

**Research Writing**  
**Prof. Aradhna Malik**  
**Vinod Gupta School of Management**  
**Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur**

**Lecture- 10**  
**Elements of Writing**

Welcome back to the MOOC course on research writing. My name is Aradhna Malik and I am helping you with this course, and we have been talking about various things, we talked about we talked about literature review, we talked about how you collect reviews. Now in this or how you read up whatever it is that you read up for your research. Now in this class what we will do is, we are going to start discussing how you start your writing process and. So, before you embark on even research writing, there are few things that I and think you should know about writing as such writing anything; and of course, I will tie it in with research writing. So, let us see what we have for you.

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**Why English?**

- Common language of the educated Indian
- International research community
- Electronic communication

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Now, as a person living in India, as an Indian who has studied English and number of other languages, I think I consider it my responsibility to share a few concerns with you, and my concerns here are that in India English is the common language of the educated Indian ; that is why we use English for research. It is the language that educated Indians use, it is the language that we communicate in despite our differences, despite our cultural differences, despite our linguistic differences, you know despite the diversity in

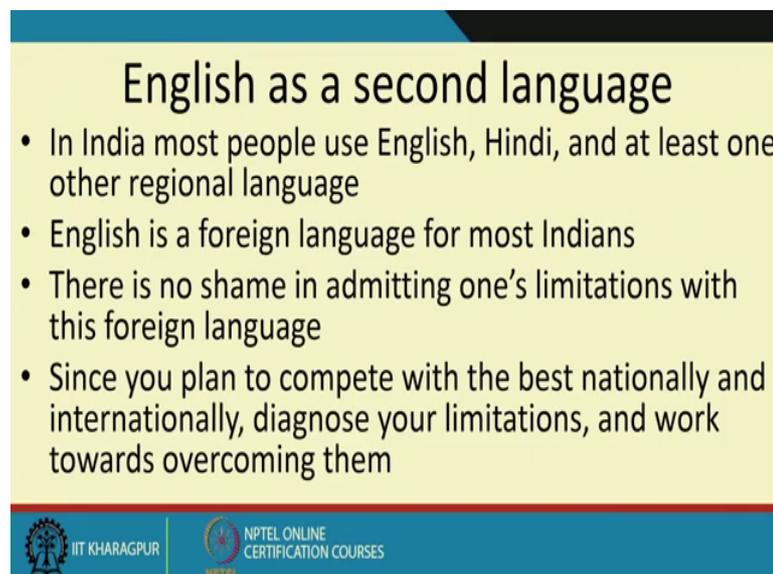
the country; English and Hindi are two languages that tie us together. In fact, Hindi is a national language and English has slowly you know come to be accepted as a Lingua Franca in many states ah. So, these two languages tie us with each other.

Now, English is also the language of the international research community, it is a common language of the international research community and that is why knowing how to write papers, knowing how to write your research in English is very important. It is also one of the most common languages of electronic communication, which in turn is our window to the rest of the world, which in turn is our window to whatever is happening in the rest of the world.

So, that is why we need to learn English. If all this was happening if the internet had been developed by to Germans, we would probably all of us would have been speaking in German by now, but the internet was developed by people, English speaking people and then the internet of course, brought with it and information boom, and so with the result, and of course, it spreads the internet, spread in different parts of the world.

Now of course, we have we have local languages internet in local languages also, but in order to stay in touch with the rest of the world, we need to use the English language. I have nothing to say in favour of the language or against it, is just a tool that we use to share what we have done to share our editions to the knowledge base with the rest of the academic and research community in the rest of the world.

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**English as a second language**

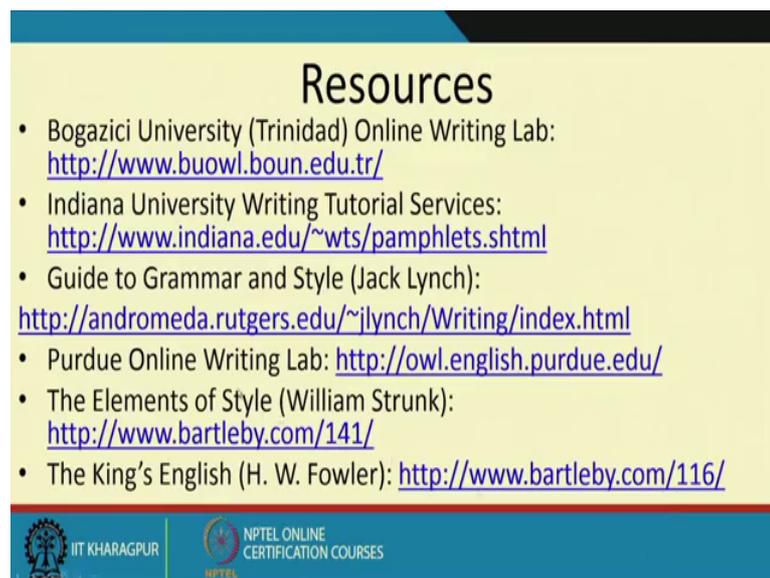
- In India most people use English, Hindi, and at least one other regional language
- English is a foreign language for most Indians
- There is no shame in admitting one's limitations with this foreign language
- Since you plan to compete with the best nationally and internationally, diagnose your limitations, and work towards overcoming them

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Now, for most Indians in English is a second or third or fourth language. In India most people use English, Hindi and at least one other regional language. So, most of us in India are tri lingual, most of us are tri lingual. English is a foreign language for most Indians. If there is no shame in admitting ones limitations with this foreign language, and since you plan to compete with the best nationally and internationally you need to diagnose your limitations and work towards overcoming them.

So, many people who feel restricted with the use English or who feel uncomfortable, because of the English language, because of the use of the English language, need to start overcoming these limitations it is just a tool. It is like saying that you are an engineer, but you have trouble using a screwdriver ok. So, that is what I mean, it is a tool that we use for our work. So, we acknowledge all of these things and we move towards learning how to write and how to use the language properly.

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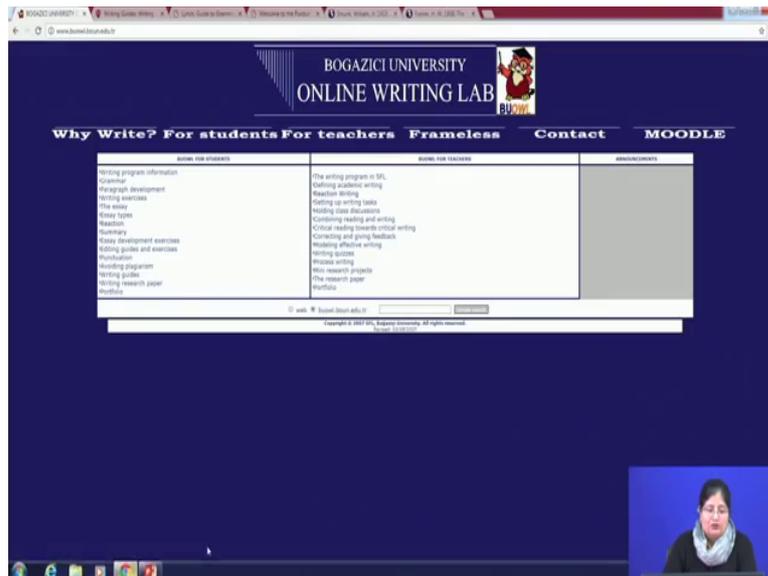


## Resources

- Bogazici University (Trinidad) Online Writing Lab: <http://www.buowl.boun.edu.tr/>
- Indiana University Writing Tutorial Services: <http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets.shtml>
- Guide to Grammar and Style (Jack Lynch): <http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Writing/index.html>
- Purdue Online Writing Lab: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>
- The Elements of Style (William Strunk): <http://www.bartleby.com/141/>
- The King's English (H. W. Fowler): <http://www.bartleby.com/116/>

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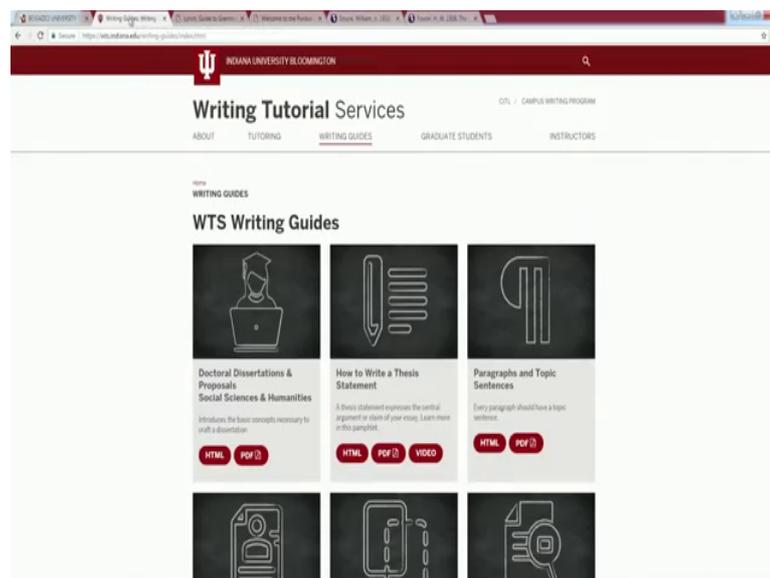
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Some resources that I can refer to you here or refer you to, are these let me show you Bogazici University is based in, it is in twin Draden Tobago ,and the good part I selected this online writing lab, because this is especially for students who use several other languages.

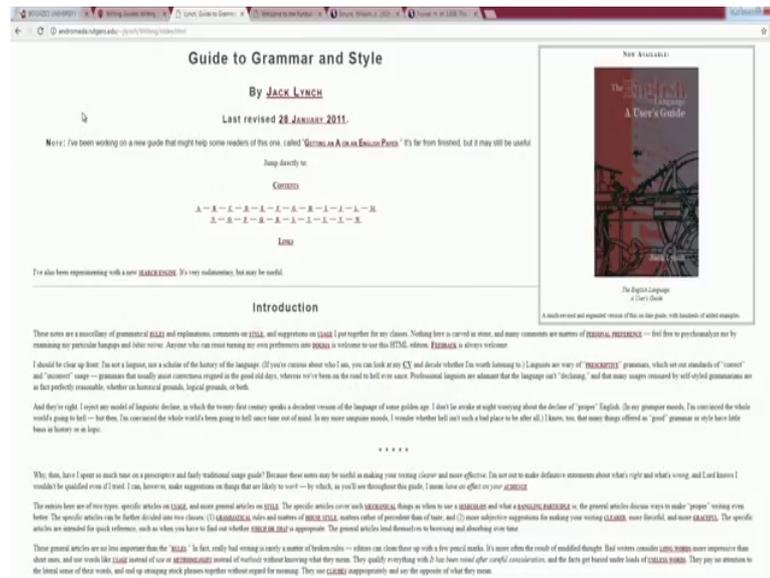
So, it is very interesting, you know how write grammar paragraph development writing exercises essay types again. We need to have a control over this language that we are going to be using, before we can jump into research writing ok. So, you can go through these different online writing labs that we have.

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Then, there is writing tutorial services on the internet by Indiana University. Again very interesting and you can go through these doctoral dissertations and proposals and how to write thesis statement, paragraphs and topic sentences etcetera. So, all kinds of writing resources are given here.

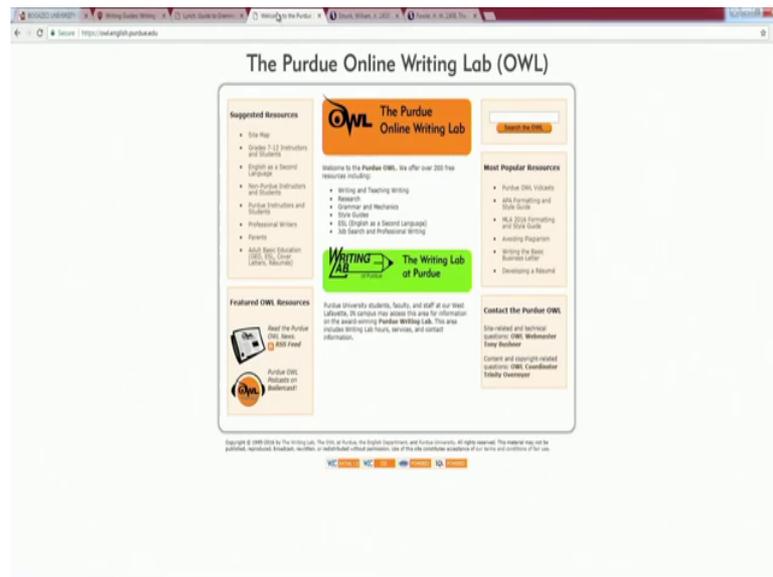
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Then some of us struggle with the grammar. I still have my class ten grammar book on my table, in case I get stuck, in case I get in case I get confused. I still pick up the class ten grammar books and refer to it. We used to have a book by Wren and Martin and I still have a copy of that, because it is so useful, another book is by Michael Swan. So, I will give you all these references and you can use them and post them on the forum when the forum is active.

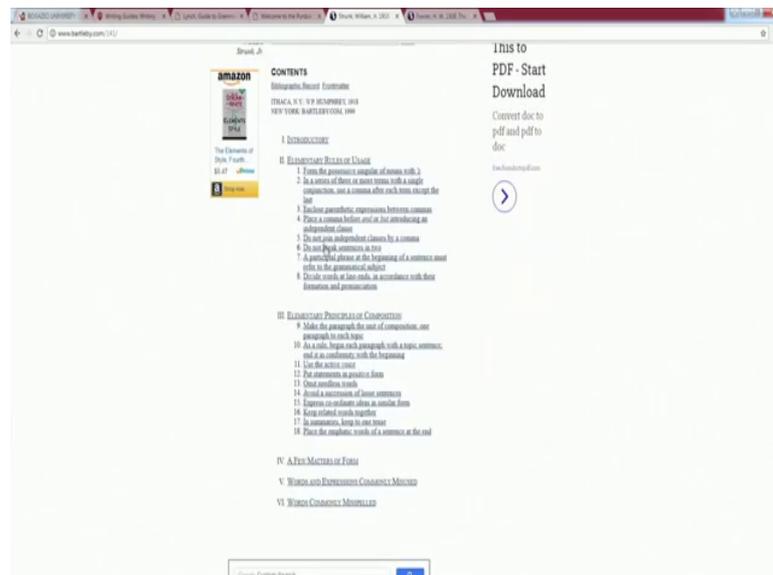
So, it is very important to use the language accurately, appropriately and so you know in order to get a point across. Another resource here is guide to grammar and style by Jack Lynch very helpful.

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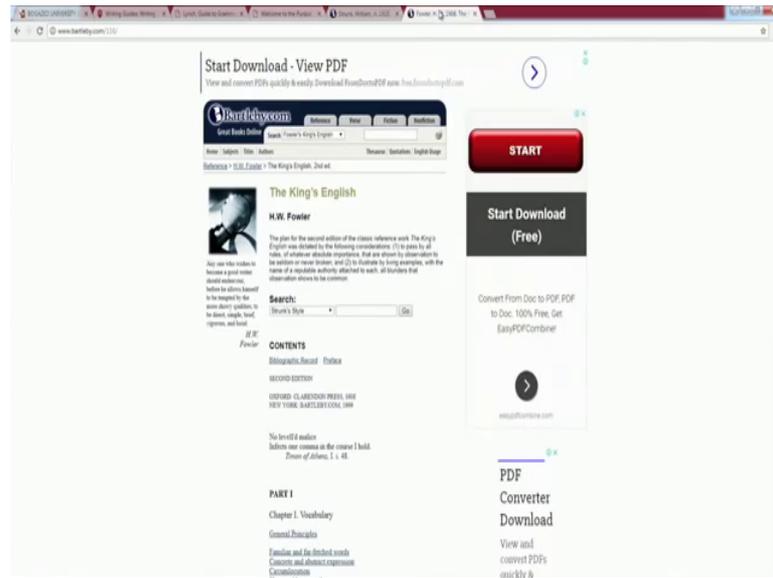
Then there is another one, this is the one that I have been referring to extensively the Purdue online writing lab ok. You will see a lot of, in lot of places I have written Purdue Owl, wherever I have explained certain things; now this material from online writing lab that I am trying to share with you.

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Then there is another book the elements of style by William Strunk, and this book was initially published in 1918 and then republished in 1999. So, an old book, but very helpful ok, here the contents are here ok, elements of style.

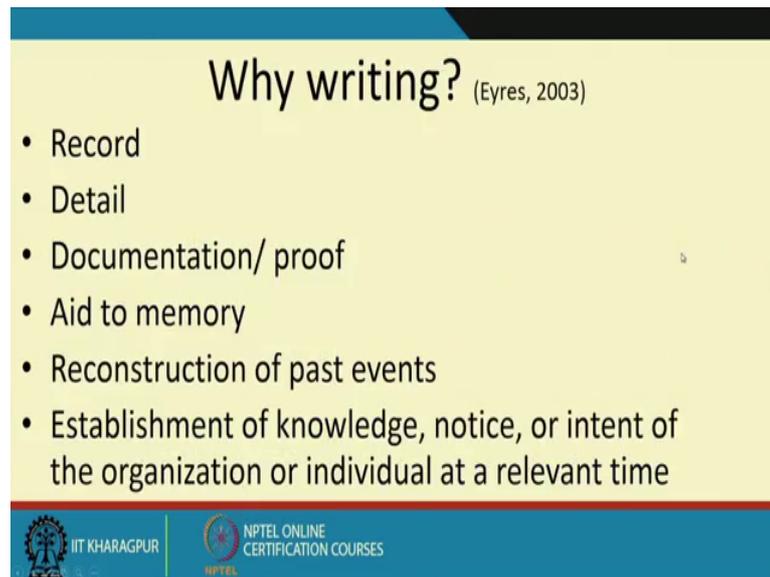
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Then the kings English by H W Fowler so, you can download these books, these are free of cost. Again this book was published in 1908 more than 100 years ago ok. So, this book was published 109 years ago and you can or 110 years ago by that time this course is aired. So, this book is again available for free download.

So, you can download the book and you can go through it, you know this is again on grammar. So, very nice books and of course, in addition to these this list is by no means exhaustive, but this is very essential for people who struggle with this, this monster called the English language ok.

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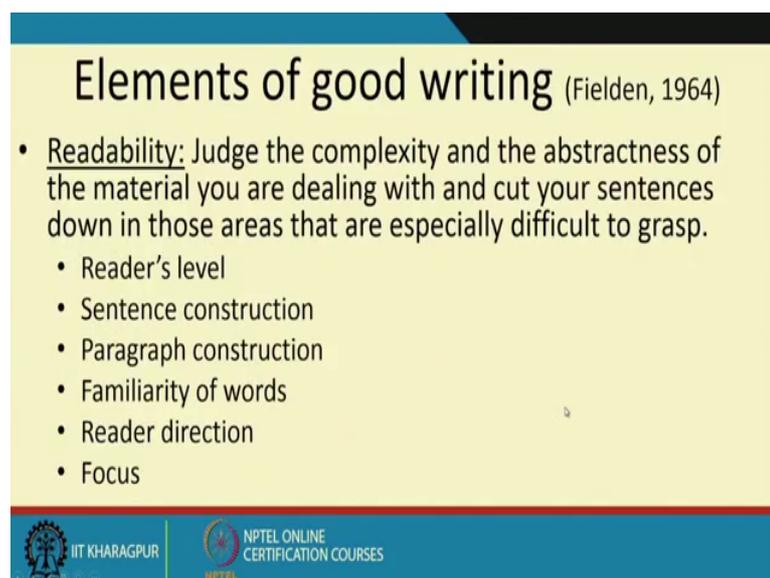
**Why writing?** (Eyres, 2003)

- Record
- Detail
- Documentation/ proof
- Aid to memory
- Reconstruction of past events
- Establishment of knowledge, notice, or intent of the organization or individual at a relevant time

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Alright now, why do we write? we write to record the journey that we have undertaken as researchers, we write to add details to our work, we write for documentation or proof of the work we have done, it is also an aid to memory, it helps us reconstruct past events, it helps us establish knowledge notice or intent of the organisation or individual at a relevant time. So, you write for various reasons.

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**Elements of good writing** (Fielden, 1964)

- Readability: Judge the complexity and the abstractness of the material you are dealing with and cut your sentences down in those areas that are especially difficult to grasp.
  - Reader's level
  - Sentence construction
  - Paragraph construction
  - Familiarity of words
  - Reader direction
  - Focus

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Now, some elements of good writing, again this is by the, this is by a paper from a paper by John Fielden, and elements of good writing. The first element of good writing is

readability. You need to judge the complexity and the abstractness of the material you are dealing with, and cut your sentences down in those areas that are especially difficult to grasp, and these should be cut down to match the level of the reader. These should be, you know you need to pay attention the sentence construction, the paragraph construction, familiarity of words and you also need to direct the reader to whatever it is that you are trying to say and you need to maintain the focus of the paper. So, readability depends on all of these factors.

The level of the reader now, if you are writing a research paper; again for publication in a AJ, let us start with various things. So, you write a research proposal. Now the purpose of the research proposal is to prove your point of view and to convince the readers to allow you to a conduct the research, two may be even fund your research as a researcher. So, again the reader's level is much higher than yours, why because there are people who are senior to you, they know much more about what it is that you are writing. So, use of jargon would be very appropriate here, because they are expected to know what these terms mean; however, when you are writing say a working paper for circulation within your own organization.

Then working papers are usually works in progress, and the purpose of a working paper is to get feedback from people who read it. So, your work can be improved and eventually published. Now when we talk about working paper then some jargon, some explanation, lot of descriptions, lot of definitions and some open ended questions can be there, you need to, you need not tie all loose ends you can leave certain ends loose, so that you get feedback, in order to stimulate feedback from the reader.

The same goes for conference presentations. You are writing a paper for presentation at a conference, you share it; yes you need to share whatever it is that you have done; however, conference the primary purpose of conference presentations is again to get a lot of feedback on different kinds of feedback on the work that you are doing. So, it is primarily for works in progress and occasionally to demonstrate the good work that you are doing, so you can make networks and all. However, the physical presence of the academic community from a particular field in a particular place, can actually get you ideas that you, may not have been able to think of yourself. So, in that case also, it is not necessary to tie all loose ends.

You know you will say in that case our papers will not get accepted, they will, if whatever you have done has merit in its own and you are actively seeking feedback then your papers will get accepted, but the idea is one to show case what you have done, and two to get feedback on what it is that you are intending to do with whatever you have done. So, the way you write those papers will also be different, you are expecting the readers be of a certain level, your, they will not have very much time, the space may be very limited for conference presentations, the size of the papers is very limited as compared to the prescribed size for presentation in journals, as compared to your doctor (Refer Time: 12:10) which gives you enough freedom to take one, you know to write the story of how you have created a piece of knowledge over the past several years. So, you may be given 150 to 200 may be even 500 words, wherever you know depending on the place you are at. So, you can really go into detail.

So, now again the readability will depend on who is going to read your document, the sentence construction, how complicated the sentences are, how easy they are. You cannot have two easy sentences in your research documents, they cannot also be very you know very difficult that nobody understands them they need to be of an appropriate size. Then again paragraph construction where do you start your paragraphs, how do you end them, every paragraph ideally should have a heading, every paragraph should have a focus familiarity of words, jargon, reader direction, how do you want, what do you want the reader to think next, where do you want the reader to go after reading paragraph a, and the focus does whatever you are saying tie in with the main theme and title of the paper. So, all that is very important.

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**Elements of good writing (Contd)** (Fielden, 1964)

- **Correctness:**
  - Accuracy of information
  - Mechanics
    - Grammar
    - Punctuation
  - Format
    - Appearance
    - Standard writing style appropriate for resp. discipline
- **Coherence:**
  - Relationship of ideas to each other
  - Logical juxtaposition of ideas to each other

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Then correctness; this is absolutely essential in a research writing. So, it is critical that whatever you present is correct. Accuracy of information very important unless you present accurate information you cannot build true knowledge, unless you build that knowledge you cannot expect others to take that knowledge and build on the knowledge that you have created. So, accuracy of information is absolutely critical to writing a good research documents. Then mechanics ,grammar and punctuation, I mean this is you will say this is school stuff; it is not, because many of us like I said struggle with English as a second or third or fourth language, and sometimes it becomes essential for us to get the help of professional editors which is alright.

So, but it is very important to have the mechanics right, the grammar should be accurate because that in turn; enhances the readability and the credibility, the believability. Somebody will believe that you were as serious about your research as you were in writing it, if your grammar and punctuation are implacable ok. So, that is why it becomes very important. Then format, the appearances, standard writing style appropriate for respective discipline. Now depending on the journal you submit this paper to, you know you could have different writing styles. I spent just this morning, I spent about four hours changing the referencing pattern, to suit the needs of a specific journal that we are submitting a paper to.

It was I mean, we were scratching our heads we had a long list of references, but we went you know piece by piece, bracket by bracket, comma by comma; why, because readers of a particular journal are tuned to seeing things in a certain way. They want to see why one thing in one place and another in another place. So, we will talk more about it when we talk about referencing. So, the format is critical, then the journal has prescribed a format according to which the abstracts should be written, according to which the tables should be drawn up, according to which the information or the main text has to be written.

So, just the formatting we have got the meet in, but just the formatting is taking up so much time, but we need to adhere to those guidelines, because; of course, the acceptability of our paper could depend on it, that is a logistical reason for it, but also because the readers of that particular journal are tuned to reading certain things in a certain, written in a certain way certain things, placed at certain significant places in the document. So, that is very important.

The font size, the spacing all of that is critical, the size the margins all of that; becomes very critical then coherence relationship of ideas to each other. We are talking about correctness here, so we are talking about adherence to certain guidelines, whether it is grammar, whether it is the ethics ethical standards of research, we are talking about coherence also. Coherence is the relationship of ideas to each other, which ideas flows from which ok, how do you connect the ideas, are they connected, are they free floating, logical juxtaposition of ideas to each other. Superimposition is when you put one idea on top of another, juxtaposition is when you lay them side by side ok.

So, when I say I want to write a paper on research writing, what is research writing. So, I start with what is research, what is writing and how do the two tie in with each other. I cannot just start out by saying this is what is research and then I talk about research writing and then I switch to just writing per say, that will not be an accurate, that will you know the those ideas will not be appropriately juxtaposed; however, if I say I start with either writing or research and I say this is what writing is, this is what research is then I slowly start building the connection between the two, and I come to an understanding of what a research writing is. Now that will be appropriate juxtaposition of ideas ok. So, that is a logical juxtaposition of ideas to each other. So, you are taking the reader from one side to a another direction that you want the reader to go into ok.

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**Elements of good writing (Contd)** (Fielden, 1964)

- Thought
  - Preparation
  - Competence
  - Fidelity to assignment
  - Analysis
    - Thoroughness of examination of data
    - Ability to draw conclusions
    - Presentation of conclusions
    - Identification and justification of assumptions
    - Qualification of tenuous assertions
    - Biases

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Then thought; thought refers to preparation, competence, fidelity to assignment how much preparation has gone into it, when you are writing a research paper, you need to have reviewed the literature you need to have knowledge of whatever has been done in the past, and how do you get that knowledge, by going through material that you have or by going through other research. How much of preparation do you have, do you have the competence to assets whatever it is that you are writing about. If I were to, you know if I were asked to write a paper on say engineering drawing for example, I am not an engineer and I do not know anything about drawing, and I do not know what engineering.

I heard about engineering drawing, I have seen engineering students do it, but if I were to teach engineering drawing I would not have the competence for it, I will not be asked to teach engineering drawing or even write a paper on it. So, you know how competent am I, do I have the training though I have attitude for it, do I have the aptitude for it, can I learn, can I. So, you know all of those things will go into your writing, should you be writing about subjects that you do not know very much about, my answer is no not.

If you really want to kill your credibility; first learn about the subject, dwell into it, know enough about it, and once you write your first documents share it with several people and only after you tried and tested it, should you venture into making it public. Very good place to test whether you are really competent in a subject or not is after you have

learned enough and you think you have done enough, take the paper and send it to a conference. In order for a paper to be accepted at a good conference, some of your competence in that area will be required; otherwise your paper you will not be able to write a paper that can be accepted.

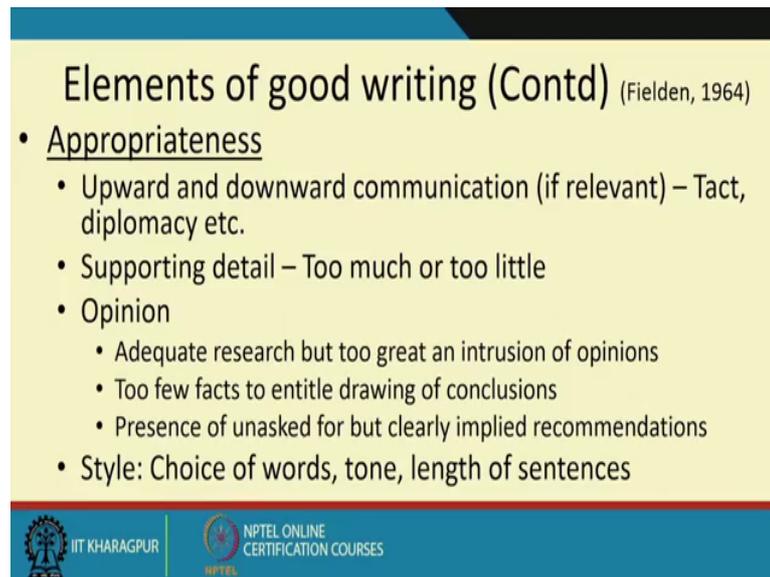
Go to the conference and get lots of feedback, be very open to feedback do not justify yourself, just absorb everything like a sponge. Note everything down incorporate all those suggestions find out if you can get back or you can check back with some members of the audience that is how you make networks, go back, go back and forth have some mentors that you can check with, write the paper and then eventually submit it and after several deliberations you could eventually emerge as an expert and discipline, but you must prepare test the waters, come back prepare some more test the waters, again come back prepare some more experiment, come back prepare some more and then go into it. So, you know that is how you build your competence, and that competence will be visible in how you write your papers.

Fidelity to the assignment; again you know when you start writing a assignment if you are not committed to it, it will show expert readers, people who read this papers day in and day out, will be able to see the difference between a well written assignment or a well written or a well thought through paper and a paper that has not been thought through. Then analysis; thoroughness of examination of data as the data have been analyse thoroughly or not, has the data been completely you know picked apart or not, ability to draw conclusions.

Presentation of conclusions; how have you drawn conclusions, have you presented your conclusions in a way that they should be presented, identification and justification of assumptions, qualifications of tenuous assumptions, tenuous assumptions are you know at times we are stuck between two opposing points of view, how do you qualify them, how do you choose which way you want to go and your biases..

All of these things will feature in how you analyse whatever it is that you are writing about, and then all of this will then eventually reflect through what you have written about. So, these are some of the elements of good writing, that I would really like you to pay attention to ah; that is all ah. And of course, there is one more I forgot.

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The slide is titled "Elements of good writing (Contd)" with a reference to "(Fielden, 1964)". It lists several elements under the heading "Appropriateness". The elements are: Upward and downward communication (if relevant) – Tact, diplomacy etc.; Supporting detail – Too much or too little; Opinion, which includes Adequate research but too great an intrusion of opinions, Too few facts to entitle drawing of conclusions, and Presence of unasked for but clearly implied recommendations; and Style: Choice of words, tone, length of sentences. The slide also features logos for IIT KHARAGPUR and NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSES at the bottom.

### Elements of good writing (Contd) (Fielden, 1964)

- Appropriateness
  - Upward and downward communication (if relevant) – Tact, diplomacy etc.
  - Supporting detail – Too much or too little
  - Opinion
    - Adequate research but too great an intrusion of opinions
    - Too few facts to entitle drawing of conclusions
    - Presence of unasked for but clearly implied recommendations
  - Style: Choice of words, tone, length of sentences

So, another element of good writing is appropriateness; now appropriateness again upward and downward communication if relevant tact diplomacy etcetera. Supporting detail, when we are talking about the when we are talking about writing research documents, many times we tend to put in either too much detail or we immediately jump to conclusions. Now that cannot; that is not acceptable when we write research documents, jumping to conclusions without qualifying them without justifying them is not acceptable. So, you may have either too much supporting detail or too little supporting detail, both of which are not appropriate.

Then your opinions in research documents you cannot let your opinions interfere too much. So, when we talk about research documents, your arguments need to be based on sound logic or past research, or your own experiments, but you cannot say in my opinion or this is how I feel no, that does not qualify as research. Too few facts to entitle drawing of conclusions, at times you have very few facts, but again you jump into conclusions, if not conducted enough or you have not collected enough data.

Presence of unasked, but clearly implied recommendations; however, again sorry when we talk about unasked for, but clearly implied recommendations, we are talking primarily about the intuitive issues that come up. So, many times in order to just add meat to our papers, we write down things that may be too obvious. So, instead of doing

that, I mean that can really lead the reader to think that you are, that you are bias towards things that may just seem obvious.

Now, the style again makes a difference and that again connects to the appropriateness or is a part of the appropriateness, what kinds of words you choose, what tone you use, the length of sentences etcetera. Again that is that is again you know that is part of readability, it is also part of a appropriateness, because in research documents the words you choose, the tone you use, you cannot be biased in favour of something or biased against something or use too many adjectives. So, when you use too many adjectives, the tone becomes or the inclination becomes flowery, the language becomes flowery and that is not really acceptable in research documents.

Similarly the length of sentences where necessary may be long, but in most cases it should be short and it should be direct and it should be devoid of any emotion or opinion or objectives to the extent possible. When we talk about qualitative research we are exploring the interaction of the researcher with the research issue. So, that becomes very different. So, all of these then adds up to the appropriateness. So, that level of communication, the detail, the opinion and the style all of these contribute to the appropriateness, and when you write you must pay attention to all of these factors, and then you know after you have written you must revise.

Now, there is one thing that I will not put on the slides that I want all you to know. When we start writing a document, we must accept that anything that we write will go through a number of revisions. If you are a PhD student please be prepared for at least forty to fifty revisions of your final dissertation minimum. Please do not give flustered when you get feedback, please do not get upset, please do not lose faith, do not lose hope. We have all gone through these, it is very essential that you revise your document at least forty to fifty times before the final submission, only then will your document become acceptable.

It is and you know you go through the document once, then slip over it, you get feedback, incorporate the feedback, you go through it, again you sleep over it, you incorporate the feedback once again, keep revising it, keep revising it, till it is as flawless as can be. Again you all have to meet deadlines, so my suggestion is, that if you have deadlines please finish the work at least 60 percent of the time or within 60 percent of the time and keep the rest of the time for revisions, only then will your work becomes

acceptable in the academic community. If you leave everything till the last minute then you will not be able to meet your deadlines or come out with the good quality work, everybody has to do it.

So, you know when we talk about good writing, you can use the elements that have just been discussed, to see where your paper fits in and then keep cutting and pruning your document, till it really becomes something worth reading or worth submitting to an international or worth submitting preferably to an international journal of top quality. So, on that note I will end the discussion here, we will continue with some more discussion on research writing in the next class.

Thank you very much for listening.