

2. Successful classroom activities & materials

In this part of the workshop, we are going to share some of the activities and materials that we, as EAP tutors, find work particularly well with our students.

Most of the materials that I use, focus on **the product**, it is however important that we consider both **process** and **product** approaches to academic writing.

Let's discuss:

- What are the differences between *process* and *product* writing?
- Which approach do you tend to use in your classroom?
- Can you think of some advantages and disadvantages of each approach?
- As a learner, which approach would/do you prefer?

Process writing

The theorists behind this approach believe the key to effective writing is understanding the route writers undergo when they create and produce a written composition. Therefore, the theorists promote a focus on the writer and the processes used when writing. There are different groups within the process writing approach, for example: The Expressivists and the Cognitivists.

Elbow (1998) and Murray (1985) are two theorists that support the Expressivist view. They believe the main feature of the writing process is for writers to discover their own voice and be creative. Elbow, for example, advises learners to “Just write, trust, don’t ask too many questions, go with it” (1998: Xiii).

The Cognitivists focus more specifically on the cognitive/thinking processes involved in writing. The Cognitivists criticise the linear series writing model proposed by some theorists namely; Rohman (1965), as they view the writing process as a “non-linear exploratory and generative process whereby writers discover and reformulate their ideas as they attempt to approximate meaning” (Zamel 1983:165).

Product writing

Pincas (1982a) provides the most detailed description of the product approach. She believes that one of the general principles behind the theory is that writing as a skill, has to be taught, and it is not the result of extensive reading or free writing. She affirms that genuine written texts must be used as models to teach aspects of writing and that these models can be imitated by the learner.

This approach embraces the disembodiment of texts and encourages a focus on the “microstructural regularities” (Hyland 2002:7) found in texts. Thus textual analysis is considered key to the development of a learner’s writing ability. Pincas (1982a) supports this idea as she believes writing is essentially concerned with linguistic knowledge, lexis, syntax and cohesive devices.

Typically, L2 learners are introduced to the product approach to writing in four principal stages. These stages are: familiarisation, controlled writing, guided writing and free writing. Pincas (1982b:14) states that “Learners need to start by becoming familiar with the type of writing they are going to practice. Once they have achieved some familiarity with it, they can practise the skills involved. After such exercises they can try to produce their own piece of writing”.

Successful classroom activities that incorporate the process approach to academic writing

- Do any of you have any classroom activities that focus on process writing?
- Do you use any course books which emphasize process writing? If yes, what types of activities do they encourage?

Share your ideas with your group and then with the class.

Successful classroom activities that incorporate the product approach to academic writing

1. Focus on understanding essay titles

Read through the following activities to see how they break down the product. Once you have read each activity, discuss the following questions with your partner/group:

- Do you use this type of activity in your classroom?
- Do you use different types of activities to carry out the same task? **Share your ideas/activities.**
- Would your students benefit from carrying out this activity? If no, why not? If yes, how?

Understanding essay titles

Introduction

Students often do worse than they should in examinations or when writing assignments in English in the UK because they have not fully understood what they have been asked to do. To score high marks in an examination or an essay, it is important to fully understand what a question means and how it should be answered (Swales, 1982).

TASK A

In answering the question one of the key tasks is to identify the instruction.

In the exercise below match the instruction verbs to the correct definitions:

Instruction

Explanation

Account for	Clarify, interpret and account for the material you present. Give reasons for important features or developments, and try to analyze causes.
Analyze	Consider carefully and in detail by breaking the problem down into its constituent parts, identifying and describing in detail the main characteristics, and recognizing the relationships between them.
Discuss	Explaining the reasons for, giving an indication of all relevant circumstances. This is very different from "give an account of", which asks only for a detailed description.
Explain	Given a set of instances, pick out a particular subset.
Identify	Investigation or examination carefully by argument and debate, giving

	pros and cons, advantages and disadvantages. Be complete and give details. Consider all sides of the issue and reach a balanced conclusion.
Outline	Make an appraisal of the worth of something, in the light of its truth or utility, including both advantages and limitations. Emphasize the views of authorities as well as your personal opinion. Also: 'assess'.
Evaluate	Provide a framework description of the main features or general principles of a subject, omitting minor details, and emphasizing structure, arrangement or classification of the material.

Analysing the question

To analyse the title, it is useful to follow the following steps:

- 1) Identify the *topic*.
- 2) If the *topic* has a *restriction* or *expansion*, identify it.
- 3) Search for the *aspect*. This is the angle or point of view on the subject matter. Often, the *aspect* is a phrase ending in 'of', e.g. 'the importance of', 'the contribution of'. Be sure you are clear about how the *aspect* relates to the subject matter. It can be an example of it, a stage in its sequence, the cause or effect, one of the solutions to it as a problem etc.
- 4) Identify the *instruction* (which often comes at the beginning) and decide what it means and what it requires you to do.

TASK B

1. Identify the *topic*.
 2. If the *topic* has a *restriction* or *expansion*, identify it.
 3. Search for the *aspect*.
 4. Identify the *function*
- 1) An analysis of the changes in US policy towards China during the 1970s.
 - 2) An explanation of the concept of 'role' in corporate management.
 - 3) A comparison and contrast of the effects of overcrowding in the developed world.
 - 4) An evaluation of the contribution of political parties to the development of public policy in the United States and Canada.
 - 5) Discuss the use of behaviour therapy in clinical psychology
 - 6) An outline of the requirements for declaring bankruptcy in French Law.

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Brainstorming

TASK C

Before you start writing an essay, it is often helpful to write down the ideas you have about the topic.

Working with a partner, choose one of the essay titles above and brainstorm some ideas below.

TASK D

Imagine that the length of the essay is 3000 words. What percentage should be given to the introduction and what percentage should be given to the conclusion?

Introduction	
Main body	
Conclusion	
	Total 3000 words

2. Focus on: Introductions, main bodies & conclusions

Before you look at the materials, discuss:

- How do you make your students aware of what to include in a high-scoring introduction, main body or conclusion?

We are now going to look at how to write a good academic introduction and conclusion. Before we begin, here are a few questions for you to consider.

Introductions

1. Do you find writing introductions difficult? If yes, why?
2. What is the purpose of an introduction?
3. What should you typically include in an introduction?
4. What percentage of an academic piece of work should the introduction be?
5. Why is an introduction one of the most important parts of an academic piece of writing?

We are now going to look at some high-scoring and some high-scoring introductions.

Introductions

High-scoring introduction 1

Read the following introduction. The key features have been identified.

<p>[1] Immigration is a controversial issue due to its various effects on the UK's society. [2] It is constantly on the rise and in recent years has shown no signs of slowing down. A recent study carried out by the Office of National Statistics (2011) has shown an increase to around 36% of the net migration demonstrating the rise in the number of immigrants entering the UK. There has been a long tradition of immigration with the UK receiving "immigrants for centuries" (Segal and Elliott 2010: 124). After the Second World War, "which left over 40 million displaced..." (Castles and Miller 2003: 105), the UK openly searched for labor immigrants to help and rebuild the economy and industries damaged during the war. [3] Due to immigration, the UK has experienced a number of damaging effects on its society. [4] This essay will examine the problems immigration has such as: the drain on the welfare state, criminal connections, and their neglect to the British way of life. However acknowledgement will also be made, exploring counter arguments that are presented in support of immigration including the economic benefits. [5] It will start by looking at the problems that immigration has including the open borders that the UK exercises. Significance will be made of the consequences of the drain on the welfare for example, and later exploring the benefits; notably to the economy, that immigration creates.</p>	<p>[1] Introduction to the topic</p> <p>[2] Background information with evidence</p> <p>[3] Thesis statement</p> <p>[4] Purpose of the essay</p> <p>[5] Outline of the structure</p>
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High-scoring Introduction 2

Read the introduction and identify the key features.

<p>[1] English is a dominant language in the world today. [2] The primary reasons for its dominance can be linked to certain historical events that have occurred throughout the world. There are historians that believe that Britain is the primary reason why English is a globally influential language (Graddol 1997), while others state its dominance is as a result of the economic power of the United States of America (USA) (Crystal 2003) and naturally, there is a minority that maintain a different reason. [3] This essay will try and demonstrate that while the dominance of English can be linked to the economic power of the USA, there are also other factors to consider. [4] This essay</p>	<p>[1]</p> <p>[2]</p> <p>[3]</p> <p>[4]</p> <p>Is anything missing?</p>
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will start by considering the historical and political predisposition of English. It will then underline the economic use of English and lastly it will study the limitations of the use of English as a global language.	
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Time to reflect

- What do you notice about the high-scoring introductions?
- Are there any key features that you have not used before?
- Underline any phrases that you could use in your introductions in the future?

Low-scoring Introductions

We are now going to look at some low-scoring introductions. Identify the key features. How could they be improved?

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The same process can be carried out with main body paragraphs and conclusions.

3. Focus on overall essay structure

Structuring an Essay

- The aim of this lesson is to familiarise you with conventions of writing an academic essay.
We will look in detail at how an essay is structured, focussing on the style and content

1 TOPIC DISCUSSION – Discuss in pairs/small groups

You are going to read an essay about care for the elderly. Before you read the essay text think about the following questions:

- What issues connected with old age are topics of discussion / debate in your country?
- What opinions do you have about those issues?
- Do you have grandparents who are still alive? What do they do? Where do they live?
- How would you feel about your parents living with you when they get old? What could be positive / negative about it? What would the alternatives be? What would be advantageous about those alternatives? Which do you think is best?

Before you read the essay have a look at these words associated with essay writing. With a partner try and explain what they mean:

- a thesis statement
- an argument
- an opinion
- evidence
- a direct quotation
- a citation
- a list of references

2 ESSAY INTRODUCTIONS

Now read the introduction to the essay and answer the following questions:

1. Does the writer agree with the statement in the title?
2. Which part is the thesis statement?
3. What is the purpose of the sentence that starts '*This essay highlights...*'
4. How many paragraphs do you think will be in the main body of the essay?
5. What grammatical tenses are used in the introduction
 - a) when referring to research or background information ?
 - b) when referring to the content of the essay?

It is to the benefit of society for family units living together to include the older generation. To what extent do you agree with this statement?

In recent years in the UK there has been an increasing trend towards smaller families, with a growing number of families having only one child (National Statistics Online, 2013). At the same time, there has been talk in UK political circles that some responsibility for social welfare, in particular care of the elderly, should be moved from the government to families. According to the most recent data 12% of the UK adult population provide unpaid care for senior family members (Department of Health, 2012). The proposed government policy marks a dangerous shift that could lead to a variety of social problems, not only for the elderly people themselves, but also for the families that would have to look after them. This essay highlights three problems inherent in a system where the elderly are dependent on family; lack of independence, financial concerns, and the considerations of younger members of the family. Counter arguments to these points are also addressed.

3 MAIN BODY PARAGRAPHS

This essay has four main paragraphs. Each paragraph needs **evidence to support the main point**. Look at the evidence below and decide which paragraph each should be in:

Paragraph 1 – Lack of independence

Paragraph 2 – Finance

Paragraph 3 – The young

Paragraph 4 – Counter arguments

- a. Baker (2009), conducting a survey of 10,000 young people living with their families in the UK from a variety of social and ethnic backgrounds, also found that these young people had a strong desire to leave home.
- b. Research has shown that up to 76% of older people with children would prefer not to live with their children because of issues related to independence (Johnson, 2005).
- c. Apart from these direct costs incurred over the period of care, there is often a long-term, indirect cost for those who take time off from their careers.
- d. Research has shown this to be the case for young people in traditional Pakistani families living in England (Black, 2011, p102).

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4 PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE

This is the first main paragraph from the essay.

What is the purpose of the first sentence in the paragraph?

Often, it is the elderly people themselves who are reluctant to live with their children. Two main reasons are commonly given for this. The first is that many want to retain their independence. They want to be able to come and go as they please, and to be able to live their lives in their own way and not have to fit in with other people, even if they are family. Research has shown that up to 76% of older people with children would prefer not to live with their children because of issues related to independence (Johnson, 2005). Secondly, many elderly people are proud of being able to look after themselves, and would feel deep shame to be looked after by anyone, even close family members. Baker (2009), for example, found that 89% of older relatives questioned would be ashamed to feel that they needed to be looked after. The senior members of the family often treasure their independence as much as the young.

This is the typical structure of a paragraph in an academic essay:

- i. Topic sentence
- ii. Supporting statement 1
- iii. Evidence 1
- iv. Supporting statement 2
- v. Evidence 2
- vi. Concluding statement

- Identify these sections in the paragraph
- What is the difference between the supporting statement and the evidence?
- What other things could be said in the concluding statement?

5 PARAGRAPH COHERENCE

If each main paragraph has a single topic or theme then it is important that this is reflected in the vocabulary you use. However, you do not want to repeat the same words over and over and over and over and over again as this will become repetitive and annoying to the reader.

Look at the third main paragraph. There is a lot of repetition of the word **family** and **young people**. What synonyms can you think of for these words? You can also use **pronouns** to avoid repeating the same words.

Try to replace some of these words so that the paragraph is still easy to follow, but it avoids too much repetition. (Note: if you change *all* of them, it may be difficult to read).

Extended **families** can also impact on **younger family members** by reducing **the young people's** independence. A large **family**, especially an extended **family**, is not always a good environment for **young people** to develop in. This is because **young people** can be made to feel it is **young people's** duty to carry out the wishes of **young people's** elders, which may not always be in **young people's** best interests. Research has shown this to be the case for **young people** in traditional Pakistani **families** living in England (Black, 2011, p102). It is natural for **young people** to want to leave parental influence and make decisions for themselves. Baker (2009), conducting a survey of 10,000 **young people** living with their **families** in the UK from a variety of social and ethnic backgrounds, also found that **these young people** had a strong desire to leave home. The aspirations of all members of the **family** should therefore be taken into account.

- For more information on **Cohesion** in paragraphs look at this link:

http://www.uefap.com/writing/parag/par_coh.htm

7 USING SOURCES

Here are the four main body paragraphs for the essay, together with the introduction. Read it and answer the following questions about the sources (these have been highlighted in the text):

1. How many different sources are used in the essay?
2. Which two will **not be included** in the list of references at the end of the essay? Why?
3. Why do some sources have names of **people** and others names of **organisations**?
4. What is meant by **p. 272** - when is this included?
5. Compare the ways these two sources are referred to:
 - a. Research has shown that up to 76% of older people with children would prefer not to live with their children because of issues related to independence (Johnson, 2005).
 - b. Thornton, (2011) points out that increasing numbers of households rely on more than one income to meet their daily needs...
6. What is meant by '**cited by**'? When should you use this?
7. The last paragraph refers to 'Stuifbergen **et al** (2011)' – why is **et al** used here?

It is to the benefit of society for family units living together to include the older generation. To what extent do you agree with this statement?

In recent years in the UK there has been an increasing trend towards smaller families, with a growing number of families having only one child (**National Statistics Online, 2013**). At the same time, there has been talk in UK political circles that some responsibility for social welfare, in particular care of the elderly, should be moved from the government to families. According to the most recent data 12% of the UK adult population provide unpaid care for senior family members (**Department of Health, 2012**). The proposed government policy marks a dangerous shift that could lead to a variety of social problems, not only for the elderly people themselves, but also for the families that would have to look after them. This essay highlights three problems inherent in a system where the elderly are dependent on family; lack of independence, financial concerns, and the considerations of younger members of the family. Counter arguments to these points are also addressed.

Often, it is the elderly people themselves who are reluctant to live with their children. Several main reasons are commonly given for this. The first is that many want to retain their independence. They want to be able to come and go as they please, and to be able to live their lives in their own way and not have to fit in with other people, even if they are family. Research has shown that up to 76% of older people with children would prefer not to live with their children because of issues related to independence (**Johnson, 2005**). Secondly, many elderly people are proud of being able to look after themselves, and would feel deep shame to be looked after by anyone, even close family members. **Baker (2009)**, for example, found that 89% of older relatives questioned would be ashamed to feel that they needed to be looked after. The senior members of the family often treasure their independence as much as the young.

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Time to share...

Now that you have looked through some of the ways in which I break down the product, it's time for you to share some of the materials that you find work well with your students.

- Tell your partner/group about the task.
- What your students like about the task
- What it teaches them
- How you incorporate it into the class

List of references (Process & product writing)

Elbow, P. (1998). *Writing with power: techniques for mastering the writing process*. Oxford: OUP.

Hyland, K. (2002). *Teaching and Researching Writing*. Longman.

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Zamel, V. (1982). Writing: The Process of Discovering Meaning in *TESOL Quarterly*. Vol. 16/2:195-209.