

Your Monthly EMI Newsletter

EMI English Medium Instruction

EMI Language Tip of the Month (Sept 2018) – Verb use in writing

When writing in English, verbs are often the key to make your writing more **succinct** and/or more **vivid**. Let us take a closer look at two examples:

Succinctness

Less efficient: We **performed a thorough analysis of** current wind energy policies in Transylvania (12 words).

More efficient: We **thoroughly analysed** current wind energy policies in Transylvania (9 words).

Less efficient: Researchers **have drawn the conclusion** that there **will be a proliferation** of botnets (13 words).

More efficient: Researchers **have concluded** that botnets **will proliferate** (8 words).

Of course, these are isolated examples and other factors play a role in how one words his/her sentences. Nevertheless, it is worth the extra effort to review sentences when revising ones writing and to attempt condensing where possible.

Vividness

Less vivid: We **thoroughly analysed** current wind energy policies in Transylvania.

More vivid: We **combed over/mined** data on current wind energy policies in Transylvania.

Less vivid: Researchers **have concluded** that botnets **will proliferate**.

More vivid: Researchers **believe** that botnets will **mushroom**.

While the examples above may not adhere to 'traditional' standards of academic register, they liven up the imagery and make the reading more fun. In the end, the writer has to have a feel for the target readership and craft his/her message accordingly.

Writing a teaching statement

Keeping with the topic of writing, we focus on penning a teaching statement in this month's newsletter. Teaching statements, also known as teaching philosophies, are a common requirement for job applications in academia. Statements provide your potential employer with a snapshot of your classroom (philosophy towards student learning, course design, methodology). When penning your statement, keep these pointers in mind:

1. Write it in a first person narrative. While this style of writing may be uncommon for some academics, it is common for teaching statements since it best depicts your view on a personal belief, i.e. teaching.
2. Be specific. Refer to courses already taught and the content of those courses. It suffices to list buzz terms in your field related to the content of the course. This gives the reader at one glance the topics covered in previous courses.
3. Be concise. A teaching statement is usually one to two pages. That is not much space to convey your philosophy. Further, you are not trying to showcase your academic writing skills; that is what your research and articles do. Thus, short, digestible sentences are best for the reader (a selection committee member) to get the gist of what learning in your classroom looks like.

Using these broad strategies will help you engineer a solid teaching statement. To find out more about strategies and EMI support for penning a teaching statement, check out the EMI [e-module Writing Skills for Teaching in English](#).

Food for thought

To wrap up, we leave you with some quotes dedicated to the art of writing.

- 'Never put off until tomorrow what you can do today.' (Mark Twain, Galaxy Magazine, July 1870)
- 'A good style must first be clear.' (Aristotle, The Art of Rhetoric, 350 B.C.E.)
- 'First drafts do not have to be perfect, they just have to be written.' (unknown)
- 'Perfection is the enemy of good.' (Paul Smith, EFL trainer, 2008 Canterbury)

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