

Adjectives & Sentence Patterns for Expressing Evaluation & Stance in Academic Writing

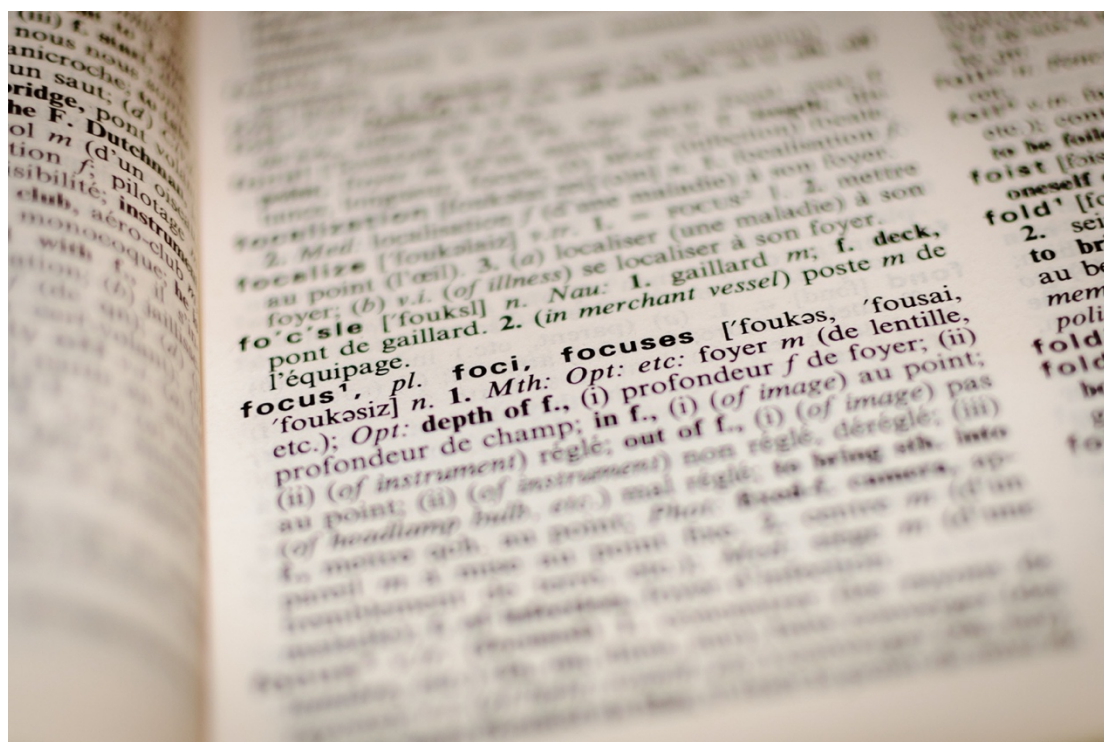


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Context Information

Target Students	College/University Students (25-28 students)
Expected English Proficiency	DSE Level 3 or above; IELTS 6.5 or above
Teaching Context	<p>Tutorial of an Academic English writing subject:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The tutorial is conducted in the computer laboratory, in which each student can work on his/her own computer, or undertake pair works. ● The students were previously taught the functions and organisation of 5-paragraph academic essays, and currently focusing on crafting effective paragraphs ● Students reflected that they find the requirement for making “objective evaluation” and “critical discussions” in academic essays confusing, in that they might use expressions such as “I/we think/agree/believe” or those influenced by their native language (e.g. Cantonese).
Duration	120 minutes
Corpus Used	Corpus of Contemporary American English
Aims & Objectives	<p>Through a series of activities in this tutorial, students will actively engage with the corpus tool (COCA) for building academic vocabulary and sentence patterns. More specifically, the lesson aims to help students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify adjectives commonly found in academic writing for evaluating the topic or research findings through the two recurrent patterns: “it + linking verb + adjective + to-infinitive/that-clause” and “Subject + finds it + adjective + to-infinitive/that-clause” ● Use the above sentence patterns to suggest the topic or activities under evaluation (e.g. It is interesting <u>to see what attracts...</u>; SMEs find it difficult <u>that they need to compete...</u>) ● Avoid using more spoken-like expressions (“I think”, “I believe”, etc.) or those influenced by their first language (e.g. Chinese/Cantonese), such as “SMEs are difficult to compete...” (cf. 中小企很難和__ 競爭...)

Teaching Guides

(Note: The activities in this guide will be provided to students in a separate activity sheet.)

Activity 1. Lead-in: Individual Gap-filling Task (10 minutes)

Purpose: This activity intends to induce errors from students so as to introduce the target sentence patterns in the forthcoming activities. Admittedly, the target students are expected to be capable of completing sentences with appropriate grammatical items. However, based on my experience, some of them may produce sentences grammatically correct but semantically wrong (e.g. *we are necessary* in place of *it is/we find it necessary*). Therefore, as the teacher does not give them explicit hints, more capable students would give correct answers, contrasting with the erroneous answers. The teacher can then highlight and discuss the differences between the answers before moving on to the corpus exploration.

Instructions: read the abstract from an undergraduate research article (abridged & slightly edited). Complete the two sentences by filling the blanks provided (Hint: there should be two words if two lines are given).

During the last nine years, more and more young people join in the carnival on November 11 affectionately known as “Double 11 Shopping Festival”. Although Chinese millennials are often asked in marketing research studies as to why they shop online on this day, their views have never been considered seriously – many of our peers have been left out of the dialogue. In light of this, we (1) _____ necessary that the reported data needs to take immediate peer groups. In addition, one subject that emerges is why millennial choose to participate in this festival in the age of such fabulous in-store experiences. (2) _____ interesting to see what attracts this student group to the online venue from a list of motivational factors including social satisfaction and financial savings.

Reference

Zhao, X., Chen, X., Song, X., Zhang, W., Gao, L., & De Ciel, R. (2019). A look at Alibaba Double 11 Shopping Festival. *Journal of Student Research*, 8(1), 88-91.

Activity 2: Studying Concordance Lines for the Correct Sentence Structure of Evaluation (30 minutes)

Purpose: After introducing the target corpus tool, and basic concepts of the corpus (e.g. concordance lines, collocational patterns, authentic language use, etc.), this study serves to give students hands-on experience to work with concordance lines, in a more controlled fashion. The concordance lines are selected by the teacher to minimise confusion, e.g. having to read 50 lines at a time, dealing with difficult vocabulary, etc. The students will have a chance to explore the corpus tool in the forthcoming activities. The teacher will also remind the students to focus on the sentence patterns and their grammatical components instead of finding the meanings of separate lexical items.

Instructions: In pairs, study the concordance lines in the following figures. Check whether your answers in Activity 1 are correct. Then, answer the following questions and discuss the answers with your partner.

Corpus of Contemporary American English

PDF

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SEARCH

FREQUENCY

CONTEXT

HELP

SECTION: ACADEMIC (4) (SHUFFLE)

CLICK FOR MORE CONTEXT

☐

[?]

SAVE LIST

CHOOSE LIST

It is important

CREATE NEW LIST

[?]

SHOW DUPLICATES

1

2016

ACAD

J History Philosophy

A

B

C

also constituted so that M is deducible from them. if in doing this **we find it necessary** to have recourse to concepts not contained in M, we must seek

2

2011

ACAD

AmerScholar

A

B

C

mirror. But now those pleasures are, of course, denied us. **We find it necessary** to cover up, the better to obscure evidence of decay and fallen

3

2009

ACAD

Education

A

B

C

definitely play an important role in achieving success if enough attention is paid. **We find it necessary** to keep up-to-date with what has been done for the last two

4

1995

ACAD

AgricResrch

A

B

C

," says John Biele, a fruit grower in northern Washington. " **We find it necessary** to spray more and more, because the moths keep building up their

Figure 1. Sentence pattern for (1)

Corpus of Contemporary American English									
SEARCH			FREQUENCY			CONTEXT			HELP
SECTION: ACADEMIC (1,168)									
FIND SAMPLE: 100 200 500 1000									
PAGE: << < 1 / 12 > >>									
CLICK FOR MORE CONTEXT									
<div><input type="checkbox"/> [?]</div> <div>SAVE LIST</div> <div>CHOOSE LIST</div> <div>It is important</div> <div>CREATE NEW LIST</div> <div></div> <div>[?]</div> <div>SHOW DUPLICATES</div>									
1	2019	ACAD	...ter Science & Technology	A	B	C	using a very recent work employed a deep learning model (Bi-GRU). It is interesting also to clarify that the proposed semi-supervised learning		
2	2019	ACAD	eLife	A	B	C	the ability of nucleotide binding or hydrolysis to communicate with the microtubule-binding domain. It is interesting to note that the small frac		
3	2019	ACAD	Zoological Letters	A	B	C	these structures might have been affected by a single regulatory genetic system. # It is interesting to note that fossil larval representatives of f		
4	2019	ACAD	J Neuroinflammation	A	B	C	a memory impairment effect of SR9009 is due to an activation of REV-ERB. # It is interesting to speculate that OAbeta enhances the effects of S		
5	2019	ACAD	PLoS Computational Biology	A	B	C	coefficients 43, which requires less than one second of CPU time here. It is interesting to note that u g, max and u o mainly contribute to the		
6	2019	ACAD	BMC Bioinformatics	A	B	C	of premature entry into mitosis through Cdk1 phosphorylation by Wee1 and Pkmyt1 129-132. It is interesting that Cdk1 phosphorylation not o		
7	2019	ACAD	PeerJ	A	B	C) and spinal (Young, Spence & Behm, 2018) excitabilities, it is interesting and important to examine if there are any central-mediated changes o		
8	2019	ACAD	Neural Development	A	B	C	for ipRGC subtypes would be different from what has been reported in adulthood, it is interesting that the physiological differences between s		
9	2019	ACAD	Cato Journal	A	B	C	is not tied to the value of a commodity, such as gold. It is interesting to notice that Schumpeter (1954: 288) spelled the term as "		
10	2019	ACAD	Studies in the Novel	A	B	C	whether in a primitive society or at the Court of St. James. (It is interesting that a little later in the novel all Mr. Collins's pomposity and stupidit		

Figure 2. Sentence pattern for (2)

- Read the highlighted words in the concordance lines of Figure 1 & 2. What word is in the Subject position in each figure? Circle those words.
- Observe the positions of “It” in the two sets of concordance lines. How does the pronoun “it” function in the sentences?
- Discuss with your partner: suggest the possible sentence patterns that collocate with the adjectives for evaluation.

Subject	Verb	Object/ Complement

Suggested answer:

Subject	Verb	Object/ Complement (not complete)	
Noun	Find	Dummy “it”	Adjective
Dummy “it”	Linking verb	Adjective	

Note to teachers: If time allows, briefly explain the functions of the dummy “it” in the sentence as a subject or an object.

- TEN-MINUTE BREAK -

Activity 3: Categorising Adjectives for Evaluation (30 minutes)

Purpose: This activity seeks to help students explore the corpus and find the common adjectives for evaluation of the subject matter, while more distant from emotion-triggering commentaries. This is achieved through using the two sentence patterns taught in Activity 2. Students would also learn to classify different types of adjectives for expressing positive or negative stances. Through this activity, they do not just learn the sentence structures, but kinds of evaluative meaning targeting different topics in terms of possibility, necessity, importance, etc.

Instructions: based on the sentence patterns found in #2, engage the corpus tool and look for top 30 adjectives collocating with such patterns in the sub-corpus of academic writing.

1 Instructions:

- 1.1 In “Collocates”, key in “it is” or “find it” in the first search bar.
- 1.2 Click on the “POS” next to the second search bar, and choose “adj.ALL”.
- 1.3 Click on the number “2” to identify the adjectives collocates within 2 words on the right of “it is”/ “find it”.
- 1.4 Click “Sections”, and choose “ACADEMIC” in [1].
- 1.5 Click on “Find Collocates”.

The screenshot shows the COCA interface with the 'Collocates' tab selected. The search bar contains 'it is' and the POS is set to 'adj.ALL'. The 'Find collocates' button is highlighted. The 'Sections' dropdown is open, showing 'ACADEMIC' selected. The results table shows the following data:

Section	Collocates
*ize verbs in ACADEMIC	Past tense verb + up in TV/MOVIES
*ment in ACADEMIC	Nouns near green in 2010-2019
good + NOUN in NEWSPAPERS	Noun near chair in FIC
Hard + NOUN in MAGAZINES	Synonyms of strong in TV/MOVIES
Verbs in MAGAZINES-Sports	Nouns in NEWSPAPERS-Money
Adjectives in ACADEMIC-Medicine	Adverbs in TV/MOVIES

Figure 3. Instructions for searching the right collocates (adjectives) of “it is” in academic texts

- 2 Sort the adjectives into seven main categories (modified based on Bednarek [2006]). Students can complete the table collaboratively using Google Docs:

Category	Examples (Students can add more)
Ease	easy, difficult, hard
Importance	important, crucial
Expectedness	obvious, surprising
Possibility	possible, impossible
Necessity	imperative, necessary
Reliability	useful, good
Emotivity	wise, unfortunate

Note to teachers: before the activity, Teacher can briefly explain these categories (note that these categories are not definitive), and that these adjectives are useful ones for giving comments on their essay topics, research activities, etc.

Activity 4: Completing the Sentence Structure (25 minutes)

Purpose: This activity aims to help students complete the sentence structure that combines the expression of evaluation (*we find/it is* + adjective) and the target of evaluation (i.e. essay topic, subject knowledge, research findings, etc.). They will consult the corpus tool again, and identify the Complement components in the concordance lines (i.e. to-infinitives or that-clauses).

- T tells students that it is not enough just to express comments; they also need to direct their comments to the topic.
- In pairs, students will study the concordance lines (either in the activity sheet or on COCA directly) and identify the two common phrase/ clause patterns immediately following the adjectives.

Suggested answer:

Subject	Verb	Object/ Complement		
Noun	Find	Dummy "it"	Adjective	1. To-infinitive 2. That-clause
Dummy "it"	Linking verb	Adjective		

- c. They will also copy, from the concordance lines, one or two examples for each pattern. If necessary, they can click on a particular entry for more context.

Grammatical pattern	Examples from the corpus
N + find it + adj + to-inf/ that-clause	1. 2.
It is + adj + to-inf/ that-clause	1. 2.

- d. T tells students that the things described in the to-infinitives and that-clauses after adjectives would be the targets of evaluation. For example, in the sentence “**it is necessary** to pay more attention to the older patients.”

Comment	Target of evaluation
Necessary	Paying more attention to the older patients (caretakers <u>need</u> to take this action.)

Note to teachers: While it is possible to move them around in the sentence (e.g. “To compete with big enterprises is difficult for SMEs.”), it is out of the scope of the present lesson, but will be very helpful to discuss it in future lessons.

Activity 5: Review & Take-home Task (15 minutes + follow-up in the next lesson)

Purpose: In this concluding session, T and Ss review the two main patterns for evaluation and expressing stance. In addition, students will also work independently to apply what they have learnt in the tutorial to the individual rewriting exercise. They are also encouraged to make use of the corpus tool to do the extra discussion activity.

a. Discuss when each of the two patterns are used

Hint: note again from the concordances, especially those from the search of “find it + adjective”, what nouns would usually take the Subject positions. For example:

FIND SAMPLE: 100 200
PAGE: << < 1 / 3 > >

CLICK FOR MORE CONTEXT

[?]

SAVE LIST

CHOOSE LIST

Itisimportant

CREATE NEW LIST

[?]

SHOW DUPLICATES

1	2012	WEB	...uickanddirtytips.com	A	B	C	# The problem is is that he wasn't home. Why do we suddenly find it necessary to repeat the verb? # Both of these usages have become commonplace
2	2012	WEB	ietf.org	A	B	C	of a line. On the other hand, a user or process may sometimes find it necessary or desirable to provide data which does not terminate at the end of
3	2012	WEB	...sitielypositive.com	A	B	C	explain to me what the president has to do with this article Why do you find it necessary to politicize this excellent article? # Etoth # a life, Jason
4	2012	WEB	state.nj.us	A	B	C	# Although stage information is useful for some purposes, most users of streamflow data find it necessary to have discharge information about a stream. D
5	2012	WEB	...riting2.richmond.edu	A	B	C	the text from sources without properly indicating that you have done so. If you find it necessary to directly quote an author, clearly indicate what has been c
6	2012	WEB	esr.ibiblio.org	A	B	C	build systems. # However, to avoid a rather brutal old ag, I find it necessary to spend the vast majority of my life creating things that make other
7	2012	WEB	gnu.org	A	B	C	different system. If you call the whole system " Linux, you will find it necessary to say things like, " Android contains Linux, but it is
8	2012	WEB	mediaite.com	A	B	C	way my husband does with me, no pretense or coldness. Why do people find it necessary to turn Gov. Romney into a cartoon character? This is a
9	2012	WEB	amazon.com	A	B	C	London, writes in British English, it is rather odd that he seems to find it necessary to translate the *names* of American transit companies into British Engl
10	2012	WEB	newcastle-news.com	A	B	C	# It also used to make me crazy when Mother would tell a story and find it necessary to verbally scroll through the name of every acquaintance she'd had si

Figure 3. “Evaluators” (nouns in Subject position, circled) as do-ers of the thinking action (*find it + adjective*)

1	the image of father has been gradually changed. It is necessary to use female images to describe God. # Professor Wang Weifan wrote
2	weakness of the theological heritage and theoretical foundation, it is difficult to deal with gender issues in the church. (58) #
3	the cultural biography of the complex, however, it is possible to offer some alternative reconstructions. # The ashlar walls of the underground capture
4	as younger subjects due to difficulties in recruitment. It is possible that the use of animacy cues might increase for the older adults with
5	33 other studies did not use this classification. It is important to consider that symptomatic pancreatic fistula is associated with high morbidity. In
6	between surgery and the drainage procedure; however, it is important to note that bleeding risk is likely more important in cases of early
7	it is used to improve fertility10, 11. It is possible that A. digitata (L.) possesses secondary metabolites that act differently based
8	shown in Fig 3E. In this plot, it is possible to observe that all curves converge towards the same rate level, which
9	concentration, ranging from 1% to 100% metofluthrin. It is possible to observe that knockdown increases with metofluthrin concentration while bites are reduced,
10	, increasing opportunities of exploring new movement patterns. It is important for practitioners to learn about each unique student through collaboration with the family

Figure 4. Concordance lines (*it is + adjective*) for highlighting the evaluation

Suggested answer:

- “Find it + adjective” is used when we want to indicate the “evaluator” who performs the action of “finding” (something is necessary according to **whom?**);
- “it is + adjective” can often omit the evaluator, unless the prepositional phrase “for + evaluator” is included in the structure (e.g. it is important **for everyone** to know if the President failed...)

Wrap up: the evaluative patterns introduced in this tutorial seek to help students “correct” more “Chinese-like” expressions such as “SMEs are difficult to compete...” (cf. 中小企很難和__ 競爭...) and replace them with “SMEs find it difficult to...”, the pattern more closely resembling the Chinese counterpart.

- b. Take-home writing task: Rewrite the underlined parts having less English-like evaluative expressions and present the results in the next class.

Text A

The majority of customers in Hong Kong are used to the traditional display space in a store. In light of this, the retailing team noticed that they are important to adopt a new approach for product assortment. For instance, they placed the new arrivals facing the door and the shoes, accessories or cosmetics next to the garments. As a result, the consumers are easy to know the possible ways to match them. This new product assortment method had great success, which encouraged the customers to buy multiple items simultaneously.

Text B

SMEs play an important role in the achievement of sustainable development goals (SDGs), promotion of inclusive and sustainable economic growth, creation of employment and decent jobs, promotion of sustainable industrialization and fostering innovation and the reduction of inequality. However, manufacturing SMEs are challenging to include low innovation and product development. Other challenges would be inability to access both domestic and international markets, inability to access affordable credit, tedious and lengthy process in quality standards and certification. In addition, they face limited access to markets which is a severe constraint to its growth and competitiveness. Further, as a result of their small sizes, it usually finds difficult to compete in the domestic economy with established enterprises, face competition from imported goods, and lack requisite productive capacity and technologies to meet demand in the international markets. It is argued that some affirmative action and selective interventions and preference schemes by the government can enhance their market penetration. SMEs are difficult to access public procurement opportunities compared to large firms.

Extracted and edited from

Osano, H. M. (2019). Global expansion of SMEs: role of global market strategy for Kenyan SMEs. *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, 8(1), 13.

Activity 6: “Bonus stage” – Extra observations

- a. If time allows, Teacher and students can use the examples text to discuss where in a paragraph using evaluative sentence patterns is common.

- 1 First sentence of a point in a paragraph;
- 2 Concluding sentence of the paragraph, or places where the writer explains the consequence of something.

- b. Using the “Compare” function, make a comparative search for the patterns of adjective use between “it is + adjective” and “find it + adjective”

1 General usage

SEE CONTEXT: CLICK ON NUMBERS (WORD 1 OR 2)

[\[HELP...\]](#)SORTED BY RATIO: CHANGE TO [FREQUENCY](#)

WORD 1 (W1): IT IS (28.12)

WORD 2 (W2): FIND IT (0.04)

	WORD	W1	W2	W1/W2	SCORE		WORD	W2	W1	W2/W1	SCORE
1	CLEAR	8688	3	2,896.0	103.0	1	AMUSING	226	100	2.3	63.6
2	CRITICAL	1378	0	2,756.0	98.0	2	DISTASTEFUL	38	19	2.0	56.2
3	LATE	1340	0	2,680.0	95.3	3	APPEALING	23	12	1.9	53.9
4	EVIDENT	1280	0	2,560.0	91.0	4	HUMOROUS	47	25	1.9	52.9
5	ONLY	2450	1	2,450.0	87.1	5	OFFENSIVE	175	140	1.3	35.2
6	APPARENT	1052	0	2,104.0	74.8	6	REPULSIVE	25	20	1.3	35.2
7	CRUCIAL	927	0	1,854.0	65.9	7	RELAXING	23	19	1.2	34.0
8	SUPPOSED	844	0	1,688.0	60.0	8	CHARMING	25	25	1.0	28.1
9	UNCOMMON	759	0	1,518.0	54.0	9	HILARIOUS	88	99	0.9	25.0
10	OKAY	733	0	1,466.0	52.1	10	ODD	267	342	0.8	22.0

2 Academic usage

SEE CONTEXT: CLICK ON NUMBERS (WORD 1 OR 2)

[\[HELP...\]](#)SORTED BY RATIO: CHANGE TO [FREQUENCY](#)

WORD 1 (W1): IT IS (81.07)

WORD 2 (W2): FIND IT (0.01)

	WORD	W1	W2	W1/W2	SCORE		WORD	W2	W1	W2/W1	SCORE
1	CLEAR	3101	0	6,202.0	76.5	1	EASIER	80	454	0.2	14.3
2	TRUE	1594	0	3,188.0	39.3	2	HELPFUL	39	327	0.1	9.7
3	UNCLEAR	907	0	1,814.0	22.4	3	DIFFICULT	405	3424	0.1	9.6
4	COMMON	603	0	1,206.0	14.9	4	USEFUL	56	587	0.1	7.7
5	POSSIBLE	5917	5	1,183.4	14.6	5	EASY	56	1214	0.0	3.7
6	EVIDENT	583	0	1,166.0	14.4	6	IMPOSSIBLE	39	1465	0.0	2.2
7	CRITICAL	558	0	1,116.0	13.8	7	NECESSARY	47	2247	0.0	1.7
8	ESSENTIAL	1000	1	1,000.0	12.3						
9	GOOD	469	0	938.0	11.6						
10	APPARENT	441	0	882.0	10.9						
11	CRUCIAL	406	0	812.0	10.0						

Note: The pattern “find it + adjective” is actually less commonly used in academic contexts. This may be because most academic texts foreground topic knowledge and research events and activities more than human agents (e.g. researchers, authors, respondents, etc.)

References

Bednarek, M. (2006). *Evaluation in media discourse: Analysis of a newspaper corpus*. London, UK: Continuum.

Text samples

Osano, H. M. (2019). Global expansion of SMEs: role of global market strategy for Kenyan SMEs. *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, 8(1), 13.

Zhao, X., Chen, X., Song, X., Zhang, W., Gao, L., & De Ciel, R. (2019). A look at Alibaba Double 11 Shopping Festival. *Journal of Student Research*, 8(1), 88-91.