

Національний університет «Києво-Могилянська академія»

METHODOLOGICAL GUIDELINES

**Linguistic Aspects of Writing an Academic Research Article in English
for Students and Researchers of the Faculty of Public Health, Social Work, and
Psychology**

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Annotation

These methodological guidelines present the philological (linguistic and discourse-related) principles of writing an academic research article in English in the fields of public health, social work, and psychology. The guidelines cover lexical, grammatical, stylistic, and discourse features of academic English, terminology use, cohesion and coherence, hedging, and ethical language. The publication provides structural and linguistic recommendations for each section of a research article (IMRaD), typical language models, and practical exercises.

The guidelines are recommended for undergraduate and graduate students, doctoral candidates, and researchers of the Faculty of Public Health, Social Work, and Psychology who prepare academic publications in English.

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1. Introduction

Academic publication in English has become a fundamental requirement for researchers in public health, social work, and psychology. Beyond disciplinary knowledge, successful publication requires linguistic competence, as the ability to use language accurately, coherently, and appropriately within academic discourse conventions.

Researchers in social and health sciences operate with sensitive human-related concepts such as health status, vulnerability, behavior, and well-being. Therefore, linguistic precision and ethical clarity are essential components of scholarly communication. Inaccurate or culturally inappropriate language may distort meaning, stigmatise populations, or weaken scientific credibility.

The purpose of these guidelines is to develop authors' awareness of the linguistic features of English academic writing and to provide practical recommendations for producing clear, coherent, and ethically appropriate research articles in the fields of public health, social work, and psychology.

2. Academic Discourse in Public Health, Social Work, and Psychology

Academic discourse in the health and social-behavioral sciences combines scientific objectivity with sensitivity to human experience. It is characterised by:

- conceptual precision and terminological consistency
- evidence-based argumentation
- neutral and non-judgmental tone
- cautious interpretation of findings
- person-centered and non-stigmatising language

Unlike purely biomedical writing, social and behavioral research frequently describes lived experiences of individuals and/or communities. Consequently, authors should avoid deterministic or labeling expressions and prefer formulations that emphasise conditions rather than identities (e.g., people with disabilities rather than the disabled).

3. Structure of a Research Article: Linguistic Perspective

3.1. Title

The title is a clear and specific label for your work. It is important to include "keywords" (search terms) so that search engines and online libraries can show your paper to the right people.

Example pattern:

Psychological Well-Being and Social Support Among Caregivers of Children with Chronic Illness

3.2. Abstract

The abstract is a structured summary divided into four clear parts: Background, Methods, Results, and Conclusions. It needs to be "self-contained," meaning a reader should be able to understand your whole study without having to read the entire paper.

Language features:

- high lexical density
- absence of citations
- neutral reporting verbs

3.3. Introduction

The introduction establishes the research territory, reviews relevant literature, identifies a gap, and states the aim.

Typical linguistic functions:

- describing the problem
- synthesising prior research
- indicating limitations
- formulating objectives

3.4. Methods

The Methods section describes participants, instruments, procedures, and ethical considerations with maximum clarity for the purpose of replicability.

Language features:

- standardised terminology
- procedural verbs
- frequent passive constructions
- precise quantitative expressions

3.5. Results

Results present findings without interpretation.

Language features:

- neutral reporting verbs (showed, indicated, revealed)
- statistical expressions
- references to tables and figures
- absence of evaluative adjectives

3.6. Discussion

The Discussion interprets findings in relation to theory and prior studies.

Language features:

- cautious claims (hedging)
- comparison with prior findings
- explanation of mechanisms
- acknowledgment of limitation

3.7. Conclusion

The conclusion summarises the main findings and outlines implications for practice, policy, or research. Claims must remain proportional to evidence.

4. Terminology in Public Health, Social Work, and Psychology

Terminology in these disciplines includes clinical, psychosocial, community, and policy-related concepts. Authors must ensure

- consistent use of key terms
- internationally recognised terminology
- correct use of diagnostic or program names
- person-first language

Terminological inconsistency reduces clarity and may cause conceptual confusion

5. Lexical Features of Academic English

Academic English in social and health sciences is characterised by:

- discipline-specific vocabulary (intervention, outcome, prevalence, coping)
- abstract nouns (well-being, resilience, adherence)
- nominalisation (assessment of needs)
- formal collocations (provide support, experience distress)

Colloquial or emotionally evaluative words should be avoided.

6. Grammatical Features of Academic Writing

Typical grammatical patterns include:

- passive constructions in methods
- present tense for general knowledge
- past tense for study procedures
- complex noun phrases
- parallel structures in lists and arguments

Grammatical accuracy supports clarity and credibility

7. Cohesion and Coherence

Coherent academic text requires logical connections between sentences and paragraphs.

Key devices:

- connectors (however, therefore, moreover)
- lexical repetition of key concepts
- pronoun reference
- thematic progression: Theme (the known starting point) and Rheme (new information)

Each paragraph should develop one central idea.

8. Hedging, Modality, and Ethical Caution

Health and social research often deals with variability and probability. Authors should avoid categorical claims.

Hedging devices:

- modal verbs (may, might, could)
- adverbs (likely, possibly)
- verbs (suggest, indicate)

Ethically appropriate language avoids stereotyping or deterministic statements about groups.

9. Academic Integrity and Citation Language

Accurate representation of sources is both an ethical and linguistic task.

Key skills:

- paraphrasing
- summarising
- reporting verbs (argue, report, demonstrate)
- integration of citations into sentences

Proper citation language prevents plagiarism and clarifies author stance.

10. Typical Language Errors by Non-Native Authors

Common difficulties include:

- omission or misuse of articles
- incorrect prepositions
- word order influenced by Ukrainian
- literal translation of terms
- confusion of false cognates

10.1. Omission or misuse of articles

Ukrainian does not have articles (a, an, the), so it is very common for authors to leave them out or use them where they are not needed.

Error: *Study shows that results are significant.*
 Correction: **The** *study shows that the results are significant.*

Error: *We used a software for analysis. (Software is uncountable).*
 Correction: *We used software for analysis.*

10.2. Incorrect Prepositions

Prepositions rarely translate 1:1 between languages. Many Ukrainian authors translate the preposition used in their native language directly into English.

Ukrainian Logic	Incorrect English	Correct English
залежать від	depend from	depend on
впливати на	influence on	influence (no preposition)
подібний до	similar with	similar to
у 2026 році	at 2026	in 2026

10.3. Word Order (Ukrainian influence)

Ukrainian has a flexible word order, while English is much more rigid (Subject-Verb-Object). Placing the verb at the end or the subject in the middle can confuse English readers.

Error: *In this article is analysed the linguistic phenomenon.*
 Correction: *This article analyses the linguistic phenomenon.*

10.4. Literal Translation of Terms

Directly translating a Ukrainian phrase often results in "word salad"—phrases that make sense to you but sound unnatural to a native speaker.

Error: *The scientists made a great contribution into science. (Literal: зробуму внесок).*
 Correction: *The scientists made a significant contribution to the field.*

10.5. Confusion of False Cognates ("False Friends")

These are words that look or sound similar in both languages but have different meanings.

Actual/Актуальний: In English, "actual" means "real" or "fact." In Ukrainian, "актуальний" means "topical," "relevant," or "current."

Error: *"This is an actual problem."*

Correction: *"This is a relevant (or current) problem."*

Data/Дата: "Data" in English refers to information/statistics; it does not mean a calendar "date."

Precise/Прецизійний: While similar, "accurate" or "exact" is often better for general academic contexts than the more technical "precise."

Awareness of these patterns facilitates self-editing.

11. Editing and Proofreading

Linguistic revision should ensure:

- terminology consistency
- optimal grammar and article usage
- clarity of sentences
- cohesion between paragraphs
- adherence to academic style

Multiple revision stages are recommended.

12. Model Language for Article Sections

Extended Phrase Banks for Research Articles in Public Health, Psychology, and Social Work.

12.1. Introduction

General Academic Framing

Recent research has increasingly focused on ...

There is growing recognition of the role of ... in ...

The issue of ... has received considerable scholarly attention.

Despite extensive research on ..., little is known about ...

A key challenge in ... concerns ...

Public Health

... represents a significant public health concern.
The prevalence of ... has increased in recent years.
Population-level determinants of ... include ...
Preventive strategies targeting ... are essential.
Public health policies increasingly emphasize ...

Psychology

Psychological well-being has been conceptualised as ...
Cognitive and emotional processes underlying ... remain unclear.
Individuals with ... often experience ...
Prior studies have linked ... to ...
The construct of ... is central to understanding ...

Social Work

Social workers frequently encounter clients who ...
Vulnerable populations are disproportionately affected by ...
Access to social services remains uneven across ...
Community-based interventions have been proposed to address ...
Social support systems play a critical role in ...

Research Gap and Aim

However, evidence regarding ... remains limited.
Few studies have examined ... in the context of ...
The present study aims to investigate ...
This study seeks to explore ... among ...
The objective of this research is to assess ...

12.2. Methods

Study Design

A cross-sectional / longitudinal / qualitative study was conducted.
The study employed a mixed-methods design.
An exploratory qualitative approach was adopted.

Participants / Population

Psychology

Participants were adults diagnosed with ...
Individuals meeting the inclusion criteria were selected.
The sample consisted of ... participants (mean age = ...).

Social Work

*Clients receiving social services at ... were invited to participate.
The study involved families experiencing ...
Service users were employed through community agencies.*

Public Health

*The study population comprised residents of ...
A representative sample of ... was selected.
Participants were employed from primary care facilities.*

Instruments / Measures

*Psychological distress was assessed using ...
Social functioning was measured with ...
Health-related quality of life was evaluated by ...
Data on ... were collected through structured questionnaires.*

Procedure

*Data collection was carried out between ... and ...
Participants completed the survey anonymously.
Interviews were conducted in accordance with ...
Ethical approval was obtained from ...*

Data Analysis

*Quantitative data were analysed using ...
Qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis.
Associations between variables were examined using ...
Statistical significance was set at $p < ...$*

12.3. Results

General Reporting

*The results indicated that ...
Analysis revealed significant differences in ...
A positive/negative association was found between ... and ...
The majority of participants reported ...*

Psychology

*Higher levels of ... were associated with increased ...
Participants with ... demonstrated lower ...
Emotional distress scores were significantly correlated with ...*

Social Work

Clients receiving ... reported improved ...
Service utilisation was associated with ...
Participants described experiences of ...

Public Health

The prevalence of ... was ...% in the sample.
Individuals exposed to ... had higher odds of ...
Rates of ... were significantly greater among ...

Tables and Figures

As shown in Table 1
Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of ...
Detailed results are presented in ...

12.4. Discussion

Interpretation

The findings suggest that ...
These results support previous research indicating ...
The observed association may be explained by ...
One possible interpretation is that ...

Psychology

This pattern may reflect underlying cognitive-emotional mechanisms.
Psychological vulnerability may contribute to ...
The findings align with theoretical models of ...

Social Work

The results highlight the importance of social support in ...
Structural barriers may account for ...
These findings underscore the role of community services.

Public Health

The results emphasize the need for preventive interventions.
Population-level factors may influence ...
These findings have implications for public health policy.

Comparison with previous findings

Consistent with prior studies, ...
In contrast to earlier findings, ...

This study extends previous research by ...

Limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged:

The cross-sectional design precludes causal inference.

The sample may not be representative of ...

Self-reported data may be subject to bias.

12.5. Implications

Practice

The findings suggest that practitioners should ...

Interventions addressing ... may improve ...

Screening for ... could facilitate early support.

Social Work

Social workers should consider ... when working with ...

Community-based programs may enhance ...

Public Health

Public health initiatives should target ...

Policy measures aimed at ... may reduce ...

Psychology

Psychological interventions focusing on ... may be beneficial.

Therapeutic approaches addressing ... could improve ...

12.6. Conclusion

The study demonstrates that ...

This research contributes to understanding ...

The findings highlight the importance of ...

Addressing ... remains essential for ...

Further research is needed to examine ...

12.7. Hedging and Cautious Claims (Discipline-Relevant)

The results may indicate that ...

These findings suggest a possible link between ...

The association could be explained by ...

It is likely that ...

The evidence appears to support ...

12.8. Person-First and Ethical Language

People with mental health conditions
Individuals experiencing homelessness
Children with developmental disabilities
Communities affected by poverty
Participants with substance use disorders

Avoid: <i>the mentally ill, the disabled, the addicts, the homeless.</i>
--

12.9. Reporting Qualitative Data

Participants described ...
A recurring theme was ...
Respondents emphasised ...
Narratives reflected experiences of ...
Illustrative quotations are presented below.

12.10. Reporting Quantitative Associations

... was significantly associated with ...
After adjustment, the relationship remained significant.
The odds of ... were higher among ...
... predicted ... in the regression model.
No significant differences were observed in

13. Practical Exercises

Exercise 1: Person-First Language

Stigmatising labels often define a person by their condition. Person-first language puts the individual before the diagnosis.

Task: Rewrite "The schizophrenics were monitored for six months."

Key: "Participants with schizophrenia were monitored for six months."

Explanation: In academic ethics, we avoid using a condition as a collective noun for people.

Exercise 2: Hedging (Cautious Language)

Academic writing avoids "universal truths" unless they are mathematical laws. We use "hedging" to show academic humility.

Task: Rewrite "This data proves that the strategy is a failure."

Key: "These data suggest that the strategy may be ineffective under these conditions."

Explanation: Using "suggest" instead of "proves" and "may be" instead of "is" protects the researcher if future studies show different results.

Exercise 3: Improving Cohesion

Cohesion is about the "flow" between sentences. Without transition words, a paragraph feels like a list of disconnected facts.

Task: Connect these two sentences: "The experiment failed. The equipment was outdated."

Key: "The experiment failed; this was primarily due to the fact that the equipment was outdated." OR "The experiment failed because the equipment was outdated."

Explanation: Using "due to" or "because" creates a logical cause-and-effect link.

Exercise 4: Terminology Inconsistency

Using different words for the same thing in one paper confuses the reader (and search engines).

Task: Fix this sentence: "The respondents filled out the form, but several subjects left the survey incomplete."

Key: "The participants completed the questionnaire, but several participants left the questionnaire incomplete."

Explanation: Pick one term (e.g., participants and questionnaire) and stick to it throughout the entire manuscript

14. Concluding Principles

Effective academic writing in public health, social work, and psychology requires:

- linguistic clarity
- terminological precision
- ethical sensitivity
- coherent argumentation
- cautious interpretation

Linguistic competence strengthens the scientific validity and global accessibility of research.

15. Citations

To meet the rigorous demands of academic referencing, a researcher must ensure a perfect match between in-text citations and the final reference list while strictly adhering to a specific style manual. Referencing serves to credit original ideas, avoid plagiarism, and enable readers to locate sources for further validation.

Core Principles of Academic Referencing

- **Internal Consistency:** Every source cited in the body of your text must appear in the reference list, and every entry in the reference list must be cited at least once in the text
- **Adherence to Style:** Journals and universities typically mandate one specific style (e.g., APA 7, Harvard, or Vancouver). You must follow its rules for punctuation, capitalisation, and formatting without exception.
- **Precision in Detail:** A reference is only useful if it is accurate. You must verify the author's spelling, the year of publication, volume numbers, and DOI links.

Authors must reference sources that focus on the date of publication

Strategic Instructions for Authors

- **Use Reference Management Software (RMS):** Tools like Zotero, Mendeley, or EndNote are essential for modern researchers. They automate the formatting of citations and bibliographies, significantly reducing manual errors and saving time.
- **Verify the Original Source:** Never copy a reference from another paper's bibliography without checking the original document yourself.
- **Prioritize DOIs:** Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs) should be presented as functional URLs to provide a permanent link to the research.

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