


*"I should not say this, but this translation to my language is just Greek to me."*  
 - representative of Greece in EU meeting  
 (From: Steward Clark:  
 Broken English Spoken Perfectly)

## 582519 Scientific Writing for MSc in Computer Science: Reviewing a paper

Lecture 5, 1.10.2013  
 Tiina Niklander

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## Last week's tasks: How did it go?


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-- fill comments here --

How many pages in your draft?

When is your reviewing task?

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## Abstract

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- Independent text
- Explains briefly what the paper covers
  - Main topic, key results, etc
- ACM Classification: [www.acm.org/class](http://www.acm.org/class)

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## Reviewing hints from publishers

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- All scientific journals and publishers have 'Instructions to reviewers'
- Elsevier: <http://www.elsevier.com/reviewers/supporting-reviewers>
- ...
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## What should reviewer do?

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-- to be added in the class --

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## Elsevier guidelines

Justify all criticisms by specific references

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- Originality: Does not apply to the student papers
- Structure: Key point!
  - Title, abstract, introduction
  - Method, results, conclusion/discussion
  - Language
- Previous research: Important
  - proper references, omitted important ones, ...
- Ethical issues: Always important
  - Plagiarism, fraud, other concerns

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## Five Easy Steps to Editing Your Own Work

- **Step One:** Just walk away, Renée (or Kevin or Amy).
- **Step Two:** Imagine you're not you.
- **Step Three:** Is your writing in proper style?
- **Step Four:** Listen to your high school English teacher — grammar, spelling, etc.
- **Step Five:** Now clean it up and read it again. Out loud.
- Yay, I'm done! Does that mean it's perfect?

<http://www.copyblogger.com/edit-your-writing-2/>

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## WRITING AND REVISING CHECKLIST by D.White

1. Read out loud, mark all unclear and difficult parts
2. Revise the paper
3. Take time away from the paper – day or two
4. Repeat steps one and two
5. Get feedback from others
6. Leave enough time for the writing process

<http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/~dwhite/papers.htm>

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## Peer Reviewing tips (1/2)

<http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/PeerReview.html>

- Before and while you read the paper
  - Find out writer's intentions and the intended audience.
  - Find out writer's expectations for the reader.
  - Read the entire draft once before commenting.
- Write a separate review statement, not just detailed comments in the paper
  - Be honest, polite, and constructive; describe what you see in the paper
  - Comment on large issues first
  - Praise what works well in the draft
  - Concentrate on the most important ways the draft could be improved

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## Peer Reviewing tips (2/2)

<http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/PeerReview.html>

- Detailed comments
  - Comment on whether the introduction clearly announces the topic and suggests the approach that will be taken
  - Be specific in your response (explain where you get stuck, what you don't understand) and in your suggestions for revision
  - Explain why you're making particular suggestions
  - Identify what's missing, what needs to be explained more fully. Also identify what can be cut.


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## Examples of probing questions for reading and listening

- Does that always apply?
- How is that relevant?
- Can you give me an example?
- Is there an alternative viewpoint?
- How reliable is the evidence?
- How accurate is your description?
- You say it is x, which particular kind of x?
- What's the underlying principle then?
- In what situation would this rule break down?
- What distinguishes the two cases?

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## Practise reviewing

- Next page contains a letter.
- While reading the letter
  - After each paragraph:
    - write down what is the writer's message
- After reading
  - Make corrections to the letter OR
  - Rewrite the letter to your own paper
  - List the types of corrections you suggested

[From: B. Holloway: Technical Writing Basics, 3rd ed. Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005](#)

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## Practise reviewing


Dear Occupant,

Hello, I'm your new landlord. I bet you're wondering if there's going to be an increase in rent. Let me tell you a little about myself. My name is Augie Batdorff, I bought this property with the money I inherited from my aunt. I need the income so I can go back to school and find a new career. Seems like hubcap replanting is a dead-end these days, that's for sure.

Well, you probably see me around the place trimming those ugly trees or sealing the parking lot sometime this fall. Got to do it myself, those hired types really cost money!

I've been studying up all the leases and if the creek don't rise and the sun still shines, I think I can keep rent the same for a year. Look for me around the place. I'll be wearing a red baseball cap. Thank you.


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## Guidelines for the author of the letter

-- collect in the class --

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## Proofreading

Proofreading means examining your text carefully to find and correct typographical errors and mistakes in grammar, style, and spelling. Here are some tips. (from the Writer's handbook, University of Wisconsin-Madison)

<http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Proofreading.html>

<http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/PeerReview.html>

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## Proofreading tips

<http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Proofreading.html>

- Work from a printout, not the computer screen
- Use a blank sheet of paper to cover up the lines below
- With computer:
  - find mistakes you commonly make
  - use spelling check
- Hint for checking the structure – read just the first sentence of each paragraph


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## More practising in the proofreading and writing skills

- There are books to help you to improve your skills.
- Some books even have practice tasks and questions
- Two such books are
  - J. Swales and C. Feak: Academic writing for Graduate Students. Michigan Series in English for Academic professional Purposes. The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor. 2009.
  - Grammar Smart: A Guide to Perfect Usage by the Staff of the Princeton Review. Random House Inc. 1997.
- (Example tasks were given out earlier in class)


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## Outline: Polishing work

- Editing
- References
- Skill improvement

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## Revising

- After the first draft is ready/complete
- **Aim:** ensure that thoughts created in the mind of the reader(s) are the same as the thoughts of the writer(s)
- Checking
  - the order of presented ideas
  - the use of words and terminology
  - style, layout and punctuation

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## Revising (2)

- No statement should be introduced abruptly and without warning
- Relationships between parts at a same level should be clear
  - Each section should be related to the preceding and the next one
  - Similarly with paragraphs in a section and sentences in a paragraph

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## Revising (3)

- Paragraphs and sentences should be in a logical and effective order
- Balance is important
  - Parts must be balanced in themselves, and in the relation to one another
  - Holds for sections, subsections, paragraph, and even sentences
  - For example, no sections with just one subsection!

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## Revising (4)

- Important and difficult parts typically re-written several times
- After a revision, put the text a side for a moment
  - Avoid blindness to your own text!
- Ask someone to read your text and give comments!
  - Experts versus non-experts
  - The function of criticism and feedback is to improve your writing

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## Finalising

- When all the parts of the text are written at least once
- Check that objectives, motivation and restrictions are in line
- Evaluate issues that the readers or reviewers might criticise or argue against
- Check technical details
- If published, the critics of the reviewers should be taken into account
- Changing publication forum may require bigger changes

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## Questions?

-- filled in the class --

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