



Lesson plan 2

Aim: To prepare students to write an argument essay by helping them to:

- Identify the structure of an argument essay
- Identify useful language that they can use in writing an argument essay

Level: Upper intermediate – advanced

Time: 45 minutes

- 1 Write **ARGUMENT ESSAY** on the board. Ask students what they understand an argument essay to be. Note that *argument* in this context means something quite different from the common use of the word *argument*. Write their ideas on the board. If appropriate, ask students to look up the academic definition of the word *argument*.
- 2 (optional step) Using the iWriter, project the definition of an argument essay on the wall and discuss how this compares to students' ideas about an argument essay.
- 3 Tell students they are going to look at an example of an argument essay. Photocopy 1 copy per 2-3 students of the excerpt from an academic essay below. Cut it along the lines indicated. Each pair should receive 1 cut-up essay. **[NB: This text is taken from *Oxford Learner's Dictionary of Academic English* (2014): pp AWT 10-11 and can also be found on the iWriter under model essays: essay 2: argument.]**

Allow pairs of students to compare and discuss their ordering of the paragraphs with other pairs of students. This will be a good opportunity to see any cultural differences in organising essays. Allow 5 minutes for this activity to encourage student to skim the text quickly for clues about the organisation.

- 4 Ensure students have the correct order of paragraphs. Tell students there are two common structures for argument essays in English (see below). Ask them which of the two structures the essay above follows. [It's structure 1]. Find out which structure students are most familiar with, either because of a similar structure in their culture or because of what they have been taught in the past.

Structure 1: Introduction

Arguments against, including evidence

Arguments for, including evidence

Conclusion

Structure 2: Introduction

Argument 1 (explanation of a point + supporting evidence and counterarguments)

Argument 2 (as above)

Argument 3 (as above)

Conclusion

[source: adapted from *Oxford Learners Dictionary of Academic English* (2014). Oxford: OUP: AWT 11.]

- 5 Using a projection of the iWriter if possible, or the board, if not, show the three key things that the introduction features. Ask students to highlight the 3 parts in the introduction.
 - a Background information on the topic (first two sentences)
 - b A specific introduction or explanation to the topic (3rd sentence starting w/ *consequently*)
 - c The scope and aim of the essay (last two sentences)
- 6 To check, use the *show me* icons on the iWriter if possible.
- 7 Give one minute for students to read the conclusion. Ask them to turn their paper over and try to summarise the conclusion in their own words. Looking at the conclusion in this way will help students see more clearly how the two main paragraphs provide arguments for and against.
- 8 Divide the class in half. One half of the class (group A) should read the paragraphs with arguments against and the other half (group B) should read the paragraphs with arguments for. Ask them to think about the purpose of the section – what is it pointing out?
- 9 Ask students to discuss the purpose with another person who read the same section. Next, pair up students from group A with students from group B to share their observations. Feedback to the whole group using the explanation on the iWriter if possible.
- 10 (optional) Ask the students why the author would choose to present arguments against. Does this weaken or strengthen the argument? Ask them why they think arguments against come before arguments for. Possible answers are that in academic writing it is important to show that you have considered both (or multiple) sides of an issue when forming your argument. Starting with arguments against allows the writer to finish with arguments for – this is a stronger position. Flipping this around would weaken the argument.
- 11 Useful language: Ask the students to identify any useful phrases that they think they might like to use in their own writing. Ask them to categorise them into one of the following categories: [NB: these categories can be found in the *Oxford Learners Dictionary of Academic English* p AWT11 and also on the iWriter]
 - a Phrases which express the writer's viewpoints more objectively
 - b Words which show the connection and progression of the argument
 - c Hedging language which softens the assertiveness of the viewpoint
 - d Reporting verbs that show how the cited source fits in with the argument

If possible, use the iWriter to show the phrases.

- 12 Ask students to make a list of top tips for writing an argument essay. There are no 'right' answers here, but some tips are given in the dictionary p AWT 11.
- 13 For homework, ask students to review the model for an argument essay in the iWriter or dictionary (pp AWT 10-11). Assign them a research topic (or ask them to choose their own). Ask them to use the iWriter writing tool to help them write their essay. They can save and export their essay directly from the iWriter. Make sure to remind them to use the AWL tool to see how many words from the Academic Word List (AWL) they have used in their writing.

There are approximately 688 000 people who are severely or profoundly deaf in the United Kingdom, and 840 children who are born deaf each year (RNID, 2011a). It is clear from these figures that there is a large community of people who are deaf in the United Kingdom alone. Consequently, it must be considered how deafness may affect language acquisition and what steps caregivers can take to overcome any difficulties. There are different levels of deafness and hearing loss (RNID, 2011b); however, it is not within the scope of this essay to consider all of these levels. Therefore, this essay will mainly focus on people who are born with severe or profound deafness (RNID, 2011b).

Spoken language acquisition

Ninety percent of children who are deaf are born into hearing families ... [Statistics are presented (omitted here).] ...

Researchers have argued that deaf people are less proficient in speechreading than hearing people as the auditory aspect of language enables more competence in speech recognition (Bernstein *et al.*, 1998: 212). ... [Evidence is provided through research studies (omitted here).] Therefore, speechreading will not be an effective means of communication for all people who are deaf.

Cued Speech is another method used by some people to help children who are deaf to communicate. ... [Elaboration on benefits and drawbacks is provided through citing research studies (omitted here).] However, Bavelier *et al.* (2003: 3) reason that this form of communication is not a natural language ... This method could therefore impact negatively on the deaf child's language development (*ibid*).

Lewis (1987: 74) suggests that the acquisition of a spoken language can depend on many factors. [Elaboration on these factors follows (omitted here).] ... However, regardless of the level of assistance ... it is advisable that another approach to language could be sought to enable a child who is deaf to communicate.

Sign language acquisition

Sign language appears to be a more natural language of people who are deaf (Sacks, 1989: 27–28). A way of teaching deaf children to communicate, using both signed and spoken language, was through simultaneous communication (Dodd *et al.*, 1998: 229). [Elaboration on this method follows (omitted here).] ...

Nevertheless, the majority of children who were educated with the simultaneous communication method had poor spoken and signed English ... [Evidence is cited from research (omitted here).]

Sign languages, such as British Sign Language, are naturally occurring languages. Each one is a unique system of communication ... Bavelier *et al.* (2003: 6–7) support this notion by highlighting research ... [Related issues around the learning of sign language, including an example of a case study, are highlighted (omitted here).]

Conclusion

In conclusion, this essay has ... [Evaluation of the approaches suggested in the essay follows.] ... Thus, it seems that sign language is a more natural choice of communication. This has implications ... [Elaboration on the implications follows.] ...

Although some parents may be concerned that learning a sign language will isolate their child from the community of hearing people, Mayberry *et al.* (2002, cited in Bavelier *et al.*, 2003: 12) suggest that the acquisition of a sign language could facilitate the acquisition of a spoken language. ... Thus, to reduce the risk of this happening, Bavelier *et al.* (2003: 15) propose that there should be a bilingual approach ... This approach may help children who are deaf to reach their full potential. [A full list of references follows.]