A pragmatic approach to enhance writer-reader interaction in HDR student writing

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Overview

1. Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) & Social Constructionist framework
2. Challenges in ALL practice
3. Writing samples and reviewers’ comments
4. A ‘toolkit’ to evaluate writing
SFL Research & Social constructionist framework


• Knowledge evolves through social negotiation/interaction with the audience

  “language is … the process by which experience becomes knowledge” (Halliday, 1993, p. 94)

• “Every successful text must display the writer’s awareness of both its readers and its consequences” (Hyland, 2001, p. 550).

14 Days left (3) by krystianmajewski http://www.flickr.com/photos/krystianmajewski/2570323007
“Writing requires a clear awareness of, and appropriate engagement with, one’s likely readers” (Hyland, 2001, p. 555) and “Writing needs to solicit reader collusion” (Hyland 2005, p. 184)
Reader Orientation (reader personality: tolerant, aggressive impatient & critical)

http://52weekstooptimism.files.wordpress.com/2014/04/angry_girl_reading_book.jpg

http://www.impatientoptimists.org/Posts/2013/03/Reading-and-Writing-Less-Kafkaesque-for-Students
Challenges in ALL practice

Diversity of linguistic issues and other structural issues/ too much to consider in one to one consultations

http://www.ursuladietconsultant.co.uk/my-services/individual-consultations/
Our focus

- Examination of NNS HDR writing /reviewers’ comments
- Writer’s awareness of audience (writer-reader relation)
- Developing a consistent approach for ALL advisers and students

1. What are the challenges faced by NNS HDR writers?
2. What strategies can be used to make HDR writing more effective/reader friendly?
Findings:

NNS HDR Student writers:

- Are not often reader sensitive
- Are not creative users of language (little diversity)
  - Sometimes lexically inadequate
  - Tend to use unfamiliar/awkward sentence patterns
Analysing written samples:
1. Logical flow (theme-rheme)

AFM is becoming the most versatile tool as it is being used in many applications in material science, life science, and process control with high scanning speed. **Imaging the surface of a sample with a commercially available AFM is achieved** by applying a small, gradually increasing gradient staircase or ramp signal in the y direction while concurrently applying a triangular signal along the x direction …

 ✓ Sentences do not follow logically.
2. Sentence structure

Since this chapter involves cross-sectional data, it is only considering entrepreneurial motivation at the time of the survey after three years of the cessation of conflict given the condition of security, macroeconomic environment and the characteristics of respondents.

✓ Sentence length affecting clarity; rethink and rephrase
3. Voice (1)

In this chapter, the configuration of the optical system used for flow diagnostics in T–ADFA shock tunnel will be described in detail, followed by a discussion on the factors affecting the accuracy of these results. The experimental results will be presented along with a comparison of these results with the simulation.

✓ Use active voice instead of passive
3. Voice (2)

The world is facing a crisis of environmental degradation and being impacted upon by problems such as the loss of biodiversity, … *(Hagemann et al. 2010)*. Many nations, dealing with problems such as infant mortality and malnutrition, are overwhelmed by these additional *(Hagemann et al. 2010)*. Therefore, tackling the issues of environmental degradation is an urgent problem *(Melville 2010)* …. 

✓ Where is the writer’s voice?
4. Pronouns

... Hence, *this line* is not a good candidate to be targeted at condition E. ... However, *it can be seen that these* have similar trend in *their* line strength variation with temperature, and *its line strength ratio* does not change considerably ... *This is* because *their* lower state energies are not very different from each other.

✓ Use the pronouns appropriately
One of the reasons for emerging the AFM in biology is that, it resolves the problem of imaging in heterogeneous surfaces and under a variety of solutions [24]. Usually, the AFM works better in water because, while imaging in air medium the cantilever tip covered with a layer of contaminants comes near to a contaminated sample, an adhesive force works on tip to drive it towards the sample [25] …

The AFM is running with many challenges during scanning above 10 Hz, where some application demand for high scanning speed, e.g., scanning of biological samples such as DNA, RNA, cells, etc, and liquid crystals…

✓ Prepare the reader for the new and somehow contradictory information: use “despite all the advantages achieved using ..., this method has its disadvantages.....”
6. Lexical richness (diversity, sophistication, complexity & appropriate choice)

The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) 2001 Executive Report differentiated two entrepreneurs on the basis of an individual’s level of participation in an entrepreneurial activity: necessity entrepreneurs and opportunity entrepreneurs. Necessity driven entrepreneurs are those who …

✓ Consistency in the use of keywords: “necessity entrepreneurs or necessity driven entrepreneurs?”
More examples for lexical choice

These **results claim** …

✓ **Inappropriate collocation**

Biologists **were dreaming to manipulate** the investigations of biomolecules and by the invention of the AFM their dream came true.

✓ **Genre inappropriate lexical choice**

No study has uncovered the relationship between peace and access to finance and **the impact on** entrepreneurial decision.

✓ **Lexical: Incomplete lexical meaning; impact of what?**

Likewise, Kenyan, Ghanaian and Nigerian entrepreneurs’ **motive** was to …

✓ **Unclear clutter: use “the motive of entrepreneurs in …”**

✓ To examine the **effect trade liberalization** on industry wage inequality, we employ a third-stage estimation framework as in.
How to write to your reader?

**Writer’s voice**
Keep your voice clear and strong

**Information flow**
Theme-rheme
Information needs to flow logically

**Sentence variety/structure**
Spice up your writing to make the message memorable
How to write to your reader?

**Linking**
Use language resources to keep the link

**Transformation/Signposting**
Use appropriate links to facilitate reading

**Word choice**
Use effective words to suit your genre
Anyone can lead a horse to water, but if you can get him float on his back, you have got something.

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Reference


