Description

In academic documents, authors need to describe or report a wide range of research activities. For example, they need to describe the aims/purpose of their research, refer to other research papers, explain the procedures used, and compare the results of their study.

The phrases used to report such information differs from spoken English. For example, for describing the purpose of a study, when addressing another person face-to-face, one could say “I want to tell you about….” However, in an academic context, one should write “This study aims to describe….” Note how this academic version avoids direct reference to either the writer (*I, we*) or the reader (*you*) and prefers the choice of vocabulary particular to that field of study—“*aims”* instead of *“want to”* and *“describe”* instead of *“tell.”*

In this article, we are going to talk about various types of phrases to introduce or report information in academic writing.

1. Phrases to Define the Scope of a Study

Scope refers to either the aims or subject matter which is (not) covered in a text.

- This paper presents a new method for localizing the electric activity in the brain based on multichannel surface EEG recordings.
- This thesis aims to demystify the facilitation of participatory processes in order to improve the performance of the facilitation professional.
- This thesis focuses on the problem of text retrieval allowing errors, also called “approximate” string matching.
- This study does not consider whether parents and friends actually smoke at the levels reported by subjects.
- The case of supersaturation, with fog formation, lies outside the scope of this study.

2. Phrases to Describe What is About to Follow

Such phrases often occur at transitions between sections of the text.

- In this section, we compare the prices of bond options implied by each of the different interestrate processes.
- This section reviews some concepts of multi-index asymptotics that were introduced in Phillips and Moon (1999).
- Moreover, this section discusses both clinical and laboratory methods of eye movement examination.
- We now return to the question of estimating the magnitude of the fluctuations in I.

In addition to statements given at the beginning of individual sections, theses, journal articles and reports often contain a paragraph that previews the entire structure of the document. This convention is typical for research articles in fields such as engineering, physics, and biochemistry. For example:

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 describes the details of our image analysis system, which extracts descriptive features from the prepared sample. In Section 3, we present the inductive learning technique that was used to solve the diagnostic problem. Two different methods for prognosis are shown in Section 4. Section 5 summarizes the technical issues involved with making Xcyt remotely executable. Finally, we conclude the study with a discussion of future directions in Section 6.

3. Phrases to Connect Sentences

Phrases used to connect sentences, often called “connectives” or “linking words,” link ideas and help the writer to build up arguments. For example:

- Showing contrast: In contrast, the endonuclease inhibitor, aurintricarboxylic acid acts at later stages of apoptosis
- Showing addition: In addition, much progress has been made in reducing IR detector cost and proposing new detector debar assemblies.

However, the use of these phrases forms a part of a much larger topic.

4. Phrases to Point to Data

Academic conventions require that writers clearly state their information sources. This can be seen in statements that direct the reader where to look either within or outside the text. For example:

- (See Section 4, and Section 5A for comparison with Hopf’s formulae).
- For an expanded, annotated view of these clusters, see (5).

Below are some common phrases in academic writing to point out to your readers which **table**, **figure**, or **diagram** they should turn to when reading data.

- Table 3 presents the relative risks of first MI in analyses.
- A high-performance clocked CVSL circuit is illustrated in Figure 5.

- Therefore, the B matrix will be skewed, as shown in Figure 3(b).

Look for more pointers in our next post in this series.

Category

1. Manuscripts & Grants
2. Reporting Research

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Author
daveishan