

English Corner

Summarizing and concluding in reports



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How to draw conclusions and make recommendations are two skills equally important in not only report writing, but many other workplace situations such as presentations or negotiations. The main purpose of the conclusion is to summarize and highlight the significance of your main findings. Do not introduce any new material (e.g. results, analyses) in this section.

(I) Examples of conclusions

Here are three examples of conclusions from reports. The concluding remarks made by the writer are underlined.

Example A

This study set out to evaluate the effectiveness of the mandatory training course offered by Education Bureau to local secondary teachers. Most of the teachers found the course useful and practical. Female participants were generally more positive about the course than male participants. The vast majority of the participants reported that they had understood the course content. The findings of the study suggest that there is a correlation between teaching effectiveness and teachers' education level, their motivation for professional development, and their passion towards teaching.

Example B

This study of trends in graduate employment in 2010 found that the majority of the subjects were in full-time employment at the time the survey was conducted. The starting salaries received by most of the graduates ranged from \$9,000 to \$13,000 per month. The main factors which the subjects considered when selecting their jobs were salary/remuneration benefits, the work nature and career development opportunities. When asked about the difficulties they experienced during the job hunting process, most of the graduates surveyed reported that they needed more help with business English including interview techniques, writing application letters and curriculum vitae. Concerning their views on their current job, most of the subjects believed that it fitted their career goals either perfectly or to some extent. Finally, in assessing the range of factors which contributed to job satisfaction, the subjects identified "having a good relationship with superior and colleagues", "interesting and challenging work", and "a job that enables me to



develop skills and abilities” as the most satisfying aspects of their jobs. As regards job motivation, the female subjects felt that “recognition for good work” was the most important factor, while the male subjects found “salary and benefits” more important.

Example C

This study has found that English continues to function as the main medium of written communication in the post-1997 professional workplace. As might be expected, there was some degree of variation in the use of English in the government, government-related and private sectors. English is apparently still the primary language of internal written communication in the civil service, which suggests that government initiatives to promote greater use of written Chinese have yet to be fully implemented. Although English was also found to be the main written language in quasi-governmental organisations, such bodies also appear to make use of Chinese in external communication for particular purposes. The findings indicate that Chinese professionals who work for foreign-owned companies make greater use of written English in external and internal communication than their counterparts in the Hong Kong-owned sector. Generally speaking, professionals who work for large Hong Kong-owned companies need to read or write in English slightly more than those who work for small local companies. The findings relating to spoken communication suggest that contextual factors play a greater role in determining language choice than is the case with written communication. Cantonese appears to be the unmarked language of intra-ethnic communication, particularly in informal, interpersonal business settings, while the use of English seems to be restricted to situations such as presentations and meetings where expatriates are present (Evans & Green, 2003).

Language Use

1. If you want to draw a clear conclusion about your findings, you can use these expressions:

- It can be concluded that ...
- The findings clearly indicate that ...
- It is clear that ...
- This study has found / demonstrated / revealed / shown that ...

2. If you want to express caution when drawing conclusions, you can use these expressions:

- The findings seem / appear to indicate that ...
- The results suggest that ...
- The evidence points to ...

3. Conclusions often contain expressions of generality such as:

- In the main ...
- In general ...
- Overall ...
- Taken as a whole ...
- On the whole ...
- Generally speaking ...

Recommendations are actions or measures which a writer believes should be taken on the basis of the conclusions of the report. When you write recommendations, you will often want to demonstrate how your recommendation is derived from a particular conclusion.

(II) **Examples of recommendations**

Here are four examples of recommendations from business reports. The writer's recommendations are underlined.

Example A

It is suggested that language teachers should take the Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers (LPATE) and reach level 3 (benchmarked level) before they can teach the language subjects. However, this study has revealed that around a third of the teachers do not want to take the test. The results also show that there is a significant correlation between the attitude of the teachers towards the use of the test and their willingness to take the test. In view of these findings, the government should promote the need and importance of the test more before introducing the policy in full.

Example B

The results show a significant correlation between drinking and the occurrence of road accidents. It is therefore recommended that the government organise a campaign to raise awareness of the potential dangers of drunk-driving. We also suggest that more detailed research be conducted into the relationship between drinking and accidents.

Example C

Although most subjects claim that they consider safety to be of paramount importance, half of them believe that income, job security and welfare are more important than safety. Furthermore, some subjects apparently have a somewhat pessimistic view on whether accidents are preventable. In light of these findings, we propose that more emphasis be placed on accident prevention for both employers and employees.

Example D

Because these measures may be unpopular with teachers, the government should explain the importance of introducing the language benchmarking examination. The teachers should be given opportunities to express what they think about the proposal.

Language Use

1. You can use these expressions to indicate the connection between your conclusion and recommendations:

- Given ...
- In view of ...
- In the light of ...
- Taking into account / consideration ...
- Considering ...

2. Making recommendations is an important element in reports written in order to preset solutions to problems. Note the structures that are used with the following verbs, which are frequently used in recommendation sections.

- recommend
- suggest
- propose

3. When you make a recommendation, suggestion or proposal you can use a “that” clause with a modal verb (typically “should”).

- It is recommended that the institute should form a working party to investigate the problem.
- It is recommended that a working party should be formed to investigate the problem.

4. It is quite common to omit the modal verb, particularly in formal writing. If you leave out the modal, you should use the base form of the verb (i.e. as if the modal were present).

- It is recommended that the institute form a working party to investigate the problem.
- It is recommended that a working party be formed to investigate the problem.
- I suggest that the Director of Finance examine the records.
- It was proposed that Sally convene a meeting to review procedures.

5. Here are other ways of putting forward and evaluating solutions to problems in recommendation sections:

- I think / believe that the rent should be maintained at the present rate.
- The company should consider engaging a team of consultants.
- We could (introduce) ...
- One way of addressing the problem would be to (introduce) ...
 - dealing with
 - tackling
 - approaching
 - solving
 - alleviating
 - reducing
 - minimizing
 - limiting
- One possible solution would be to (introduce) ...
- What we should do is (introduce) ...
- To solve the problem of ... we should (introduce) ...
- A short-term solution would be to (introduce) ...
- In the long term, we should (introduce) ...
- The problem of ... could be alleviated if we (introduced) ...
- The main benefit / advantage of ... is ...
- One of the main disadvantages / drawbacks of ... is ...

You are suggested to complete the [Quiz](http://www.hkiaat.org/e-newsletter/Dec-11/quiz.pdf) (<http://www.hkiaat.org/e-newsletter/Dec-11/quiz.pdf>) to facilitate your learning for concluding skills.

References:

Evans, S. & Green, C. (2003). The use of English by Chinese professionals in post-1997 Hong Kong. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 24 (5), 386-412.