

Academic Writing for Chinese Students
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Academic Writing for Chinese Students: From Reading to Writing. From Global to Local

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1.2 Meanings of “global”

- = macro-level, holistic, a bird’s eye view (in contrast to “local”)
- = world-wide, similar discipline-specific conventions
- = applies to several genres, like (research) articles, MA theses, conference abstracts
- can be compared on a similar, sound empirical basis

1.3 “Writing”

Types of literacy

- traditional literacy
- multimedia literacy
- academic literacy (skills):

information collection

information processing

reading
writing

listening
speaking

translation

information presentation (constructionism):

- discourse community: genre conventions (expectations)

vs.

- writer identity - audience/readership relationship

NOT: “spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings”, but a craft!!

→ metalanguage

1.4 “Non-native” “academic” writing

in academic writing nobody is native!

even more:

native conventions may not be functional and

**thus may be “expanded”, sub-rules “neglected”, “simplified”,
etc. without risking comprehensibility**

(e.g. relative constructions, articles)

“academic” = research-based

at least at “novice”/university level (C1?, MA?)

**NOT argumentative essay writing in practical language teaching/learning,
as in ICLE=International Corpus of Learner English**

1.5 Types of Writing at University (genres)

Language Practice (Learning): “Expository/Argumentative Essay”

= a type of discourse used to explain, describe or inform.

Purpose: to give the reader a balanced account of a subject,
in a neutral, objective tone

introduction > body > conclusion

persuasive : pro+ con

Subject Learning: “Academic/Research Paper”

Purpose: to convince the reader of the validity of your point of view.

clearly state an opinion rather than appearing neutral

still appeal to the reader's logic rather than emotion

1.5 “Reading”

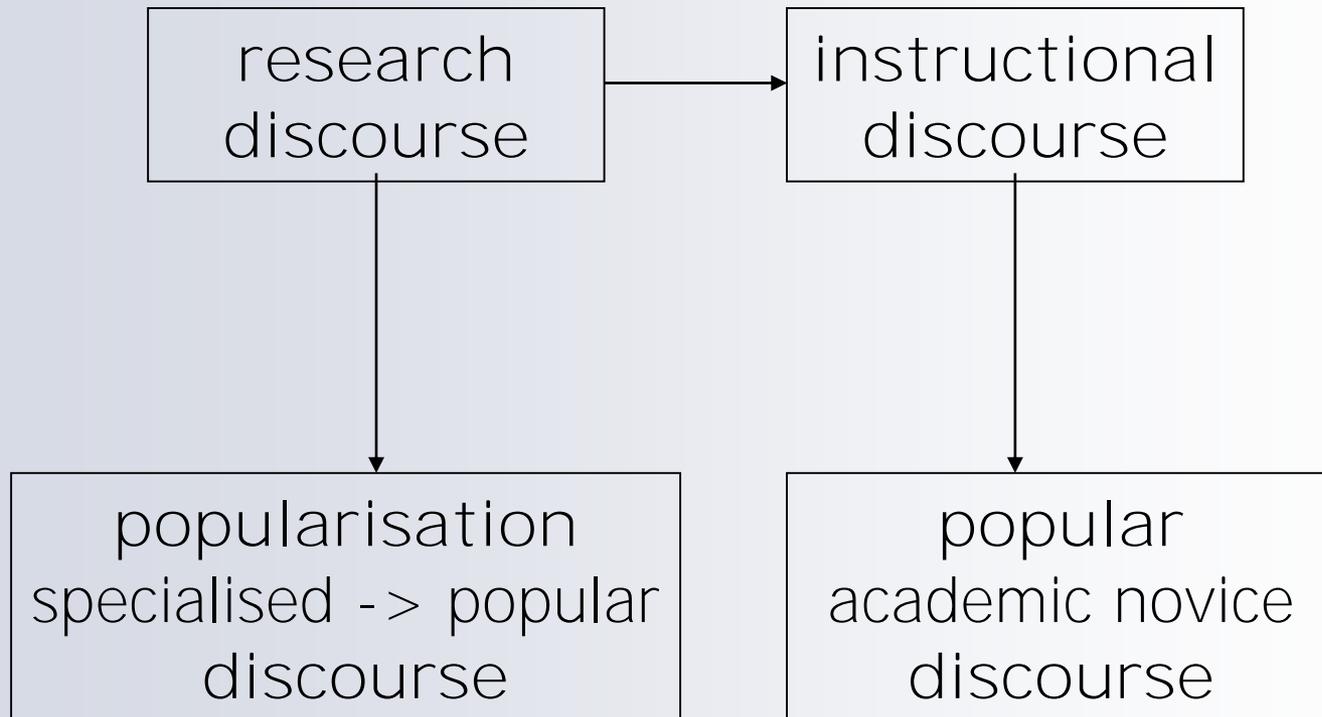
Close reading is intensive work: understanding, categorization, selection

- 1. Read with a pencil in hand, and annotate the text.**
- 2. Look for patterns in the things you've noticed about the text—repetitions, contradictions, similarities.**
- 3. Ask questions about the patterns you've noticed—especially how and why.**

2. Key concepts in Academic Writing

2.1 Discourses in science communication

discourse community approach (Hyland 2006, 2012; Schmied 2011) =
a writer/speaker appeals to shared knowledge to create a community of discourse
incl. linguistic clues: *of course, as we know from ...*



2.2 Academic research cycle

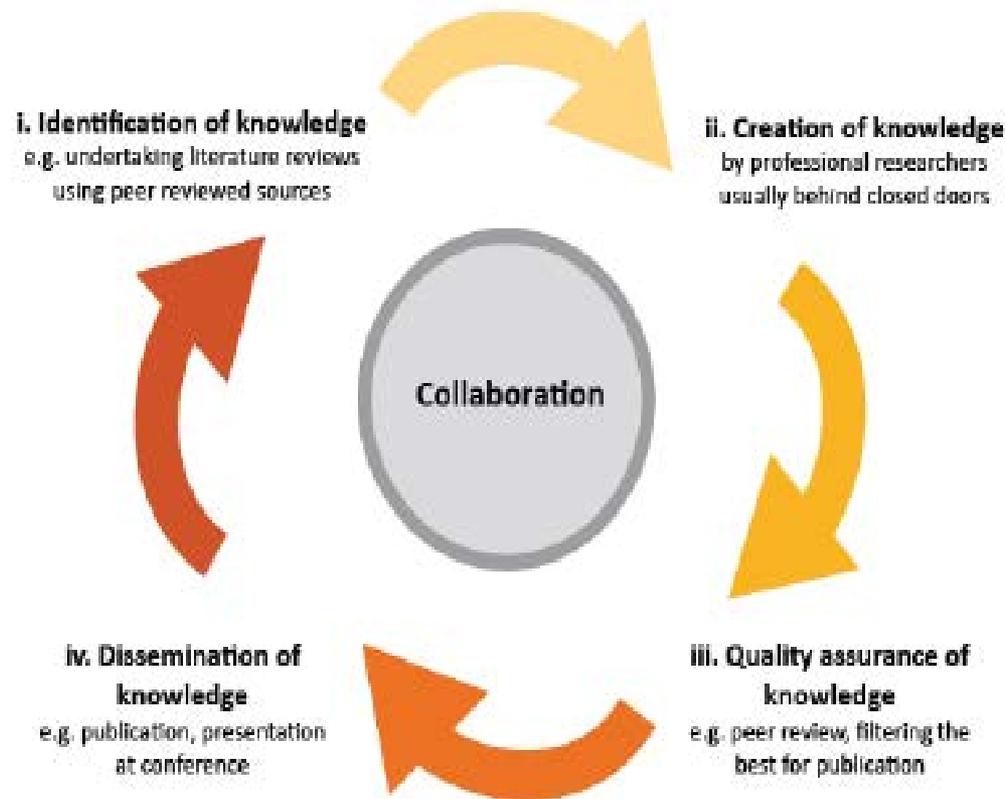


Figure 1: The Academic Research Cycle

2.3 The Genre Approach

research "output"

- research article
- book reviews
- project proposals
- conference presentations

teacher "talk"/e-learning

- ppt presentations
 - lectures
 - student presentations
- textbooks
 - Wikis/Moodle/Google+
 - www pages (HTML, php)

discipline-specific
culture-specific

science "journalism"

- popular science articles
- popular blogs (David Crystal)
- popular science films (Horizon)
- popular science books
- science slam

student "literacy"

- essays (argumentative!)
- seminar papers
- MA/BA thesis (persuasive!)
- seminar presentations

"Novice Academic English"

author-specific
culture-specific

2.4 (Academic) metadiscourse, metalanguage

= language about language, i.e.
information management/reader guidance beyond the plain proposition

fields:

- **“global text management”**,
argumentation structure
IMRaD -> paragraphing -> cohesion, like *conclude*
- **“local” text management**,
text cohesion --> cognitive coherence (*first, thus, ...*)
- writer - reader **“interaction”**, incl. address (*you, we*)
- **writer commitment to the truth value/reliability ...**
esp. hedging, (epistemic) modal aux/adv.
(*... may contribute, may be correct ... arguably*),
- occasionally boosting (*certainly, fact*)

3. Gobal paradigms: texts =macro-level

3.1 IMAC global paradigm spreading from natural sciences into humanities

organisation can be viewed on several levels using different theoretical approaches:

- **global** vs. local planners:
a fixed structure like IMAC provides a general “skeleton” for global planning, which is said to characterize good writers
- **moves + steps in sections (Swales’ model)**
e.g. CARS (= Creating A Research Space) to identify a gap to fill
- topical structure analysis:
discourse deixis through personal pronoun references
(in the paragraph, the 1st focus is the topic that is referred to by personal pronoun in all following clauses until a new focus topic starts a new paragraph)
- theme – rheme (functional sentence perspective)
- IMRaD

Research paradigm, global text structure:

Introduction **M**ethodology **R**esearch **A**nd **D**iscussion

1.2. The trend towards revised **IMRAD**, adapted for English research (with prototypical phrases):

I = **issue**, i.e.

new, i.e. *not enough research yet*

relevant, i.e. *important in discourse or for practical applications*

focussed, i.e. small, but data-based; careful and reliable

M = **methodology**, i.e.

previous research, i.e. literature review incl. evaluation

hypotheses possible?

data base

tests/procedure

<https://twiki.tu-chemnitz.de/bin/view/English/IntroResearchPara>

A = **analysis**, i.e.

examples as evidence

statistical tables as summaries

significance to generalise

(cf. Schmied 2015: 17-20)

C = **conclusion**, i.e.

available in academia.edu

summary, e.g. *in conclusion, we have shown*

interpretation, e.g. *this proves that*

contextualisation, e.g. *in a wider perspective*

limitations, e.g. *more data*

outlook, e.g. *further research is necessary*

3.2 BA/MA theses as key qualification texts for academic carriers

academic novices are introduced to the discipline-specific conventions developed so far
writer identity allows novices to choose only to a limited extent

3.3 Examples of theses paradigms

ToC of a BA thesis with IMRAD structure

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ToC of a BA thesis with a non-IMRAD structure

Polish Migration to the UK

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2. Theoretical Background
2.1. Definition of the Key Concept Migration
2.2. Types of Migration
2.3. Theories Explaining Migration
2.3.1. Ravenstein's Migration Theory
2.3.2. Lee's Migration Theory: Push and Pull Factors
3. Case study: Polish Migration to the UK
3.1. Behaviour
3.2. Motivation etc.

Revised ToC of a BA thesis with non-IMRAD structure

metalanguage terms / expected general academic phrases:

2. Theoretical background
 - 2.1. Definition, key concept
 - 2.2. Types
 - 2.3. Theories
3. Case study

“**historical** perspective” is always an option in humanities and social sciences

should subheadings be more explicit? like

- 4.1. Polish Migration to the UK before **the accession of Poland to the EU in 2004**, etc.

should general phrases be supplemented by project-specific one? like

- 2.3.2. **Lee’s Migration Theory: Push and Pull Factors**

IMRAD structure in 20 lang./lit. MA samples from Cameroon, Germany, China

Introduction

Methodology

Analysis

Conclusion

disc.	Corpus	Abs	I	IN	IR	IF	M	ML	MC	MT	M RQ RH	MD	MT	A	AE	AT	AS	C	CS	CI	CC	CL	CO
Lang.	CamC	8	10	2	8	9	9	0	0	0	0	9	9	9	6	9	3	10	10	6	1	3	10
	ChemC	4	10	4	4	9	10	0	0	0	0	10	10	10	9	10	7	10	10	9	7	7	9
	ChinC	10	10	3	8	9	5	0	0	0	0	5	5	10	8	9	10	10	10	10	7	8	9
Lit./ Cult.	CamC	10	10	4	4	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	10	0	0	10	10	10	3	2	6
	ChemC	3	10	1	5	9	3	0	0	0	0	3	3	10	8	5	9	10	10	10	8	1	3
	ChinaC	10	10	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	10	10	0	0	10	9	10	0	1	0

I = issue

IN new

IR relevant

IF focussed

M = methodology

ML literature review

MC key concepts

MT theories

MRQ/MH research questions

MD data base

MT tests/procedure

A = analysis

AE examples as
evidence

AT statistical tables

AS significance

C = conclusion

CS summary

CI interpretation

CC contextualisation

CL limitations

CO outlook

4. Information management: in/between paragraphs (**meso-level**)

but written for Dutch users of English, for short argumentative texts!

4.1 An effective title

- provides an indication of the **context** in which the text should be understood
- orients the reader towards the topic of the text
- strikes a balance between brevity and clarity
- is readily understandable
- does not pre-empt your conclusion (HM 2017: 51)
- **makes (further) reading attractive and useful ?**

→combine: **sexy title: descriptive title**
context title, esp. specific subtitle

examples:

Working with Media Texts: Deconstructing and Constructing Crises in Europe.
Complexity and Coherence in English Student Writing, especially in Hypertext Learning Systems.

Where the grass is greener? Colour terms in East African English.

Corpus-based contrastive lexicology: the case of English *with* and its German translation equivalents.

4.2 An introductory paragraph

- provides a context for the argument that is to follow
- expresses your perspective on the issue you will be dealing with
- explicitly or implicitly makes clear which aspects of the issue will not be treated
- has forward dynamics, presenting a coherent development of the topic sentence and involving the reader in your argument

4.3 Intro intro: opening sentence (H/M 2017: 54, 3,4,1,2)

- does not depend on the preceding title for its understanding
- is a fresh start after the title
- is fairly uncontroversial
- is not linked directly to the time of writing

examples:

For centuries increasing meat consumption has been an indicator of increasing prosperity... ***But today*** the new trend towards vegan ...

4.4 Climax intro: thesis statement

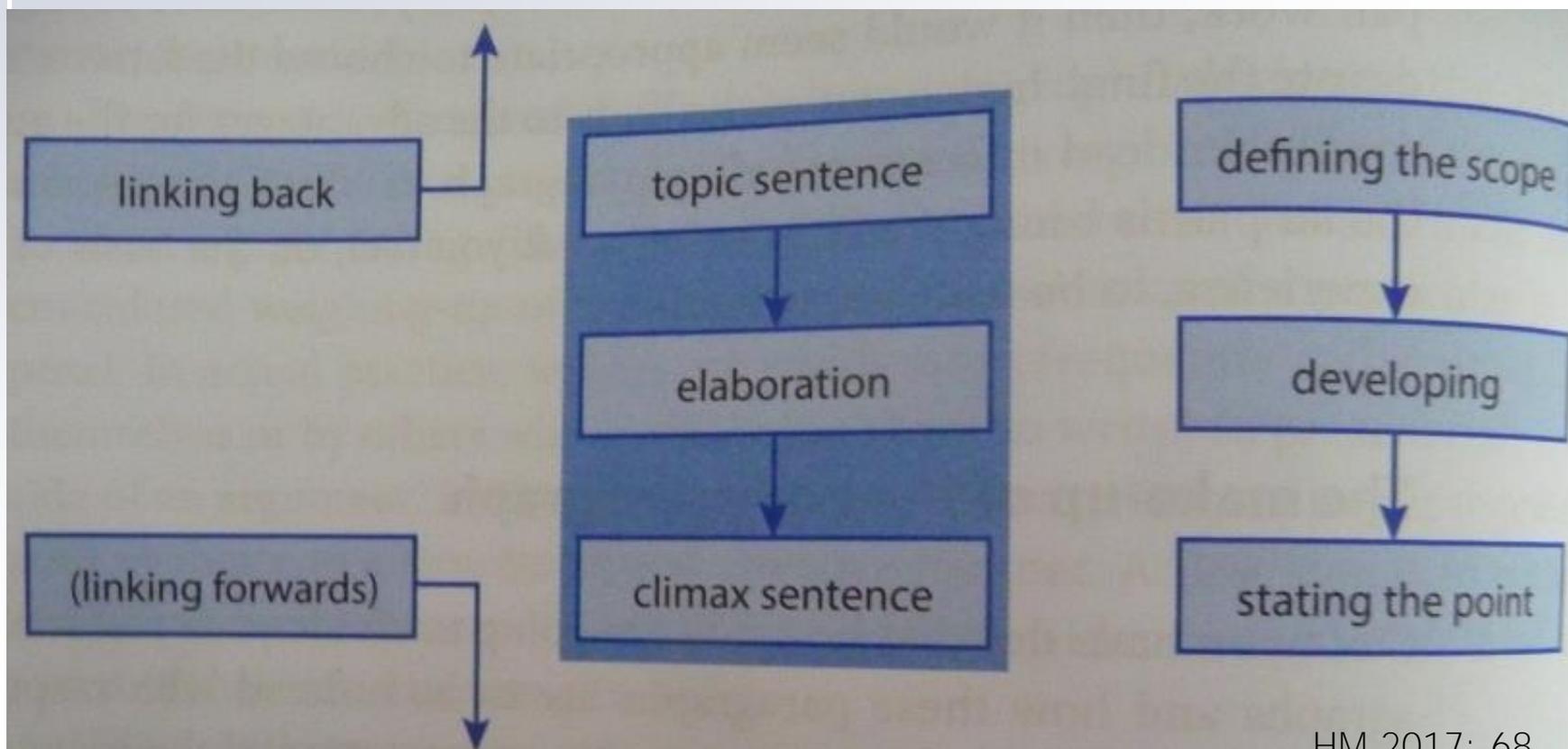
- expresses the central concern of the text
- is recognisable by its paragraph final **positioning**, without any cumbersome **sign-posting**
- is rather neutral or **suggestive** of the **line** to be followed [??JS]
- is formulated in such a way as to end the paragraph in a **strong, self-confident** way (HM 2017: 59)

examples: good or bad?

The thesis to be examined in the following paragraphs is whether grandparents should once again be given a place in the family home.

Any decision to place restrictions on what is broadcast *should follow on* a careful consideration of the pros and cons of television censorship.

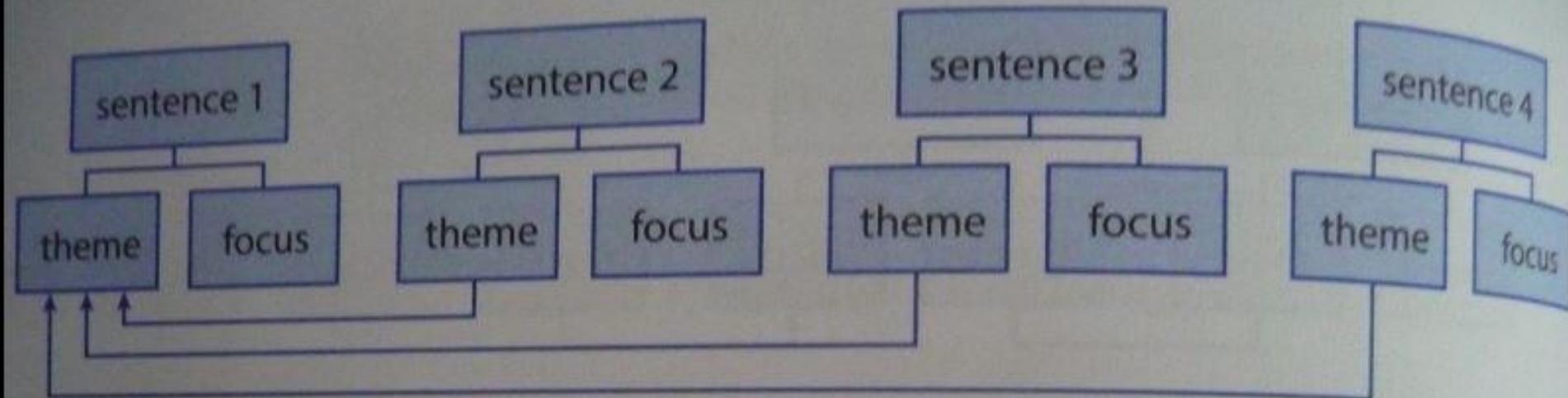
4.5 Theme and focus in sentences and paragraphs



4.6 Theme and focus in sentences and paragraphs

In Functional linguistics (from Prague School to Halliday),
theme (=topic, background, presupposition) and
focus (=rheme, new, comment) have been used
to describe the argumentation, information management

the theme may depend on the previous focus of previous theme!



4.7 Cohesive devices (linking, connectors, etc. e.g. clause adverbials ,)

coherence = extralinguistic factors contributing to the creation of texture (=implicit)

cohesion = linguistic means which create texture (=explicit)

1	It is unfortunately not the case that knowledge of the mechanical	0002AX
2	Unfortunately , an instantaneous comparison was not possible	0003AX1
3	Unfortunately , exact information on gas usage is unavailable	0003AX1
4	Unfortunately , one has no a priori way of predicting	0003AX1
5	Unfortunately , neither easily works.	0003AX1
6	Unfortunately , there are as yet no reliable calculations that	0004AX1
7	Unfortunately our experience is confined to an equilibrium ...	0004AX2
8	Unfortunately , the energy resolution of a neutrino telescope is ...	0015AX
9	... technique to obtain black hole masses which, unfortunately , is unfeasible	0018AX
10	Unfortunately , lack of information about the collective ...	0021AX
11	Unfortunately , the complexity of each subprocess also grows ...	0025AX
12	Unfortunately these theorems tell us practically nothing about ...	0032AX
13	Unfortunately there are very few analytic results available	0040AX
14	Unfortunately , all recent experiments are, in principle,	0043AX
15	Unfortunately , all those exciting recent experiments are	0043AX
16	Unfortunately , those prior art solutions require daunting experiments	0043AX
17	Unfortunately , the NID is uncomputable since the constituent ...	0045AX
18	Unfortunately , in many places such information is getting harder ...	0056NS
19	it's a good protective barrier," says Hildebrand, " unfortunately ."	0069NS
20	Unfortunately , because of the rarity of plant data from this ...	0100PN

4.8 Reference (micro-): esp. pronouns

- (1) According to some people, doing a degree in arts and humanities is the same as committing suicide: **they** are thought to have no chance of finding any suitable employment.
- (2) The Industrial Revolution brought along social abuses and represented a spiritual void. The Victorian Age reacted to this void with a reassessment of British culture: **institutions such as the BBC, the publishing company Penguin and several other projects** stimulating music, theatre and dance were founded.
- (3) Gnosticism was a movement which strove for esoteric knowledge. This knowledge was related to the divine nature of the human soul and was secret. The gnostic path to this esoteric consciousness was a kind of pilgrimage: **they** travelled in their souls, searching for divinity.
- (4) The career prospects of young children are already influenced, positively or negatively, at a very early stage, depending on **the child's** parents' income.
- (5) Every country has to deal with the immigration problem in **their** own way.
- (6) Greenpeace is not only concerned with the pollution that is caused by new developments such as genetic engineering but also with the balance in nature. It is of the utmost importance to maintain this **balance in nature**, because it forms the basis of all life in this world.
- (7) The impact of some of the articles and reports by journalists in newspapers or on television is much greater than when **it** is said by the average citizen.
- (8) To call for changes in society cannot be of any immediate help to the individual patient. What **they** need is the assurance that they can live without having to be afraid of their emotions and without their obsessive addiction to food.

5. Critical Revision for natural language/idiomaticity on the local level

5.1 "local" errors may be 1st language induced and culture-specific
(“Chinese does not have articles/determiners”)

5.2 "local" errors may target-language-(and culture-)specific
(“English uses a complex system of modal auxiliaries”)

5.3 some errors may be academic-writing related (nominalisations, compounds)

5.4 test usage using on-line data-bases/corpora

byu-corpora

(google scholar)

5.5 find good models in your area to interest, library, ...

5.2 Examples: abstracts (CMAC05CU_31)

This paper attempts to conduct a contrastive study on the realization of requests in Chinese context and English context from the pragmatic perspective, with the framework provided by linguists Blum-Kulka and House. Western scholars have made a multilingual investigation on the request strategies and found that all languages studied preferred conventionally indirect strategy. While Chinese scholars claim that Chinese did not fit into the frame and developed a new perspective to justify the conclusion. Through data collecting and data coding, this paper, with its own proofs and methodology, tries to reach the same conclusion with other Chinese researchers in this field.

A research is included in this paper in which data is collected by the instrument of observation sheets distributed among altogether 70 university of different majors in two universities. They are required to record all the requests they have made, received and overheard within a week. The data mostly derived from the authentic conversation and is valid for coding and analyzing.

To widen the scope of request strategies studies, the reasons for the differences in the choice of the request strategies between the Chinese speakers and English speakers are put forward with the consideration of the politeness theory, proposed by Brown and Levinson (1978 and 吉林大学硕士学位论文 iii 1987). Since China and other English speaking countries favor the different politeness systems, it is no doubt that politeness systems will influence the adoption of request strategies. Equally important, cultural variables, such as collectivism and individualism and the social power distance are valued with diverse attitudes in different cultural backgrounds, which also account for the differences.

A pedagogical suggestion for improving the appropriateness of English requests is presented in the last part of the paper in hope to help English learners avoid the cross-cultural communication failure and enhance their communicative competence.

great academic word list
prepositions
articles

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5.2 Examples: abstracts (CMAC05CU_36)

Culture and language are closely related to each other. It's impossible to translate one language into another without considering the cultural factors involved. In this sense, translation is a cross-linguistic and cross-cultural communicative activity. The ultimate purpose of translation is to promote the cross-cultural exchange. Translation, in its essence, is an activity of transformation between cultures with their own language as cultural carrier. Then, how to realize the transformation of cultural connotation from the source language to the target language has become one of the important criteria to judge whether the translation is successful or not. Both English and Chinese words carry different cultural connotation respectively, so we have to master the two languages if we are intent on holding the two cultures. Among the elements of a language, lexical word is a basic one. As the main unit of expressing language meaning, words involve abundant cultural connotation due to the cultural influence in the long process of being used.

Language is a part of culture and is the carrier of culture as well. Language and culture cannot be separated from each other. Language would be meaningless without culture and culture would be unimaginable without language. Translation, therefore, is not only an inter-lingual transformation but also an intercultural transformation. There exist many similarities and differences between the two languages of English and Chinese; the similarity makes general culture, while the dissimilarity forms heterogeneity. Lexical gap refers to the phenomenon of non-equivalence in both of the two languages. That is to say, the referent object in the source language does not exist or seldom appears in the target language; or referent meaning in the two languages is the same, but the semantic meaning is different, or the denotative meaning is the same, but the pragmatic meaning is different. Different cultural backgrounds II have their own traits and their unique words in expressing cultural heterogeneity, which, when reflected in the target language, will cause the phenomenon of lexical gap or semantic gap...

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6. Conclusion: advice

6.1 writing, esp. editing your own draft is a **craft (=can be learnt by practise)** that determines the success of academic careers from global to local: on macro-, meso-, micro-level

6.2 neglected considerations:

a) **planning: psychological “writing block”**

“do not wait for “spontaneous overflow” – make a global plan based on a best practise model

b) **hierarchy: start with “global”, i.e. sections - subsections - paragraphs, finish diligently with details on local level: the right word, idiomaticity (esp. prepositions), grammar (esp. articles), punctuation (e.g. : ;)**

6.3 use electronic resources as aids:
spell-, style, grammar checker

6.4 find good models **in your area** to copy + practice makes perfect

...

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