Introduction to the Academic Writing Workshop

Welcome to this Academic Writing Workshop, which aims to improve your ability to use online lexicographic tools (monolingual dictionaries, bilingual dictionaries, Thesauruses, and corpora) to support your English academic writing.

Everywhere you go, you can see examples of English used incorrectly – what's wrong with the signs below?

A road sign in Ueno Park, Tokyo

A tourist sign for ferry departures, Palawan, the Philippines

Although mistakes like this are usually forgiven in spoken English, they are taken more seriously in writing – particularly when they occur in academic work.

Research suggests that language learners typically use a bilingual dictionary to support their academic writing in English. This is understandable, but is often not the best strategy to find the answers you are looking for. An appreciation of the wide variety of lexicographic resources available (for free) on the Web, and how to use them effectively, will improve both the quality of your English academic writing and your overall English proficiency.

The workshop is divided into 4 parts:

I.   Monolingual dictionaries

II.   Thesauruses

III.   Online corpora (BNC, COCA) and corpus analysis software (BYU platform, AntConc)

IV.   Bilingual dictionaries

Each section includes (i) an introduction to the online resource and (ii) familiarization tasks. By the end of the workshop, you should be able to answer these questions:

- What are the strengths and weaknesses (or advantages and disadvantages) of each type of lexicographic resource?
- For each type of resource, which online platform do you prefer and why?
- Which resource(s) should you select for a particular type of query?
- What strategies most efficiently help you to find answers to your questions when querying online lexicographic resources?

Good luck & we hope you enjoy the course!