Language and Writing Style in Science

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The purpose of scientific writing is to communicate ideas to others and not to show the writer's linguistic ability. In poetry and prose, the main purpose is to show linguistic ability before ideas, and the writer plays with words and may deliberately chooses a difficult to understand style. To communicate ideas easily and properly requires the following:

Short sentences: This means the choice of a minimal number of words, phrases, and clauses. Long sentences full of comas, semicolons, and brackets are difficult to follow and understand.

Choice of verbs: It is better to stick to the same verb tense (present, past, future, perfect) at least in each paragraph.

Any sentence you write and you need to read it twice to understand it is not a clear sentence. If you find it difficult to understand, it is definitely more difficult to be understood by others. Remember that what you write is for the others to read.

Avoid unnecessary repetitions: Sometimes the writer finds his assay short and tries to repeat ideas in different style by changing verbs and changing the sequence of sentences. This leads to confusion, and a short and clear assay is better than a long confused one.

Avoid clauses and phrases as: On the other hand we (alternatively), in order to do (to do), it must be said (to say), because it is necessary (it is necessary), in comparison to (compared with), much more important (very important), the problem is that it is (because it is), much more significant (highly significant), of very low significance (not significant, insignificant), regarding or in regard or in regarding or concerning age of the patients (age range of patients, their age ranged), regarding or concerning sex of the patients (there were 8 males and 6 females).

Emphasize the studies that agree with your findings starting with the most recent ones

Avoid: Similar results were found by (Hassan reported similar results), other studies showed different result (name the studies), the results of this study are similar to that of (my or our results agree with that of), the aim of this study is to (this study was carried out to), a lot has been said or done (a great deal has been said or done), large amount of effort was (a great deal of effort was, good effort was), the results agreed with A, B, C, and disagreed with D, E, and F, (the results agreed with A, B, and C as shown in table I. the results disagreed with D, E, and F as shown in table II).

The tables should show your results, name of the author of each study, the date of each study, and the result of each study.

Avoid complaining: The patients were not cooperative, or refused to cooperate (efforts were made to ensure cooperation of patients), I had no time to (I did my best to), the patients did not understand the questionnaire (I did my best to explain the questionnaire to the patents), the patients were not educated (patients had limited knowledge), avoid blaming patients for anything.

Point out the shortcomings of your study and give reasons: This is appreciated by the examining committee and will minimize their criticism. Avoid frankly blaming the others or the circumstances for the shortcomings, instead be subtle.

Do not leave questions, defects, or problems unexplained: This will let the committee know that you are aware of them and stop or minimize criticism. It means you are in control.

Copying data from other studies: Clearly say where it is from and write it in full. We often try to conceal it by changing the sequence, and if discovered, all your work becomes a suspect. There is nothing wrong with copying good ideas.

Look for the reasons that explain why other studies' findings disagreed with yours.

Do not translate from Arabic to English: Languages differ in grammar and sequence of words, and translating word for word may change the meaning. You should translate ideas and thought.

Before submitting your work ask two friends to read it: We often re-read our work several times looking for mistakes but we do not see them. Re-reading creates a template (a copy) in our visual cortex, which interferes with seeing mistakes. This is why mistakes are often found during the first or the second reading and not 5^{th} or the 10^{l} . We are surprised when a friend finds our mistakes so quickly.