**Introduction to Academic Style**

Look at the following two texts. Which text is more academic in style? Compare the differences with your group.

1. If you want to know your market you have to split your market up into different sets of customers who need different thing according to how they spend their money. You can do this geographically, by looking at the region, population density, the size of the town and what the weather is like, or by using demographic factors, like age, sex, the size of the family or where they are in the family cycle; there are other variables too, like income, occupation, social class, life style and their personalities.

1. Market segmentation means dividing a market into distinct subsets of customers with different needs, according to different variables that can play a role on purchasing decisions. These can include geographical factors – region, population density, size of town and climate; demographic factors such as age, sex family size or stage in the family life cycle; and other variables including income, occupation, education, social class, life style and personality (Brown, 2001).

Academic style used for essays, assignments and projects is quite different from spoken English or informal written English. Some of the features of academic writing are detailed below.

1. **Choose the correct verb**

In everyday English it is usual to choose a phrasal or prepositional verb to describe an action, whereas in written academic English, it is common to use a single verb.

* Informal: The company will keep on going as long as possible.
* Academic: The company will continue as long as possible.

1. **Avoid Contractions**

Avoid the use of contractions in academic language.

* Informal: The actions of the chairman proved that they’d performed badly.
* Academic: The actions of the chairman proved that they had performed badly.

1. **Avoid Idiomatic Language**

Some expressions in English are more idiomatic and are more appropriate for spoken English. Colloquialisms (conversational expressions) are not appropriate for formal written English.

* Informal: The company got good results from the marketing.
* Academic: The company received favourable results from the marketing.
* Informal: They dispatched a lot of application forms.
* Academic: They dispatched numerous application forms.

1. **Use the more appropriate formal negative forms**

* not …… any → no
* not …… much → little
* not ……many → few

1. **Use nominalisation**

Nominalisation allows us to represent one event as causing another event in a single clause. It is very common in academic writing to use a noun to represent an event or process, rather than a verb.

🗴 JIT stock control was adopted. This was because of its greater efficiency.

🗸 The adoption of JIT was due to its greater efficiency.

1. **Limit the use of ‘run on’ expressions such *as and so forth* and *etc.***

🗴 These devices can be used in batch, continuous process and so forth.

🗸 These devices can be used in batch, continuous process and other production.

1. **Avoid addressing the reader as ‘you’**

🗴 You can see the results in table 1.

🗸 The results can be seen in table 1.

1. **Be impersonal**

Most courses prefer you to avoid personal pronouns such as ‘I’, ‘we’ and ‘you’.

* It can be seen that ……
* There are a number of ……
* It has been found that ……

1. **Limit the use of direct questions**

🗴 What can be done to improve productivity?

🗸 It could be important to consider how productivity can be improved.

1. **Place adverbs within the verbs**

In academic writing, adverbs are often placed mid-position rather than in the initial or final positions. In informal English, adverbs often occur as clauses at the beginning or end of sentences.

🗴 Then the audit is carried out.

🗸 The audit is then carried out.

🗴 The new appraisal system was introduced slowly.

🗸 The new appraisal system was slowly introduced.

1. **Be cautious**

Academic writing generally sounds cautious. Writers indicate that they are aware that nothing is completely certain. They use words that express this lack of certainty.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| * appear to …… * seem to …… * tend to …… * may …… | * might …… * possibly …… * probably * apparently | * generally * seemingly * in some cases, this …… * the evidence suggests that…… |

1. **Avoid vague, meaningless and simple terms**

* Thing → What is a thing?
* Huge → How large?
* Nowadays → An annoying IELTS term
* Everybody knows → No, they do not.
* Human beings → Are you talking about monkeys?
* Every coin has two sides → No, it does not. Coins have three sides.
* Big, lots of → Too simple.

1. **Avoid flowery terms**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * Beautiful * Happy | * Lovely * Good/Bad thing |

1. **Avoid generalisations**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| * Everyone * All | * Everywhere * Always | * Never |