What studying in English actually means…

*Academic English: A foreign language for everyone*

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How many of you are UG?

How many of you are PG?

How many of you have been previously educated in the UK or through the medium of English?
What concerns, if any, do you have about studying through the medium of English at Cambridge?
It’s important to know that…

Academic Language…

‘…is no-one’s mother tongue’

Academic (writing) skills are not innate …

They need to be **actively** learned, **continually** practised and **continually** trained and honed …

– even for native speakers.
All language is contextual
What we are going to look at:

The way we teach, the assessment methods we use, the emphasis on independent and self-directed learning may be very different to what you are used to.

① recognize the challenges that studying in English will pose;

② understand the approach and conventions of academic English, which may vary quite considerably from those of your first language; and

③ Identify the learning strategies that you can employ in order to meet these challenges and fulfill your academic potential.
Three Types of Shock
So – what will be expected of you?

Weekly supervision essays

Lab Reports

Thesis
Weekly supervisions

Presentations
These are the two main ways you will be assessed...
But of course there will also be lots of these...
And not forgetting....
Emphasis on independence and self-centred study...
… where **Critical Thinking** is key
And, of course, everything’s in …
In terms of English language proficiency…

…you have all already met or exceeded the University’s **minimum** English language requirements.
BUT…

ONLY THE MINIMUM REQUIREMENT
It’s not simply a case of ...
In linguistic terms...

Mechanical Manipulation

Extent of communication competence
It’s studying in English – which is more like this:

YOUR SUBJECT
Academic English
But what is ‘academic English’?
Well…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key elements of university-level writing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Developing an argument</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Linking theory and evidence</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Drawing a conclusion</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Being critical</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Developing a central idea</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Processing information</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Incorporating facts</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Using correct terminology</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Using of evidence to support an argument</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Using primary texts</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Using quotations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Acknowledging work previously done in field</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Presenting in a logical order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Using analytical interpretation</td>
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<tr>
<td>• And so much more …</td>
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</table>
So, it’s not just about the language...
There are **no** grammatical patterns or **lexical** items in *academic English* that do not appear in *general English*.

**KEY WORD: ACADEMIC**
Academic English…

…is the type of English that the Korean researcher uses to communicate their ideas to the Brazilian researcher at a conference in Moscow.
But being clear can be difficult...

especially in writing.
Well, **writing** is not just about, well, **the writing**...
New Area = More Difficult

Complex Writing = Deep Thought?

The Unavoidable Problem of Inexperience

I used to hate writing assignments, but now I enjoy them.

I realized that the purpose of writing is to inflate weak ideas, obscure poor reasoning, and inhibit clarity.

With a little practice, writing can be an intimidating and impenetrable fog. Want to see my book report?

The dynamics of interbeing and monological imperatives in Dick and Jane: A study in psychic transrelational gender modes.

Academia, here I come!
But mainly it’s because we …
It involves starting, progressing and, finishing a complicated and challenging set of tasks.
It requires you to activate lots of different skills, sometimes at different stages and phases in the process, sometimes all at the same time.
It’s important not to lose sight of the fact that all academic writing starts with flawed, incomplete, vague hunches, ideas and concepts.
But the key is to exploit its **revisability**:  

this then allows you to come full circle, to revisit ideas, to explore the same things in different ways, to revise, and to reconceptualise …

– *all of which are arguably central to the essence of scholarship itself.*
Academic Communication is a process

- Your contribution to scholarship
- Literature Review
- Methodology

Scoping
- Data Collection
- Argument Development

Research
- Structure Development
- Argument Development

Consolidation
- Pulling it all together

First Draft
- Structurally, in terms of Content, and Language

Revisions
- Fruits of your labour!

Thesis

But this linear representation is deceptive…
... since the process is more *cyclical*
In fact, each stage could be said to be cyclical itself...
So, critical thinking at every stage is vital
And, of course, there’s the external constraint of...
Don’t forget that writing is a **Process**
‘I always try to write on the principle of the iceberg. There is seven-eighths of it under water for every part that shows.’

Ernest Hemingway
It is important to write at every stage in the process.

- Write to *Remember*
- Write to *Understand*
- Write to *Gain Perspective*

Thinking in written form is more useful, more sustained, more... thoughtful.
In fact, you never stop writing…

① To take notes
② To draft out ideas
③ To consolidate ideas
④ To outline sections
⑤ To draft drafts
⑥ To edit drafts
⑦ To continually edit
⑧ And on, and on, and on…
When English is not your L1...

Cultural Influence on Language
Kaplan’s doodles
• But what are these ‘expectations of the native reader’?
• Where have they come from?
• How can the (L2) student adopt them?
Developing arguments is a culturally embedded topic: different cultures have different ways of approaching the initial formation and development of an argument.
And there are different kinds of *cultures*...
Remember our box?

YOUR SUBJECT
Awareness-raising to address this:

TO LOOK AT HOW (ACADEMIC) ENGLISH WORKS

BLIND SPOT

AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, WHY.
Conceptual Foundations of English

Rhetorical Heritage

Writer Responsible

Low Context

Linear
Logic is not universal – it is culturally defined.

The language and related approach to expression have evolved out of the Anglo-European cultural pattern.

The expected sequence of thought in English is essentially a Platonic-Aristotelian sequence.
In terms of argumentation, we therefore tend to prefer a **tight chain of reasoning**:

But not all cultures share this preference…
Writer-Responsibility

CLARITY in

\{ 

STRUCTURE

ARGUMENTATION

LANGUAGE

\}

What are the differences?

**WRITER**
- linear
- **parallel progression**
- accumulative
- tight chain of reasoning
- **LOGOS**
- clear and concise
- 3-part structure
- Unit of composition: paragraph

**READER**
- non-linear or quasi-linear
- **sequential progression**
- tangential
- looser, with richer detail and context
- **ETHOS & PATHOS**
- elaborate and complex
- multi-part structure
- Unit of composition: larger conceptual blocks
Why?
Two Examples:

**Reader-Responsible Approach**

**Weight-Time-Importance Allocation**

*Fail to prepare, prepare to fail*
CLARITY OF COMMUNICATION

in academic English

CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON COMMUNICATION & ARGUMENTATION
Non-UK

UK
But don’t forget: It’s a Parallel Process...

It must not be overlooked, particularly when at university, is that doing good research and becoming an effective communicator, be it in writing or orally, are not separate processes, but closely related aspects of intellectual development that need to work in parallel.
By becoming a **better reader**, you also become a **better writer**.
By becoming a better listener, you also become a better speaker.
Skills Integration

Listening
- e.g. attending a lecture on the topic

Speaking
- e.g. discussing your supervision essay

Reading
- e.g. for your supervision or essay

Writing
- e.g. making lecture or reading notes

Speaking
- e.g. discussing it in a supervision

Writing
- e.g. writing your supervision essay
But help is at hand...
Sources of Support:

Researcher Development Programme

Training and development for Cambridge researchers, including managing research projects and managing your time, as well as opportunities to develop your approaches to communicating, presenting and working effectively in Cambridge’s demanding academic cultures. For those who teach, we run short workshops as well as a flexibly structured, accredited ‘Teaching Associates Programme’.

Colleges and departments
In-Sessional Support Programme

Academic Development & Training

_for International Students_

@ The Language Centre

UNDERGRADUATE

POSTGRADUATE

POST-DOC
Workshops – an example:

**Reading**
- Rhetoric
- Language of Argument

**Writing**
- Self-Editing
- Writing across the disciplines
- Preparing for MPhil / PhD dissertations

**Speaking**
- Pronunciation & Intonation
- Presentation Skills
- Debating

**Listening**
- Note-taking in Lectures
- Listening for Detail

**Skills**
- Exam Techniques
- Effective E-mails
- Academic Conventions
Online Courseware
ADTIS Enquiries: adtis@langcen.cam.ac.uk
Any questions?