

Academic Writing



SESSION 1: PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE



SESSION 2: QUESTION WORDS

Video timestamps:

- 00:00 – Introduction
- 00:37 – Timestamps
- 01:07 – What is academic writing?
- 02:17 – Structured, planned and focused
- 04:34 – The 5Cs [Organisation of Content]
- 07:11 – SPSE structure
- 08:00 – Paragraph Writing approaches
- 10:39 – (Interim-)Conclusions/transition sentences
- 11:54 – Example: Good and bad paragraphs

What is Academic Writing?

Main characteristics:

- 1) Structured, planned and focused**
- 2) Formal in style and tone**
- 3) Evidence-based and Critical**

1) Structured, planned and focused

- **Logical** argument:

If X is the case, then Y must follow.

- **Empirical/scientific** argument:

Lightbown (2000) conducted a study of X and found Y...

The input hypothesis proposed by Krashen (2003) states that...

- **Anecdotal** argument:

From my experience in the classroom...

MAPGENU/301 [Section 10]: The Organisation of Content [5Cs]

(University of South Africa, 2020)

Clear, Concise, Consistent, Coherent, and Critical(/Credible)

Clear:

- Avoid vague or unexplained terms. If you mention an academic term, you should also be defining it.
- Only use expressions such as "thus" and "therefore" when what you are about to say follows from what you have just said.
- Make clear what you are referring to when you use words such as "this" and "it".
- Use examples wherever possible.

Concise:

- Avoid any unnecessary information and wordiness.
- Avoid long quotations from sources rather paraphrase the information into *your own words* (always include the citation and reference).

Consistent:

- Avoid using a term in more than one way. Don't contradict on page 12 what you said on page 2.

Coherent:

- Ensure that the various sections, subsections, paragraphs and sentences of your answer follow a natural and logical progression.

Writing coherently makes use of signal/linking words or phrases:

- "Firstly,..."
- "In addition to..."
- "On the other hand..."
- "Having discussed the advantages of..."
- "This next section will look at the disadvantages of..."

Critical:

- Take a critical standpoint towards theories, analyses and arguments.
- Are the concepts and terms defined and explained clearly?
- How logical are the arguments?
- How reliable are the methods used to gather the evidence?



SPSE structure (University of South Africa, 2020)

SPSE as an essay structure:

- a) What is the **Situation?** (Intro)
- b) What is the **Problem?** (Intro and Body)
- c) What is the **Solution?** (Body)
- d) How is the solution to be **Evaluated?** (Body and Conclusion)

As a paragraph structure:

- a) Topic and argument (Introducing the **situation**) [1st sentence]
 - b) Development or **problem** [2nd]
 - c) Evidence/example and **solution** (Linking and discussing problem and evidence) [3rd]
 - d) Conclusive **evaluation** statement ((Interim-)conclusion) [Last sentence]
-

Paragraph Writing Approaches:

Topic sentence >
supporting
sentence(s) >
conclusion/
transition sentence

Basic:

- Topic sentence (claim/fact/definition)
- Development and/or argument (explanation and main idea)
- Example/evidence (citation)
- Comment of relevance and interim-conclusion

Argumentative:

- Topic sentence (claim/fact/definition)
- Development and/or argument (explanation and main idea) and Example/evidence (citation)
- Counter-argument/rebuttal and Example/evidence (citation)
- Final development/stance and comment
- Conclude relevance to the question/topic

Interim-conclusion

"An interim conclusion is a preliminary conclusion you make in a paragraph during the body of your essay, after examining or discussing certain aspects of a topic."

(University of South Africa, 2020)

Example:

"... From the discussion above, research into the role of X in additional language (AL) learning is contradictory. This could be because the construct X is difficult to define and makes it difficult to measure and assess its role in AL learning."

(University of South Africa, 2020)



Example: Bad vs Good Paragraphs

Question: Explain and discuss the competition model.

Example Paragraph

The competition model says that language is a collection of mappings. They are understood as a system of form-to-function mappings. The word cat has phonetic (/kæt/) and graphemic (cat) representations, and a function that means it is a domesticate four-legged furry animal (Saville-Troike 2012). Cues show the relationships between the words within sentences. English has a very strong word order cue, which tells learners that the subject will act on an object (Lightbown & Spada 2013). There are many cues so there is competition, and some cues are better than others and learners must choose the best cues.

Example Paragraph

The competition model suggests that language is a collection of mappings which are understood as a system of form-to-function mappings (Saville-Troike 2012). For example, a word such as 'cat' has its form made up of phonetic (/kæt/) and graphemic (cat) representations, while its function is the semantic meaning of a domesticate four-legged furry animal (Saville-Troike 2012). Similarly, cues such as grammatical markers and word order, within sentences show the relationship between the words. In the sentence 'the cat eats the mouse' the grammatical form is Subject-Verb-Object, and the function is that 'the cat eats the mouse', not 'the mouse eats the cat'. This is because English has a very strong word order cue, which will prompt learners to understand that the subject will act on the object (Lightbown & Spada 2013). Furthermore, learners learn through mapping multiple cues, but because there are so many cues there is competition where some cues are more prominent than others and learners must opt for the best cues.



Example: Bad vs Good Paragraphs

Question: Explain and discuss the competition model.

Example Paragraph

The competition model says that language is a collection of mappings. **They** are understood as a system of form-to-function mappings. The word cat has phonetic (/kæt/) and graphemic (cat) representations, and a function that means it is a domesticate four-legged furry animal (Saville-Troike 2012). Cues show the relationships between the words within sentences. English has a very strong word order cue, which tells learners that the subject will act on an object (Lightbown & Spada 2013). There are many cues so there is competition between cues.

Example Paragraph

The competition model suggests that language is a collection of mappings which are understood as a system of form-to-function mappings (Saville-Troike 2012). **For example, a word such as 'cat' has its form made up of phonetic (/kæt/) and graphemic (cat) representations, while its function is the semantic meaning of a domesticate four-legged furry animal** (Saville-Troike 2012). **Similarly,** cues such as grammatical markers and word order, within sentences show the relationship between the words. In the sentence 'the cat eats the mouse' the grammatical form is Subject-Verb-Object, and the function is that 'the cat eats the mouse', not 'the mouse eats the cat'. This is because English has a very strong word order cue, which will prompt learners to understand that the subject will act on the object (Lightbown & Spada 2013). **Furthermore, learners learn through mapping multiple cues,** but because there are so many cues there is competition where some cues are more prominent than others and learners must determine the best cues.



Thank you for watching!

Please continue to Part 2 on Question Words presented by Ms Mdali.



Academic Writing



SESSION 2: QUESTION WORDS

Video timestamps:

- 00:11 – Timestamps
- 00:15 – Blooms taxonomy
- 02:00 – Low- and high-level thinking skills
- 02:32 – Question words
- 06:44 – ‘Summarise’ example
- 07:35 – ‘Compare’ and ‘contrast’ example
- 08:29 – ‘Justify’ example
- 09:11 – Importance of providing examples
- 10:28 – Conclusion
- 11:50 – References
- 12:10 – Contact details



BLOOM'S TAXONOMY



Knowledge
Recall /regurgitate facts without understanding. Exhibits previously learned material by recalling facts, terms, basic concepts and answers.

Comprehension
To show understanding finding information from the text. Demonstrating basic understanding of facts and ideas.

Application
To use in a new situation. Solving problems by applying acquired knowledge, facts, techniques and rules in a different way.

Analysis
To examine in detail. Examining and breaking information into parts by identifying motives or causes; making inferences and finding evidence to support generalisations.

Synthesis
To change or create into something new. Compiling information together in a different way by combining elements in a new pattern or proposing alternative solutions.

Evaluation
To justify. Presenting and defending opinions by making judgements about information, validity of ideas or quality of work based on a set of criteria.

Key words:

Choose	Observe	Show
Copy	Omit	Spell
Define	Quote	State
Duplicate	Read	Tell
Find	Recall	Trace
How	Recite	What
Identify	Recognise	When
Label	Record	Where
List	Relate	Which
Listen	Remember	Who
Locate	Repeat	Why
Match	Reproduce	Write
Memorise	Retell	
Name	Select	

Key words:

Ask	Extend	Outline
Cite	Generalise	Predict
Classify	Give examples	Purpose
Compare	Illustrate	Relate
Contrast	Indicate	Rephrase
Demonstrate	Infer	Report
Discuss	Interpret	Restate
Estimate	Match	Review
Explain	Observe	Show
Express		Summarise
		Translate

Key words:

Act	Employ	Practice
Administer	Experiment with	Relate
Apply	Group	Represent
Associate	Identify	Select
Build	Illustrate	Show
Calculate	Interpret	Simulate
Categorise	Interview	Solve
Choose	Link	Summarise
Classify	Make use of	Teach
Connect	Manipulate	Transfer
Construct	Model	Translate
Correlation	Organise	Use
Demonstrate	Perform	
Develop	Plan	
Dramatise		

Key words:

Analyse	Examine	Prioritize
Appraise	Find	Question
Arrange	Focus	Rank
Assumption	Function	Reason
Breakdown	Group	Relationships
Categorise	Highlight	Reorganise
Cause and effect	In-depth discussion	Research
Choose	Inference	See
Classify	Inspect	Select
Differences	Investigate	Separate
Discover	Isolate	Similar to
Discriminate	List	Simplify
Dissect	Motive	Survey
Distinction	Omit	Take part in
Distinguish	Order	Test for
Divide	Organise	Theme
Establish	Point out	Comparing

Key words:

Adapt	Estimate	Plan
Add to	Experiment	Predict
Build	Extend	Produce
Change	Formulate	Propose
Choose	Happen	Reframe
Combine	Hypothesise	Revise
Compile	Imagine	Rewrite
Compose	Improve	Simplify
Construct	Innovate	Solve
Convert	Integrate	Speculate
Create	Invent	Substitute
Delete	Make up	Suppose
Design	Maximise	Tabulate
Develop	Minimise	Test
Devis	Model	Theorise
Discover	Modify	Think
Discuss	Original	Transform
Elaborate	Originate	Visualise

Key words:

Agree	Disprove	Measure
Appraise	Dispute	Opinion
Argue	Effective	Perceive
Assess	Estimate	Persuade
Award	Evaluate	Prioritise
Bad	Explain	Prove
Choose	Give reasons	Rate
Compare	Good	Recommend
Conclude	Grade	Rule on
Consider	How do we know?	Select
Convince	Importance	Support
Criteria	Infer	Test
Criticise	Influence	Useful
Debate	Interpret	Validate
Decide	Judge	Value
Deduct	Justify	Why
Defend	Mark	
Determine		

Actions:

Describing
Finding
Identifying
Listing
Locating
Naming
Recognising
Retrieving

Outcomes:

Definition
Fact
Label
List
Quiz
Reproduction
Test
Workbook
Worksheet

Actions:

Carrying out
Executing
Implementing
Using

Outcomes:

Demonstration
Diary
Illustrations
Interview
Journal
Performance
Presentation
Sculpture
Simulation

Actions:

Attributing
Deconstructing
Integrating
Organising
Outlining
Structuring

Outcomes:

Abstract
Chart
Checklist
Database
Graph
Mobile
Report
Spread sheet
Survey

Questions:

Can you list three ...?
Can you recall ...?
Can you select ...?
How did ... happen?
How is ...?
How would you describe ...?
How would you explain ...?
How would you show ...?
What is ...?
When did ...?
When did ... happen?
Where is ...?
Which one ...?
Who was ...?
Who were the main ...?
Why did ...?

Questions:

Can you explain what is happening ... what is meant ...?
How would you classify the type of ...?
How would you compare ...?contrast ...?
How would you rephrase the meaning ...?
How would you summarise ...?
What can you say about ...?
What facts or ideas show ...?
What is the main idea of ...?
Which is the best answer ...?
Which statements support ...?
Will you state or interpret in your own words ...?

Questions:

How would you use...?
What examples can you find to ...?
How would you solve ... using what you have learned ...?
How would you organise ... to show ...?
How would you show your understanding of ...?
What approach would you use to...?
How would you apply what you learned to develop ...?
What other way would you plan to ...?
What would result if ...?
Can you make use of the facts to ...?
What elements would you choose to change ...?
What facts would you select to show ...?
What questions would you ask in an interview with ...?

Questions:

What are the parts or features of ...?
How is ... related to ...?
Why do you think ...?
What is the theme ...?
What motive is there ...?
Can you list the parts ...?
What inference can you make ...?
What conclusions can you draw ...?
How would you classify ...?
How would you categorise ...?
Can you identify the difference parts ...?
What evidence can you find ...?
What is the relationship between ...?
Can you make a distinction between ...?
What is the function of ...?
What ideas justify ...?

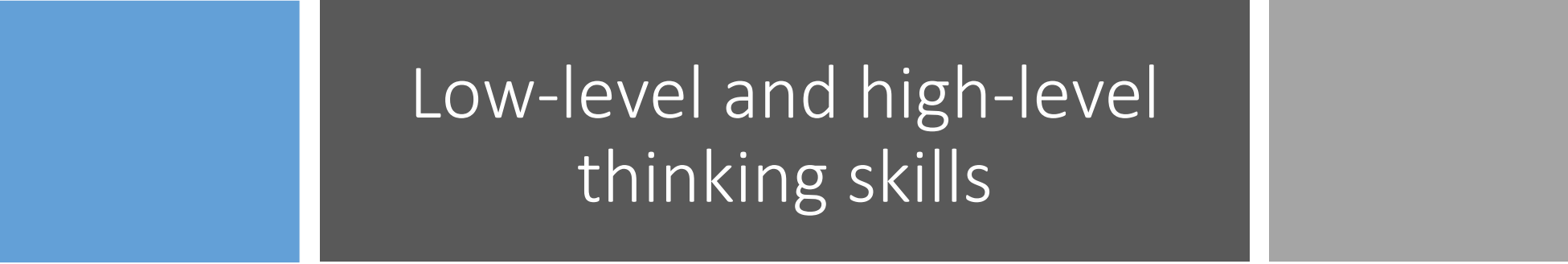
Questions:

What changes would you make to solve...?
How would you improve ...?
What would happen if...?
Can you elaborate on the reason...?
Can you propose an alternative...?
Can you invent...?
How would you adapt ... to create a different...?
How could you change (modify) the plot (plan)...?
What could be done to minimise (maximise)...?
What way would you design...?
Suppose you could ... what would you do...?
How would you test...?
Can you formulate a theory for...?
Can you predict the outcome if...?
How would you estimate the results for...?
What facts can you compile...?
Can you construct a model that would change...?
Can you think of an original way for the ...?

Questions:

Do you agree with the actions/outcomes...?
What is your opinion of...?
How would you prove/disprove...?
Can you assess the value/importance of...?
Would it be better if...?
Why did they (the character) choose...?
What would you recommend...?
How would you rate the...?
What would you cite to defend the actions...?
How would you evaluate ...?
How could you determine...?
What choice would you have made...?
What would you select...?
How would you prioritise...?
What judgement would you make about...?
Based on what you know, how would you explain...?
What information would you use to support the view...?
How would you justify...?
What data was used to make the conclusion...?

Bloom's Taxonomy: Teacher Planning Kit



Low-level and high-level thinking skills



Low Level thinking skills:

Knowledge,
Comprehension and
Application

High level thinking skills:

Analysis, Synthesis and
Evaluation

Question Words

- **Distinguish(High Level -HL)** – take into consideration the differences of two topics that sets it apart from one another.
- **Explain (HL)** – discuss and clarify to ensure the reader clearly understands your argument. Make use of illustrations, descriptions or simple but logical explanations.
- **Identify (Low Level-LL)** – name the most important characteristics of a topic.
- **Summarise (LL)** – give key aspects of the topic in a brief discussion. Omit minor details and focus on the main facts which are most important.

- **Outline (LL)** – present the data in a brief logical and systematic manner.
- **Interpret (LL)** – explain or give the meaning of something in terms of a more common concept. Your explanation should be as practical as possible.
- Give a definition/**Define (Low Level Thinking)** – give a definition which ideally should be in your own words and always includes a citation.
- **Discuss (Higher level)**– discuss a topic by examining its various aspects, a critical approach should be followed in most such cases.



Example: Summarise the procedure used to test children in Ntuli and Pretorius (2005):

Extract

- "Various aspects of the Grade R children's language and emergent literacy skills were assessed at the start of the programme, early in the year (these formed the pre-tests). The same children were assessed again eight months later (these formed the post-tests). Due to the length of the intervening time, there were unlikely to be memory effects, so the same tests that were used in the pre-tests were used in the post-tests (cf. Pretorius, 2003, for further details about the nature of these emergent literacy assessments)" (Ntuli & Pretorius 2005,98).

Summary of above extract

- The Grade R children's language and literacy skills were assessed using the same assessment in a pre-test post-test design. There were eight months between the pre and post-test.
-



Example: Compare and Contrast:

Compare Roberts (2008) study with Ntuli and Pretorius' (2005) study.

The similarities between Roberts, and Ntuli and Pretorius are that both studies carried out pre- and post- tests to determine the effect of storybook reading on vocabulary development.

Contrast the following terms; phoneme and grapheme, and provide examples:

- "A phoneme is the smallest part of spoken language that makes a difference in the meaning of words... The word "if" has two phonemes (/i/ /f/)"
- "A grapheme is the smallest part of written language that represents a phoneme in the spelling of a word. A grapheme may be just one letter, such as b, d, f, p, s; or several letters, such as ch, sh, th, -ck, ea, -igh"

(Armbruster et al. 2003:3)



Example: Justify

“You need to explain the basis of your argument by presenting the evidence that informed your outlook. In such answers, you need to present your evidence in a convincing way, demonstrating good reasons for adopting your position.

Also, you may want to consider arguments that are contrary to your position before stating a conclusion to your arguments.”

- (OxbridgeEssays 2018).

The importance of providing examples:

The argument:

The vocabulary of the learners (Group A) who were part of the reading project increased immensely as compared to that of children (Group B) who were not in the reading project.

The examples:

At the beginning of the project, Group A learners only knew names of objects in their classroom, e.g door, board, pen, table but at the end of the project, exposure to more books had helped them acquire more vocabulary for objects outside their classroom such as hall, computer, projector, garage, koala.

(Ntuli & Pretorius, 2005).

To Conclude:

- **Answer all questions** including smaller questions within the main question but remember to focus on answering the main question with assistance from the smaller ones.

For example, 'Theories of second language acquisition/learning(SLA) are still a rather contentious area in applied linguistics. Drawing from your readings so far, discuss this statement in relation to two main SLA theories. What influences to the field of SLA have these two theories brought?' (10 Marks). From this question we can see we need to **discuss two theories AND explain** what influence they made to the field of SLA. [approximately **5 marks each theory**].

- Avoid Repetition.
- **Label the question appropriately** as it is set out in the Tutorial letter. E.g. 1a, 1b, 3, 4a, 4b, 4c.
- Note **question words**: define, explain, contrast, etc.
- Note **question types**: Short questions and long questions/essay format questions. [**NO** bullet points]
- Note the **mark allocation** – it is a big hint to how much information is needed to be included in your answer.
- You will also know how much detail to include, after reading all the prescribed readings for the question.
- Support your arguments with examples.
- Proofread spelling and grammar, including your references and citations (in-text reference).

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Thank you for watching!

