Asian Journal of Technology and Applied Sciences
ISSN: 2301-xxxx (online) | IF: 10.01 | Vol: 1, issue 1
Available: http://asiansciencejournal.org

LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF INFORMATIONAL TEXTS IN ENGLISH LEARNING

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Abstract: Informational texts occupy an important position in contemporary English language education because they provide learners with access to factual, academic, scientific, and professional knowledge. Unlike narrative texts, informational texts are primarily designed to explain, describe, classify, compare, or present information in a logically organized manner. Their linguistic organization is therefore characterized by a number of distinctive features, including specialized vocabulary, lexical density, nominalization, complex noun phrases, passive constructions, grammatical compression, cohesive devices, and explicit logical relationships. These features enable writers to communicate a considerable amount of information in a relatively limited textual space, but at the same time they may create significant comprehension difficulties for English language learners. The present article discusses the major linguistic characteristics of informational texts and considers their significance for English language teaching. Particular attention is given to the relationship between linguistic complexity and learners' reading comprehension. The article argues that students should not merely be exposed to informational texts but should also be explicitly taught how such texts construct meaning. Developing awareness of vocabulary, grammatical patterns, cohesion, and discourse organization can help learners become more independent and effective readers and writers of academic English.

Keywords: informational texts, English learning, linguistic features, lexical density, nominalization, academic vocabulary, cohesion.

Introduction

The ability to understand informational texts has become increasingly important in English language education. Modern learners encounter information in a wide variety of forms, including textbooks, scientific articles, encyclopedic entries, educational websites, reports, manuals, newspaper articles, and other forms of academic and professional communication. Consequently, successful English learning requires more than the ability to understand everyday conversations or literary narratives. Learners must also develop the linguistic competence necessary to process texts in which information is presented in a relatively dense, formal, and logically structured manner.

Informational texts differ considerably from conversational and narrative texts. A narrative generally focuses on events, characters, experiences, and temporal development, whereas an informational text normally emphasizes concepts, facts, processes, explanations, classifications, and relationships between ideas. This difference is reflected directly in language. Informational writing tends to contain more technical and abstract vocabulary, longer noun phrases, nominalizations, passive structures, and explicit logical connectors.

Research in functional linguistics has repeatedly demonstrated that academic and educational texts use linguistic resources in distinctive ways to construct knowledge. Fang, Schleppegrell, and Cox, for example, emphasize that academic language differs significantly from ordinary social language and that nouns and nominal structures play an important role in constructing knowledge in school subjects.

For English learners, these characteristics can become a considerable source of difficulty. A student may know the individual words in a sentence but still fail to understand

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the overall meaning because the information is compressed into complex grammatical structures. Therefore, teaching informational texts requires attention not only to vocabulary but also to the linguistic mechanisms through which information is organized.

The Concept and Purpose of Informational Texts

The principal purpose of an informational text is to communicate knowledge. Depending on its genre, such a text may explain a phenomenon, describe an object or process, classify information, compare different concepts, present evidence, or provide instructions.

For example, a simple sentence such as:

«Plants need water to grow» communicates basic information. A more academically oriented version might be: «Adequate water availability is an essential factor influencing plant growth». The second sentence is more characteristic of formal informational writing. It contains an abstract noun (availability), a complex noun phrase (adequate water availability), and a more formal lexical choice (influencing plant growth). Although both sentences communicate a similar idea, the second one demonstrates a considerably higher level of linguistic density. This type of linguistic organization is not accidental. Informational texts are designed to transmit knowledge efficiently. Consequently, writers frequently use grammatical and lexical resources that allow several pieces of information to be incorporated into a single sentence. Research on EFL textbooks has shown that linguistic complexity may increase as learners progress through educational levels. In particular, lexical density, nominalization, and grammatical metaphor can contribute to increasing textual complexity.

Lexical Features of Informational Texts

One of the most noticeable characteristics of informational texts is their vocabulary. Such texts frequently employ specialized, academic, and technical vocabulary related to a particular subject area. For example, a general text may use: The doctor looked at the patient. An informational medical text is more likely to use: The physician conducted a clinical examination of the patient. The second sentence contains more specialized vocabulary and therefore requires greater lexical knowledge. Informational texts also frequently demonstrate lexical density, meaning that a relatively large proportion of the words carry substantial semantic information. Content words such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs are especially important in this respect. Academic vocabulary also plays an important role. Words such as significant, factor demonstrate, consequently, distribution, development, investigation, and influence occur frequently in educational and academic discourse. Learners who have insufficient knowledge of such vocabulary may understand individual sentences only partially.

However, vocabulary instruction should not be limited to memorizing isolated words. Students should learn how words function within larger linguistic structures. For example, development may appear in expressions such as economic development, language development, child development, or the development of new technologies. Learning words together with their typical collocations can therefore improve comprehension.

Nominalization and Information Density

Another important feature of informational English is nominalization. Nominalization occurs when a verb, adjective, or another linguistic element is transformed into a noun.

Examples include:

- develop → development
- analyze → analysis
- important → importance
- responsible → responsibility
- decide → decision

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- improve → improvement

Nominalization enables writers to represent actions and processes as concepts or entities. This makes it possible to connect ideas more efficiently within a text.

Compare: «Scientists analyzed the data and then they developed a conclusion» with: «The analysis of the data resulted in the development of a conclusion».

The second version is more nominalized and more characteristic of formal written discourse.

Nominalization can increase information density and help writers construct abstract relationships. Research has shown that nominal structures can expand the amount of information contained in a clause while also helping writers establish and maintain textual reference.

At the same time, excessive nominalization can create difficulties for learners. When a sentence contains several nominalizations, the original actions and relationships may become less immediately visible. For this reason, teachers can help students by showing them how to "unpack" nominalized expressions. For example: «The rapid expansion of urbanization resulted in environmental deterioration» can be unpacked as: «Cities expanded rapidly, and this caused the environment to deteriorate.» Such exercises allow learners to see how grammatical choices influence meaning.

Complex Noun Phrases

Complex noun phrases are another central characteristic of informational texts. A noun phrase may contain a head noun together with several modifiers. For example: «students» is a simple noun phrase. However: «highly motivated secondary-school students from rural communities» is a considerably more complex noun phrase. Informational texts often use such structures because they allow writers to specify information precisely without creating numerous separate sentences. Scientific and educational texts may contain noun phrases such as:

- the rapid development of digital technologies
- the significant increase in global temperatures
- the long-term effects of environmental pollution
- a comprehensive analysis of language-learning strategies

For learners, the difficulty often lies in identifying the central noun. Students may encounter several adjectives, nouns, and prepositional phrases before reaching the main element.

Teachers can therefore train learners to identify the head noun first and then determine how the other elements modify it. This strategy can make long informational sentences significantly easier to process.

Passive Constructions and Formality

Passive voice is another frequently observed feature of informational and academic texts. Compare: «Researchers conducted the experiment in 2025» with: «The experiment was conducted in 2025». In the passive construction, attention is shifted from the person performing the action to the action, process, or result itself.

This is particularly useful in scientific and informational writing because the process or finding is often more important than the individual researcher. For example: «Researchers collected the data from three schools» can become: «The data were collected from three schools». The passive form allows the writer to focus on the data rather than on the researchers.

Although passive constructions are not exclusive to informational texts, their frequent use contributes to the formal character of scientific and academic discourse. Learners

therefore need to understand both the grammatical structure and the communicative purpose of the passive voice.

Cohesion and Logical Organization

Informational texts must present information in a coherent and logically understandable manner. This is achieved partly through cohesive devices and logical connectors. Common connectors include:

- however
- therefore
- consequently
- in addition
- for example
- in contrast
- although
- as a result
- moreover

These expressions help readers understand the relationship between ideas. For example: «Online learning provides greater flexibility. However, it may reduce direct interaction between students and teachers». The word however signals contrast. Without it, the relationship between the two statements would be less explicit. Cohesion can also be achieved through lexical repetition and related vocabulary. For example: «Climate change affects agricultural production. This environmental phenomenon can reduce crop yields and increase food insecurity». The expressions climate change, environmental phenomenon, crop yields, and food insecurity are semantically related and contribute to the unity of the text. Research on academic texts has also identified cohesion and nominalization as important textual resources in the construction of academic discourse.

Syntactic Complexity and Grammatical Compression

Informational texts often contain longer and syntactically more complex sentences than everyday conversation. Several ideas may be integrated into a single sentence through subordinate clauses, participial phrases, relative clauses, and prepositional phrases. For example:

«Students who regularly read academic texts can develop vocabulary knowledge that helps them understand increasingly complex informational materials». This sentence contains a relative clause and several embedded relationships. Such structures allow writers to express complex relationships efficiently, but they can create problems for learners who attempt to process the sentence word by word. One effective teaching strategy is to divide a complex sentence into smaller meaningful units. Students can first identify the main clause and then examine the additional information. For example: «Students / can develop vocabulary knowledge / that helps them understand complex texts». After identifying the basic structure, learners can gradually reconstruct the complete sentence. This approach can help learners understand that grammatical complexity is not simply a collection of difficult rules; it is a method of organizing meaning.

Informational Texts and English Language Learning

The use of informational texts in English classrooms has several important advantages. First, such texts expose learners to authentic academic vocabulary. Second, they provide opportunities to develop reading strategies. Third, they prepare students for university study and professional communication.

However, simply giving students difficult texts does not automatically improve their reading ability. Teachers need to provide appropriate linguistic support. A useful instructional

sequence may include three stages. Pre-reading stage. Before reading, the teacher can introduce key vocabulary, activate learners' prior knowledge, and explain the purpose of the text. For example, before reading a text about climate change, students might discuss:

- What is climate change?
- What causes it?
- What effects can it have?
- What words do we already know about this topic?

While-reading stage

During reading, learners can identify:

- key vocabulary;
- topic sentences;
- main ideas;
- supporting details;
- logical connectors;
- nominalizations;
- complex noun phrases.

They can also underline words that indicate cause, contrast, comparison, or result.

Post-reading stage

After reading, learners can summarize the text, transform complex sentences into simpler ones, create diagrams, or write their own informational paragraphs.

This process encourages students not simply to understand information but to recognize how language constructs that information.

The Role of Teachers in Developing Informational Literacy

Teachers play a central role in helping learners become comfortable with informational texts. One important principle is explicit linguistic instruction.

Students should know not only that a sentence is difficult but also why it is difficult.

For example, instead of simply telling students that the sentence

«The rapid expansion of digital communication has significantly influenced interpersonal interaction».

is difficult, the teacher can demonstrate that it contains:

- a nominalization: expansion;
- an adjective: rapid;
- a complex noun phrase: the rapid expansion of digital communication;
- an academic verb: influenced;
- another abstract noun phrase: interpersonal interaction.

Once learners can identify these features, they become more capable of analyzing similar sentences independently.

Research on EFL learners indicates that instruction based on functional linguistic awareness can provide students with concrete tools for recognizing and constructing disciplinary texts.

Practical Strategies for Teaching Informational Texts

Several classroom strategies can make informational texts more accessible.

First, vocabulary mapping can help learners organize specialized terminology around a central topic.

Second, sentence unpacking can be used to transform complex academic sentences into simpler propositions.

Third, sentence combining can then be used in the opposite direction: students combine several simple sentences to produce a more academic informational sentence.

Fourth, text annotation can encourage students to identify headings, topic sentences, supporting evidence, connectors, and key terms.

Fifth, genre comparison can help students compare narrative and informational texts and recognize how their linguistic structures differ.

For example, students can compare: «Yesterday, Ali visited a museum and saw an interesting exhibition» with: «The museum exhibition presented significant information about the historical development of the region». The first sentence is personal and narrative, while the second is impersonal and informational. Comparing such examples helps students develop genre awareness.

Recent research on pedagogical texts similarly emphasizes the importance of lexical density, nominalization, modifiers, readability, and information unpacking when adapting texts for learners.

Conclusion

Informational texts represent an essential component of English language learning because they connect language development with the acquisition of academic, scientific, and professional knowledge. Their linguistic organization differs significantly from everyday spoken language and narrative writing. Specialized vocabulary, lexical density, nominalization, complex noun phrases, passive constructions, grammatical compression, cohesive devices, and logical connectors all contribute to the way information is constructed and communicated.

For English language learners, these features may initially appear difficult because large amounts of meaning are frequently compressed into relatively short stretches of text. Nevertheless, such complexity can be made accessible through systematic and explicit instruction.

The teaching of informational texts should therefore move beyond traditional vocabulary exercises and comprehension questions. Learners should be taught to recognize how words, grammatical structures, and discourse patterns work together to construct meaning. Activities such as sentence unpacking, vocabulary mapping, identification of nominalizations, analysis of noun phrases, and examination of cohesive devices can develop learners' linguistic awareness and reading independence.

Ultimately, successful English education should prepare learners not only to communicate in everyday situations but also to understand and produce the informational and academic texts that characterize education, science, technology, and professional life. Developing awareness of the linguistic features of informational texts is consequently an important step toward stronger academic literacy and more effective English language learning.

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