Pitfalls to Avoid:

Unload the Dead Weight in Your Academic Writing

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2021 Virtual
TEXTBOOK & ACADEMIC *Authoring Conference*

TAA
JUNE 18, 21-24, 2021

Pitfalls to Avoid: Passive Voice

Definition

Passive voice shows "the relationship between a subject and a verb in which the subject receives the action of the verb" (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). Though passive voice can be useful, too much passive voice obscures meaning. To illuminate meaning, use active voice.

Examples of passive voice

a. The interviews *were conducted* by graduate students.
   Graduate students *conducted* the interviews.

b. English I students *were required* to use the writing center.
   We *required* English I students to use the writing center.

c. Participant confidentiality will *be maintained* by the research team during the study.
   The research team *will maintain* participant confidentiality during the study.

How to address or avoid passive voice

How: To change passive voice to active voice, say who or what did the action.

Task: Replace passive voice with active voice in these text selections or your own text selection.

…These four sociological principles on parental involvement are tightly linked to issues of equity, which fills in the missing parts of parental involvement. For children's success in learning, these four principles should be considered and added in parental involvement including Epstein's (2001) six types of parental involvement. To support children's heritage language retention, active parental involvement is strongly encouraged.

Boundaries between himself, colleagues, and professors were drawn according to their stance regarding issues of social justice. Positioning himself on the periphery, there was a disconnection between his identity and the way the program positioned the role of teacher. His mission became the measurement by which all practices and professors were validated or rejected. Given this mission, his own teaching practices were transformed to incorporate principles of teaching for social justice.

Three forms of data were collected: interview, observation, and document analysis. Interview protocols are discussed first; this section includes rationale for obtaining data through interviews, an overview of the protocol for each interview, the alignment of each interview question with the research questions, the focus of analysis for each question, and a timeline for the interviews. Observations are explained next including the same categories of explanation: rationale, overview of the protocol, alignment with the research questions, the focus of analysis, and a timeline of the observations. After the observation procedures are explained, the document analysis is described following the same written structure as the interviews and observations.

Pitfalls to Avoid: Dead Wood

Definition

Dead wood refers to "people or things that are no longer useful" (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). In writing, dead wood is "unnecessary words, phrases, or exposition" (Dictionary.com, n.d.). To energize your writing, revise and trim the "waste words" (Sword, 2016).

Examples of dead wood: There, this, it, that; wordiness or unnecessary words

a. *There are* workshops *that* can promote environmental education and community action.
   Workshops can promote environmental education and community action.

b. *This* is important for our children's future. (What is important for our children's future?)
   Environmental action is important for our children's future.
   Community action is important for our children's future.

c. *It* is my belief *that* environmental education may prompt community action.
   I believe environmental education may prompt community action.

d. *As a matter of fact*, novice writers *who are* navigating the publication process *for the first time* could benefit from *the opportunity of having* mentorship.
   A novice writer navigating the publication process could benefit from mentorship.

How to address or avoid dead wood

How: To address the dead wood, reduce the unnecessary words or phrases.

Task: Trim the dead wood in these text selections or your own text selection.

As with many professional development workshops and activities, there are often hurdles faced by the educators that prohibit their participation. The biggest hurdle faced by teachers was the COVID-19 pandemic and the cancellation of the planned workshops. There was nothing that could be done about the impacts of COVID-19, so I focused on the other perceived barriers of the teachers who participated in the program.

To understand immigrant children, it is useful to know the Korean immigrant mothers and the reasons why this language minority group immigrated to the U.S. (Lee, 2012). There are two main reasons that Korean families immigrate to the U.S. One is to provide better education for the children, and the other one is to complete the parents' own advanced education (Lee, 2012). It is important to know how parents get involved with their children's education because Korean immigrant parents have high expectations for their children's educational achievement.

What I am trying to say is that each teacher recognized the hurdles they faced when trying to participate in the program and discussed these challenges openly and honestly. For all intents and purposes, the biggest barrier for teachers' participation in professional development, which has been a widely recognized, was finding the time in their busy lives to partake.

Pitfalls to Avoid: Nominalization

Definition

Nominalization is "the process of making a noun from a verb or adjective" (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.) by adding suffixes (e.g., -tion, -ment, -ness, -ty). While nominalizations are appropriate in some cases, too many nominalizations add unnecessary weight to text. To lighten your writing, replace nominalizations with verbs or adjectives.

Examples of nominalizations (adapted from https://owl.purdue.edu/)

Nouns	Verbs	Nouns	Adjectives
Argument	Argue	Applicability	Applicable
Attendance	Attend	Capability	Capable
Intention	Intend	Carelessness	Careless
Decision	Decide	Difficulty	Difficult
Management	Manage	Excitement	Excite
Performance	Perform	Happiness	Happy
Preparation	Prepare	Intensity	Intense

How to address or avoid nominalizations

How: Identify nominalizations and revise the text using verbs or adjectives.

Task: Reduce the use of nominalizations in these text selections or your own text selection.

The presentation of the arguments by the doctoral students was compelling. Their incorporation of statistical data and facilitation with rhetorical structures enhanced their position. After the presentations, the discussion led by the moderator to bring clarity to key points was conducted. Yet, the intensity of the ensuing debate left the doctoral students in a state of confusion. For this reason, changes in the management of the subsequent presentations was taken into consideration by the university.

The preparation for the dissertation defense could take doctoral students hours, days, or weeks; however, the demonstration of their knowledge generation must occur within a two-hour block of time. For the protection of the doctoral students, there is a provision by the university for there to be an outside dissertation committee member. There is a presumption that the outside dissertation committee member can guarantee fair treatment of the doctoral student and adherence to university standards.

The commission gave a report and offered a series of suggestion to improve the quality of community services provided by the agency. Community leadership made a decision based on the commissions' report. The community leadership voted for the adoption of one suggestion. This served as a catalyst for long overdue change in the delivery of community services. Nevertheless, the applicability and difficulty of the implementation of the change by community leadership was problematic.

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