

Professional Development Programme

Exploring the Academic Use of English in the Senior Secondary English Language Classroom

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Workshop Objectives

- To introduce teachers to language features and purposes of academic texts
- To discuss effective strategies for deepening students' awareness and understanding of the role of academic use of English in achieving the purposes of different academic texts
- To provide teachers with hands-on activities on designing learning activities that engage students in exploring the academic use of English in academic texts and applying them in writing academic texts

Workshop Agenda

- Typical features of the academic use of English
- Linguistic features in academic/formal texts
- Academic use of English in reading and writing

English Language Education

Key Learning Area

English Language

Curriculum and Assessment Guide (Secondary 4 - 6)

Jointly prepared by the Curriculum Development Council and
the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority

Published for use in schools by the Education Bureau
HKSARG
2021
Effective from Secondary 4 in the 2021/22 school year

4.2.3 Promoting the Academic Use of English

English is one of the major mediums of instruction in different senior secondary subjects and university courses. It is therefore crucial to promote the academic use of English to heighten students' awareness of English commonly used in academic texts they read and/or write in other subjects, facilitating their current and/or further studies. English teachers can take the lead to raise students' awareness of the style and features of academic texts by selecting appropriate texts and designing relevant learning activities.

Importance of Academic Language

*“Academic language is the language needed by students to **understand and communicate in the academic disciplines**. Academic language includes such things as **specialized vocabulary, conventional text structures within a field** (e.g., essays, lab reports) and other **language related activities typical of classrooms**, (e.g., expressing disagreement, discussing issues, asking for clarification). Academic language includes both productive and receptive modalities. **One of your goals for the learning segment should be to further develop your students’ academic language abilities.** This means that your learning objectives should focus on language as well as on content. You can and should **communicate content** through means other than language, e.g., physical models, visuals, demonstrations. However, you should also develop your students’ abilities **to produce and understand oral and written texts typical in your subject area as well as to engage in language-based tasks.**”*

Definition of Academic Language

- “the **specialized language**, both oral and written, of **academic settings** that **facilitates communication and thinking** about **disciplinary content**” (Nagy & Townsend, 2012, p. 92)
- “**the language used in school** to **acquire new or deeper understanding** of the content and to **communicate that understanding** to others” (Gottlieb & Ernst-Slavit, 2013, p. 2)
- “**the language used in school** to help students **acquire and use knowledge**” (Anstrom et al., 2010, p. iv)
- “**the formalized language of school** ... builds a foundation that helps our students **define terms, form concepts, and construct knowledge**” (Johnson, 2009, p. 1)

Academic Use of English

- Language across the Curriculum (LaC)
- English as the medium of instruction (EMI)

Most immediate source:
Textbooks and reference books



Student-generated texts (e.g., assignments):

- Lab reports, research reports, essays, proposals, formal letters, etc.

What are the key academic language functions served by these texts?

Academic Use of English

Lab Reports (Science)

To describe procedures

To report observations

To explain causality and reasons

To make speculations

Research Projects (e.g., Citizenship & Social Development)

To define and describe an issue

To synthesise information

To evaluate evidence and perspectives

To argue and persuade

Essays (e.g., History, Geography, Economics)

To interpret and evaluate

To justify and persuade

To compare and contrast

Formal Letters and Proposals (e.g., English)

To state a purpose and make requests

To justify and provide reasons

To make recommendations

To persuade and anticipate outcomes

Major Purposes of Academic Texts

Explaining

- To clarify concepts, processes or causes and effects (e.g. explaining how public housing developed in Hong Kong)

Describing and reporting

- To present factual information or findings in a neutral tone (e.g., lab reports, historical accounts, survey reports or news-style factual descriptions)

Comparing and contrasting

- To highlight similarities and differences between ideas, systems, places or data sets (e.g. comparing two housing policies or two energy sources)

Sequencing / Procedures

- To give ordered steps or stages in a process (e.g., experimental procedures, instructions, timelines of events or “how-to” explanations)

Problem-solution

- To identify an issue, analyse causes and effects, and propose or evaluate solutions

Arguing and evaluating

- To present a stance, support it with reasons and evidence, and weigh alternatives

Academic Use of English

Academic use of English

A purposeful practice or application that emphasises the functional, strategic and contextual deployment of English to achieve specific goals

Use English appropriately for a purpose and to perform a function (e.g., use of **passive voice** in lab reports **to maintain objectivity**)

Teaching Implication

Design activities where students explore how language is used in texts to achieve purposes and then apply that understanding in their own writing

Connecting **form**
to **function**

Academic Use of English

Academic-style texts

- informative, expository or argumentative texts
- formal letters
- proposals
- problem-solution essays
- editorials
-



Structured arguments or explanations, paraphrasing, logical organisation, cohesion and coherence, discriminating between main ideas and supporting details, etc.

Text Types for KS1 (P1 – 3)	Additional Text Types for KS2 (P4 – 6)	Additional Text Types for KS3 (S1 – 3)	Additional Text Types for KS4 (S4 – 6)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertisements • Captions • Cards • Cartoons and comics • Charts • Conversations • Coupons • Diaries • Directions • Fables and fairy tales • Forms • Illustrations • Instructions • Labels • Leaflets • Lists • Menus • Notes and messages • Notices • Personal descriptions • Personal letters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accounts • Announcements • Autobiographies • Biographies • Blogs • Brochures • Catalogues • Children’s encyclopaedias • Dictionaries • Directories • Discussions • Emails • Explanations of how and why • Formal letters • Informational reports • Jokes • Journals • Maps and legends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Book reviews/reports • Encyclopaedias • Film reviews • Interviews • Itineraries • Letters to the editor • Manuals • Memoranda • Newspaper/Magazine articles • Presentations • Short films • Short novels • Social media texts • Talks • Trailers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abstracts/synopses • Agendas • Debates • Documentaries • Editorials • Essays • Feature articles • Films • Minutes • Novels • Proposals • Speeches • Resumes • Thesauri

- Tables
- Timetables

Features of Academic-style Texts

Comparison: At Word Level

Everyday English	Academic Use of English
Common, everyday informal words and phrases	More formal, specialised vocabulary, discipline-specific jargon
More general or colloquial terms, and may not be as concerned with precision (e.g., <i>OK</i>)	Precise and accurate terminology to convey specific meanings (e.g., <i>acceptable, appropriate</i>)
Use contractions, informal expressions , and incomplete sentences for the sake of brevity or familiarity	Avoid contractions, slang or informal expressions
Avoid excessive acronyms in order to be accessible to a wider audience	Occasional use of acronyms (typically defined on first use)
Fewer qualifiers and modifiers, leading to a more straightforward and direct communication style	Qualifiers and modifiers to provide nuance and precision in describing concepts or ideas (e.g., <i>a significant proportion</i>)
Use figurative language , such as idioms and metaphors , to convey meaning in a more creative and expressive way	Figurative language used less frequently

Comparison: At Sentence Level

Everyday English	Academic Use of English
Personal pronouns (<i>I, you, we</i>) to convey a sense of subjectivity or personal opinion	Third-person pronouns (<i>he, she, they</i>) to convey a sense of objectivity
Use the active voice more frequently	Use the passive voice to convey objectivity and focus on the action rather than the subject
Simpler sentence structures , usually basic subject-verb-object patterns	More complex sentence structures with more subordination and coordination
More flexibility and tolerance for colloquialisms, slang, and informal grammar	Greater emphasis on correct grammar, punctuation, and sentence mechanics
More direct and assertive in expressing opinions or making statements (e.g., <i>always, never, definitely, everyone knows</i>)	Hedging and cautious language to express uncertainty or to qualify statements (e.g., <i>may, might, tends to, in many cases, is likely to</i>)
Shorter clauses/sentences	More information packed into noun groups (e.g., <i>the rapid increase in..., the main reason for..., the impact of...</i>)

Comparison: At Paragraph Level

Everyday English	Academic Use of English
More concise and may rely on context or assumptions	Longer and more detailed explanations , with a focus on precision and clarity
Personal opinions, biases, and subjective viewpoints without the need for extensive analysis or objectivity	An objective and analytical approach to information and ideas
More frequent topic shifts and looser sequencing , with meaning carried by context rather than formal connectives	Clearer transitions to maintain coherence between ideas within and across paragraphs

Comparison: At Text Level

Everyday English	Academic Use of English
Structure and organisation may be less important ; may not adhere to strict organisational patterns and may be more conversational and spontaneous	A structured and organised approach (Introduction → Body → Conclusion); ideas presented in a logical and coherent way, with clear transitions between sections
Stronger emotion/judgement (e.g., <i>wonderful, awesome, terrible, amazing, ridiculous</i>)	More measured evaluation (e.g., <i>problematic, beneficial, ineffective, significant</i>); a focus on facts and evidence
No formal citations or sources	Citations and references to support claims and provide evidence
More on personal opinions, anecdotes , and less formal methods of persuasion	A stronger emphasis on presenting evidence, logical reasoning , and constructing well-supported arguments
Casual, conversational and subjective tone	Objective and formal tone
Often assume shared meaning	Often define key terms or narrow meaning

Features and Description of Academic Language

Vocabulary

Sentence structures

Tone and stance

Decontextualisation

Genre

Something not
in the
immediate
physical
environment

Specific form or type of
discourse that has
distinguishing lexical and
grammatical features

The degree of
familiarity of
topic or
audience based
on the context

Making Comparison using Student-friendly Language

- Everyday vocabulary vs topic/subject-specific vocabulary
- General/vague wording vs. precision (e.g., *Do we know a more specific quantity/condition?*)

- Personal vs. impersonal language
- Objectivity signals (e.g., *Does the sentence focus on ideas or people?*)
- Certainty level (e.g., *How sure does the writer sound?*)
- Evidence signals (e.g., *Does the writer show where the ideas come from?*)
- Sentence “packaging” (e.g., *How much information is expressed in one sentence?*)
- Linking and logical signposting (e.g., *How does the writer guide the reader through the logic?*)

- Audience and situation clues (e.g., *Who is this written for? In what setting?*)
- Purpose (e.g., *Is the writer explaining, arguing, evaluating, reporting, comparing?*)

English Language Education Key Learning Area

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Common Features of Academic Texts

Academic texts refer to texts that students read and/or produce when studying subjects of other KLAs (e.g. Science Education, Mathematics Education, Personal, Social and Humanities Education). The purpose of an academic text is usually to explain an idea or concept with data/statistics, to discuss an issue with evidence or to argue and justify a point. Academic texts are generally formal, objective, precise and technical (with subject-specific terms).

Formal

Objective

Precise

Technical

**An important teaching focus:
Language features needed to realise these!**



Everyday English

Everyday English

Skinny guys should eat more protein and **carbs** to **put on weight**.

We **did a study** and **found** that lack of regular exercise **causes** a range of chronic health conditions.

The software helps firms **keep and find old emails**.

One of the effects of **cutting down too many trees** is that some animals and plants will lose their **homes**.



VS

Academic English



Academic English

A higher intake of protein and **carbohydrates** helps **underweight people** to **gain weight**.

A **study was conducted** and it was **found that** physical inactivity could **be a cause** of a range of chronic health conditions.

The software helps firms **archive and retrieve emails in the past 12 months**.

One of the effects of **deforestation** is the loss of **habitats** for some animals and plants.

Style of Academic Language

Formal

e.g. Use **nouns** & **avoid colloquial language**

Objective & Impersonal

e.g. Use **the passive voice** & **hedging words**

Precise

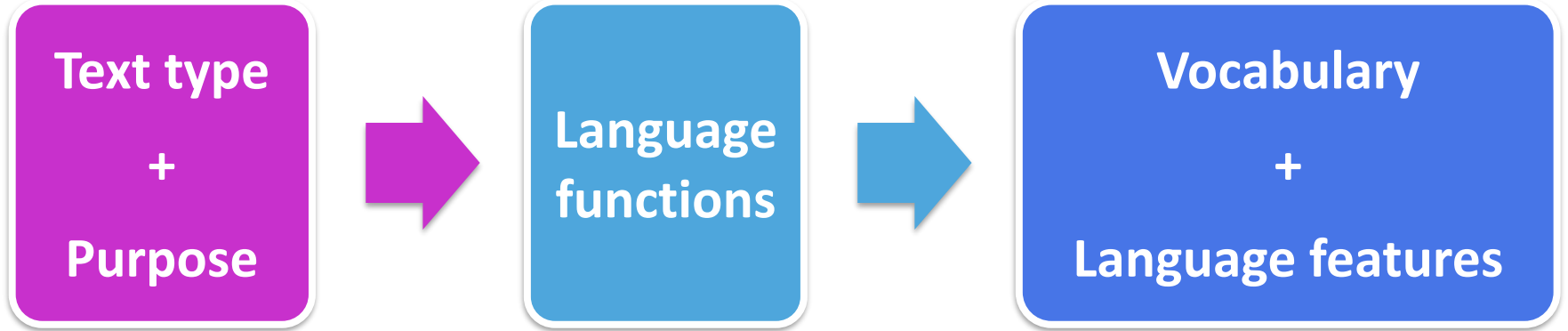
e.g. Use **exact words** & **provide specific details**

Technical

e.g. Use **subject-specific words**

**Reading and Understanding
Academic Texts:
Practical Strategies**

In Simple Terms...



Different purposes = Different language

Purpose-Feature Connection

- Study the text
- Determine its communicative purpose
- Support your decision based on the language choices in the text
- What language functions can you identify in the text?

Purpose-Feature Connection

- Study the text again.
- Design at least two in-class activities to help your students read the text
 - understand what is being said (content) and how it is being said (language functions/features)
 - understand the relationship between the two

Focus on the
academic use of
language, NOT
reading skills

Reflection

- Would you adapt the reading text to better suit your learners? If so, how would you adapt the text?
- How would you adapt the activities to cater for learner diversity?

Types of vocabulary

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graph TD; A[Types of vocabulary] --> B[General / everyday / core vocabulary]; A --> C[Academic vocabulary]; A --> D[Technical vocabulary];
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**General /
everyday / core
vocabulary**

Basic words used
often in everyday
conversation

**Academic
vocabulary**

More complex,
frequently occurring
words in academic
settings across a
variety of disciplines

**Technical
vocabulary**

Highly
specialised/technical
low-frequency words
that are related to a
specific discipline

Vocabulary Learning and Teaching

- Parts of speech
- Word formation (e.g., prefixes, roots)
- Semantic relationships (e.g., synonyms and antonyms)
- Collocations
- Polysemantic words
- Register (e.g., formal vs. informal; slang vs. academic)
- Connotation (i.e., positive, negative, neutral)

Writing Academic Texts: Practical Strategies

Overall Analysis

- Read the text and identify the following:

Purpose

Audience

Tone

Content

Text type

Writing Academic Texts

- Study the text
- Design at least two in-class activities to help your students **write** this text (a balanced discussion)

Intro

Issue + context +
both sides +
preview

Pros

3-4 points with
explanation

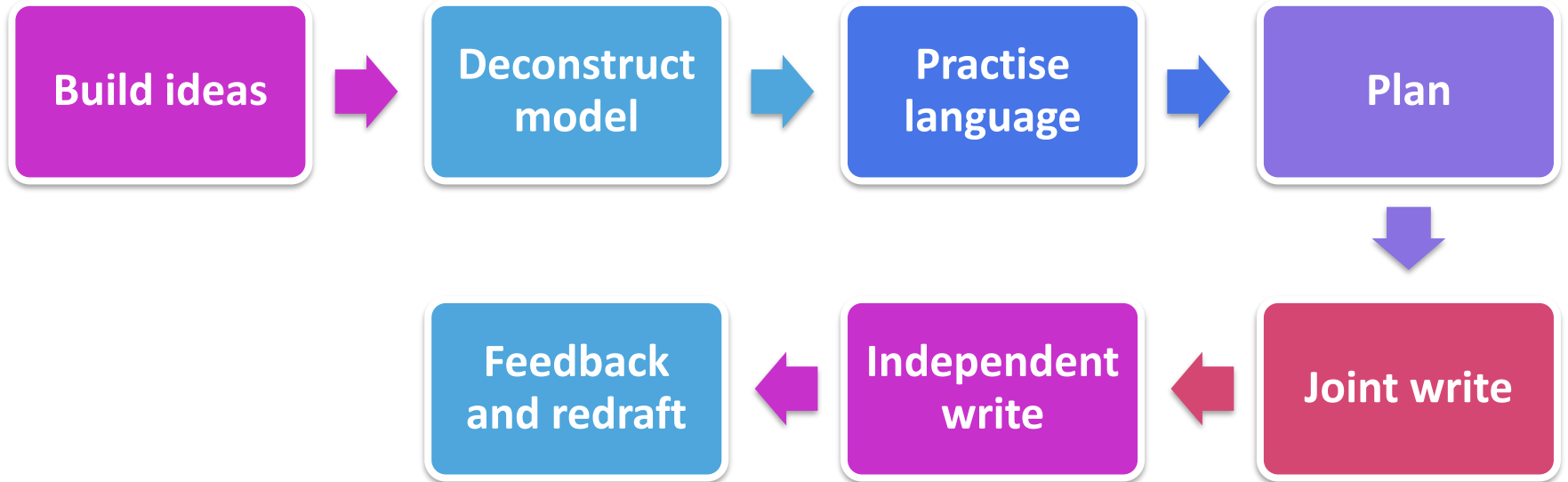
Cons

3-4 points with
explanation

Conclusion

Balanced
judgement +
recommendation

Genre-based + Process Writing Approach



Your Try: Putting Everything Together

- Study the text
- Drawing on some of the strategies/techniques introduced just now, what classroom activities would you design to help your students produce one of the sections of this text?

Curriculum Planning: Progressive Development

Unpacking dense information	Skill in comprehending and using complex words and complex sentences that facilitate concise communication (e.g., nominalisations, embedded clauses, expanded noun phrases)
Connecting ideas logically	Skill in comprehending and using 'connectives' prevalent in academic texts to signal relationships between ideas (e.g., consequently, on the one hand ... on the other hand)
Tracking participants and ideas	Skill in identifying or producing the terms or phrases used to refer to the same participants or themes throughout an academic text (e.g., Water evaporates at 100 degrees Celsius. This process ...).
Organising analytic texts	Skill in organising analytic texts, especially argumentative texts, according to its conventional academic structure (e.g., thesis, argument, counter-argument, conclusion) and paragraph-level structures (e.g., compare/contrast; problem/solution)

Curriculum Planning: Progressive Development

Understanding metalinguistic vocabulary	Skill in understanding precise meanings, in particular, in using language to make thinking and reasoning visible, known as metalinguistic vocabulary (e.g., hypothesis, generalisation, argument)
Understanding a writer's viewpoint	Skill in understanding or using markers that signal a writer's viewpoint, especially 'epistemic stance markers', those that signal a writer's degree of certainty in relationship to a claim (e.g., certainly; it is unlikely that)
Recognising academic language	Skill in recognising more academic language when contrasted with more colloquial language in communicative contexts where academic language use is expected (e.g., more academic vs. more colloquial definitions of nouns)

THE LEARNING PROGRESSION FRAMEWORK (LPF)

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

The Learning Progression Framework for ENGLISH LANGUAGE (READING SKILLS)

Reading – ATM 1	Reading – ATM 2	Reading – ATM 3	Reading – ATM 4	Reading – ATM 5	Reading – ATM 6	Reading – ATM 7	Reading – ATM 8
Understanding information and ideas in texts about simple facts using basic reading strategies as appropriate.	Understanding information and ideas in texts about simple facts using basic reading strategies as appropriate.	Understanding and inferring information from texts using a small range of reading strategies as appropriate.	Understanding and inferring information from texts using a small range of reading strategies as appropriate.	Understanding and inferring information from texts using a small range of reading strategies as appropriate.	Understanding and inferring information from texts using a small range of reading strategies as appropriate.	Understanding and inferring information from texts using a small range of reading strategies as appropriate.	Understanding, inferring and comparing information from texts using a small range of reading strategies as appropriate.
Underlying Principles							
<p>1. Language development strategies, general skills, and positive values and attitudes are essential to English Language learning and form an integral part of the learning-teaching-assessment cycle.</p> <p>2. Learners are exposed to a variety of text types and reading programs (e.g. reading for academic development, reading for pleasure) in preparation and life applications.</p> <p>3. Selection of a wide range of texts of appropriate lengths and different genres, including authentic texts, is essential to the development of reading skills and strategies (e.g. assessing the specific information, identifying the key message/content that is well as learners' assessment of different others).</p> <p>4. The literacy between tasks and texts is a factor for consideration when teachers design a range of tasks for learners to demonstrate their understanding of the texts. In particular, task demand increase with the complexity of learners' progress in the development of reading skills and strategies. To cater for learner diversity, simple tasks can be included for complex texts to maintain learners' confidence, and difficult tasks for simple texts to stretch their abilities.</p> <p>5. Teacher support is essential to helping learners understand the text and document to their understanding during the learning and teaching process. Teachers are also expected to help learners activate their prior knowledge and experiences in the process of interacting with the text. In learner progress, the amount of support provided is a directly related to learners' diverse backgrounds.</p>							
<p>ATM – Assessment Milestone</p> <p style="text-align: right;">© English Language Education Institute, Curriculum Development Institute, Education Bureau, The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, 2014. All rights reserved.</p>							

BACKGROUND

In support of the curriculum reform and the recommendations detailed in a series of associated curriculum documents, schools are encouraged to put emphasis on “Assessment for Learning” as an integral part of the learning-teaching-assessment cycle. In addition, the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) has endorsed the development of a Learning Progression Framework (LPF) from Primary One to Secondary Six for the subject of English Language. Its major aim is to help teachers better understand and articulate learners’ performance, and to help teachers plan strategically how to enhance English learning and teaching.

In the process of developing and validating the LPF, tryouts were conducted in 36 primary and 30 secondary schools, including those schools that participated in the project “Developing and Using a Learning Outcomes Framework to Enhance the Learning and Teaching of English at Primary and Secondary Levels” from 2003 to 2006, to collect data about students’ ability and performance and to explore how constructive feedback could be given to motivate students and to enhance learning and teaching. The draft LPF was then refined, based on the analysis and interpretation of the school tryout data as well as the suggestions from an overseas curriculum and assessment consultant, teacher focus groups, the CDC Ad Hoc Committee on Assessment for Learning and the CDC Committee on English Language Education.

The Learning Progression Framework for
ENGLISH LANGUAGE (READING SKILLS)

Reading – ATM 1	Reading – ATM 2	Reading – ATM 3	Reading – ATM 4	Reading – ATM 5	Reading – ATM 6	Reading – ATM 7	Reading – ATM 8
Understanding information and ideas in some short simple texts, using some reading strategies as appropriate	Understanding information, ideas and feelings in a small range of short simple texts, using some reading strategies as appropriate	Understanding and inferring information, ideas and feelings in a small range of simple texts, using and integrating a small range of reading strategies as appropriate	Understanding and inferring information, ideas and feelings in a range of simple texts, using and integrating a small range of reading strategies as appropriate	Understanding and inferring information, ideas, feelings and opinions in a range of texts with some degree of complexity, using and integrating a range of reading strategies as appropriate	Understanding and inferring information, ideas, feelings and opinions in a range of texts with some degree of complexity, using and integrating a range of reading strategies as appropriate	Understanding, inferring and interpreting information, ideas, feelings and opinions in a range of texts with some degree of complexity, using and integrating a range of reading strategies as appropriate	Understanding, inferring and interpreting information, ideas, feelings and opinions in complex texts, using and integrating a range of reading strategies as appropriate

Underlying Principles

- Language development strategies, generic skills, and positive values and attitudes are essential to English Language learning and form an integral part of the learning-teaching-assessment cycle.
- Learners are exposed to a variety of text types and reading purposes (e.g. reading for academic development, reading for pleasure) in preparation for real life application.
- Selection of a wide range of texts of appropriate lengths and different topics, including authentic texts, is crucial to the development of reading skills and strategies (e.g. scanning for specific information, skimming for gist, using contextual clues) as well as learners' awareness of different cultures.
- The interplay between tasks and texts is a factor for consideration when teachers design a range of tasks for learners to demonstrate their understanding of the texts. In principle, task demand increases with text complexity as learners progress in the development of reading skills and strategies. To cater for learner diversity, simple tasks can be included for complex texts to cultivate learners' confidence, and difficult tasks for simple texts to stretch their abilities.
- Teacher support is essential to helping learners understand the text and demonstrate their understanding during the learning and teaching process. Teachers are also expected to help learners activate their prior knowledge and experiences in the process of interacting with the text. As learners progress, the amount of support provided is gradually reduced to promote learner independence.

ATM – Attainment Milestone

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The Learning Progression Framework for
ENGLISH LANGUAGE (WRITING SKILLS)

Writing – ATM 1	Writing – ATM 2	Writing – ATM 3	Writing – ATM 4	Writing – ATM 5	Writing – ATM 6	Writing – ATM 7	Writing – ATM 8
Learning Outcomes							
Content							
Completing blanks in short texts to convey simple information centred around objects, people and actions	Writing short texts to convey simple but limited information, ideas and personal experiences on familiar topics	Writing short texts to convey simple information, ideas and personal experiences on familiar topics	Writing short texts to convey simple information, ideas, personal experiences and opinions on familiar topics with some elaboration	Writing texts to convey simple information, ideas, personal experiences and opinions on familiar topics with some elaboration	Writing texts to convey information, ideas, personal experiences and opinions on familiar topics with elaboration	Writing texts to convey information, ideas, personal experiences and opinions on familiar and less familiar topics with elaboration	Writing texts to convey information, ideas, personal experiences and opinions on familiar and less familiar topics with substantial elaboration
Organisation							
Putting words under appropriate headings/ topics	Putting ideas about a topic in sentences	Linking ideas quite coherently in a short text, or showing an awareness of overall organisation of ideas	Linking ideas quite coherently in a short text, and showing an awareness of overall organisation of ideas	Linking ideas quite coherently in some parts of a text, and showing some overall organisation of ideas	Linking ideas quite coherently throughout the text, and showing appropriate overall organisation of ideas	Linking ideas coherently throughout the text, and showing appropriate overall organisation of ideas	Linking ideas coherently throughout the text, and showing effective overall organisation of ideas
Language and style							
Using some simple words quite appropriately, and showing an awareness of some simple formats	Using some simple language forms and functions, and simple formats quite appropriately	Using simple language forms and functions, and simple formats quite appropriately and accurately	Using a small range of quite appropriate and accurate language forms and functions, and showing an awareness of tone, style, register and features of some text types	Using a range of quite appropriate and accurate language forms and functions, and quite appropriate tone, style, register and features of some text types	Using a range of generally appropriate and accurate language forms and functions, and generally appropriate tone, style, register and features of some text types	Using a wide range of generally appropriate and accurate language forms and functions, and generally appropriate tone, style, register and features of a range of text types	Using a wide range of appropriate and accurate language forms and functions, and appropriate tone, style, register and features of a range of text types
Underlying Principles							
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Language development strategies, generic skills, and positive values and attitudes are essential to English Language learning and form an integral part of the learning-teaching-assessment cycle. The meaningfulness and appropriateness of the written texts to the context, purpose and audience are implicit in and apply across all the learning outcomes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> writing legibly (preferably being able to use both print and cursive scripts), generating ideas by brainstorming or seeking and selecting information and ideas from different sources, using knowledge of letter-sound relationships to spell words, asking questions to clarify and seek information for correction, editing drafts by correcting errors in language (e.g. spelling, punctuation and grammar items) with or without using references, revising drafts by adding, deleting, substituting or linking ideas, and reflecting on own writing based on feedback from teachers or peers. Teachers are expected to help learners develop these strategies with increasing sophistication. Teacher support is essential to helping learners express and organise their ideas during the learning and teaching process. As learners progress, the amount of support provided is gradually reduced to promote learner independence. 							

ATM – Attainment Milestone

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Strategies for Developing Academic Use of English

1. Developing students' academic language takes **purposeful, well-planned instruction**
2. Pair **language objectives** with **content objectives** in every lesson so students learn how to express what they are learning
3. **Differentiate** your approach to meet students' diverse language levels, backgrounds and learning styles. This ensures that all learners can access and use academic English effectively.

Strategies for Developing Academic Use of English

Explicit Instruction

- Explain and exemplify academic language features (e.g., transition words, complex sentences or discipline-specific terms) clearly and explicitly
- Model the use of key vocabulary and appropriate grammar in both spoken and written forms so students can see it in action
- Incorporate guided practice where students try new language structures with immediate feedback to refine accuracy and confidence
- Use think-alouds to show how academic language functions inside real tasks (e.g., summarising a text or justifying a viewpoint)
- Create visual supports (e.g., word walls, anchor charts, graphic aids) to continuously reinforce important words and phrases

Scaffolding

- Connect new (academic) terms to what students already know by activating prior knowledge and experiences
- Use graphic organisers (e.g., concept maps, Venn diagrams) to help students visually structure complex ideas
- Provide sentence starters and frames to support both academic speaking and writing, gradually removing support as proficiency increases
- Employ the gradual release model (I do, we do, you do) to move students from teacher guidance to independent use of academic language
- Offer repeated opportunities for practice and application (e.g., in discussions, writing tasks) to develop fluency in context

Integrating Language with Content Areas

- Embed language instruction directly into subject lessons rather than treating it as a separate skill area
- Identify and explicitly teach the high-value vocabulary, grammar structures and text types needed within each content area (e.g., science reports, history arguments)
- Use authentic materials (e.g., news articles, infographics or lab reports) to expose students to how English functions in real academic and professional settings
- Build in academic talk (e.g., debates, small-group discussions, presentations) to help students apply academic English orally before transferring it to writing
- Design writing tasks that require purposeful use of academic language (e.g., explanations, comparisons and justifications) linked to classroom content



Home > Curriculum Development and Support > Key Learning Areas > English Language Education > References Resources > Academic Use of English

Academic Use of English



English is one of the major mediums of instruction in different senior secondary subjects and university courses. The academic use of English is promoted to heighten students' awareness of English commonly used in academic texts they read and write in other subjects, so as to facilitate their current and further studies.

A variety of learning and teaching resources are developed to support schools in incorporating elements of the academic use of English into the English Language curriculum and facilitate students' self-directed learning. These resource materials can be used in combination flexibly to help students acquire the skills in the academic use of English more effectively.



<https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/kla/eng-edu/references-resources/Academic-Eng/home.html>

https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/kla/eng-edu/references-resources/Academic-Eng/resource_pack.html



RESOURCE PACK

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PREFACE



CHAPTER 1

What is Academic English?



CHAPTER 2

Academic Vocabulary



CHAPTER 3

Useful Sentence Structures and
Language for Academic Writing



CHAPTER 4

Paraphrasing, Summarising and Quoting



CHAPTER 5

Paragraph Structure



CHAPTER 6

Common Academic Text Structures

Please note the following for optimal operation of the e-platform:

1. Access the platform with a device of minimum resolution of 1080 X 810.
2. Disable the auto-capitalisation or auto-spacing function of your device, which may affect the reliability of the answer-checking function.



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<https://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/curriculum-development/kla/eng-edu/Academic-Eng/e-platform/index.html>



RESOURCE PACK

Chapter 1: What is Academic English?

- a) Academic English vs Everyday English
- b) General Features of Academic English

Chapter 2: Academic Vocabulary

- a) Academic Vocabulary vs General Vocabulary
- b) Subject-specific Words and Technical Terms
- c) Word Formation

Chapter 3: Useful Sentence Structures and Language for Academic Writing

- a) Passive Construction
- b) Hedging Language
- c) Noun Phrases and Clauses
- d) Adjective Phrases and Clauses

Chapter 4: Paraphrasing, Summarising and Quoting

- a) Paraphrasing
- b) Summarising
- c) Quoting

Chapter 5: Paragraph Structure

- a) A Five-paragraph Essay
- b) Paragraph Purposes
- c) Topic Sentences
- d) Supporting Details
- e) Concluding Sentences
- f) Paragraph Cohesion

Chapter 6: Common Academic Text Structures

- a) Cause and Effect
- b) Comparison and Contrast
- c) Procedure/Sequence
- d) Problem and Solution



A collection of six posters is designed to present six key topics on the academic use of English in a lucid and graphical manner for easy understanding. The posters can be used together with the Resource Pack to illustrate important concepts in academic English. Teachers are encouraged to make effective use of the posters to heighten students' awareness of the features of academic English and display the posters in classrooms, English Room or at appropriate places of the school premises to create a language-rich environment.

Everyday English vs Academic English

Everyday English

Style of Academic Language

Features

- Use direct & avoid colloquial language

Features & Implications

- Use the positive voice & hedging words

Academic English

Style of Academic Language

Features

- Use hedging words & provide specific details

Features & Implications

- Use subject-specific words

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Cohesive Devices for Different Purposes

Cohesive Devices for Different Purposes

- Cause and Effect:** Followed by a clause (therefore) as a result. Example: I studied hard so I passed.
- Contrast:** Followed by a contrasting phrase (however, on the other hand). Example: I studied hard, however, I failed.
- Condition:** Used to specify a condition. Example: If it rains, I will stay home.
- Comparison:** Used to compare two things. Example: This book is more interesting than that one.
- Summary:** Used to summarize a point. Example: In brief, the conclusion is that...
- Order:** Used to list items in a sequence. Example: First, second, third.
- Addition:** Used to add information. Example: In addition to...
- Emphasis:** Used to emphasize a point. Example: It is absolutely necessary that...

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Hedging

Hedging

Hedging is the use of cautious or tentative language. It is commonly used in academic writing, particularly in scientific writing, to avoid overstatements and make the tone more cautious and less absolute.

Verbs	Adverbs
appear to, seem to, tend to, look like	probably, possibly, perhaps, seemingly, presumably
Nouns	Modal Verbs
assumption, possibility, indication, probability, likelihood	can, could, may, might
Adjectives	Other Phrases
likely, possible, probable, unlikely	generally, often, sometimes, normally

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Comparison and Contrast

Comparison & Contrast

Comparing and contrasting is an important skill in academic writing. It can be done at the text or paragraph level.

Differences	Similarities	Differences
Transition words followed by a clause: although/even though, in contrast, whereas/while, on the one hand... on the other hand, on the contrary	Transition words followed by a clause: as well as, both... and, similar to, identical, in the same way, equally, just as	Transition words followed by a clause: in contrast, whereas/while, on the one hand... on the other hand, on the contrary

Describing similarities and differences (An Example: Mammals vs Reptiles)

Mammals and reptiles are both vertebrates and they both share some similar characteristics. They both breathe with lungs. Like most vertebrates, mammals and reptiles reproduce sexually. However, they also differ in a number of ways. For example, mammals are warm-blooded, whereas most reptiles are cold-blooded. Unlike mammals which have four legs, most reptiles lay eggs. One of the defining characteristics of all mammals, reptiles are the contrary, do not have hair. They have scales instead.

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Summary

- Typical features of academic/formal English (e.g., objective, precise)
- Linguistics features in academic/formal texts (e.g., nominalisation, reported speech, complex sentences, passive voice)
- Academic use of English in reading and writing (e.g., moves analysis, language functions)

Thank you! 😊

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