

LECTURE 7: Academic Tone, Hedging, and Objectivity

Submitted by: Assist. Prof. Mohammed Essa Alwan

Department: English Department, College of Education for Human Sciences, University of Diyala

1. Principles of Scholarly Objectivity

Academic writing requires an objective, detached, and formal tone. To maintain this standard, writers must remove subjective emotions and personal bias. This means choosing precise language over informal vocabulary. For instance, casual phrases like 'a lot of trouble' should be replaced with scholarly alternatives like 'significant challenges.' Similarly, emotional adjectives like 'terrible' or 'amazing' should be swapped for objective terms like 'adverse' or 'highly effective' to keep the tone professional.

2. Eliminating First-Person Pronouns

Traditional academic essays maintain a formal distance by using the third-person perspective. First-person pronouns (I, me, my, we, us) should generally be avoided unless the specific assignment guidelines explicitly allow them. Instead of writing 'I believe the results show,' students should use objective, passive, or structural phrasing like 'The empirical data indicates' or 'It can be inferred from the evidence that.' This shift centers the reader's attention on the research itself rather than the individual writer.

3. The Mechanics of Hedging

Hedging is a critical rhetorical tool used to express dynamic levels of certainty, caution, and probability. Academic writers avoid making absolute, sweeping claims because new research can always bring new insights. For example, instead of making a rigid statement like 'Using technology in the classroom guarantees higher test scores,' a seasoned scholar will use cautious language: 'The integration of digital tools often correlates with improved academic outcomes.' Common hedging tools include verbs like 'suggests,' 'indicates,' or 'tends to,' modal auxiliaries like 'may' or 'could,' and adverbs like 'primarily' or 'partially.'

4. Tone Reformation Exercise

Students will review a collection of informal, biased sentences and rewrite them to meet professional academic standards. This exercise focuses on removing first-person pronouns, replacing casual words with scholarly choices, and adding appropriate hedging language.

5. Tutorial Assignment

Take a previously written informal essay or text and completely revise it into a formal, scholarly piece. Focus on removing personal pronouns, using precise vocabulary, and applying hedging strategies across every paragraph.