University of Medea

Faculty of Economics , commercial Sciences and Management Sciences.

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Financial technology-Fin Tech-

Module : Academic English

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General English vs Academic English

Aspect	General English	Academic English
Main purpose	Everyday communication	Study, research, and academic communication
Context	Daily life, travel, social situations, work	University, lectures, seminars, research, journals
Vocabulary	Common and familiar words	More precise, formal, and sometimes technical vocabulary
Style	Informal or neutral	Formal
Tone	Personal and conversational	Objective and impersonal
Sentence structure	Usually shorter and simpler	Often more complex and carefully structured
Contractions	Common: *don't, can't, isn't*	Usually avoided: *do not, cannot, is not*
Personal pronouns	*I, you, we* are common	Often reduced, depending on discipline and purpose
Evidence	Usually not required	Claims are normally supported by evidence and sources
References	Rarely required	Citations and references are important
Organization	Flexible	Highly organized and logical
Connectors	*and, but, so(FANBOYS)*	*however, therefore, consequently, moreover*
Certainty	Direct statements	Often uses cautious language: *may, might, suggests, appears to*
Technical terms	Limited	Often discipline-specific
Main skills	Speaking, listening, reading, everyday writing	Academic reading, writing, listening, speaking, critical thinking

These differences are consistent with descriptions from the Open University and other academic-English resources, which emphasize **formality, objectivity, precision, technicality, logical organization, and cautious claims** in academic English.

A simple example

General English:

I think the government's new economic policy is a bad idea because it will make people's lives harder.

Academic English:

It could be argued that the government's new economic policy may have negative consequences for household welfare.

Notice the differences:

- **I think** → *It could be argued that*
- **bad idea** → *negative consequences*
- **people's lives** → *household welfare*
- **Direct certainty** → more **cautious/objective** language.

Another examples

General English: *A lot of people use social media because it is easy and fun.*

Academic English:*The widespread use of social media can be attributed, in part, to its accessibility and recreational value.*
Academic English is **not simply about using difficult words**. The most important change is the way ideas are **organized, supported, expressed precisely, and presented objectively**.
The relationship between the two Think of it this way:
General English → Foundation → Academic English
A student needs General English first, because academic English builds on basic grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, reading, and communication skills.
If your purpose is **teaching university students**, I can also prepare a complete **lesson on "General English vs Academic English"** with:

1. definition of both,
2. detailed comparison,
3. examples,
4. vocabulary transformation exercises,
5. grammar differences,
6. reading/writing activities,
7. and an **answer key**.

PART 1 — INTRODUCTION

Question 1 : How would you say this to a friend?
"A lot of students don't like online classes because they're really difficult."
Question 2 : How might you express the same idea in a university essay?
Possible answer:
"Many students may find online classes challenging because of the difficulties associated with this form of learning."
Discussion

- Why did the second sentence sound more academic?
- Which words changed?
- Is the second sentence necessarily "better" in every situation?

Important point: Academic English is not simply about using long or difficult words. It is about choosing language appropriate to an academic purpose and audience. Academic writing aims to be clear, precise, formal and appropriately cautious.

PART 2 — DIFINITION OF GENERAL ENGLISH AND ACADEMIC ENGLISH

- **Definition of General English :** General English refers to the English used for everyday communication.

It is commonly used in:

- conversations
- travel
- shopping
- social media
- everyday emails
- informal messages
- ordinary workplace communication
- entertainment

Example :"Hi Ahmed, how are you? Did you watch the football match last night? It was amazing!"
This sentence is perfectly appropriate in everyday communication.
General English can be:

- informal
- conversational
- personal
- direct
- flexible

- **Definition of Academic English :**Academic English is the type of English used in educational and research contexts.

It is commonly used in:

- university essays
- research papers
- academic articles
- reports
- lectures
- seminars
- academic presentations

Academic English is generally more formal, objective, precise and cautious than everyday language. However, academic writing should not become unnecessarily complicated; clarity remains important.

Example

General English:"A lot of people think social media is bad for students."

Academic English:"Many researchers have suggested that excessive social media use may have negative effects on students."

PART 3- FORMALITY

Formal vs. Informal Vocabulary : Academic English normally avoids slang, colloquial expressions and overly conversational language.

Common transformations

General / Informal	Academic / Formal
a lot of	many / numerous / a considerable number of
lots of	numerous / considerable
kids	children
guys	people / individuals
stuff	materials / factors / issues
things	factors / aspects / issues
really important	highly significant
really big	substantial / considerable
get	obtain / acquire / receive
help	assist
buy	purchase
show	demonstrate / indicate
find out	determine / discover
deal with	address / examine
look at	examine / investigate
go up	increase
go down	decrease
good	beneficial / effective / positive
bad	negative / harmful / problematic
huge	substantial / considerable
okay	acceptable
enough	sufficient
not enough	insufficient

Example

Informal:"There are a lot of things that cause students to drop out."

Academic:"Several factors contribute to student dropout."

PART 4- CONTRACTIONS

Avoiding Contractions : Academic English generally prefers full forms rather than contractions.

General English	Academic English
don't	do not
can't	cannot
won't	will not
isn't	is not
aren't	are not
didn't	did not
hasn't	has not
it's	it is
they're	they are
we've	we have

Example
Informal:"The results don't show a clear relationship."
Academic:"The results do not show a clear relationship."

PART 5- OBJECTIVITY

Objective Language : Academic writing generally focuses on evidence, ideas and analysis rather than personal feelings.
Instead of:"I think this theory is wrong."
Write:"The evidence does not appear to support this theory."
Instead of:"I believe this is a very good solution."
Write:"This approach appears to provide an effective solution."
Instead of:"In my opinion, unemployment is a terrible problem."
Write:"Unemployment represents a significant socioeconomic challenge."
Academic writing can still express an author's position. The important point is that claims should normally be supported and expressed appropriately rather than relying only on personal opinion.

PART 6- CAUTIOUS LANGUAGE

Hedging : One of the most important features of academic English is **hedging**.
Hedging means using language that indicates the strength or limits of a claim.
Instead of making an absolute statement: "Social media causes depression."
An academic writer might write: "Excessive social media use may contribute to psychological difficulties."
Or: "Research suggests that excessive social media use may be associated with psychological difficulties."
Common academic hedging expressions include:

- may
- might
- could
- can
- appears to
- seems to
- indicates
- tends to
- is likely to
- is possible that
- there is evidence to suggest that

Hedging is important because the strength of an academic claim should correspond to the strength of the available evidence.
Compare
Too strong: Technology always improves education.

More academic: Technology can contribute to improvements in education under appropriate conditions.
Too strong: This treatment is the best solution.
More academic: This treatment may represent an effective option in certain circumstances.

PART 7- PRECISION

Be Specific : General English often permits vague expressions.
Academic English requires greater precision.
Example 1
General: "Food prices have gone up a lot."
Academic: "Food prices have increased significantly in recent years."
Example 2
General:"Many things affect economic growth."
Academic:"Several factors influence economic growth, including investment, productivity and human capital."
Example 3
General:"The results were very good."
Academic:"The results indicate a significant improvement in productivity."
Academic guidance emphasizes specificity and avoiding vague expressions such as "things," "stuff," and "a lot."

PART 8- ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

Useful Academic Vocabulary

- Verbs

General	Academic
show	demonstrate / indicate
say	state / argue
look at	examine / investigate
find	identify / determine
talk about	discuss
give	provide
get	obtain
use	employ / utilize
keep	maintain
make better	improve / enhance
cause	contribute to / result in
explain	clarify / demonstrate

- **Nouns**

General	Academic
problem	issue / challenge
answer	response / solution
idea	concept
reason	factor
result	outcome / finding
change	modification / transformation
way	method / approach
area	field / domain
use	utilization / application
growth	expansion / development

PART 9- LINKING WORDS

Cohesion and Logical Connections : Academic writing needs clear connections between ideas.

Addition

- furthermore
- moreover
- in addition
- additionally

Contrast

- however
- nevertheless
- in contrast
- whereas
- although

Cause

- because
- since
- due to
- owing to

Effect

- therefore
- consequently
- thus
- as a result

Example

- for example
- for instance
- such as

Conclusion

- in conclusion
- overall
- therefore
- in summary

Example paragraph : Online education has become increasingly common in higher education. **Furthermore**, technological developments have made online learning more accessible. **However**, some students continue to experience difficulties because of limited digital skills. **Therefore**, universities should provide appropriate technical support.

Linking words help establish logical relationships between ideas and improve cohesion.

PART 10- GRAMMAR AND SENTENCE STRUCTURE

General vs. Academic Sentence Structure

General English: "Students use their phones a lot. This can cause problems. They sometimes cannot concentrate."

Academic English: "The extensive use of mobile devices among students may negatively affect their ability to concentrate."

The academic version combines related ideas and uses more precise vocabulary.

However, students should not assume that academic writing requires extremely long sentences.

Good academic English should remain clear and concise.

PART 11- ACTIVE AND PASSIVE VOICE

Passive Voice : Academic writing sometimes uses the passive voice when the action or process is more important than the person performing it.

- **Active:** Researchers conducted the experiment in 2025.
- **Passive:** The experiment was conducted in 2025.
- **Active:** The researchers collected the data from 500 participants.
- **Passive:** The data were collected from 500 participants.

PART 12- TECHNICAL VOCABULARY

Specialized Vocabulary : Academic English frequently uses terminology specific to a discipline.

Economics

- inflation
- unemployment
- productivity
- fiscal policy
- monetary policy
- economic growth

PART 13- GENERAL ENGLISH TO ACADEMIC ENGLISH

Transformation Examples

Example 1

General: A lot of students have problems with time management.

Academic: Many students experience difficulties with time management.

Example 2

General: People are using the Internet more and more.

Academic: Internet usage has increased substantially in recent years.

Example 3

General: This is a really important issue.

Academic: This is a significant issue.

Example 4

General: The government needs to do something about unemployment.

Academic: The government should implement appropriate measures to address unemployment.

Example 5

General: Kids who don't get enough sleep have problems at school.

Academic: Children who receive insufficient sleep may experience difficulties in academic performance.

PART 14- PRACTICE ACTIVITIES

Activity 1- Identify the Register

Decide whether each sentence is more appropriate for **General English (GE)** or **Academic English (AE)**.

1. "Hey, what's up?"
2. "The findings indicate a significant relationship between the variables."
3. "A lot of people are worried about inflation."
4. "Inflation has generated considerable concern among households."
5. "I think this is a bad idea."
6. "The evidence does not appear to support this approach."
7. "Kids spend loads of time online."
8. "Children spend considerable amounts of time online."

Activity 2 — Replace the Informal Words

Rewrite the sentences using more academic vocabulary.

1. A lot of students use social media.
2. The government needs to deal with this problem.
3. The results were really good.
4. Scientists looked at the effects of pollution.
5. The number of unemployed people went up.
6. The study found out some interesting things.
7. There are lots of reasons for this problem.
8. This method is not good enough.

Activity 3 — Replace the Contractions

Rewrite the following sentences in a more academic style.

1. The results don't support the hypothesis.
2. This method isn't appropriate.
3. The researchers can't explain the difference.
4. The study didn't examine gender differences.

5. These findings won't apply to every population.

Activity 4 — Make the Claims More Cautious

Rewrite each statement using appropriate academic hedging.

1. Social media causes anxiety.
2. Online education is better than traditional education.
3. Exercise prevents all diseases.
4. This policy will reduce unemployment.
5. Students who use smartphones have poor concentration.

Possible words:

may – might – could – appears to – suggests – is likely to – may be associated with

Activity 5 — Transform the Paragraph

Read the following paragraph:

Nowadays, a lot of students use their phones all the time. This is a big problem because phones are really distracting. Students check social media during classes and don't pay attention. I think universities should do something about it because it is making students' grades worse.

Task : Rewrite the paragraph in Academic English ; and :

- replace informal vocabulary;
- avoid contractions;
- reduce personal language;
- use cautious language;
- use precise vocabulary;
- create logical connections between ideas.

PART 15- MODEL ANSWER

One possible academic version is:

The widespread use of mobile devices among university students may have implications for classroom concentration. Frequent engagement with social media during lectures can distract students from academic activities and may consequently affect their learning outcomes. Therefore, universities could consider developing appropriate policies and awareness programs to encourage responsible use of mobile technology in educational settings.

Note: There are many possible correct answers. Academic English is not a process of replacing every simple word with a difficult one. The objective is to communicate the idea clearly, precisely and appropriately.

PART 16- MINI READING ACTIVITY

Read the paragraph : The increasing use of artificial intelligence in higher education has generated considerable interest among researchers and educators. AI-based tools may provide students with additional opportunities for personalized learning and feedback. However, their effectiveness depends on several factors, including students' digital literacy, the quality of the technology and the way in which these tools are integrated into teaching practices.

Questions

1. What is the main topic?
2. Identify two examples of academic vocabulary.
3. Find two examples of cautious language.
4. Identify one linking word.
5. Is the paragraph objective or subjective?
6. Why does the writer use "may" instead of "will"?

Suggested answers

1. The use of artificial intelligence in higher education.
2. Examples: *personalized learning, effectiveness, digital literacy, integrated, teaching practices*.
3. *may provide* and *depends on* / the conditional wording around effectiveness.
4. *However*.
5. Objective.
6. Because the writer does not want to make an unsupported absolute claim; the evidence may not justify certainty. This type of cautious language is a central feature of academic writing.

PART 17- FINAL PRACTICE

Activity 6 — Academic or General?: Choose the more appropriate sentence for a university essay.

1.

A. "A lot of people think unemployment is a big problem."

B. "Unemployment is widely regarded as a significant socioeconomic issue."

2.

A. "The researchers looked at the problem."

B. "The researchers examined the issue."

3.

A. "The results were really good."

B. "The results demonstrated a significant improvement."

4.

A. "This proves that the theory is correct."

B. "These findings provide evidence supporting the theory."

5.

A. "I think the government should do something."

B. "The government should consider implementing appropriate measures."

PART 18- ANSWER KEY

Activity 1

1. GE
2. AE
3. GE
4. AE
5. GE
6. AE
7. GE
8. AE

Activity 2 — Possible answers

1. A considerable number of students use social media.
2. The government needs to address this problem.
3. The results were highly positive / demonstrated significant improvement.
4. Scientists examined the effects of pollution.
5. The number of unemployed people increased.
6. The study identified several interesting findings.
7. There are numerous reasons for this problem.
8. This method is insufficient / does not appear to be sufficiently effective.

Activity 3

1. The results do not support the hypothesis.
2. This method is not appropriate.
3. The researchers cannot explain the difference.
4. The study did not examine gender differences.
5. These findings will not apply to every population.

Activity 4 — Possible answers

1. Social media may contribute to anxiety.
2. Online education may be more effective than traditional education in certain contexts.
3. Regular exercise may reduce the risk of some diseases.
4. This policy may contribute to a reduction in unemployment.
5. Smartphone use may be associated with reduced concentration among students.

Activity 6

1. B
2. B
3. B
4. B
5. B

PART 19- QUICK REFERENCE

The 10 Rules of Academic English

1. Be formal : Avoid slang and overly conversational expressions.
2. Be precise : Replace vague words with specific terms.
3. Be objective : Focus on evidence rather than emotion.
4. Be cautious : Do not make claims stronger than the evidence allows.
5. Avoid unnecessary contractions : Use "do not" rather than "don't."
6. Use appropriate academic vocabulary : Choose words that accurately express your meaning.
7. Use linking expressions : Show how ideas are connected.
8. Support claims with evidence : Academic arguments normally require appropriate sources.
9. Organize ideas logically : Use introductions, developed paragraphs and conclusions.
10. Keep your writing clear : Academic does not mean unnecessarily complicated.

CONCLUSION

General English and Academic English serve different purposes.
General English is primarily concerned with everyday communication, while **Academic English** is designed to communicate knowledge, analysis, arguments and research in educational and scholarly contexts.

The most important characteristics of academic English are:

FORMAL + OBJECTIVE + PRECISE + CAUTIOUS + LOGICAL + EVIDENCE-BASED

A successful academic writer does not simply use "big words." A successful academic writer communicates ideas **clearly, accurately, logically and appropriately for the academic audience**.