

Section 2. Introduction as an IMRD component

Unit 2. Introduction: Grammar
peculiarities

Today we are going to talk about Grammar peculiarities of the Introduction section. This unit will cover three language areas which are important in the Introduction section:

- Tense pairs;
- Signalling language;
- Passive/active use.

First, let's consider tenses used in this section. Now, I would like you to find the use of different tenses in the model. Which tenses are used? Why? Great! Now, when you are back, let's see if you have identified all the tenses.

As for the Tenses used in the sample, we can conclude that the Present Simple, Present Continuous, Past Simple, and Present Perfect are the most used tenses. Not that many.

In science writing, the **Present Simple** tense is used to state accepted *facts and truths*, but, surprisingly, it's often up to you to decide what counts as an accepted fact or truth. Research findings may occasionally be treated as fact by the writer, in which case they may be stated in the present simple, usually followed by the relevant research citation. Let's find the Present Simple Tense in our model.

The **Present Continuous** indicates *trends and situations that are evolving now, or programmed future events*. "Are currently being developed...are now showing...are becoming"
the examples on the screen show current trends in the field.

The **Past Simple** tense indicates that the *findings* are *linked* only to the writer's own research or *relate to previous studies*. On your screen you can see some instances of the Past Simple from our model. In sentences 6 and 7 the past tense is used to refer to previous work and in sentence 10 it is used to describe the writer's findings without claiming them as accepted facts.

To clarify the **difference between the Present and the Past Simple**, let's consider these two sentences. Which of the two sentences is stronger? Sentence a) It was found that the pressure *increased* as the temperature *increased* , suggesting that temperature *played* an important role in the process. Or sentence b) It was found that the pressure *increases* as the temperature *increases* , suggesting that temperature *plays* an important role in the process.

Well, the use of the Past Simple in sentence (a) indicates that the writer's findings relate only to their own research and should not be regarded as accepted or proven facts. In sentence (b), using the Present Simple tense means that the writer believes their findings and conclusions are strong enough to be considered facts or truths. Present Simple conveys credibility to the work.

The **Present Perfect** tense is used to **emphasize that something** is considered **more relevant to the situation** now. This is opposite to the Past Simple, which relates everything to the past.

Now let's think about where the writer changes the tense. From which tense to which one? Why? Right, the writer changes the tense from the Past Simple to the Present Perfect "has been paid".

Now, look what happens if there is no change in tenses. Suddenly, the sentence means that little attention was paid *then*, i.e. two years ago. Perhaps attention has been paid to this problem since then; perhaps the problem has even been solved! Tense choice is meaningful, and it always signals a change in the function of the information.

Let's now come back to the principle of academic writing which we discussed in the first video of this course – the parallel progression. This principle states that each subsequent sentence starts with the information with which the previous sentence ends. This creates flow and better cohesion. This can be achieved through various signalling words.

On the screen you can see how these words work in our model to create no information gap between the sentences. You can see that the most common types of signaling language are repetition of the exact word from the sentence before and the use of a pronoun *this* or *these* plus a summary word related to the information in the previous sentence.

Another popular way to signal the function of the information in the text is by using **sentence connectors**. On the screen you can see an example of this – however.

Sentence connectors are useful when you need to signal:

- cause: as, because, since, due to (the fact);
- result: as a result, therefore;
- contrast/difference: however, but, while;
- unexpectedness: although, in spite of/despite, nevertheless;
- addition: also, in addition, secondly, etc.

Let's consider **the choice between Passive or Active Voices**.

Some people think that in research writing we cannot use personal pronouns 'I' or 'We'. This used to be true. But today, this totally depends on the journal requirements. If the writer is referring to people in general, it's better to use a construction with It "It is known/thought that..." rather than "We know/think that..." But to mention their own contribution, the writers may use 'we'. Again, this is subject and journal specific.

The problem with using the passive in formal writing is that the agent (the person who performed the action of the verb) is often not mentioned in the sentence. In other words, we say that something was done or was identified but we don't say "by me" or "by other researchers", so the reader may not know who did it or who identified it. This can cause confusion and for that reason it is sometimes clearer to use a dummy subject "This article/the present paper" in the Introduction rather than the "agentless" passive (x is presented).

In our model, Active Voice is used when presenting the outline of the paper with a dummy subject "The present paper" presents and "It then describes."

To sum up, you have learnt that: Introduction usually employs three tenses (Present Simple, Past Simple, Present Perfect). Tense choice is meaningful. Signalling is important. Passive Voice can be used, but active is more preferable for preventing confusion.