Lesson: 05

Scientific writing and literary writing

Literary writing designates a type of writing specific to literature as opposed to ordinary writing. Literary writing would be characteristic of the professional writer who intends to write in a public setting, produces a work, and receives institutional recognition thanks to its publication. On the contrary, ordinary writing would be the prerogative of the amateur who writes on a daily basis in a relatively private setting, whether academic (note-taking, writing, dissertation, etc.), professional (reports, emails ...) or domestic (correspondence, diary, shopping list...), often in handwritten form.

These two types of writing are generally endowed with unequal functions and values:

*Literary writing would have an aesthetic function, while ordinary writing would have a utilitarian use.

*Literary writing would be beautiful and exceptional, while ordinary writing would be bland and banal.

Literary writing obeys the rules of prescriptive grammar in force at a given time and place, although it can occasionally break free from them, and in doing so, redefine these rules for posterity. For example: a poet can take poetic licenses by permanently modifying the spelling of a word, or a novelist resort to neologisms which will then enter the language for his successors.

Literary criticism, linguistics and stylistics have attempted to define what essentially distinguished literary writing practiced by professional writers from ordinary writing practiced by amateurs by putting forward the criteria of work on language and aesthetic intention. Roman Jakobson, for example, noted that the characteristic of literary writing would be to be endowed with a “poetic function”. Roland Barthes, for his part, noted that for writers, "to write" was "an intransitive verb" because it was an end in itself, while for others "to write" was a means. In order to determine whether a piece of writing is literary, we can then rely on the taste of the reader, capable of recognizing and appreciating the beauty of an object (criticism based on reception); or document the work of the writer by consulting previous states of this writing, or by reading the paratexts of his works and his personal documents (genetic criticism). Indeed, most literary

writings require several drafts: a first draft, spontaneous, and a second draft (and many others), which are those, rested, of taking control of the text, when the writer gives the consistency, work on style.

The criterion of publication: Writing for the public :

The characteristic of literary writing is perhaps to aim for publication, and therefore to be read by a large public. However, Louis Aragon was able to write: "Writing [had been invented] to fix, rather than ideas for others, things for oneself. »

Certain private writing practices give rise to works published after the death of their author, or even against their wishes, and are nevertheless considered literary writings because of their aesthetic quality.Writing correspondence or keeping a diary can today be considered literary writing, whereas this was not the case in the 17th century, for example. The criterion of publication is therefore not infallible for distinguishing literary writing from ordinary writing.

Scientific writing

All scientific content requires good writing skills. To write a good scientific article and avoid errors, it is important to know certain writing rules and methods.

What is scientific writing style?

Scientific research articles follow a precise structure and must have an appropriate writing style.

*Scientific writing pays particular attention to certain elements.

*Turns of phrase, which must convey information clearly.

*Syntax and spelling, which must be understandable and error-free.
*Compliance with certain rules, which must be applied in a coherent and harmonious manner (references and citations, paraphrases).

*The organization of the structure: length of sentences, spacing of paragraphs.
*Vocabulary and explanation of important concepts.

Why is there a need for a scientific writing style?

Adopting an appropriate scientific writing style allows you to assert the seriousness of the research while taking the readership into account. The author can thus present his position and his reasoning in a readable and coherent manner. With the development of open access, more and more articles are available online for free. The care taken in writing is therefore essential: scientific content must be accessible to a large number of readers while demonstrating a high level of expertise.

Write a convincing article

A well-written article or scientific content is more likely to please the reading committee (or editorial committee) of the journal as well as its readers. Well-crafted writing reinforces the credibility of the content and thus increases its potential to be cited by other researchers. Of course, the quality of the scientific demonstration is essential. However, a clear and pleasant aspect highlights this scientific journey.

Simplify the reader's understanding

An article written in a careful scientific style allows readers to understand the logic of the author(s)' reasoning. This type of writing facilitates the transmission of information with pedagogy.

Scientific style: important rules

There are a few rules you need to know to know how to write properly. They mainly concern the use of references, sources and paraphrases in order to avoid plagiarism.

1. Citation of sources in the text

All scientific content is based on sources. Since they concern the work of others, it is necessary to cite them. Some articles cite in quotation marks and specify the author's name, while others use APA standards in the text.

2. References in the bibliography

The bibliography also presents all the sources on which the author relied. Structurally, this section is often located at the end of the document. Its presentation can be imposed by the journal (font size and type, organization of elements, classification of works).

It is important that this section is coherent: the sources used must converge towards the same theme.

3. The use of footnotes

Footnotes are references placed at the bottom of the page. They are numbered and allow you to develop part of the text or to give the details and characteristics of a work. Like citations or references in the bibliography, references placed at the bottom of the page must follow the model requested by the journal.

4. Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing means explaining someone else's idea without quoting text with quotation marks. Its use is quite frequent and follows certain rules. To avoid plagiarism, paraphrasing must always indicate the source of the idea formulated. Scientific style: tips and examples Once the rules of scientific writing are applied, other methods can be used. Their application guarantees the use of an appropriate scientific style that is pleasant to read.

1. Follow a logical progression

It is important to make a logical statement. The reasoning must be structured and follow a clear and detailed progression. Each part can be introduced then summarized in a few lines so as not to lose the reader. The research question must be central and each part must be able to answer it. For this, the use of short sentences and spaced paragraphs is recommended, in order to optimize the readability of the text. The use of connecting words such as “besides”, “therefore”, “thus”, “firstly” and “secondly” expose the logic expressed by the researcher in his text.

2. Use adequate vocabulary

To maintain the reader's interest and ensure that they follow the reasoning, vocabulary is important. For this, it is not recommended to use overly “literary” language that uses a lot of metaphors or complex syntactic constructions. Depending on the type of magazine, it is necessary to adapt what you say to the reader. Indeed, in certain journals, the readers will be specialists in the subject while in others (popular journals or interdisciplinary journals), the reader will discover the subject. In this case, it will then be important to define the main concepts.

3. Verb tense

The present indicative tense is the tense most used in scientific articles. Narrative tenses such as the imperfect or the simple past are rarely used. The present guarantees the unity and sobriety of scientific statements and allows direct access to information.

Errors to avoid

Certain errors can hinder readers' understanding and harm scientific discourse. Among the main errors are the use of the first person, sentences that are too long and spelling mistakes.

1. Giving your personal opinion

It is often not advisable to give your personal opinion in scientific articles, except in the paragraphs dedicated to justification or interpretation. To avoid this error, impersonal forms and passive expressions should be preferred.

2. Make long sentences

In all scientific content, it is necessary to avoid length. These make the text unpleasant to read and can restrict access to information. It is better to avoid repetition: each sentence must provide information. Metalanguage is a common fault to avoid, because it lengthens sentences with information that is not very useful.

3. Spelling mistakes

Spelling mistakes can compromise the seriousness of the article and make it lose credibility. Proofreading is therefore an essential step! Most of the time, it is difficult to see your faults yourself. Indeed, after many hours spent on a text, habituation can make errors invisible to the author. The best solution is to have the content proofread by a third person (dissertation director, colleagues, etc.).

Scientific writing checklist

To help you, here are some points to check before publishing or submitting content to a journal:

*Important concepts and acronyms are defined.

*The text is regularly ventilated (paragraphs, subparagraphs).

*If the article appears in a widely-read journal, important concepts and acronyms are defined.

*No sentence is longer than three complete lines.

*Diagrams, tables and figures have a detailed legend.

*All citations and references in the text are listed in the bibliography.

*The use of the first person singular (or plural if several authors) is especially present in the parts dedicated to interpretation or positioning.

*The verbs are conjugated in the present indicative.

*Citations, footnotes and references follow the style requested by the journal.
*The article has been proofread and has no spelling errors.