Introduction to Academic Writing - 4th Class - September 5th 2018

(SUMMARY WRITTEN AND PROVIDED BY THE PRPPG7000 TEACHING ASSISTANTS)

The title of the fourth class of the discipline Introduction to Academic Writing is *Guiding the reader: Title, Abstract and Introduction*. This meeting had four main points - (i) a review of key concepts from last week; (ii) a discussion about the importance of titles and the structure of abstracts; (iii) the introduction of the "Problem Solution" concept; and (iv) think about the planning in order to start writing the introduction of your paper. To begin the class, Professor Ron brought the example of *Zeum*, a museum for children which its title was meant to be fun, but it caused a confusion among parents. This illustrates the importance of a title, which was one of the topics of the class.

However, before he addressed this first topic, Ron brought back to memory the kahoot exercise that students did last class ("Where to start writing your paper?" to which most of them answered "by the method"). Then, he emphasized the importance of letting your data drive your research and your papers - and, if you do not have data yet, you should follow this as soon as you have. Another important point to have in mind is the conscious of the *They Say I Say*; by the exercises set as homework, it was shown that the students are developing this awareness.

Another thing that was found during the homework correction was that many students answered that the naysayer might question their research method. However, this is not the only place where the judgement of a naysayer may appear (*e.g.* introductions that present statements such as "there has been no research on this topic so far in the literature", "the subject of this subject has already been well established" or "the results of this research conclusively prove that the participants improved"). They should have caution with strong affirmations such as these ones. To minimize the risk that sentences like these can cause, authors should find other studies to back them up and also be aware to not sound overly confident. The professor, thus, showed examples that are better and safer options (which will show if the researcher is aware - *or not* - of the naysayer).

Afterwards, Ron went back to the IMRaD (Introduction, Method, Results and Discussion) structure to make clear that students understand that, despite being different sections, they are all connected. After this, he talked again about the C.A.R.S. framework - (1) establish "territory"; (2) Establish "niche"; (3) Occupy niche. The professor affirms that the problem starts when you skip one of these three moves. Usually, Brazilian articles skip the second move. This makes difficult for the reader to identify what is new, what is the contribution of that paper. Also, sometimes there is no *They Say*, therefore, it looks like the research is not trying to start or enter in a conversation.

After the homework correction, Ron asked how many students already have a title for the next article they are going to write. Then, he was impressed that some people answered affirmatively. He was not expecting anyone to have this in their minds already but he is happy that some actually do. The professor explains why by using one example: the name of a baby. It helps parents to plan the future. Therefore, when writing a paper, it is good to have a title, because it helps you to have in mind the direction you want to go and what do you want to achieve.

In addition, a title sets the direction you want to give for your reader. Thus, the professor told students that there are some strategies that authors can follow when giving a title for their researches. The one you choose will vary according to what may be best for your study and for your purposes. He, then, talked about these many different types of titles (1. Transparent; 2. Finding; 3. Implication/Application; 4. Method-focused; 5. Question; 6. Effect; 7. Elaboration; 8. Mixed/Hybrid) and showed examples (available at the class' slides). Also, Ron talked about some aspects that may

be the reason behind the choice of each type. To make these points clear, Ron gave the example of an abstract about the relation between language fluency and alcohol. Then, he brought four options of titles and asked students to evaluate (though a Kahoot pool) which one of them was the best option. The highly technical title was students' least favorite. This research deals with German learners and its real title includes an expression - *Dutch courage*: which means that, by drinking alcohol, it will give you the courage to do something that you normally would not do - that relates to that. However, it is a specific expression that many non-native English speakers may not know.

Having a "not so clear" title could have a negative impact upon the paper's reception. Therefore, if some changes were made into this title, maybe this study would have had better recognition. Another thing that students should be aware is excessively long titles. Studies had shown that there is a correlation between title length and paper's citation. Also, since the results drive your research, they can drive the title of your paper as well. Ron encourages students to list a few options of titles by using different strategies and then they can choose what is best for them.

Afterwards, already addressing the introduction, the professor told students that they should not try to include excessive content (of a thesis or a dissertation, for instance) into only one article. Ron showed other text structure example, with that being Hoey's Problem-Solution Pattern, that consists of describing a situation, identifying a problem and pointing to a possible response that will lead to a result. This is a valuable method because, sometimes, the problem is used to build the argument of a study, the discussion you bring to an article can be the response/solution of the problem. Therefore, both CARS (Moves 1, 2, and 3) and Problem-Solution (Situation > Problem > Solution) are two good strategies to write an introduction.

Next, the professor advised students to look for good papers in their field and use them as examples. Take these texts and look for expressions that people usually use to say the things that you want to say - *i.e.* the vocabulary of this specific field. You can not copy the ideas (this is plagiarism), but simulating the way they use specific terms is something essential (the "good" plagiarism). Then, when writing the situation part, people usually use the Simple Present ("the world of publication *is* dominated…"). When covering what other people had done in this field, to establish territory, authors usually use the Present Perfect ("has made a claim that..."). Another important thing that Ron explained to students was the fact that an argument must be the result of a "claim" and a "warranting". We should be careful to claim something without a warrant. Therefore, it is up to the students to search and do the detective work on their fields to find these words and strategies that they can copy. Also, they should choose a "mentor text" - an important and relevant text from a field that can be followed as an example.

To finish the class, Professor Ron gave options for students that do not have any data yet. Their best option is to use their partial data. If this is not possible, they could try to search for unused data (with their advisor, colleagues, etc). Another option is to build on what students have done before (their TCCs or dissertations). In the worst case scenario, where they cannot find any data to use, they can consider the idea of a review article, since it requires no data. Subsequently, if they do not have a topic yet, it is time to create one (with the help of your advisor). Finally, Ron summarized the tools that he already showed during class, which can help students since they should start writing their introductions.

Therefore, **for next week**, students must: (i) create a **title**; (ii) find **mentor articles**; and (iii) write their **introduction** (first, an outline, using one of the strategies showed in class). The professor sees this discipline as an opportunity for them to try to start writing their papers in English. However, the focus is on teaching academic writing. Thus, they can also work with portuguese; whatever works best for them. Then, by the next class, the students should share the title and what they wrote so far

with their advisors. For the ones that are attending the course in person, they should bring a printed version of what they wrote so far. Also, it is important that students are aware that what they write for the discipline can be better developed and turned into a future publication.