



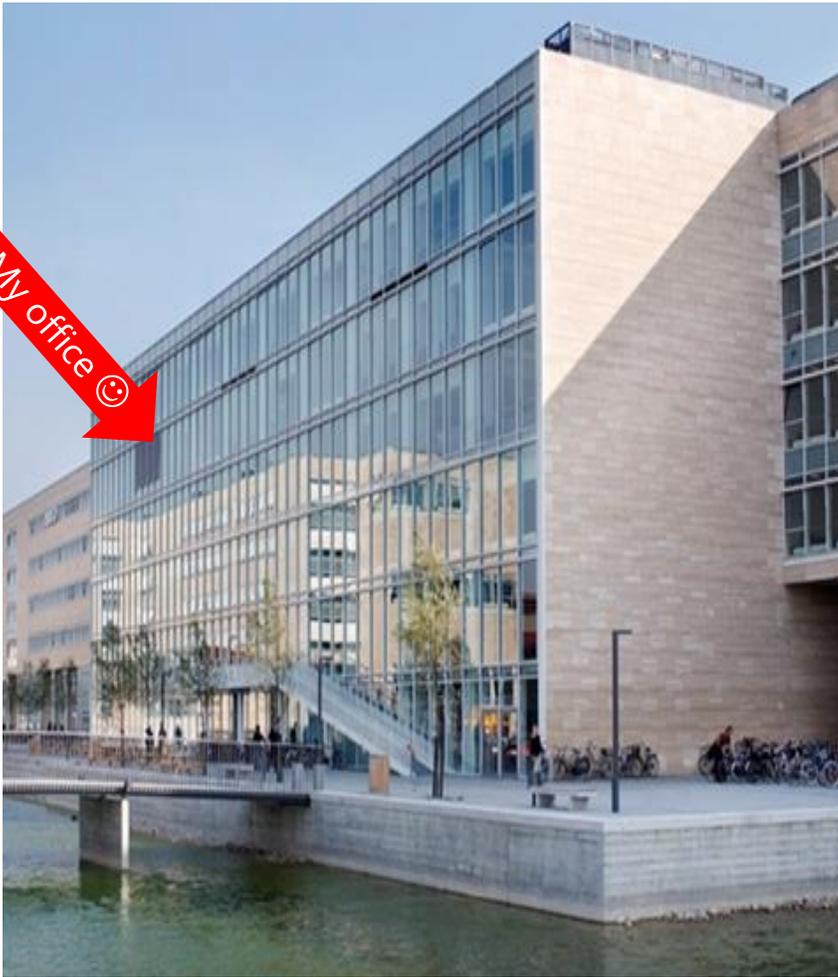
Academic writing in a nutshell: language support for university students

Nina Rasmussen
Centre for Internationalisation and Parallel
Language Use (CIP)

UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN



Centre for Internationalisation and Parallel Language Use (CIP)



- Established in 2008 in response to a growing need for language support among students and staff
- Research and resource centre: tailor-made language courses for staff and students
- Academic writing courses and workshops for students

Outline

- 1) Development of the language support
- 2) The language support
 - Academic writing workshop
 - Written feedback
 - Oral feedback workshop
 - Online resources
- 3) The focus-group interview
- 4) The future

1) Development of the language support

Autumn
2022

- Contacted by the Department of Political Science re language support for 4th semester bachelor students
- The medium of instruction and exam language changed from Danish to English in the spring of 2022

The
product



2) The language support

Spring
2023

- 2-hour writing workshop
- Written feedback on 1-page mock exam

Spring
2024

- 2-hour writing workshop
- Written feedback on 1-page mock exam
- Oral feedback workshop
- Online resources

Academic writing workshop

➤ Literally, academic writing in a...



The workshop covered:

- How to unpack the assignment
- The writing process
- Assignment structure and organisation
- Paragraph structure
- Referencing
- Academic language and style
- 2022 exam question + your practice task



Direction words, e.g., discuss



Process writing



Topic sentences, unity and logical development



Clarity and readability: cohesion, conciseness, precision, formality → editing checklist

Written feedback

2023:

- 1-page mock exam
- **39 group submissions**

2024:

- 1-page mock exam
- **107 individual submissions**

Feedback very detailed:

- Error correction code
- Comments in margin
- Occasional direct corrections
- Global comment at the end



Error correction code

Symbol	Explanation	Examples
SP	Spelling mistake	<i>*The Economic crisis that hit Indonesia in 1998 has <u>coursed</u>... → caused</i>
WF	Wrong form of the word	<i>*Others develop <u>tightly</u> or <u>loosely</u> ties with the local officials. → tight and loose</i>
VT	Verb tense wrong	<i>*In the past few decades, there <u>was</u> a contentious debate about... → has been</i>
P	Error in punctuation	<i>*Comma splices should be <u>avoided</u>, they are very distracting. → Comma splices should be avoided; they are very distracting.</i>
S/V	Subject-verb agreement problems	<i>*Those laws and regulations <u>has</u> created complexities in terms of... → have created</i> <i>*If the researcher <u>meet</u> these criteria,... → meets</i>
S/PL	Problem with number	<i>*In the 20th <u>centuries</u>, ... → century</i> <i>*These approaches are connected in different <u>way</u>. → ways</i>
R	Redundant word or information	<i>*Concerning <u>about</u> the data related to the phelloderm cells,... → concerning the data</i>
?	Confusion	I have no idea what you mean! 😕

Examples of feedback

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Apostrophe missing

Waltz's neorealist theory predicts states' behaviour in an international anarchic system (Waltz, 1979, p. 90). There are two key assumptions. Firstly, international systems are decentralised and anarchic. There is no hierarchical structure nor international body to protect states, therefor states' most important goal is to ensure their survival (Waltz, 1979, p. 91). Secondly, the distribution of capabilities. This assumption defines the system of polarity. Capabilities becomes the only vital commodity for

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You need to turn this into a complete sentence, for example: Secondly, the distribution of capabilities + verb. Defines the system of polarity?

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P for punctuation. This is a comma splice. You need more than a comma to separate two independent sentences

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SP for spelling

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Apostrophe missing

Examples of feedback: global comment

Decent draft. Your text is well structured and also generally well written, but as you can see, there are quite a few comments and corrections for you to digest. You should make better use of comparative words and phrases. It must be clear whether the theories agree or disagree on the various issues covered. You should also make it crystal clear whose voice or theory you're referring to when summarising their views. I've provided examples in a comment in the margin. There are also some consistent language issues for you to attend to. You should pay attention to the following:

- 1) Apostrophes. They serve an important function.
- 2) Subject-verb agreement (S/V). A verb must agree in number with its subject.
- 3) Punctuation. You may want to read my guide to punctuation uploaded on Absalon.
- 4) Spelling (SP). Make sure you have time to proofread your exam paper before submitting it.

Do let me know if you have any questions.

Good work



Room for improvement

Areas to pay attention to

Questions always welcome 😊

Oral feedback workshop

Spring
2024

- Oral feedback workshop

Presentation covering:

- Paragraph structure revisited
- Unclear referencing revisited
- Confusing linking words
- Distracting errors
- Useful vocabulary links

Oral feedback on
the mock exam

Online resources

Spring
2024

- **Online resources** (available on the UCPH learnir

- The workshop slides
- A 25-page compendium
- A PowerPoint on verb tense in academic texts
- A guide to punctuation in English

IR 2 EXAM Exam number: 561 31/3/2022

Excellent comparison within a sentence.

A more precise one-word alternative would be more appropriate: propose or advance.

Consider using a more formal and precise one-word alternative, such as explains or predicts?

Good use of sources.

Good use of old-to-new information flow.

1. Review

1.1 Waltz' neorealism

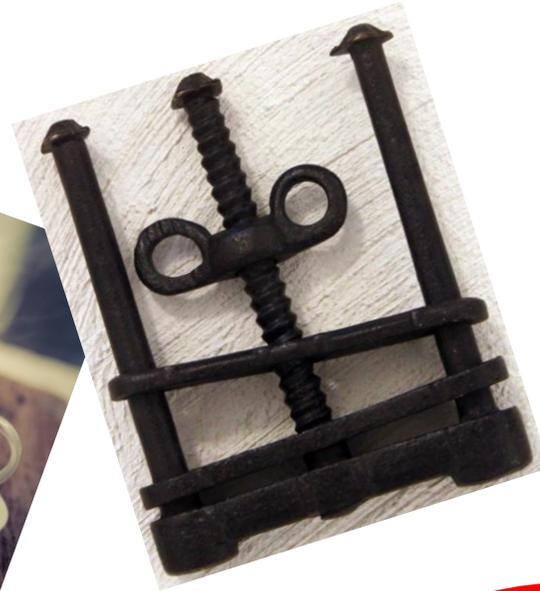
The purpose of Waltz' neorealism is to put forward a systemic theory that points to structure of the international system when explaining and predicting the behaviour of states (Waltz 1979: 124). Waltz theorizes the structure as split into 3 tiers. The 1st tier is the organizational principle of the international system, which Waltz sees as decentral and anarchic, as no central authority or instance of power exist (Wæver 1992: 130-1). The 2nd tier is the differentiation of units within the system. While neorealism acknowledges that these units, the states, might be internally different, the anarchic structure forces them to pursue the same end goal, security and ultimately survival, making them functionally alike (Waltz 1979: 126). As the 1st tier is constant, and the 2nd tier is dismissed as states behave towards the same goal, the 3rd tier becomes the determining feature of the

Examples from a published paper: present simple

Realism and Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) are in a complicated long-term relationship. Both perspectives are largely state-centric and tend to focus on security policy more than other policy areas. They both claim that part of their academic legitimacy stems from policy relevance and a more intimate knowledge of and interest in the challenges and conditions for foreign policy than other theoretical perspectives. However, they identify different, sometimes contrasting, challenges and conditions as pivotal. While foreign policy analysts emphasize the importance of domestic politics and decision-making processes for foreign policy, realists emphasize the importance of structural and systemic factors and argue that state survival in an anarchic international self-help system leaves only a limited or secondary role for factors inside the state.

Present tense because author is referring to general facts, current meanings and implications, and future applications.

3) The focus-group interview



4
students

Written
feedback
very detailed
and useful

Oral feedback
appreciated.
Nice to be
able to ask
questions

Content of
writing workshop
appropriate,
except perhaps
referencing

Checklist+
student and
published texts
particularly
useful

Exam
question too
complex and
difficult to
understand

Mock exam
should be
completed
under time
pressure

The editing checklist

Checklist
particularly

1. Remember that writing is a process: focus more on content and structure first and then attend to language later.
2. When you are ready to edit/proofread your paper, pay special attention to:
 - a) Structure and organisation (overall + sections & paragraphs)
 - b) Cohesion (does the text flow?)
 - c) Style (clear, concise and appropriately academic)
 - d) Sentence length and structure (are sentences relatively short and simple?)
 - e) Vocabulary (formality and precision)
 - f) Punctuation (avoid comma splices + never comma before "that"!)
 - g) Subject-verb agreement (3rd person singular 's')
 - h) Spelling (e.g., *then vs than, effect vs affect, loose vs lose, choose vs chose*)

The exam question

Exam
question too

Exam
ques
tion
2022

- **Compare** Kenneth Waltz's neorealism and Robert Cox's critical theory in terms of their conceptions of agency and structure. Your answer must contain:
1. a **review** that outlines the most important assumptions about agency and structure in each theory.
 2. a **discussion** of how those assumptions about agency and structure might imply different normative and political positions about the possibility of change in international relations.
 3. a research proposal that **outlines** how each theory would analyze the Russo-Ukrainian conflict. The research proposal must briefly **outline** proposed research question, research design, central theoretical concepts, and empirical material for each theory.

Exam
ques
tion
2024

1. Choose central concepts from New Materialist IR theory and Green IR theory. **Justify** your choice of concepts and **compare** their theoretical **underpinnings**.
2. Pick any empirical case linked to the climate crisis and **demonstrate** how your chosen concepts provide useful analytical insights.
3. **Discuss** how a postcolonial perspective would contribute to an alternative understanding of your chosen case.

4) The future

1. Integrate the language and writing support as a permanent feature of International Relations 2
2. Obtain more substantial student feedback (course evaluation)
3. Obtain data on the effect of the language feedback
4. Offer continued consultancy on the formulation of the exam questions



Thank you for listening 😊



Download presentation here:

