ECIL 2015 Writing Guidelines: English Language Usage

ECIL proposals and papers must be written in English. This can be a challenging task, particularly for some non-native English language speakers. In addition, even native English speakers may use varying writing styles, depending on preferences in a particular country or discipline. ECIL's English language Editorial Board offers this list of guidelines to aid editors and readers, and asks that you check your proposal and paper for each of the following points before submitting.

1. Consistency
Throughout your proposal or paper, be consistent in spelling, punctuation, writing style, and citation or referencing.

2. Spelling, punctuation and capitalization
- Choose British (U.K.) or American (U.S.) English spelling (such as colour or color, realise or realize, behaviour or behavior), and use it consistently throughout your text.
- Use the same punctuation style throughout, including placing quotation marks within **(U.K.)** or outside **(U.S.)** of punctuation at the ends of sentences.
- Spell out these symbols: **#** (use "number"); **+** (use "plus"); **&** (use "and").
- Be consistent in capitalizing throughout the text.

3. Use of Acronyms
- Spell out each acronym in full the first time you use it, followed by the acronym in parentheses, even if it seems to be universally known, such as ICT (Information Communication Technologies).
- Be aware of the fact that an acronym used widely in your culture may have a different meaning to some readers. For example some of us know 'Sails' to be a USA information literacy test, but note the following:
  > "Sails makes it easy to build custom, enterprise-grade Node.js apps. It is designed to emulate the familiar MVC pattern of frameworks." [Source: http://sailsjs.org/#/]

4. Grammar
- Avoid the passive tense.
  - Example: "The focus group was attended by fourteen undergraduate Economics graduate students."
  - Improved example: "Fourteen Economics graduate students attended the focus group session."
- Write full sentences, but avoid run-on sentences. Break very long sentences into two or more sentences, or, use a semi-colon (;) to connect them.
  - Example: "He also recommends a positive rather than a negative approach, for example, instead of a sign that reads 'No loud noise' or 'Shh,' Kupersmith recommends using a sign that says 'Quiet please'."
  - Improved example: He also recommends a positive rather than a negative approach. Instead of a sign that reads 'No loud noise' or 'Shh,' Kupersmith recommends using a sign that says 'Quiet please'."
- When reporting findings, use the past tense as the study has been concluded.
- When citing what an author has said, use the past tense, as authors can change their minds.

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- Avoid the term 'etc.' because people may imagine very different extra things to add to your list. Instead, please list important elements, or reword the sentence to indicate that you are listing examples or the most important examples.
  - <u>Example:</u> "Hands-on instruction benefits undergraduates, graduate students, etc."
  - <u>Improved example:</u> "Hands-on instruction benefits many people, including undergraduates, graduate students, and library staff.
- Avoid contractions in formal writing. For instance, use "do not" instead of "don't."
- Avoid "e.g." and "i.e." in formal writing. For "e.g." use either "for example" or "such as," or "including."
  - <u>Example:</u> "Assessment results indicate the need for intensive information literacy instruction for health care workers, e.g., nurses."
  - <u>Improved example:</u> "Assessment results indicate the need for intensive information literacy instruction for health care workers, including nurses."

5. List of Points
Start each new sub-element in a series on a new line, either numbered (as in this document) or as bullet points, in order to make each point stand out clearly for the reader.

6. Quotations
- Use three dots to indicate when you have left out a section of a quotation. If you need to add a word into the quote for clarity, put the word in brackets.
- If you are quoting a source that uses gendered language do not change the quote. You can add in brackets [sic] to signify that you do not endorse the out of date gender bias. In the example below, use of the male gender was common in 1959 but would not be appropriate today,

  > <u>Example:</u> "Huxley (1959, p. 13) suggested that it means the '*process by which the prototype human stock became (and is still becoming) … to realise more and more of his [sic] possibilities'.*"

7. Numbers – words or figures?
- In the text, spell out numbers from zero to ten and be consistent in how you report numbers.
- In graphs, charts, tables, rankings and lists use figures.
- Always spell out numbers when beginning a sentence.

8. Reporting statistics
- Use one or two decimal places for quoting correlations or reliability coefficients.
- When reporting statistics <u>in the text</u>, spell out the word 'percent.'
- <u>In graphs and tables</u>, use the percent sign (%).
  - <u>Example:</u> "A total of 49.523% (n=24) of the students disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement."
  - <u>Improved example:</u> "A total of 49.5 percent (n=24) of the students disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement."