

## Introduction to Academic Writing - 3rd Class - August 29th 2018

### (SUMMARY WRITTEN AND PROVIDED BY THE PRPPG7000 TEACHING ASSISTANTS)

The title of the subject's third class is *Think before you write* since one of the main topics discussed during this encounter was what authors should reflect upon before they start writing their papers. First, professor Ron talks about the changes regarding the location of the discipline and tells students that next week the class is going back to the first week's auditorium (Ulysses de Campos). Then, the professor addresses last class' homework. Ron corrects some exercises that are available on *Go Formative* and says that the focus of this activity is only to raise awareness about grammar topics that may cause problems (e.g. collocations, passive voice, adverb position), students should, therefore, not be worried to have them all memorized all the time.

Actually, what Ron wants is to take concerns about grammar out of the way right at the beginning of the course because this should not be students' biggest worry. Also, there are many strategies and tools that can help them when in doubt about grammar and terminology, since, as Ron says, writing is a detective work. The professor shows some of these tools: (i) [AntConc](#), a collocation tool where you can build a corpus to help you check usage of words and terminology; (ii) [Google Scholar](#), which you use to check which options have more usage through academic papers; (iii) [SkELL](#), another tool that can help you with collocations, synonyms and other useful examples; (iv) CAPA and the [monitors](#), that can help students with doubts and also with any problems or concerns that may appear during the writing process.

Additionally, professor Ron explains that some manuals and coursebooks may affirm that, to write effective papers, you should be at C2 level. However, this is not true. Only 2% of the Brazilian population has a C2 English certificate and this does not change the fact that Brazilian researchers are not only constantly publishing in English but also contributing to the development of academic language in general. Then, he brings research data to illustrate this. First, he explains what is the Inner Circle (countries where English has always been the dominant language, such as the United States and England), the Outer Circle (English colonized countries, such as India) and the Expanding Circle (for instance, Brazil, where English is important, but not an official language).

Afterwards, Ron shows many examples of non-native usage of English that, at first, can be considered as grammatically incorrect, but are becoming more acceptable as the analysis of publications from different fields showed (e.g. uncountable nouns being pluralized, such as "evidences" and "researches", more examples can be found in the third class' slides, available at the discipline's [website](#)). Therefore, what the professor wants is to show that terminology and grammar topics should not be the main concern when producing a paper.

After this, Ron says that, at this point, students might be asking why they did not start writing yet, since this is a writing course. The professor affirms that this is intentional, and that in this class he is going to explain why. To begin with, he shows a [video](#) of a guy trying to write an email to a girl he met at a bar. The guy rephrases his message constantly, not because it was incorrect, but because of the effect he wanted to cause. We do this in Portuguese all the time when writing a text or a message with an objective in mind. Thus, we should take this strategy into account when producing a research paper. Then, addressing I.M.R.aD. structure, the professor

launched an activity at Kahoot to see what is the students' opinion on where to start writing a paper. The majority answered "method".

Then, addressing this question, Ron mentions Joshua Schimel's book (*Writing Science*) and the author's opinion: "start with your data". This is because it is what moves your research; your paper should, therefore, grow around your data - which is why passive voice and third person are common things in academic texts, since your evidence is telling the story of your research. Also, another thing students should have in mind is the "*They Say, I Say*" perspective, since the academic world is a conversation and researchers should find ways of entering and contributing with this dialogue. Next, the professor talks about the two layers of aims: the specific (of the study itself) and the personal (which, usually, only we know, but it is what drives us on studying something). It is important to have both in mind when writing. Finally, it is important to be aware of the *naysayers* (people who are going to question/judge everything about our work) that are going to read our text.

To give examples of the things he presented, Ron shows the abstract of his research and asks students to identify where he states his contribution (*i.e.* placing himself inside the dialogue). The answer is 'right in the first sentence'. He explains that the earlier you say this to your reader, the better, because then s/he will understand why they are reading your paper. Therefore, it is important to have a few moves in mind when writing: (i) establish territory - state what is your research and why is it relevant; (ii) establish the niche, by saying where are you coming from and with whom do you want to start a dialogue; and (iii) occupy territory. After this, Ron uses some examples of abstracts in order to clarify what he was saying. To finish, the professor presents Eliana Hirano's study (2009) that compares the introduction structures of Brazilian and non-Brazilian journals. Usually, Brazilian abstracts skip move (ii), which implies that authors are not telling their readers what is the paper's contribution to that field.

At the end of the class, Ron told students about homework (1. To read, at least, the introduction in Hanauer and Englander (2011) "Quantifying the burden of writing research articles". Pay special attention to its structure. Also notice if you "hear" the authors addressing a "naysayer"; 2. Do Module 3 on *Go Formative*) and that, from this week onwards, activities on *Go Formative* will have a deadline of 7 days to be completed.