunctions
- Prepositions
- Synonyms

Approaches to Vocabulary

Here we will continue examining some of the key difficulties students face when reading academic texts, such as processing new vocabulary, avoiding confusion with similar words, and recognising phrases from other languages.

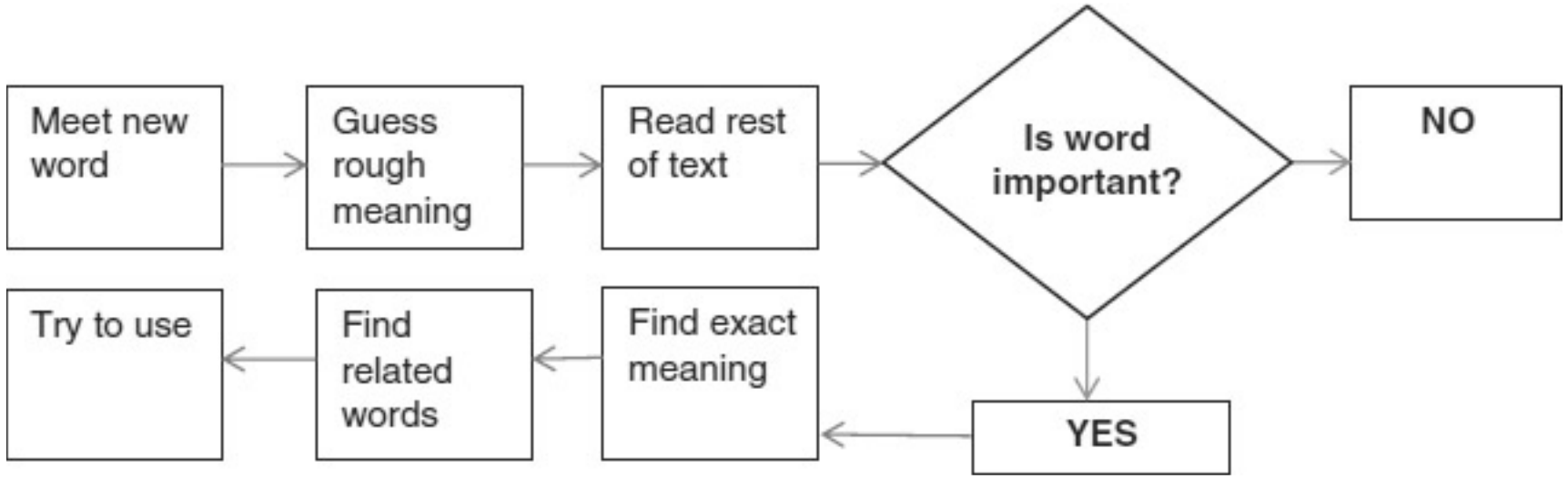
Introducing Vocabulary Issues

Going to extremes?

Muller (2012) **maintains** that the increased frequency of extreme weather events is linked to global warming, **in particular** to rising sea temperatures. **However**, McKenzie (2013) **insists** Muller has **a bee in his bonnet** on this topic, caused by using a **dysfunctional** model, and that there is no real evidence that **phenomena** such as flooding and hurricanes are becoming more common. He considers that the **key** issue is the growing population in areas vulnerable to events such as floods. Muller's **principal** concern is a rise in the temperature of the North Pacific Ocean of 0.5° C since 1968, which McKenzie regards as being within the normal range of historical **fluctuation**. But Javez (2009) and Simmonds (2011), *inter alia*, have argued for an international research programme under the **auspices** of **UNESCO** to monitor these events, given the threefold rise in the cost of insurance claims since 2000.

ITEM	VOCABULARY ISSUE
mantains; insists;	referring verbs for summarising ideas
in particular; however	conjunctions
A bee in his bonnet	idiom
dysfunctional	Can be understood by its prefix
phenomena	approximate synonym for ‘events’
key	metaphor

ITEM	VOCABULARY ISSUE
fluctuation auspices	formal or technical vocabulary
inter alia	phrase from another language
UNESCO	abbreviations



Dealing with New Vocabulary

Students will meet two vocabulary areas when reading: subject-specific and general academic. For example, in the text read students of Environmental Studies may know 'fluctuation' but not understand 'auspices'. Instead of trying to learn all the new vocabulary you encounter, you should screen it to select which words are worth learning. It can be a mistake to attempt to learn too many new words: for most students, subject-specific language will have priority.

You should also check the register of the word or phrase. Most vocabulary you read in academic work will be standard English, but ‘under the auspices’ (meaning ‘with the authority of’), for instance, is rather formal, while ‘a bee in his bonnet’ is idiomatic.

As already advised it is generally better to use standard English in your own written work.

Common Language Features

Ambiguity	Where more than one interpretation is possible; lack of clarity
Anecdote	A story told to illustrate a situation or idea
Cliché	An overused idea or phrase; lacking in freshness
Euphemism	A word or phrase used to avoid naming something
Idiom	A phrase used in colloquial speech, the meaning of which is not obvious
Metaphor	A word used to refer to something but that literally means something else unpleasant directly
Paradox	An idea that seems wrong but yet may be true
Proverb	A traditional statement or rhyme containing advice or a moral
Saying	An often-repeated comment that seems to contain some truth
Simile	A comparison of two things, using 'like' or 'as'
Slogan	A frequently repeated phrase used in advertising or politics
Statement	A rather formal comment on a situation
Synopsis	A summary of something

Working with a partner, study the following sentences and decide which of the features listed above list is illustrated by each one.

a) The President said she regretted the loss of life in the typhoon and sympathised with the survivors. (statement)
b) At the beginning of the lecture Professor Chang told them about an accident she had seen that morning. (_____)
c) There's no such thing as a free lunch, he warned them. (_____)
d) The author of the report passed away on November 21st. (_____)
e) He told the class that their law course was a voyage over an uncharted ocean. (_____)
f) She said that the older she got, the less she seemed to know. (_____)
g) After the price rise, sales fell like a stone. (_____)
h) It is said that the early bird catches the worm. (_____ ___)
i) Their teacher explained that the novel consisted of two parts; the first historical, the second contemporary. (synopsis)

Confusing Pairs

Certain common words can cause confusion because they have similar but distinct spellings and meanings; let's explain:

- *The drought affected the wheat harvest in Australia.*

An immediate effect of the price rise was a fall in demand.

'Affect' and 'effect' are two different words. 'Affect' is a verb, while 'effect' is commonly used as a noun.

- accept (verb)/except (prep)

It is difficult to accept their findings.

The report is finished except for the conclusion.

- compliment (noun/verb)/complement (verb)

Her colleagues complimented her on her presentation.
His latest book complements his previous research on South African politics.

- economic (adj.)/economical (adj.)

Inflation was one economic result of the war.
Sharing a car to go to work was an economical move.

- its (possessive pronoun)/it's (subject pronoun + verb)

The car's advanced design was its most distinct feature.
It is widely agreed that carbon emissions are rising.

- led (verb – past tense of lead)/lead (noun)

His research led him to question the orthodox opinion.
Lead (Pb) is a valuable mineral.

- lose (verb)/loose (adj)

No general ever plans to lose a battle.
He stressed the loose connection between religion and psychology.

- principal (adj/noun)/principle (noun)

Zurich is the principal city of Switzerland.
The principal welcomed the students.
All economists recognise the principle of supply and demand.

- rise (verb – past tense rose)/raise (verb – past tense raised)

The population of Sydney rose by 35% in the last century.
The university raised its fees by 10% last year.

- site (noun)/sight (noun)

The site of the battle is now covered by an airport.
His sight began to weaken when he was in his eighties.

- tend to (verb)/trend (noun)

Young children tend to enjoy making a noise.
In many countries there is a trend towards smaller families.

Choose the correct word in each sentence.

a) The company was founded on the principals/principles of quality and value.
b) Millions of people are attempting to lose/loose weight.
c) Sunspots have been known to affect/effect radio communication.
d) Professor Poledna received their compliments/complements politely.
e) The ancient symbol depicted a snake eating it's/its tail.
f) Both social and economical/economic criteria need to be examined.
g) It took many years for some of Einstein's theories to be accepted/excepted.

WORDS AND PHRASES FROM OTHER LANGUAGES

When reading academic texts, you may meet words and phrases from other languages, usually Latin, German or French.
They are generally used because there is no exact English equivalent, and they are often printed in italics:

He argued for the *de facto* independence of the states.

You are not expected to use these phrases in your own writing, but it is useful to understand them when you read. They can be found in a dictionary, and some of the more common ones are being listed here:

Latin

- *ad hoc* unplanned
- *de facto* as it really is
- *de jure* according to law
- *inter alia* among others
- *in vitro* studies conducted on isolated organs (in Biology)
- *pro rata* proportional

French

- *à propos de* on the subject of
- *ancien régime* old ruling system
- *coup d'état* military takeover
- *déjà vu* sensation of having seen something before
- *fait accompli* accomplished fact
- *raison d'être* reason for living

German

- *Bildungsroman* a story of growing-up
- *Mitteleuropa* central Europe
- *Realpolitik* political reality
- *Schadenfreude* pleasure from another's misfortune
- *Zeitgeist* spirit of the times

Abbreviations are an important and expanding feature of contemporary English, widely used for convenience and space-saving.

Students need to be familiar with both general and academic abbreviations.

Abbreviations take the form of shortened words, acronyms or a set of letters, as shown here.

a) Shortened words are often used without the writer being aware of the original form.

'Bus' comes from 'omnibus', which is hardly used in modern English, and 'disco' is more common than 'discothèque', while 'refrigerator' is still better in written English than the informal 'fridge'.

Yet 'lab' for 'laboratory', 'memo' for 'memorandum' and 'vet' for 'veterinary surgeon' are quite acceptable.

b) **Acronyms** are made up of the initial letters of a name or phrase (e.g. AIDS = Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). They are pronounced as words. In some cases, users have forgotten that these are acronyms and they are treated as ordinary words (e.g. 'radar' comes from 'radio detection and ranging').

c) Other abbreviations are read as sets of individual letters. They include names of countries, organisations and companies (US/BBC/IBM), and also abbreviations which are only found in written English (e.g. PTO means ‘please turn over’).

Note that in many cases abbreviations are widely used without most users knowing what the individual letters stand for (e.g. DNA, DVD).

MOST COMMON ABBREVIATIONS USED IN ACADEMIC ENGLISH

- AGM annual general meeting
- ASAP as soon as possible
- BA Bachelor of Arts
- BCE before the common era (previously BC)
- BSc Bachelor of Sciences
- CAD computer-aided design
- CE common era (previously AD)
- CV curriculum vitae
- DIY do-it-yourself
- ETA estimated time of arrival (for journeys)
- EU European Union

- FE further education (non-university study above 16/18)
- GM genetically modified
- GNP gross national product
- HE higher education (university study above 18)
- HR(M) human resource (management)
- ICT information and communications technology
- IMF International Monetary Fund
- LLB Bachelor of Laws
- MA Master of Arts
- MSc Master of Science
- PG Postgraduate

- PGCE Postgraduate Certificate of Education
- PhD Doctor of Philosophy
- PLC public limited company
- PR public relations
- UCAS Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UK)
- UG undergraduate
- UN United Nations
- URL uniform resource locator (website address)
- VC Vice-Chancellor
- WTO World Trade Organisation

More PUNCTUATION

There are many standard abbreviations which have a full stop after them to show that it is a shortened form of a word (e.g. Tues. = Tuesday).
Other examples are govt. (government), co. (company) and Oct. (October).

With acronyms and other abbreviations, it is now normal to write the letters without full stops (e.g. BBC, ABS).

Duplicate Abbreviations can be confusing.

PC, for example, may stand for ‘personal computer’ but also ‘politically correct’ or ‘police constable’.

It is useful to be aware of these potential confusions. A good dictionary should be used to understand more unusual abbreviations.

There are certain abbreviations common to most types of academic writing:

anon. anonymous (no author)
c. *circa* (in dates – about)
cf. compare
ed. editor/edition
e.g. for example
et al. and others (used for giving names of multiple authors)
etc. *et cetera* (and so on – do not use this in formal academic work)
Fig. figure (for labelling charts and graphs)
ibid. in the same place (to refer to source mentioned immediately before)
i.e. that is
K thousand

NB: take careful note
nd. no date (i.e. an undated source)
No. number
op. cit. in the source mentioned previously
p.a. yearly (per annum)
pp. pages
PS postscript
re: with reference to
sic used in brackets after a copied or quoted word that appears odd or erroneous to show that the word is quoted exactly as it stands in the original
vs versus

Verbs and Adverbs

- Understanding Main Verbs

Study the following sentence and underline the main verbs:

The author concludes that no reasonable alternative is currently available to replace constitutional democracy, even though he does not completely reject the possibility of creating a better political system in the future.

To follow the writer's meaning, the reader needs to be clear that 'conclude' and 'reject' are the main verbs in the two parts of the sentence.

Academic writing tends to use rather formal verbs to express the writer's meaning accurately:

In the last decade the pace of change accelerated.

Could Darwin have envisaged the controversy his work would cause?

In spoken English we are more likely to use 'speed up' and 'imagined'.

ADVERBS

1. In the following sentence, adverbs are used to give information about time (currently) and degree (completely).
The author concludes that no reasonable alternative is currently available to replace constitutional democracy, even though he does not completely reject the possibility of creating a better political system in the future.

Adverbs are used in academic writing in a variety of ways. Among the most important are:
a) to provide more detail, with verbs and adjectives:
Reasonably good data are available for only the first two years.
Decomposition eventually ceases in modern landfills.

b) individually, often at the beginning of sentences, to introduce new points or link sentences together:
Currently, the Earth's atmosphere appears to be warming up.
Alternatively, the use of non-conventional renewable energies is worth exploring.

NB: Adverbs used individually need to be employed with care. It is dangerous to overuse them, since they can be like the author commenting on the topic.

As an academic writer aims to be objective, adverbs such as ‘fortunately’ or ‘remarkably’ may be unsuitable.

2. **Adverbs** linked to verbs and adjectives usually fall into three groups.

a) Time (when?)
previously published
retrospectively examined

b) Degree (how much?)
declined considerably
contribute substantially

c) Manner (in what way?)
1. *medically complicated*
2. *remotely located*

Further common examples include:

Time	Degree	Manner
recently	*clearly*	*(un)surprisingly*
increasingly	*particularly*	*factually*
originally	*broadly*	*politically*
presently	*highly*	*locally*
currently	*wholly*	*alternatively*
traditionally	*crucially*	*similarly*
continuously	*emphatically*	*psychologically*

Complete the text by inserting a suitable adverb from the box into each gap.

virtually	conventionally	basically	originally	recently	illicitly	significantly	substantially

_____, the earliest keys were made by the Egyptians from wood, and _____ improved by the Romans, who used metal. Today's keys are _____ the same: a piece of metal with teeth, _____ produced by cutting and stamping. But _____ a new technology, 3D printing, has made it possible to manufacture much more intricate designs which are _____ impossible to copy _____. Although _____ more expensive, these hi-tech keys offer remarkable security.

Conjunctions are words or phrases which join sections of text together.
Effective reading and writing requires clarity about the specific meaning of conjunctions.
This section describes the different functions of conjunctions and practises their use.

BIOFUELS

Newly published research examines some important questions about the growing use of biofuels, **such as** ethanol made from maize. The production of these has increased sharply recently, **but** the replacement of food crops with fuel crops has been heavily criticised. **Although** initially seen as a more environmentally friendly type of fuel, the research shows that producing some biofuels, **for instance** biodiesel palm oil, is more polluting than using conventional oil. The ethanol produced from sugar cane, **however**, can have negative emissions, **in other words** taking carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, which is a beneficial process. **Consequently**, it can be seen that the situation is rather confused, **and** that biofuels are **neither** a magical solution to the energy problem, **nor** are they the environmental disaster sometimes suggested.

Note that some conjunctions link parts of sentences together:

The production of these has increased sharply recently, ***but*** *the replacement of food crops with fuel crops has been heavily criticised.*

While others join a new sentence to the previous one:

… carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, which is a beneficial process. ***Consequently****, it can be seen that the situation is rather confused …*

Insert a suitable conjunction into each gap.

a) _____ checking the equipment the experiment was repeated.

b) _____ most people use the train, a minority walk or cycle.

c) Brick is a thermally efficient building material. It is, _____, cheap.

d) Demand has increased for summer courses, _____ extra ones are offered this year.

e) Many writers, _____ Chekhov, have been doctors.

f) _____ the increase in residence fees more students are moving out.

g) _____ teaching at the Sorbonne she was writing a novel.

h) _____ he was studying Italian he spent a semester in Bologna.

Prepositions are generally short words such as ‘by’ or ‘at’ which have a variety of uses. They are important because different prepositions can change the meaning of a sentence. This unit explains how they can be understood and learnt by linking them to nouns, adjectives and verbs. Students should consult a standard English grammar for a full list of prepositional combinations.

Prepositions

Using Prepositions

a) Many international students find the use of prepositions confusing. This is because, although they are mainly short words, a different preposition can change the meaning of a sentence.

a) ■ **Compare**:

Essays must be handed in ***on*** *January 15th.*
Essays must be handed in ***by*** *January 15th.*

In the first sentence essays have to be submitted on the exact date, but in the second the date is the final deadline and essays can be submitted earlier.

b) ■ **Study the use of prepositions in the following text (ignoring to + infinitives).**

The **purpose of** this paper is to examine the **development of** the textile industry **in Catalonia in the period** 1780–1880. This clearly **contributed to** the region's industrialisation and was **valuable for** stimulating exports. **In conclusion**, the paper attempts to demonstrate the **relationship between** the **decline in** agricultural employment and the **supply of** cheap labour **in the factory context**.

Prepositions and Nouns

- **Insert a suitable preposition with the nouns in the following sentences.**

a) Evidence is presented in support _____ the value of women's work.

b) A small change _____ wind direction can lead to large temperature changes.

c) Many examples _____ tax evasion were found.

d) The answer _____ the problem was 0.585.

e) The head _____ the council has just resigned.

f) The second point is their impact _____ developing countries.

Complete the following phrases with the correct preposition.

a) _____ the whole

b) point _____view

c) in respect _____

d) _____spite of

e) in support _____

f) _____the other hand

g) _____order to

Prepositions in Phrases

Note the difference between 'among' and 'between':

Among *14 students in the class, only two were from Africa.* (large group)
He divided his time ***between*** *the offices in Barcelona and Madrid.* (limited number)

Prepositions of Time and Space

Complete the following sentences with suitable prepositions of place or time.

a) _____the respondents, few had any experience of working abroad.

b) The illiteracy rate declined gradually_____1976_____1985.

c) Most workers_____the European Union retire before the age_____60.

d) Leonardo da Vinci was born_____Florence_____1452.

e) Chocolate sales fall_____summer and peak_____Christmas.

f) _____the surface, there is no difference_____male and female responses.

g) The countries_____the Mediterranean held a meeting_____May 20th.

h) _____15 and 20 students study chemical engineering every year.

Synonyms

Synonyms are different words with a similar meaning, such as 'figures' and 'numbers'. A good writer uses synonyms to avoid repetition and thus provide more interest for the reader. Synonyms should also be used when paraphrasing or note-making to avoid plagiarism.

How Synonyms Work

- **Underline the synonyms in the following text and complete the table.**

Royal Dutch Shell is the largest oil company in the world by revenue, with a significant share of the global hydrocarbon market. The giant firm employs over 100,000 people internationally, including over 8,000 employees in Britain. Shell produces about 13% of the UK's oil and gas.

Word/phrase	Synonym
largest	*giant*
oil	
company	
in the world	
people	
Britain	

Synonyms are not always exactly the same in meaning, so that in the previous example ‘employees’ is more specific than ‘people’. It is important not to change the register: ‘firm’ is a good synonym for ‘company’, but ‘boss’ is too informal to use for ‘manager’.

Many common words like culture, economy or industry have no effective synonyms.

- **Identify the synonyms in this text by underlining them and linking them to the word they are substituting for.**

Example: agency – organisation

The chairman of the UK's food standards **agency** has said that a national advertising campaign is necessary to raise low levels of personal hygiene. The **organisation** is planning a £3m publicity programme to improve British eating habits. A survey has shown that half the population do not wash before eating, and one in five fail to wash before preparing food. There are over six million cases of food poisoning in this country every year, and the advertising blitz aims to cut this by 20%. This reduction, the food body believes, could be achieved by regular hand washing prior to meals.

Although essays are the most common assignments in many academic disciplines, students of Economics and Business are often asked to write reports.

This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND

Writing reports

While essays are often concerned with abstract or theoretical subjects, a report is a description of a situation or something that has or can happened.

In academic terms, it might describe a survey you have carried out or be a comparison of proposals to deal with a situation.

How to Approach Your Business and Financial Plan Assignment

🔍

Purpose of the Assignment

You are being asked in creating a full business and financial plan for a *fictional* start-up.

This simulates what real entrepreneurs do when presenting their business idea to investors or funders.

This project will help you:
Apply research and analytical skills
Use creativity to design a new product or service
Understand real business planning processes
Learn how to present professionally

Key Requirements (What You Must Include)

You must follow this structure. Each part is essential:

📘 1. Cover Page

- Company name, your name, date
- A clean, professional title page

22. Contents Page

A list of all sections with page numbers help readers find what they need

3. Executive Summary

A short summary of the whole plan (write this last!)
Include: business idea, goals, market, funding needs

4. Company Overview

What your business does
Your mission and vision
Structure: sole trader, partnership, limited company?

📊 5. Market Analysis

Who are your customers?
What do they need?
Who are your competitors?
Include data, trends, and research

💡 6. Product or Service Description

What are you offering?
What makes it new or different?
What problem does it solve?
✅ **Important**: Show how you came up with the idea — research, creativity, gap in the market.

📈 7. Marketing and Sales Strategy

How will people hear about you?
How will you sell to them?
You may include digital and traditional methods

- Pricing, promotion, branding, sales funnel
- Customer loyalty/retention

⚙️ 8. Operational Plan

- Day-to-day running of the business
- Business location – online or physical?
- Suppliers and equipment
- Production or service process
- Staff needed and roles
- Timeline for launching

💰 9. Financial Plan

- Start-up costs
- How much funding you need
- Where funding will come from
- Revenue and cost estimates
- Cash flow forecast (Year 1)
- Break-even analysis

10. Risks and Mitigation Strategies

- Identify key risks (market, financial, legal, etc.)
- Explain how you will manage or reduce them

📝 11. Conclusion

- Recap of the business opportunity
- Why it’s a strong, realistic idea
- Reaffirm funding request and goals

12. Reference List

- All sources used in your research
- Use the correct academic referencing style

13. Any Appendices

THANK
YOU