



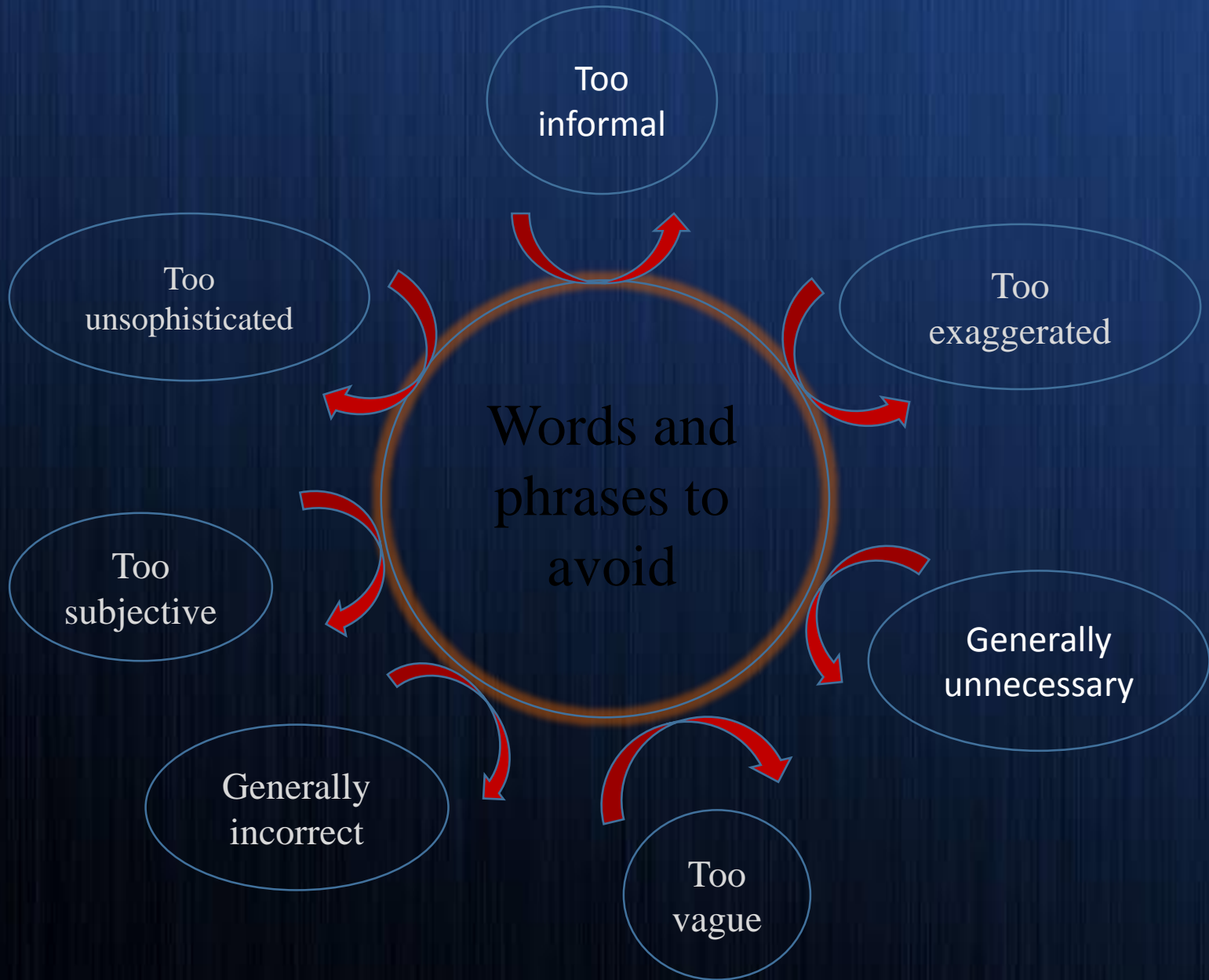
Words and phrases to avoid

Master 1

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introduction

When you are writing a dissertation, thesis or research paper, many words and phrases that are acceptable in conversations or informal writing are considered inappropriate. You should try to avoid expressions that are too informal, unsophisticated, vague, exaggerated, or subjective, as well as those that are generally unnecessary or incorrect.



1. Too informal

Academic writing is generally more formal than the writing we see in non-academic materials. It is also more formal than the ways in which we normally speak. The following words and phrases are considered too informal for a dissertation or academic paper.

Taboo	Example	Alternative
A bit	The interviews were a bit difficult to schedule	The interviews were (difficult/somewhat difficult) to schedule
A lot of / a couple of	A lot of studies	(many/several/a great number of) studies
Isn't/can't/would've/ Doesn't (or any other contraction)	The sample isn't	The sample is not
Kind of / sort of	The findings were kind of significant	The findings were (somewhat significant /significant to some degree)
Til / till	From 2008 till 2019	From 2008(until/to) 2019
You / your (i.e. the second-person point of view)	You Can clearly see the results	One Can clearly see the results/ the results Can clearly be seen

Examples from dissertation

means of communication between people of different countries all over the world. Therefore, in recent years a great number of people learn the English language because it considerably offers them various opportunities mainly the chance to get a job as well as communicate with foreigners (Alonso et al., 2014, p. 15). However, communication causes an issue for English

In other words, numerous research studies have been carried out so as to discover teaching techniques and methods that would help teachers teach more effectively. These studies come up with teaching approaches such as behaviorism, cognitivism, and

Learner's autonomy: In PBL, the learning process is not teacher-centered but learner-centered in which learners develop their autonomy.

Realism or authenticity of projects: It refers to the authenticity of all the integrated

Indrianti and Istanto (2013, p. 279) emphasize on the collaborative nature of PBL and the shift of focus from teacher-centered classroom to learner-centered classroom:

Project-based learning can also promote collaborative learning among

Informal sentence starts

Some words are acceptable in certain context, but they become too informal when they are used at the beginning of sentence. You can replace these words with appropriate transition words or simply remove them from the sentence.

Taboo

Example

Alternative

Also

Also, the participants were in agreements on the third question

(Moreover/furthermore), the participant were in agreement on the third question

So

So it can be concluded that the model needs further refinement

Therefore it can be concluded that the model needs further refinement

And

And the participants were all over the age of 30

The participants were all over the age 30

Examples from dissertation

Anxiety (FLA), its components, types and sources. Moreover, the study focuses also on the Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) and draws a relationship between the project-based learning (PBL) and FLSA by analyzing previous studies on the topic.

means of communication between people of different countries all over the world. Therefore, in recent years, a great number of people learn the English language because it considerably offers them various opportunities mainly the chance to get a job as well as communicate with foreigners (Alonso et al., 2014, p. 15). However, communication causes an issue for English

2. Too unsophisticated

Using too many simple terms can make your writing feel elementary, so take care not to overuse them. It is also better to replace phrasal verbs with their one-word alternatives.

Long and complex words are not necessarily better than short words: good academic writing should aim to be concise and use varied language

Bad

- A bad result
- A (poor/negative) result

Big/ humongous

- A big sample
- a (large/ sizable) sample

Get

- this model gets attention
- This model receives attention

give

- this chapter gives an overview
- This chapter(provides/offers/presents) an overview

Good

- a good example
- a (useful / Prime) example

show

- the figure below shows
- the figure below (illustrates/ demonstrates/reveals)

Examples from dissertation

The main objective of the study is to investigate the integration of PBL in EFL classroom and to reveal its importance in providing learners with opportunities to communicate better in order to help them overcome their SA and get rid of the fear of facing

acknowledged the role of PBL in this improvement. This confirms the findings of Ben Alahem (2013) that oral presentation is helpful in reducing speech anxiety because it provides learners with much more speaking opportunities.

Third, the study is useful to foreign language teachers in order to raise their awareness and attention on learners' lack of practice of the English language because of the teacher-centeredness approach. Besides, it attempts to show the positive effect of engaging students in project works in order to help them communicate better, express themselves freely and most

addressing a small committee, or making a classroom presentation, presents a special challenge" (Andrews, Andrews & Williams, 2002, p. 3). In other words, speaking in public is considered a challenge for people either when facing a large or even a small audience.

Second, research done at the University of Bejaia focused mainly on studying and exploring the existence of anxiety among students and its negative effect on their learning achievement and performance. To the researcher's knowledge, little research is done on the

3. Too vague

Using vague terms makes your writing imprecise and may cause people to interpret it in different ways. Always try to be as specific as possible.

Taboo	Example	Alternative
Stuff	People are concerned about their stuff	People are concerned about their (belongings/possessions/personal effects)
Thing	The report presents many things	The report presents many (details/ findings/ recommendation)
A long time, A while	This topic has interested researchers for long time	This topic has interested researchers for more than 30 years

and it was then gradually transferred to project-based education. Project-based education is a student centre pedagogical strategy which has been developed for more than 30 years”

4. Too exaggerated

Academic writing is usually unadorned and direct. Some adverbs of frequency (such as always and never), superlatives (terms that indicate something is of the highest degree, such as the best), and intensifiers (words that create emphasis, such as very) are often too dramatic. They may also not be accurate.

Sometimes, these terms add value, but try to use them sparingly.

Always/ never

- Researchers always argue that
- Researchers (frequently/ commonly/ typically) argue that

Perfect/ best/ worst/
most (or any other
superlative)

- The perfect solution to the problem
- (An ideal solution/ one of the best solutions) to the problem

Very/ extremely/
really/ too/ so (or any
other intensifier)

- This theory is extremely important
- This theory is (important/ crucial)

5. Too subjective

Some words and phrases reveal your own bias.

Expressing your opinion is appropriate in certain sections of a dissertation and in particular types of academic text (such as personal statements and reflective or argumentative essays). In most cases, though, take care when using words and phrases such as those below. Try to let the facts speak for themselves, or emphasize your point with less biased language.

Taboo**Example****Alternative**

Beautiful / ugly/ wonderful
/horrible/good/ bad

A review of literature
yielded many good articles

A review of the literature
yielded many relevant
articles

Naturally

The participants naturally
wanted to know

The participants wanted to
know

Obviously / of course

The results obviously
indicate

The results clearly indicate

Examples from dissertation

of PBL research and development activities”. Therefore, throughout the study, some of these defining features are used interchangeably. More clearly, the research paper is concerned with PBL as a teaching and learning approach. The study uses also the following concepts:

6. Generally unnecessary

You should strive to make your academic writing as concise as possible. Avoid adding words and phrases that do not add meaning, even if you think they give your writing a more refined feel.

Taboo	Example	Alternative
Has got/ have got	The dissertation has got four chapters	This dissertation has four chapters
Serves to/ helps to	This chapter serves to explain	This chapter explains

Example from dissertation

This work is divided into two chapters. The first one is theoretical. It includes two sections. The first one reviews the literature related to the issue of Project-Based Learning as a teaching and learning technique. The second section sketches the question of speaking anxiety in foreign language learning. The second chapter is practical. It is divided into two sections. The first one exposes the methods and procedures followed in this study. In the

7. Generally incorrect

Certain words and phrases are often used incorrectly, even by native speakers of a language. If you are exposed to such mistakes often enough, you may start to assume they are correct – but it is important that you do not let them creep into your writing.

You should also bear in mind that some of these mistakes relate to things we all frequently mishear (for instance, we often think the speaker is saying would of instead of would have).

Taboo

Example

Alternative

Literally

The students were literally dying to participate

The students were eager to participate

Would of / had of

The study would of considered

The study would have considered

➤ Other tips

In general, you should also try to avoid using words and phrases that fall into the following categories:

Jargon (i.e., “insider” terminology that may be difficult for readers from other fields to understand)

Cliches (i.e., expressions that are heavily overused, such as think outside of the box and at the end of the day)

Everyday abbreviations (e.g. photos, fridge, phone, info)

Slang (e.g. cops, cool)

Gender-biased language (e.g. firemen, mankind)

List of references

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Zidouni, T. (2016). *Investigating Teachers and students' perceptions towards the role of project-Based Learning to Overcome Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (Master's thesis, Bejaia)*. Retrieved from <http://univbejaia.dz/dspace/123456789/5806>.