

DukeWrites Enrichment Suite

Academic Phrasebank

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I'm Rene Caputo, the ESL Specialist for Duke University's Thompson Writing Program. We're going to take a look at Academic Phrasebank by John Morley of The University of Manchester.

Morley collected phrases from dissertations and journal articles to create this resource, designed to support academic writers. You can read more about the background here on the main page <http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/> and by clicking on the link [that says More about Academic Phrasebank].

I suggest that you read through both of those sections so that you better understand how he created the resource as well as the research behind it.

Morley notes in this introduction that it would be good for you to be creative and to adapt the language, the phrases, before incorporating them in your work. I would add you also want to adjust them to sound like your style of writing.

Across the top we have sections that relate to typical parts of a research paper. Let's take a look at **Introducing Work**. At the top, the information here provides you with some overview.

And we're going to look at this section, **Establishing the importance of the topic with time frame given**. But you can see there are lots of different very specific categories here of language.

So, let me read just a few to give you an idea:

Recently, there has been renewed interest in...

Recently, researchers have shown an increased interest in...

And this last one: In light of recent events in X, it is becoming extremely difficult to ignore the existence of...

So with any of the phrases I read or any that you find in the resource, you might consider how might you adapt that phrase to say exactly what you want to say and have it fit within the overall style of your writing.

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Let's also look at **Stating the purpose of the current research**. We have:

The specific objective of this study was to...

This research examines the emerging role of X in the context of...

And one more: This dissertation aims to unravel some of the mysteries surrounding...

So, of the three phrases that I just read from this particular section, which of those sound more like your writing? And is there one that sounded less like your writing?

To me, this last one, "aims to unravel some of the mysteries surrounding" feels like it has a very particular style. And if I were you, I wouldn't use that unless that really matches your style throughout the rest of your project.

So back to the top, let's look at **Referring to Sources**. In the overview Morley notes that "in the majority of the examples...here, the Harvard in-text referencing system has been used." You'll want to check with your professor, advisor, or the guidelines for a specific journal to see what kind of citation or reference system you should be using on a particular writing project.

So scrolling down, we're going to look at: **Reference to another writer's idea or position**. Here you have some nice reporting verbs to choose from: Smith argues, claims, suggests, maintains, concludes, points out, offers, proposes, suggests, argues for. So, a nice selection and you'll find others in this part of the resource.

Let's also look at **Reporting Results**. And we're going to look in the **Referring to data in a table or chart** section here. So, lots of language here for talking about your data.

Table 1 shows, compares, presents, provides. The table below illustrates...As shown in Figure 1. The results obtained from the preliminary analysis of X are shown, presented, summarised. So, notice on summarised ~ this is a spelling that would be more typical in the United Kingdom, where Morley is based, rather than in the U.S. As always, consider your audience and what might be most appropriate.

And now we're going to look on the left part of the page here. Morley calls these **General Language Functions**. And these are aspects of language that could be used throughout a paper.

We have: Being cautious or critical, classifying and listing, compare and contrast. Defining terms, describing trends or quantities. Explaining causality, giving examples, signalling transition, and writing about the past.

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Let's go ahead and look in **Being cautious**. So let's see: **Being cautious when giving explanations**. Here is some useful language when you're trying to soften or hedge your language, to be a bit cautious. May be, could be, might be, likely, possible, probable. So, some nice examples there. Obviously, we have some more on this page.

And let's go ahead and look at **Signalling Transition**. And **Reintroducing a topic**. So you've already talked about a particular topic and you're bringing it back in. We have: As discussed above, as explained earlier, as previously stated, and so on.

And finally, let's look at **Writing about the Past**. In this section, Morley shares some uses of particular verb tenses. So here we have **Time phrases associated with [the] use of the present perfect tense**. And here: To date, little evidence has been found associating X with Y. Until recently, there has been little interest in X.

And finally, this last section: **For reference to single investigations or publications in the past, the simple past tense is used**. And here's an example:
An experimental demonstration of this effect was first carried out by...

Ok, well that gives you an idea of what's available here. You can look at the rest of it. Now, on the bottom over here: If you think it might be challenging for you sometimes to access this online, here are some links to versions that you can use offline. You might also try doing a search in Google Scholar for Academic Phrasebank.

Remember, when you're using phrases from this resource, you often want to adapt them to fit your precise meaning and to be well incorporated with the style of your writing.

I hope you will consider using the Academic Phrasebank as a resource for your academic writing.