

# LC-1114 Communicating Technology

Principles of effective communication  
Genre and genre analysis



Aalto University  
Language Centre

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Session 1

# Today's class

- Intro to the course and assignments
- Principles of successful communication
- The concept of genre and genre recognition
- Getting to know you







# What does this course aim to do?

- Help you **recognize** elements and strategies that enhance clarity and audience-friendliness
- Help you **apply** these strategies and elements
  - in writing related to your field of study
  - in an oral presentation
- Help you **distinguish** between formal and informal communication

# Why bother with non-expert audiences and general communication skills?

- Globalism:
  - Too many engineering graduates
  - Field knowledge only is not competitive
- What will give you a **competitive edge**?
  - Communication skills: valued more in recruitment than actual field knowledge
  - Strong English skills: significant factor in career advancement

(EK, 2014; Räisänen, 2013; Rontu, 2010; Lappalainen, 2009)

# Future challenges

- Innovation
  - Created through cross-disciplinary interaction
- Reaching a wider audience
  - Non-engineers: Business, Design
  - Decision makers: Funding £\$€!
- Multicultural teams

# What will I know by the end of the course?

You'll be able to

- **Organise ideas** in order to present information clearly to non-experts (patterns of organization, readability principles)
- **Adjust style and level of formality** depending on the genre and the audience (vocabulary choice, grammar, guiding the audience)
- Receive, give and use **constructive feedback**
- **Use English more confidently** to discuss and evaluate solutions in your field of study

# What will I do during this course?

- Participate and contribute to class work
- Plan and write texts: final text is 500-600 words, based on preparatory assignments
- Complete 5 online modules independently
- Prepare, practice, and deliver an oral presentation (based on the written work), 8-10 minutes
- Give and receive peer feedback
- Review and improve my work based on feedback



# What will I do during this course?

## Preparatory assignments:

A1	Pre-course assignment	5
A2	Introduction paragraph	5
A3	Definition of solution added	5
A4	1st full draft: recommendation	5
A5	Presentation outline	10
A6	Rehearsal and slides - <i>peer feedback!</i>	5
A7	Self-evaluation and analysis	5

## Graded:

▪ Online modules	10
▪ Final report (A Recommendation)	30
▪ Final presentation	20

# Final paper writing process

**A1**

Assignment 1: Pre-course task (a rough outline)

5 pts

**A2**

Assignment 2: Introduction (about 150-200 words)

5 pts

**A3**

Assignment 3: Solution (Extended definition) (about 250-300 words)

5 pts

**A4**

Assignment 4: First full draft of recommendation report

5 pts

# Final presentation process

**A5**

Presentation  
outline

10 pts

**A6**

Rehearsal  
presentation with  
slides

5 pts

**A7**

Self-assessment of  
rehearsal  
presentation

5 pts

# Course schedule

- 12 class sessions:
  - The first 10 session in weeks 1 – 6.
  - Weeks 9-10 will be presentation rehearsals
    - Ss attend 1 90-minute session
  - Weeks 11-12 is for final presentation conferences.
    - Ss attend 1 90-minute session
- 5 online modules on writing that you will work on independently

See course schedule on MyCourses for more detail

# How are we graded?

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Points/100</b>	
5	93-100	Excellent
4	85-92	Very good
3	76-84	Satisfactory
2	69-75	Weak
1	61-68	Poor



# Do we have any course materials?

## Weekly MyCourses Pages

- In-class activities and tasks
- Lecture slides

## Materials

- AWE & Writer's Guide for Engineers
- Other additional materials (writing, presenting, online tools, language aids)

## Assignments

- Assignment instructions, materials and submission boxes
- Online modules

**Any questions about me or  
the course?**

# Do you agree or disagree?

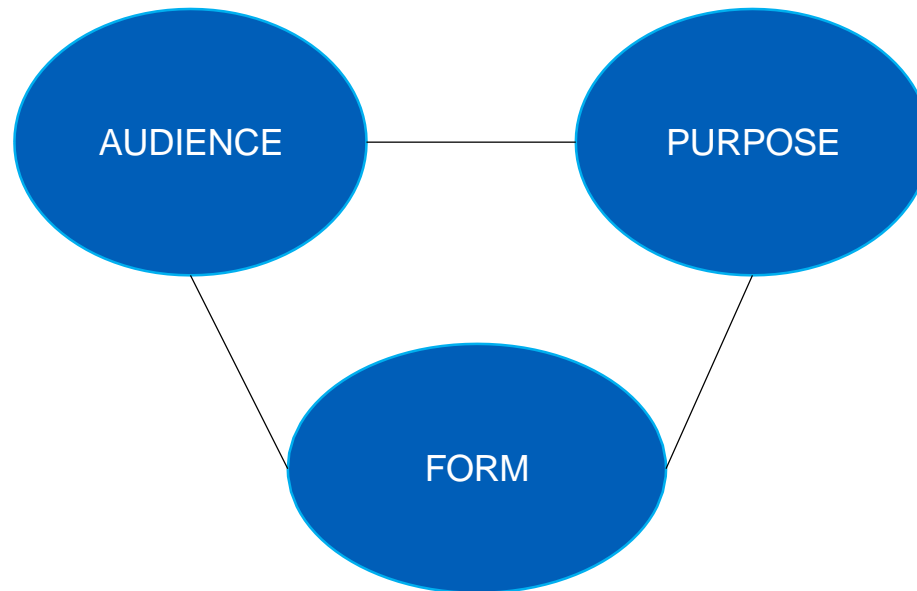
- “Writing is all about good grammar.”
- “Good writers write quickly and effortlessly”
- “Writing is a linear, *straightforward* process.”
- “I need to have a complicated sentence structure because my topic is complicated”
- “Changing your writing style for your audience is selling out”



Academic Coaching and Writing LLC (2016). *How to get your academic writing done: Myths and new research about successful writing*. <https://academiccoachingandwriting.org/categories/academicwriting/category/how-to-get-your-academic-writing-done-myths-and-new-research-about-successf>  
Premier Taaltraining English Blog. *5 myths around academic English writing debunked*. <https://blog.premiertaaltraining.nl/2014/03/24/5-myths-around-academic-writing-debunked/>  
Student Success Centre, *Writing Services* (n.d.). *10 myths of college writing*. Saint Louis University. <https://www.slu.edu/life-at-slu/student-success-center/academic-support/university-writing-services/pdfs/myths-of-writing.pdf>

# Successful communication

Product of three considerations



# Successful communication

## 1. Audience

Who are you writing to?

- Is a formal or informal style more appropriate for the audience?
- How much information does this audience already know?
- How much detail can they take?
- What information on this subject does the audience need?
- Are you writing for experts or non-experts?



# Successful communication

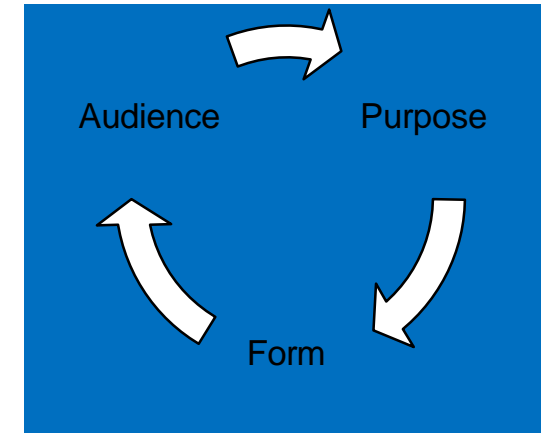
## 2. Purpose

What are you hoping to achieve?

- To inform? -> What do you want the audience to know when you are done?
- To persuade? -> What do you want the audience to believe or agree with?
- To entertain?
- .....

# Successful communication

Audience, purpose and form are interconnected

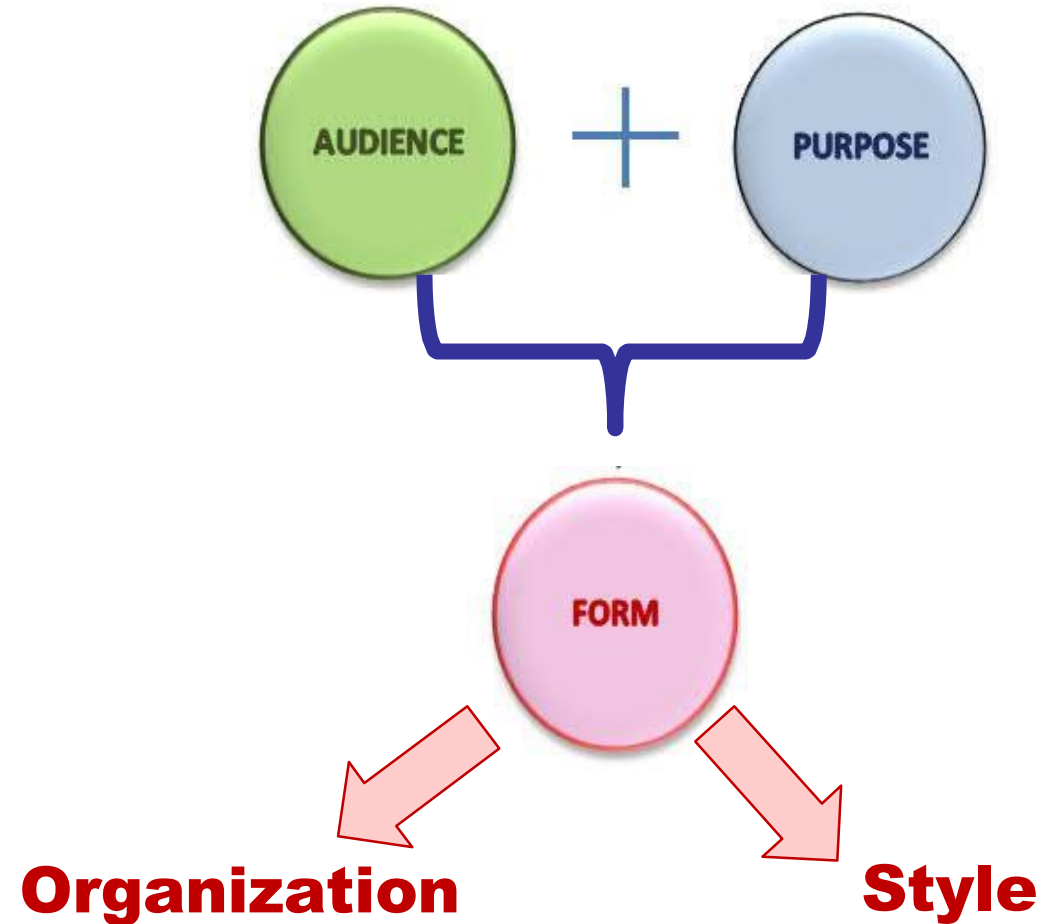


If the audience knows **less** than the writer/speaker → purpose = **instructional**

If the audience knows **more** than the writer/speaker → purpose = **display**

# Successful communication

Form is determined by  
**audience** and **purpose**



# Successful communication

What is your understanding of the  
word genre?

# Genre

A **type** of text characterized by a common

- PURPOSE (to inform, to persuade)
- FORM (organization grammar and word choice)
- For a particular AUDIENCE (expert, non-expert)

*Examples of genres:*

Research articles, technical reports, conference papers, lab reports, user's instruction manuals



# Genre

**Q: Which genres do you have experience in writing in English? Do you find some genres more difficult to write than others? Why?**

# Genre recognition task

Read the texts on the handout and discuss in groups: Which genres are these texts examples of? What is the possible source (type of publication) of each of the texts? How does the style of the text support your conclusions? What informal/formal features in the text helped you decide (take notes or create a shared Google doc to discuss)?

**Text 1: Magazine article** (Griffith, E. (2013). *What is Cloud Computing?* <http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2372163,00.asp> )

The 'cloud' is a real buzzword these days, but what exactly is the cloud, how does it impact what you do, and is it anything really new?

"What's the cloud?!" These are all questions that I've heard in Best Buy's Super Bowl ads.

In the simple terms of the programs over the Internet, the cloud is just a metaphor for the structure of the Internet as networks of computing connections and doling out data and programs.

What cloud computing is, is to store data on--or run programs from--the hard drive, that's called local storage and computing.

Everything you need is physically close to you, which means accessing your data is fast and easy (for that one computer, or others on the local network). Working off your hard drive is how the computer industry functioned for decades and some argue it's still superior to cloud computing, for reasons I'll explain shortly.

- Informal word choices (e.g. phrasal verbs)
- Contracted forms
- Direct questions
- Exclamation marks
- Addressing the reader with "you"
- Definition provided

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**Text 2: Wikipedia article on cloud computing** ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cloud\\_computing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cloud_computing))

**Cloud computing** is the delivery of [computing](#) as a [service](#) rather than a [product](#), whereby shared resources, software, and applications are hosted and made available to other users over the Internet, often as a [utility](#) (like the [electricity grid](#)), and can be used as public, private or [hybrid](#).<sup>[1]</sup>

-- Cloud computing is similar to a utility, with economies of scale, and is the broader concept of cloud computing is

Cloud computing is designed to maximize the effectiveness of computing resources, but are also dynamic. For example, a cloud server with a specific application is used by multiple users during North American business hours (e.g., a web server). This approach should maximize the use of computing power thus reducing environmental damage as well since less power, air conditioning, rackspace, etc. are required for a variety of functions. With cloud computing, multiple users can access a single server to retrieve and update their data without purchasing licenses for different applications.

Hyperlinks  
A mixture of informal and formal language  
Definition provided

**Text 3: Journal article** (Hashem, I.; Yaqoob, I.; Anuar, N.; Mokhtar, S.; Gani, A.; Ullah Khan, S. (2015).  
The rise of “big data” on cloud computing: Review and open research issues. *Information Systems 47*, 98-115)

Cloud computing is one of the most significant shifts in modern ICT and service for enterprise applications and has become a powerful architecture to perform large scale and complex computing. The advantages of cloud computing include integration with scalable data storage. Cloud computing offers low maintenance cost, efficient management of applications that leverage various data generated and ease in the scale of data in cloud computing are users that depend on the services provided by vendors, such as cloud-based technologies applicable to the environment required to access, store, and process data. The environment is achieved through virtualization of underlying hardware to increase computation.

In-text citations  
Formal language use (e.g. passive voice)  
Field-specific vocabulary  
Connectors  
A reference to the writer's goal

The goal of this study is to analyze big data in cloud computing environments and provide the definition, characteristics, and classification of big data along with some discussions on cloud computing. The relationship between big data and cloud computing, big data storage systems, and Hadoop technology are discussed. Furthermore, research challenges are discussed, with focus on scalability, availability, data integrity, data transformation, data quality, data heterogeneity, privacy, legal and regulatory issues, and governance. Several open research issues that require substantial research efforts are likewise summarized.



**Text 4: A course book?** (Jamsa, K. (2013). *Cloud Computing: SaaS, PaaS, IaaS, Virtualization, Business Models, Mobile Security, and More*. Burlington, MA: Jones & Barlett Learning. pp. 1-3))

Today the term cloud computing refers to a model for enabling ubiquitous, convenient, on-demand network access to a shared pool of configurable computing resources that can be rapidly provisioned and released with minimal management effort. Cloud computing is based on a set of technologies that enable the use of virtual machines, virtual networks, and virtual storage. These technologies are used to create a virtualized environment where users can access and use resources as if they were local. This model is often referred to as Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS), Platform as a Service (PaaS), and Software as a Service (SaaS). The cloud computing model is based on a set of technologies that enable the use of virtual machines, virtual networks, and virtual storage. These technologies are used to create a virtualized environment where users can access and use resources as if they were local. This model is often referred to as Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS), Platform as a Service (PaaS), and Software as a Service (SaaS).

Fairly formal word choices  
Connectors  
Terminology is explained  
Definition is provided  
Examples are given

underlying HTML documents. Through this process, the number of documents on the web exploded to billions worldwide. Web 2.0 is a term used to describe the set of tools and websites that allow users to publish content to the web without the direct use of HTML.

# Successful communication

## 3. Form

What form will best accomplish your purpose with this particular audience?

- Is there a model or format you should follow?
- Would formal or informal style be more appropriate for your audience and purpose?
- How can you best organize your information to have the greatest impact on your audience?

# Group work 1: getting acquainted



- **Introduce yourself briefly:**
  - Name
  - Major subject
- **What is Technical Writing?**
  - What are the **characteristics**?
  - How does it differ from other **types of writing**, e.g., academic writing?

# What is technical writing?

“Technical writing conveys *specific information* about a technical subject to a *specific audience* for a *specific purpose*... The words and graphics of technical writing are meant to be *practical*; that is, to communicate a body of factual information that will help an audience *understand* a subject or *perform* a task.”

-Michael H. Markel  
Director of Technical Communication  
Boise State University

## Consider These Statements....

- Looking into the azure blue sky, one could see the golden orb of the sun slip gently beneath the western sky.  
**TECHNICAL!**
- The sun sets in the west.  
**ACADEMIC?**
- Due to the Earth's rotation on its axis towards the east, the sun often appears to set below the western horizon. However, the exact direction depends on the latitude and the time of the year.

# What is academic writing like?

- “more structured and adheres to specific rules depending on what you are writing about and who you are writing for.”
- (has a) “specific **purpose** and are, therefore, **structured** in ways that help you, the writer, **achieve the intended effect for a specific audience.**”

Academic plagiarism. <https://academicplagiarism.co>

## Features of academic writing

Complexity, formality, precision, objectivity, explicitness, accuracy, responsibility, organisation, planning

# Form: Organization and Style

The most important pattern of organization in technical writing is the **problem-solution pattern**

**Four moves:**

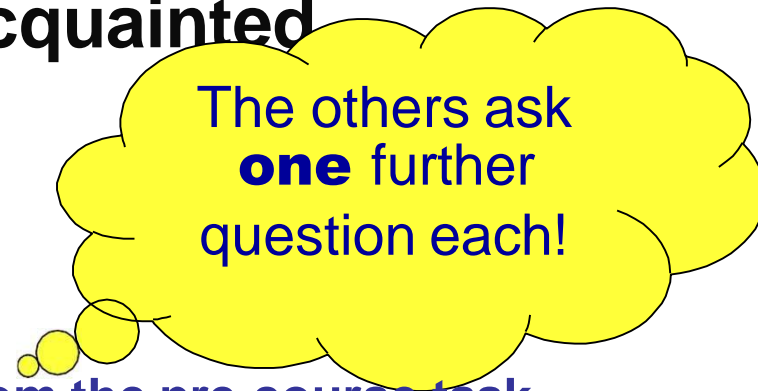
1. **Situation**  
What is relevant or important about the topic?
2. **Problem**  
What is wrong with the current situation?  
What is needed or lacking?
3. **Solution**  
What solutions past and current have been tried?
4. **Evaluation**  
Is this a good solution?



## Group work 2: getting acquainted

- **Introduce yourself briefly:**

- Name
- Major subject



- **Introduce one of the solutions from the pre-course task**

- What is it called?
- Why is it a good thing?
- What does it have to do with your field of study?
- Who would you recommend should adopt/start implementing it?



# Homework

- Finalize your topic
  - Make it something specific, innovative, but actionable
- Complete online module 1: Style and Form
  - Learning more about the features of formal, academic writing
- Familiarize yourself with the course calendar