Common Academic Expressions in English

This handout is designed for multilingual writers developing academic writing competency in English. Here we classify common academic expressions in English based on the functions they perform in research articles (e.g., to emphasize the significance of a topic, to outline the structure of a research article). For writers who speak English as an additional language, having a large repertoire of these readily-made expressions improves writing fluency. Therefore, in this handout we list academic expressions that are of high frequency across disciplines and can be effectively used in various situations and contexts in academic texts.

1. **Emphasizing Significance**
   At the beginning of a research article, researchers typically set the context for the current research by emphasizing it as part of a significant or well-established research area. Some commonly-used expressions to claim centrality or significance of a certain research topic include:

   - there has been widespread concern about
   - one of the most pressing issues in
   - one of the main issues surrounding
   - as one of the challenges/issues/problems
   - play a central role in
   - is at the heart of
   - has been recognized as one of the major
   - has increasingly become a topic of interest in
   - it is widely acknowledged that

2. **Indicating Uncertainty**
   In academic writing, researchers often use tentative voice (e.g., it is possible that…) to express uncertainty. It allows researchers to present the claims with the appropriate accuracy while recognizing alternative viewpoints and possible objections.

   - it is possible that
   - is more likely to
   - it could be argued that
   - is probably due to
   - may be due to
   - the data suggested the possibility that
   - it might be expected that
   - alternatively, it may be that
3. **Specifying Characteristics**
Presenting the attributes of a concept, a procedure, or a result accurately is central to academic or scientific writing. Expressions under this category include those that specify quantity or degree, make reference to time or space, or describe a methodological procedure:

**Quantity & Degree**
the majority of the
a large number of
a number of studies
as part of the
by a factor of
a broad range of
a wide variety of
of the most frequent
the extent to which
the degree to which

**Time & Space**
at the time of
at the end of
over the course of
in the midst of
at a time when
in the field of
of the present/current study
were performed as previously described

**Procedures**
the structure of the
the composition of the
in the form of
in the presence/absence of
a significant increase/reduction in
the relationship between the
the ways in which
the nature of the
in the design of
in the development of
in the process of
can be applied to
can be divided into

4. **Outlining Text Organization**
Depending on the scope of the study, researchers often briefly and explicitly outline the structure of the study by providing a roadmap that guides readers through the textual organization, using expressions that signal the text organization:

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows.
The objective of my research is to
In this study we aim(ed) to
This paper begins with a discussion of
In the second part of this essay I analyze
Section III lays out the model and basic assumptions.
In the final section we discuss
followed by an analysis of

5. **Making Connections**
Academic writing is writer-responsible. That is, rather than relying on readers to figure out the meaning of a difficult text, it is the writer’s responsibility to make ideas and connections as explicit as possible. Expressions that make interconnections between the pieces of information presented can circumvent ambiguity or misinterpretation. Depending on the relationship between a topic and associated details, some commonly used expressions include:

**Additional**
as well as the
in addition to the

**Conditional**
in the context of
in the case of
on the basis of
in the field of
in light of
in the presence of
from the perspective of

**Comparative**
as opposed to
in contrast to
despite the fact that
is consistent with
is in line with the
in accordance with

**Inductive**
the results indicate that
our data suggest that
does not mean that
the reason for this
as a result

**Objective**
to account for the
to better understand the
in order to explore the
6. **Voicing Attitudes**

In academic writing, researchers indicate their positive or negative evaluation of previous studies regarding their models, techniques, results, etc., in order to bring readers’ attention to a certain argument or reach a shared understanding with the readers.

- it can be expected that
- it is clear/apparent/obvious that
- has the potential to
- is of great importance
- it is important to note that
- it is important to emphasize that
- it is noteworthy that
- there is a need to
- it must be noted that
- has not been clearly defined
- some studies fail to establish
- fail to identify any robust impact of