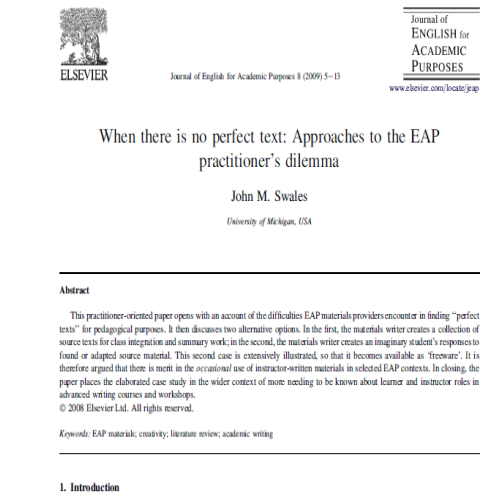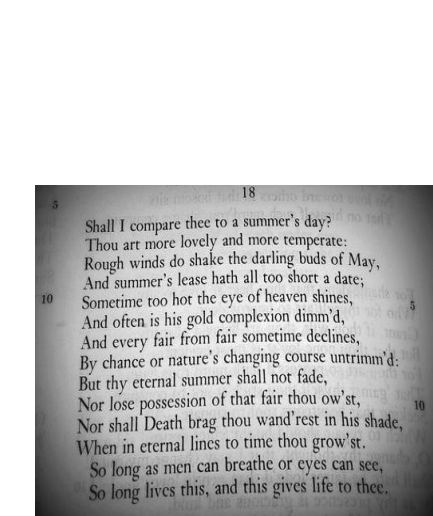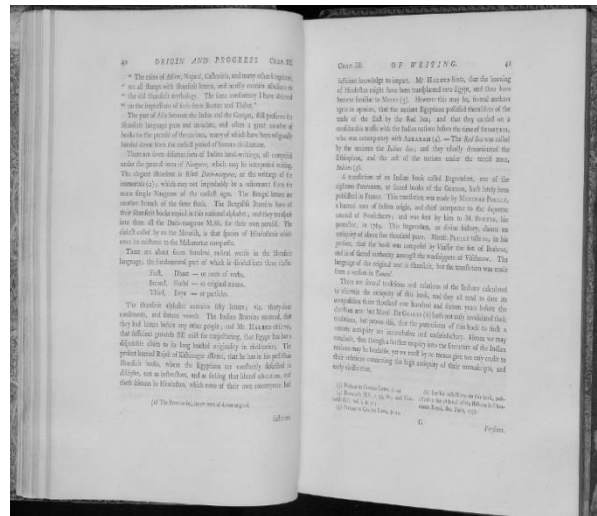# What makes a good academic paragraph?

For success at university, what factors may give some students an advantage over others?

Bridging the Divide between Academic Research and Classroom Practice

Richard Ingold

UECA PD Fest, Sydney
13th May, 2017

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date;
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd,
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,
Nor shall Death brag thou wand'rest in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st.
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

When there is no perfect text: Approaches to the EAP practitioner's dilemma

John M. Swales

University of Michigan, USA

Abstract

This practitioner-oriented paper opens with an account of the difficulties EAP materials providers encounter in finding "perfect texts" for pedagogical purposes. It then discusses two alternative options. In the first, the materials writer creates a collection of source texts for class integration and summary work; in the second, the materials writer creates an imaginary student's responses to found or adapted source material. This second case is extensively illustrated, so that it becomes available as 'freeware'. It is therefore argued that there is merit in the *occasional* use of instructor-written materials in selected EAP contexts. In closing, the paper places the elaborated case study in the wider context of more needing to be known about learner and instructor roles in advanced writing courses and workshops.
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Keywords: EAP materials; creativity; literature review; academic writing

1. Introduction

Most EAP practitioners, when preparing materials for classes or workshops, are probably familiar with that increasingly desperate feeling of "I can't find the perfect text for what I want to do in class." Hours, perhaps, of leafing through textbooks, manuals, journal articles or websites have failed to produce a solution to the materials writer's problem. One text may have the looked-for rhetorical structure and linguistic exemplification, but the content is too obscure and too unmanageable; another has attractive and utilizable content, but the structure is wrong or the treatment is too journalistic (Myers, 1990); and a third looks promising but it is too cluttered with intertextual links, asides and references to be useable "as is". In addition, there is the question of whether the target audience will find the sample material sufficiently interesting to enable their attention to become appropriately focused on it, an issue that arises with texts that are more than a paragraph or so in length. Editing is, of course, always an option, as is a certain amount of "skeletonization", whereby ellipsis or some other 'place-holder' device is used to eliminate dense content chunks so that students can properly concentrate on rhetoric and language. Hence, the EAP practitioner's dilemma: to keep on looking; to start editing; or to go somewhere else? (Indeed, this dilemma may be even more pressing for those responsible for developing reading or listening comprehension tests, especially when these are 'highstakes' (e.g. Norton Pierce, 1992).)

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Visible Pedagogy & Social Justice

"a strong focus on the **explicit** transmission of knowledge about language with the aim of empowering otherwise disenfranchised groups."
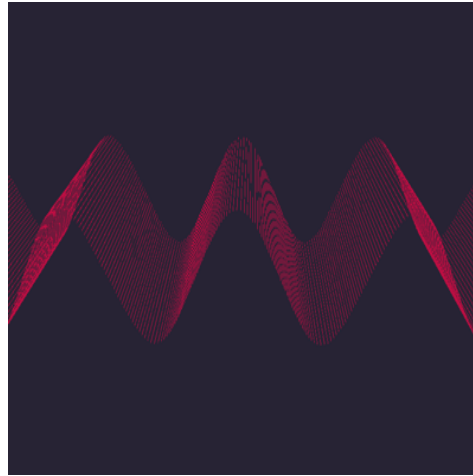(Rose & Martin, 2012)

Visible Pedagogy & ELT

"a strong focus on the **explicit** transmission of knowledge about language with the aim of …"

helping our students successfully produce the written texts they need in their daily, professional &/or academic lives.
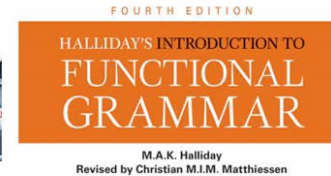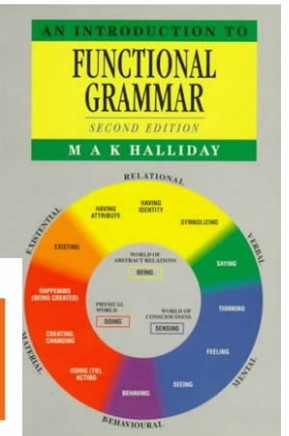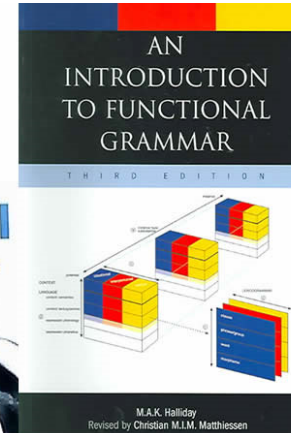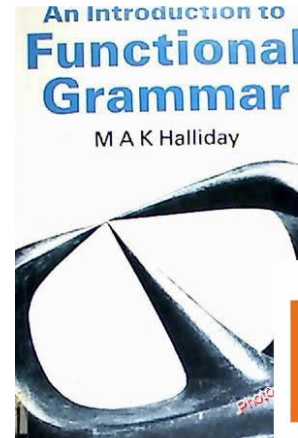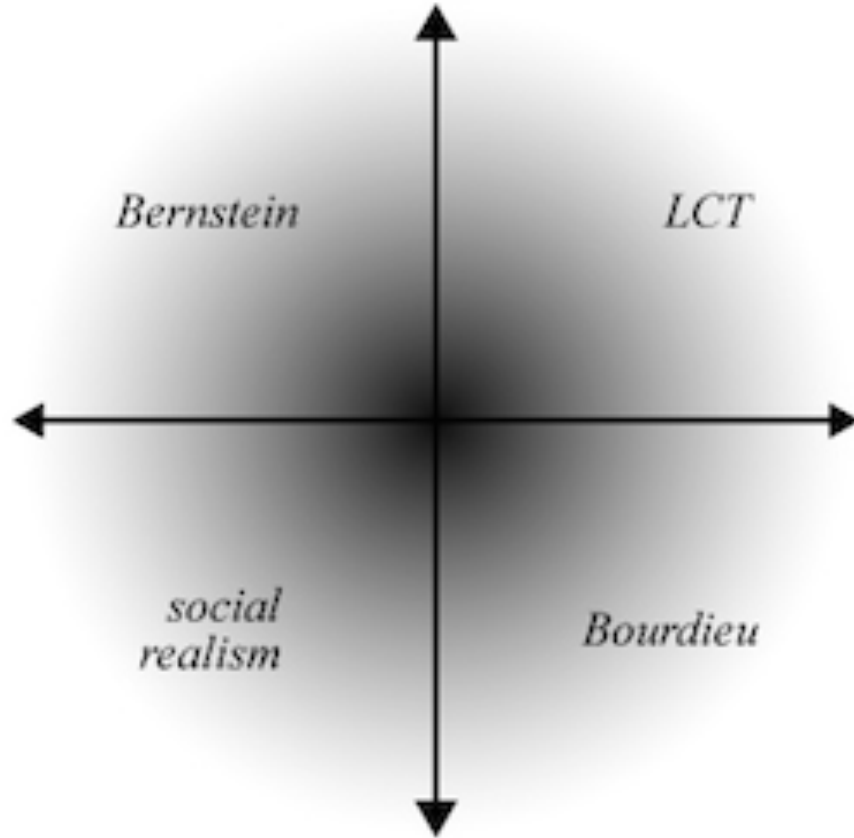
What are the rules of the game?

And can we explicitly teach them to our EAP students?

Legitimation Code Theory

Systemic Functional Linguistics

Semantics
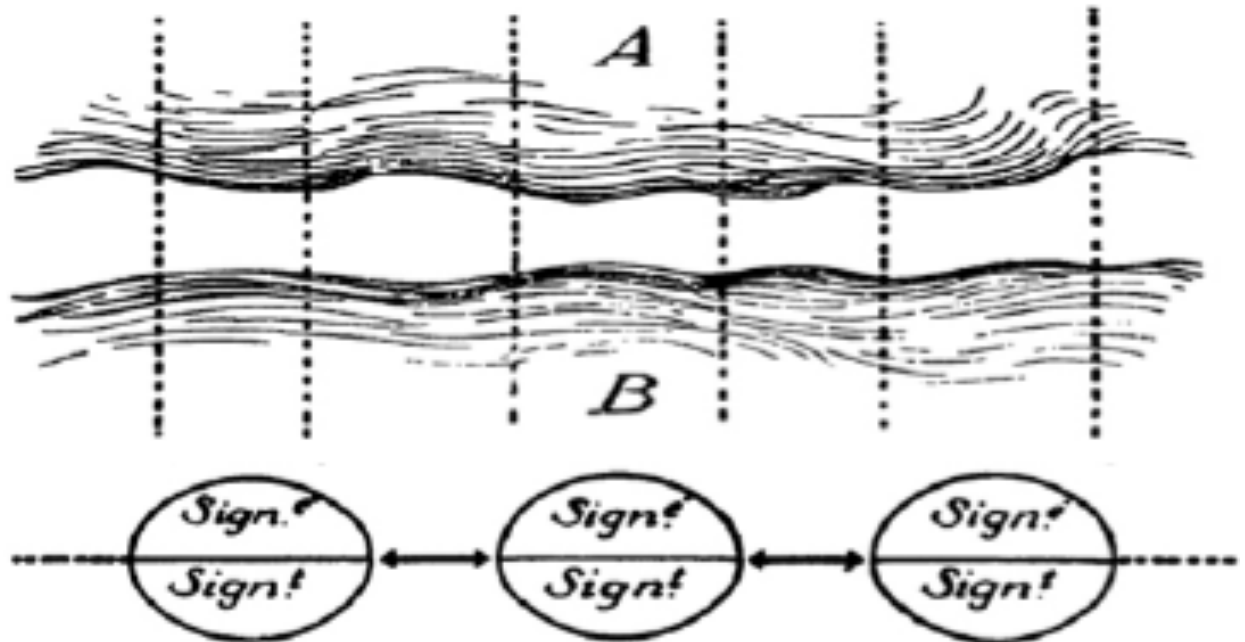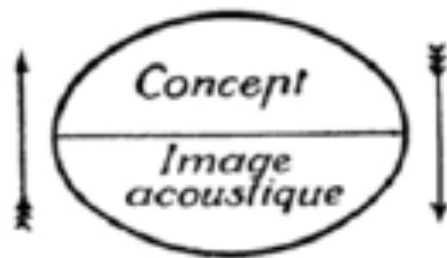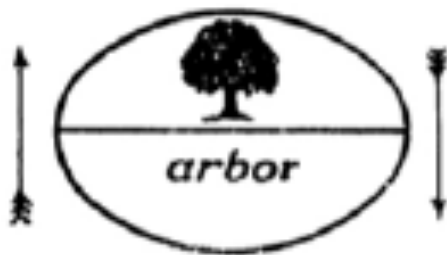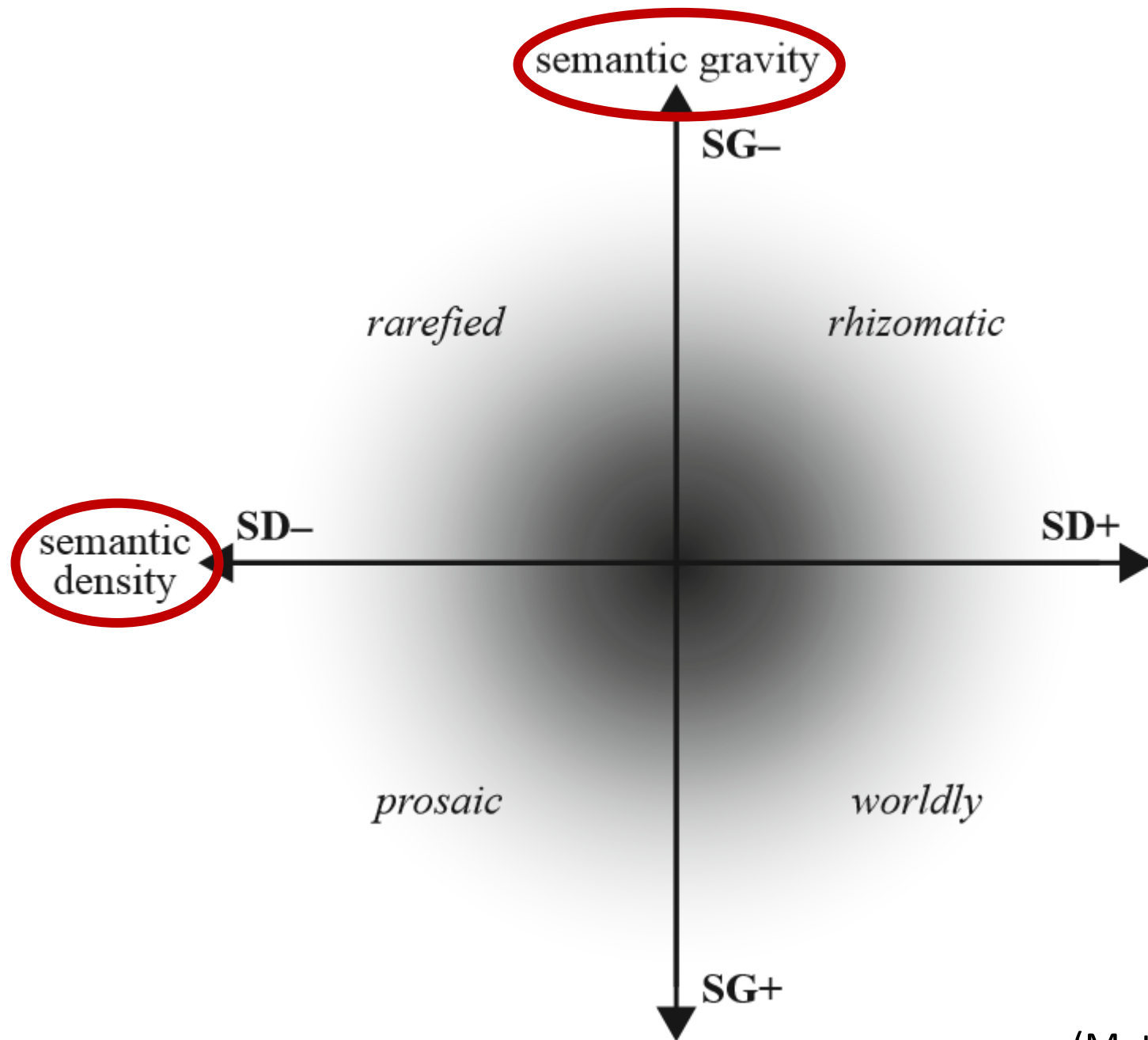
semantic gravity

SG–

rarefied   *rhizomatic*

SD–   **SD+**

semantic
density

prosaic   *worldly*

SG+

(Maton, 2016, p.16)

Semantic density

SD-   SD+

6353-C

Maton, Hood, & Shay, 2016.
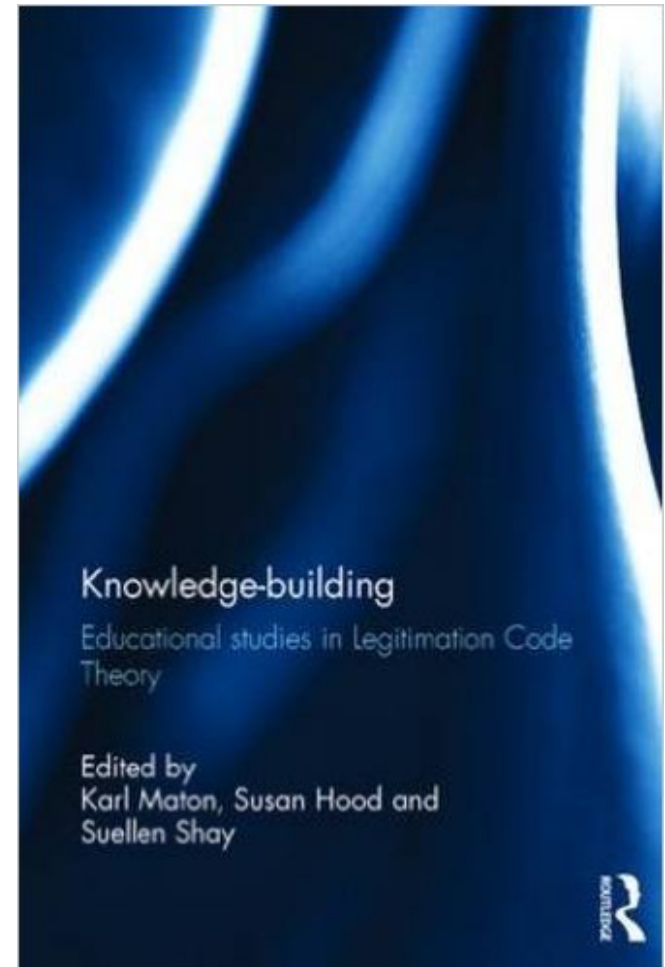
Linguistics and Education, *24*(1), 2013.

A Semantic Wave

(Maton, 2013, p. 13)
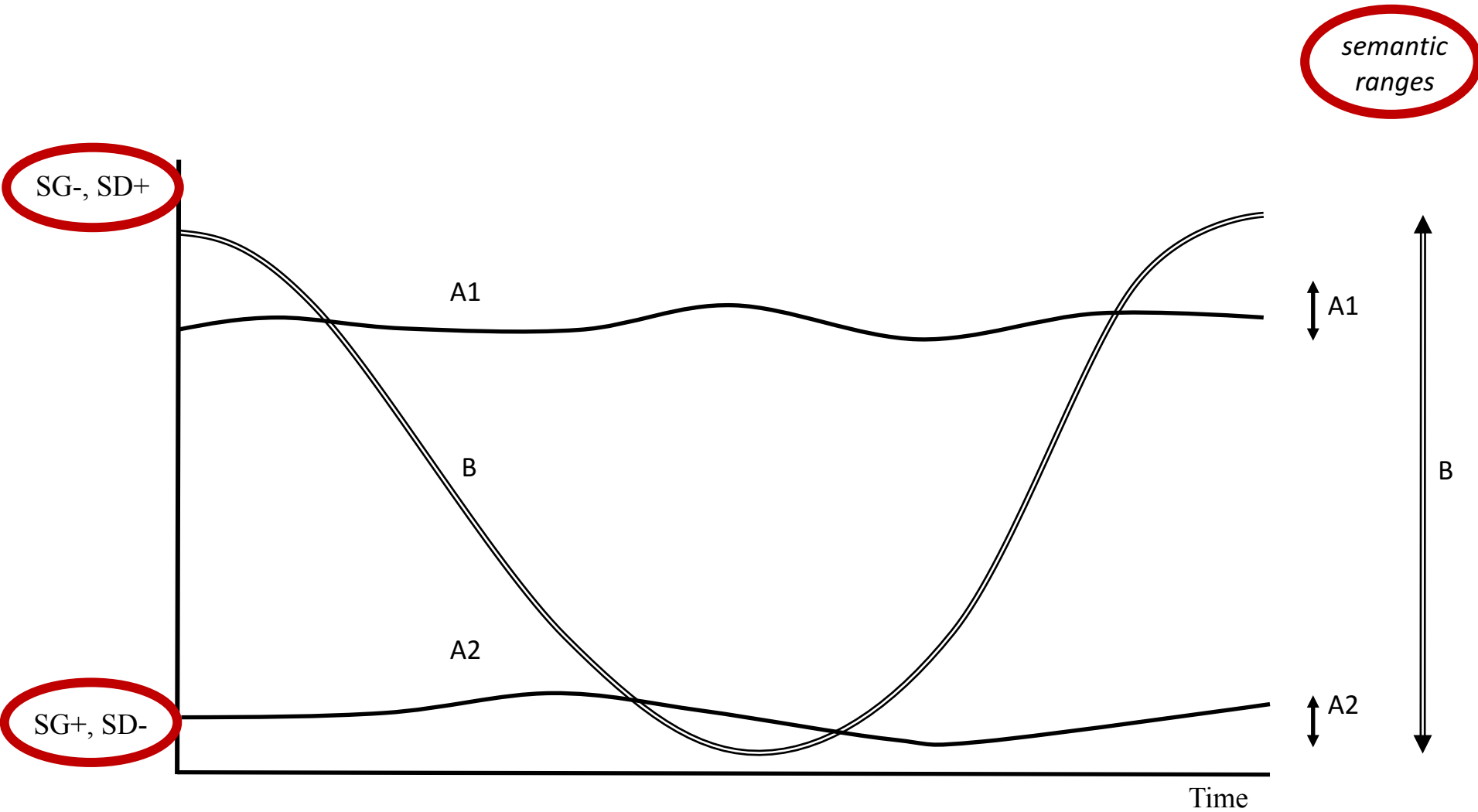
The Wave in Action

SD+ SG- A balanced diet makes a major contribution to good health. This is because it provides essential nutrients for the human body. For example, the micronutrients, vitamins and minerals, are needed for the body's cells to function well. Different types of food contain different amounts of these nutrients and so SD- SG+ eating a wide variety of foods, such as rice and bread, fish and eggs, and vegetables and fruit, every day is vital. Consumption of this diverse range of foods will result in the nutrient-rich, balanced diet which is essential for the SD+ SG- maintenance of human health.

Academic English 1

Your pathways to tertiary education

Direct entry pathways

General English or equivalent

Academic English 3

Academic English 2

Academic English 1

on successful completion

University undergraduate and postgraduate courses

Navitas pathway colleges, Foundation studies and vocational courses
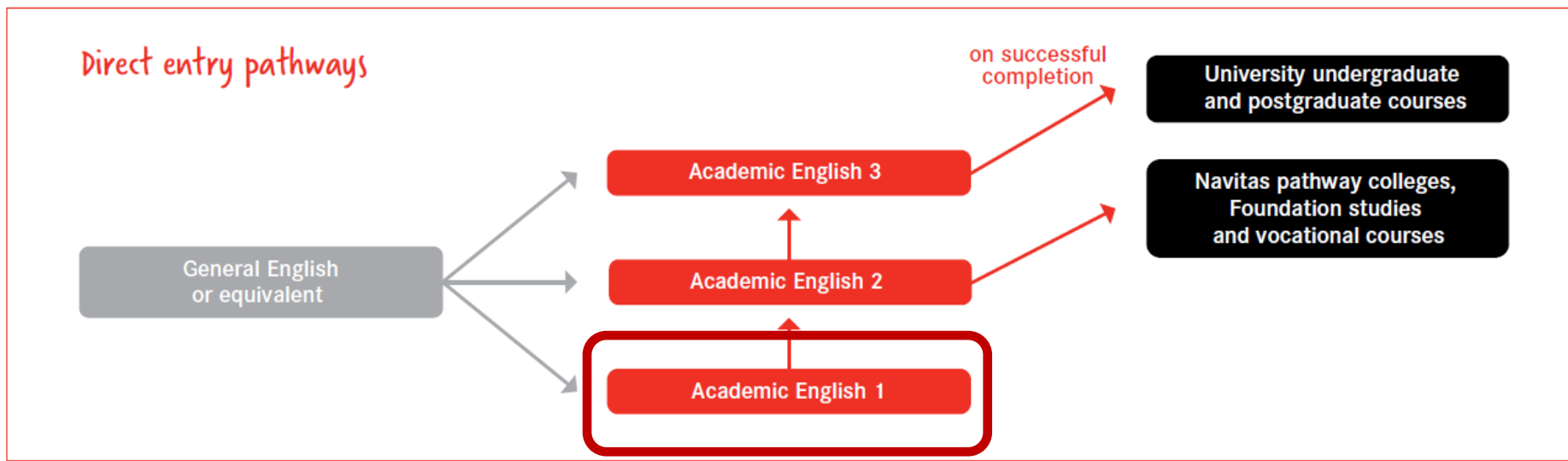
AE1 Students

➢ IELTS 4.5 / CEFR B1

➢ 10 week course

➢ 1st level of a 3 level study programme

➢ Mostly from E & SE Asia, & Middle East

➢ Accounting, nursing, commerce, engineering…

How can we help students use language to make waves?

The Power Trio

Power Words
the semantic power of technical terms

Power Grammar
the knowledge making power of nominalisation

Power Composition
the crafting and organisation of whole texts

(Macnaught et al, 2013)

Power Words: SD+ SG-

Think about the listening activity you have just completed. The doctor asked Wayne about the food that he usually eats. Which noun has the meaning 'the food people usually eat'?

food + usually + eat = *diet*

The noun *diet* contains the meanings *food*, *usually* and *eat*. So, for students studying medicine, nursing and other health science subjects, *diet* is a power word.

Abstraction (Martin, 2001)

- Semantic figure construed as a Thing → clause changed to a noun
- to make generalisations (e.g. diet not a specific meal, but all the food consumed over time)

Power Words: SD+ SG-

Power words can also be the name of a group of things or type of thing:

Power + ←——————————————→ Power -
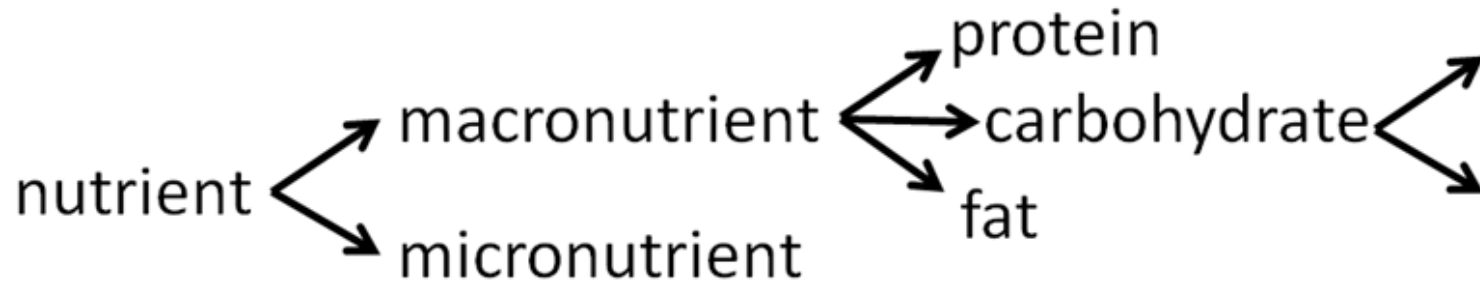
Technicality (Martin, 2001)
- Taxonomies which organise the world in uncommon-sense ways
- Classification, definition, composition

Animal cell diagram labels:

Intermediate filament
Ribosomes
Rough endoplasmic reticulum
Nucleus
Nucleolus
Chromatin
Golgi apparatus
Golgi vesicle
Cytoplasm
Vacuole
Peroxisome
Secretory vesicle
Smooth endoplasmic reticulum
Lysosome
Microfilament
Microtubule
Centrosome
Plasma membrane
Mitochondria

Comic panel:

"If I had a hammer... I'd SMASH Patriarchy"
I FOUND IT!

Engine assembly drawing:

42000

MS-2400 PISTON AND MS-2401 WRIST PIN 4 EA REQ'D
42300 MANIFOLD I REQ'D
SPARK PLUG CHAMPION V-3 4 REQ'D
42012 SPRING 8 REQ'D
42010 VALVE 8 REQ'D
42013 CAM FOLLOWER 8 REQ'D
42011 BUSHING 8 REQ'D
42007 OIL LEVEL INDICATOR I REQ'D
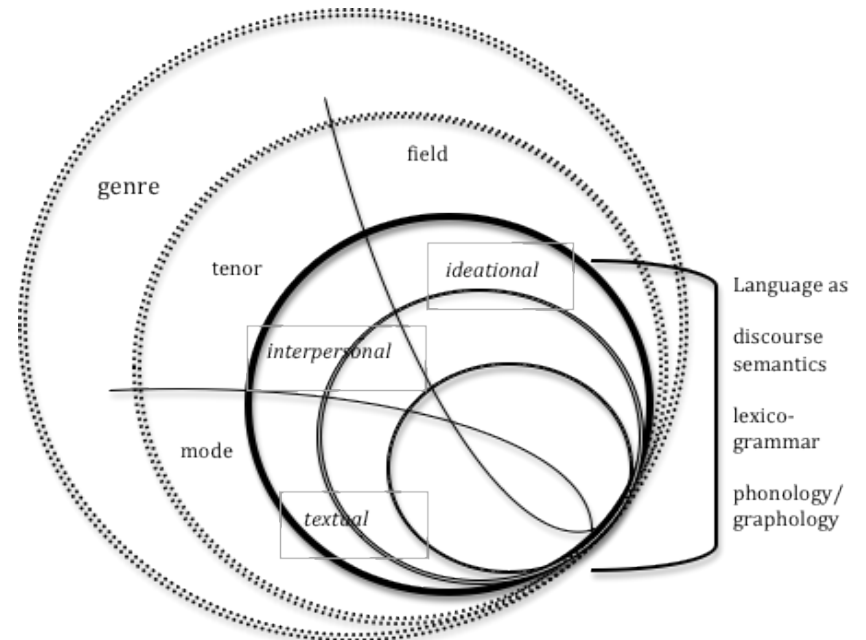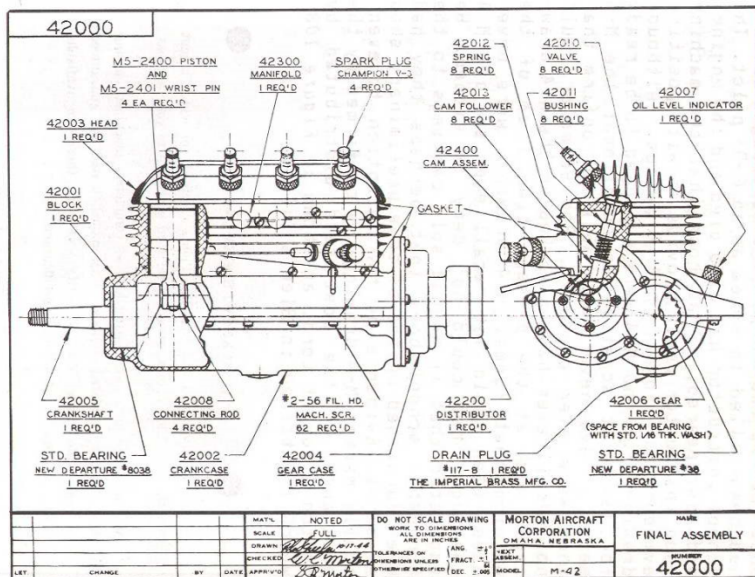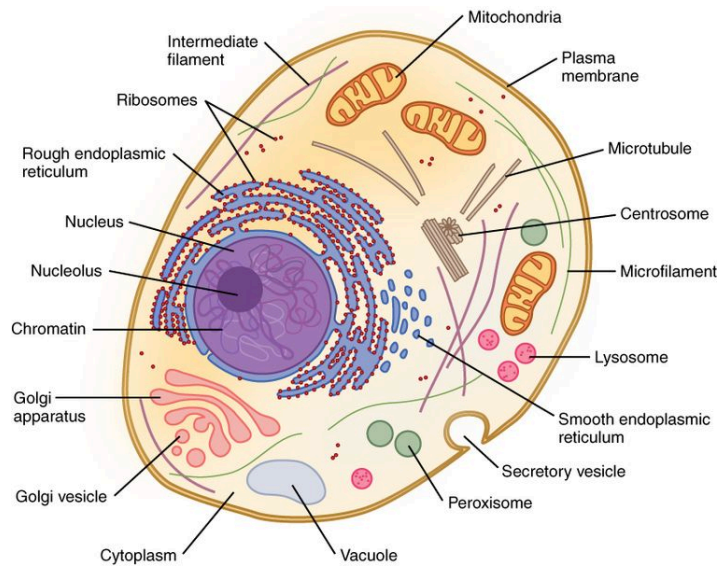42003 HEAD I REQ'D
42400 CAM ASSEM.
42001 BLOCK I REQ'D
GASKET
42005 CRANKSHAFT I REQ'D
42008 CONNECTING ROD 4 REQ'D
#2-56 FIL. HD. MACH. SCR. 62 REQ'D
42200 DISTRIBUTOR I REQ'D
42006 GEAR I REQ'D (SPACE FROM BEARING WITH STD. 1/16 THK. WASH)
STD. BEARING NEW DEPARTURE #8038 I REQ'D
42002 CRANKCASE I REQ'D
42004 GEAR CASE I REQ'D
DRAIN PLUG #117-B I REQ'D THE IMPERIAL BRASS MFG. CO.
STD. BEARING NEW DEPARTURE #38 I REQ'D

MAT'L. NOTED
SCALE FULL
DRAWN
CHECKED
APPR'V'D

DO NOT SCALE DRAWING WORK TO DIMENSIONS ALL DIMENSIONS ARE IN INCHES
TOLERANCES ON DIMENSIONS UNLESS OTHERWISE SPECIFIED
ANG ±
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MORTON AIRCRAFT CORPORATION OMAHA, NEBRASKA
FINAL ASSEMBLY
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MODEL M-42
NUMBER 42000

LET. CHANGE BY DATE

Linguistics stratification diagram:

genre
field
tenor
ideational
interpersonal
mode
textual
Language as
discourse semantics
lexico-grammar
phonology/graphology

Power Grammar: SD+ SG-

Noun	Meaning
contribution	a) to use, eat or drink something.
health	b) to make something continue at the same level, rate, or standard.
consumption	c) to give something; to cause something to happen.
maintenance	d) being physically strong and not ill.

These words are nouns, but they do not have noun meanings. *Contribution*, *consumption* and *maintenance* have the meanings of verbs, and *health* has the meaning of an adjective. Using these words allows academic writers to squash a lot more meaning into their writing and to organise it more easily.

When you use nouns which have verb or adjective meanings, you are using nominalisations. This is academic power grammar.

Power in Action

A balanced diet makes a major contribution to good health

If people usually eat a lot of different types of food, it will be one of the most important ways they can get what they need to be healthy.
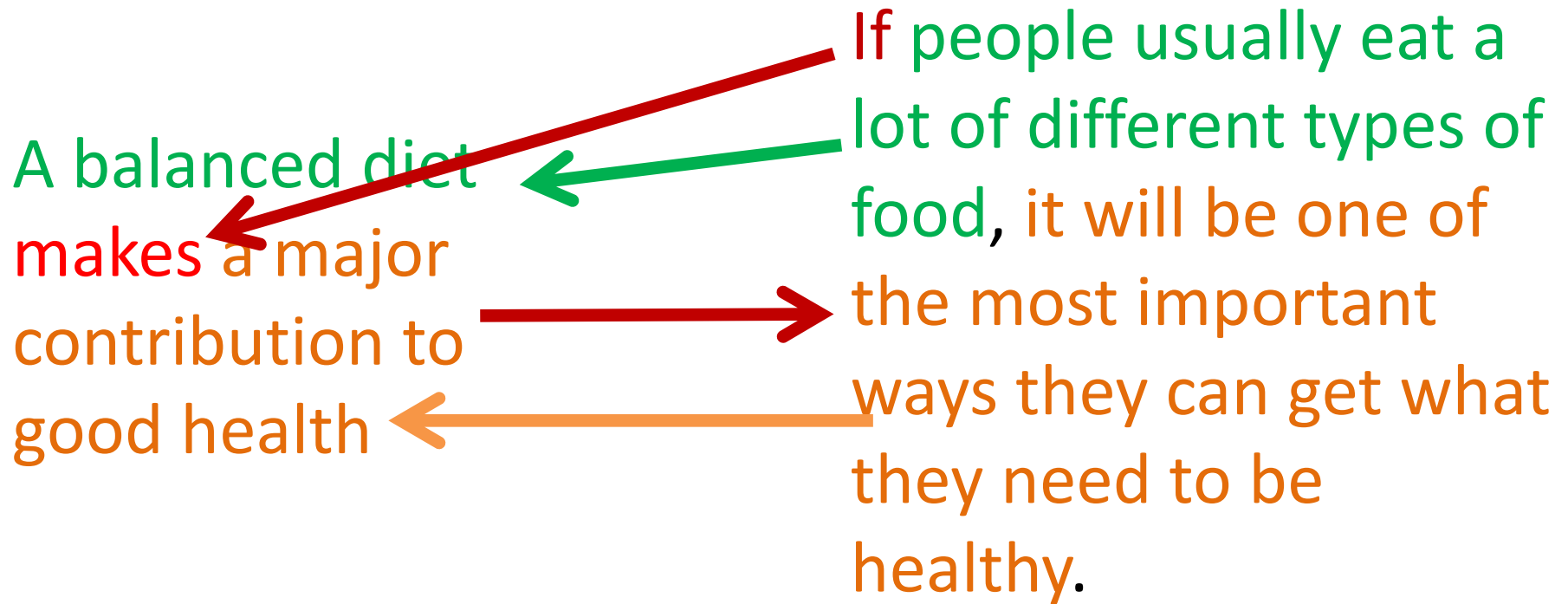
SD+ SG-

SD- SG+

Power words + Power grammar
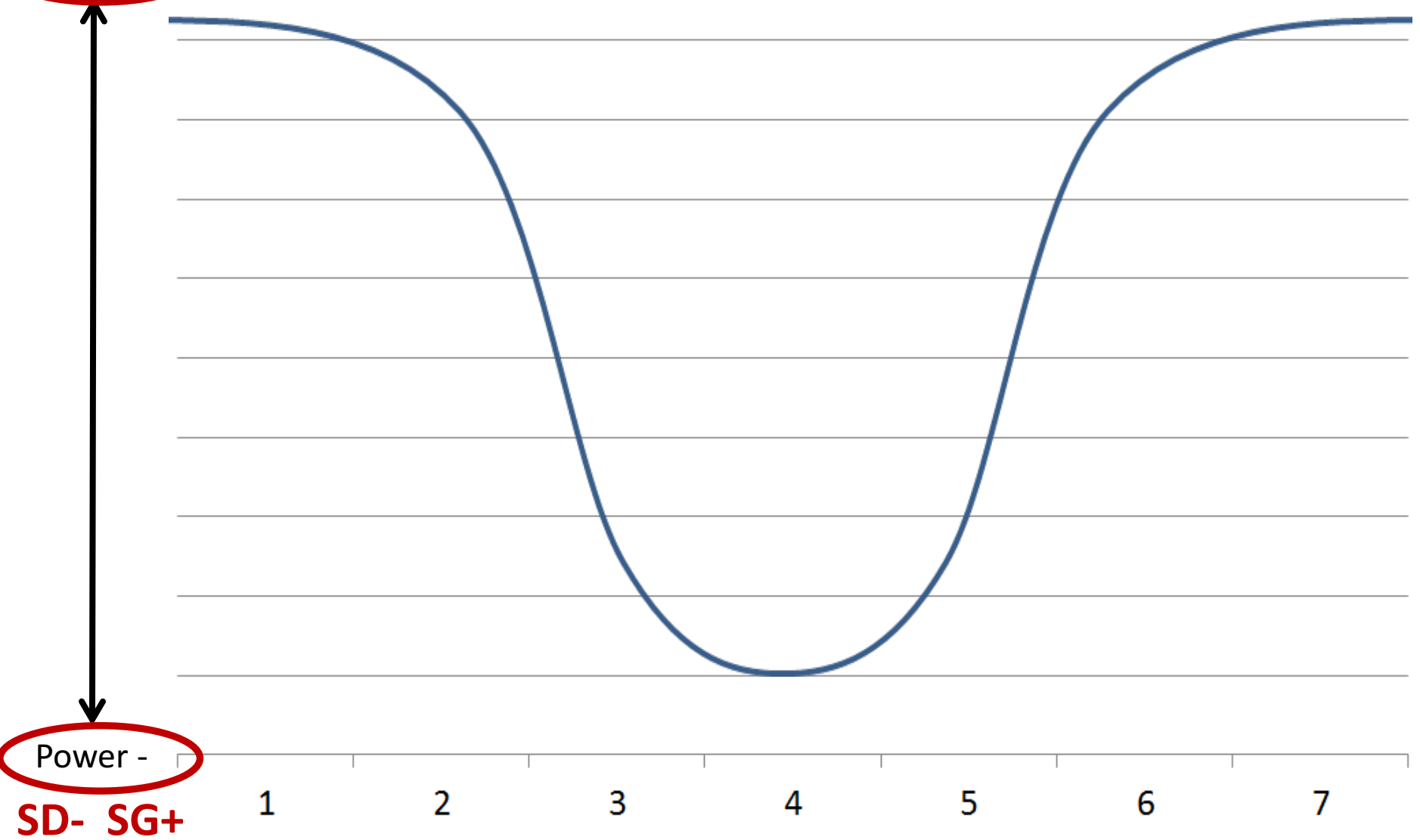
= **Power composition**

But...

it ain't what you use, it's the way that you use it.

# Power Composition = The Wave

SD+ SG-

Power +

Power -

SD- SG+

1   2   3   4   5   6   7
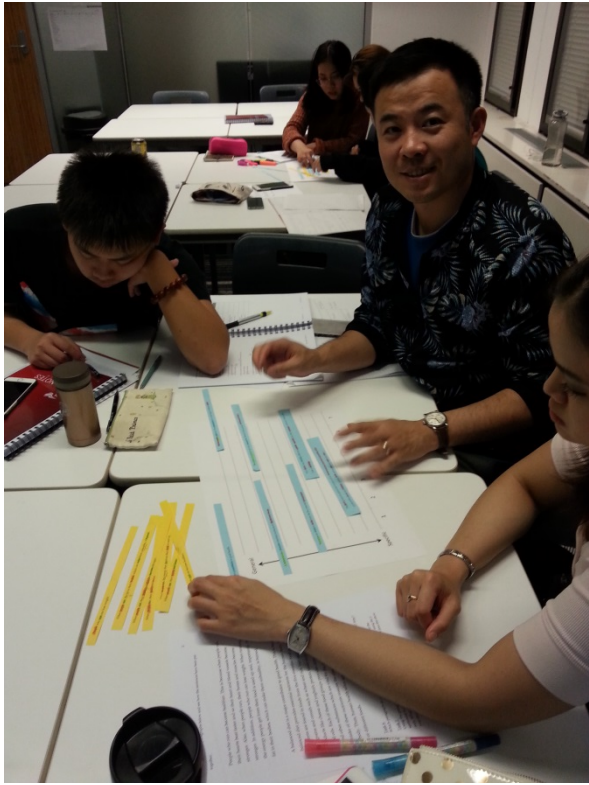
Power paragraphs

A balanced diet makes a major contribution to good health. This is because it provides essential nutrients for the human body. For example, the micronutrients, vitamins and minerals, are needed for the body's cells to function well. Different types of food contain different amounts of these nutrients and so eating a wide variety of foods, such as rice and bread, fish and eggs, and vegetables and fruit, every day is vital. Consumption of this diverse range of foods will result in the nutrient-rich, balanced diet which is essential for the maintenance of human health.

Power +

Power -

Noun group

1. a balanced diet

2. a major contribution to

3. essential nutrients for the h

4. the micronutrients, vitamins an

5. the body's cells to function well

6. different types of food

7. eating a wide variety of foods, such as rice and eggs, and vegetables and fruit

8. consumption of this diverse ra

9. the nutrient-rich, for the maintenance

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
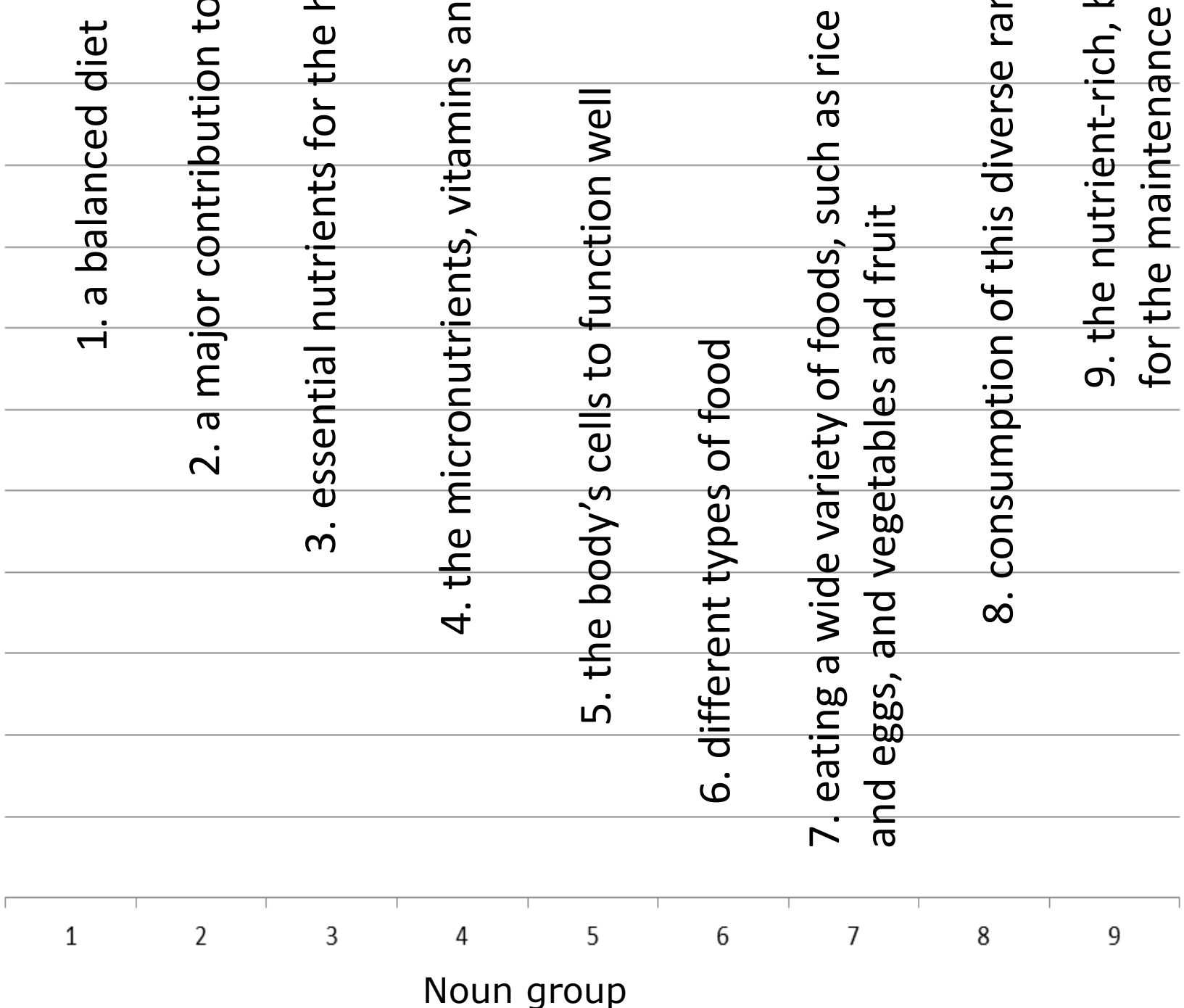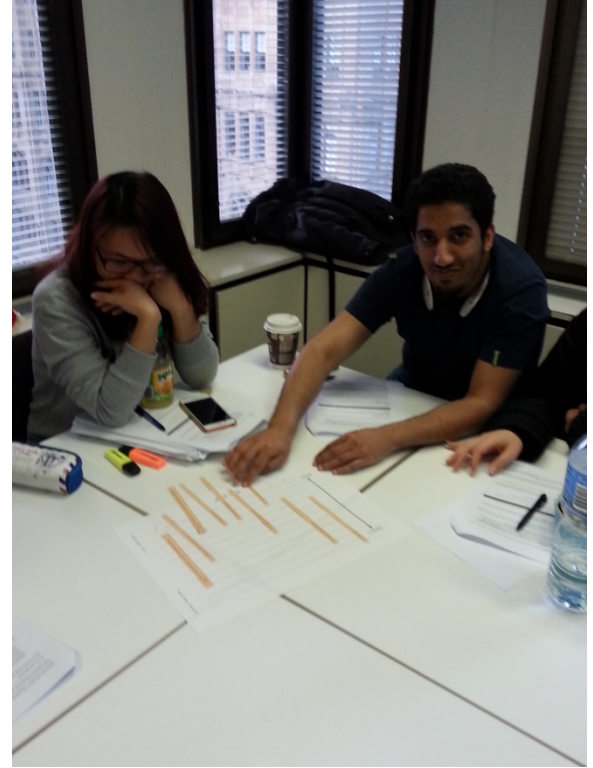
Which of the three graphs below shows how the writer uses power words and power grammar in this paragraph?

a)

Power +

Power -

b)

Power +

Power -

c)
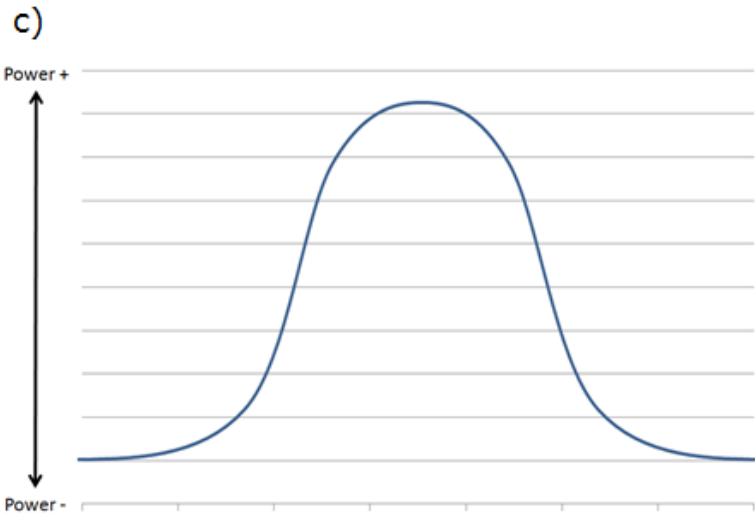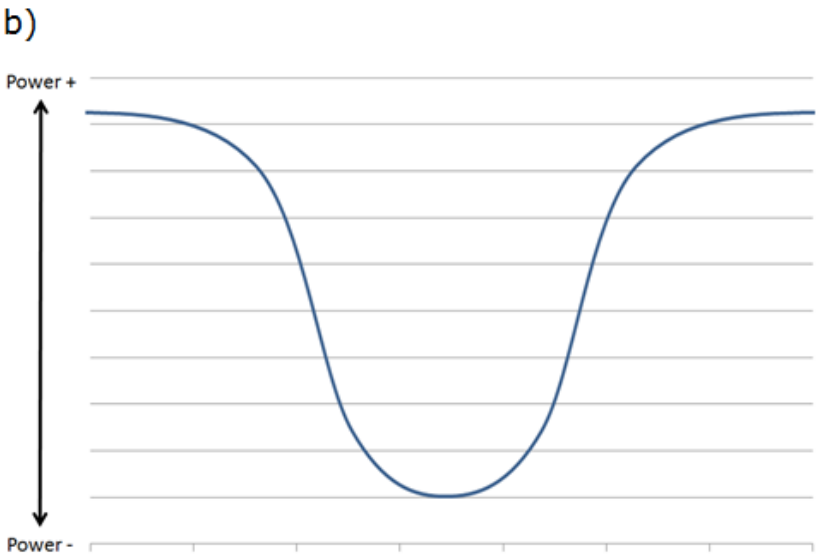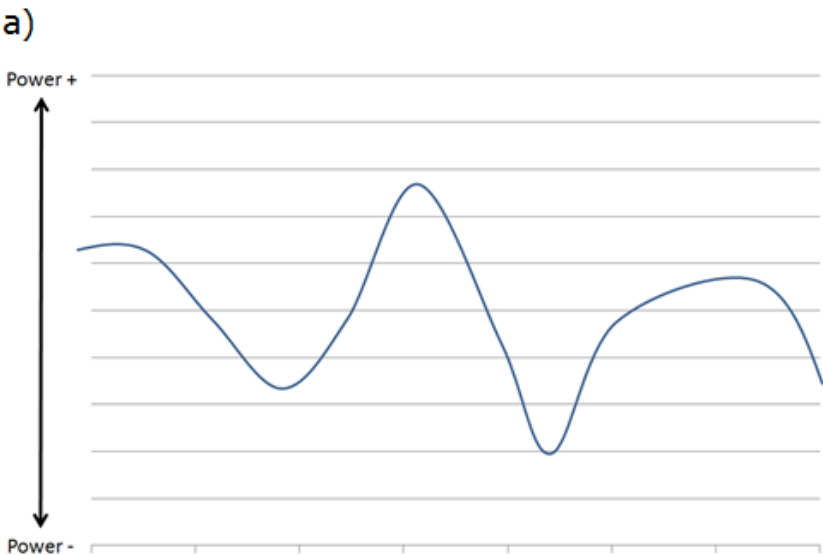
Power +

Power -

Scaffolding Argument Paragraphs
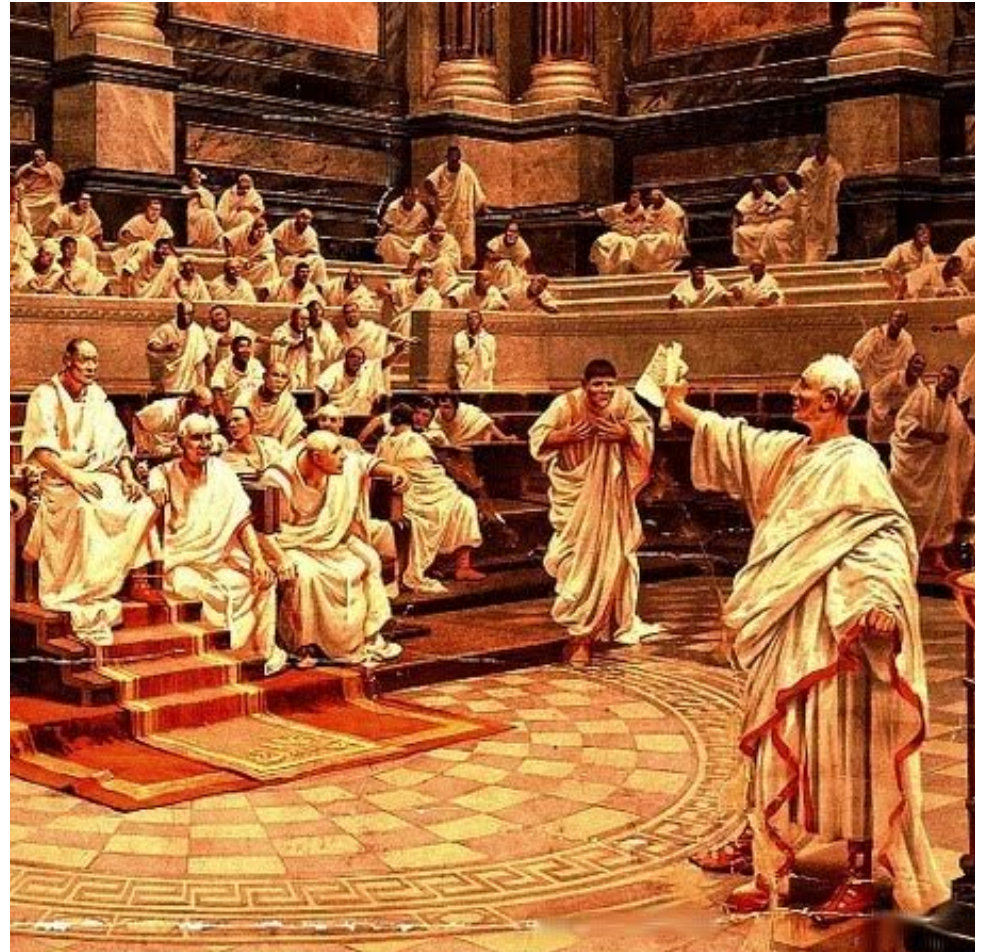
Topic sentence: Tell the reader what this paragraph will be about. Topic NG and main idea of the paragraph. Power +. Ideas & (nominalised) things.	
	Tourism causes serious environmental damage.
Supporting sentences: Give more details and explain the main idea of the paragraph. Power ↓. More specific ideas & (nominalised) things.	
	The construction of tourist resorts can lead to the destruction of forests and beaches, and the disappearance of important habitats.
Example: Include a real example of the main idea. Power -. People and actions.	
	For instance, in Zakynthos, Greece, hotels and tourists have devastated many of the beaches where loggerhead turtles lay their eggs (Kostopoulos, 2014).
Supporting sentences: What is the effect of the examples like this? What can be learnt from examples like this? Why are examples like this important? Power ↑. More specific ideas & (nominalised) things.	
	This damage has affected turtles and other wildlife as well, creating a serious threat to Mediterranean biodiversity.
Concluding sentence: Remind the reader of the paragraph's main idea and your opinion. Topic NG + main idea of the paragraph. Power +. Ideas & (nominalised) things.	
	Consequently, tourism does severe harm to the natural environment.

Power Analysis: SD+ SG-

Tourism causes serious environmental damage. The construction of tourist resorts can lead to the destruction of forests and beaches, and the disappearance of important habitats. For instance, in Zakynthos, Greece, hotel owners and tourists have devastated many of the beaches where loggerhead turtles lay their eggs (Kostopoulos, 2014). This damage has affected turtles and other wildlife as well, creating a serious threat to Mediterranean biodiversity. Consequently, tourism does severe harm to the natural environment.

Another View of the Wave
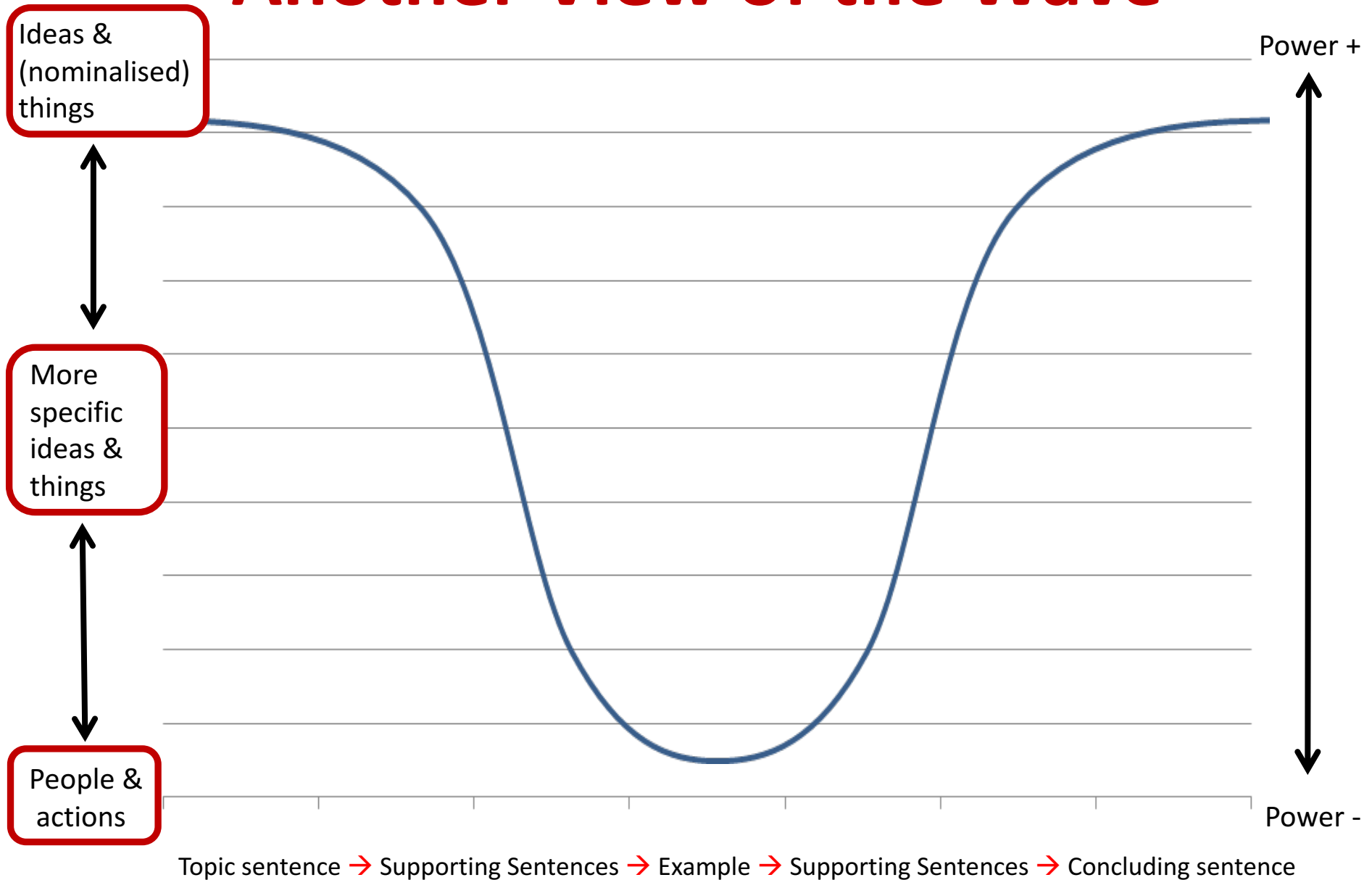
Tourism causes serious environmental damage. The construction of tourist resorts can lead to the destruction of forests and beaches, and the disappearance of important habitats. For instance, in Zakynthos, Greece, hotel owners and tourists have devastated many of the beaches where loggerhead turtles lay their eggs (Kostopoulos, 2014). This damage has affected turtles and other wildlife as well, creating a serious threat to Mediterranean biodiversity. Consequently, tourism does severe harm to the natural environment.

Another View of the Wave

Ideas & (nominalised) things

More specific ideas & things

People & actions

Power +

Power -

Topic sentence → Supporting Sentences → Example → Supporting Sentences → Concluding sentence

Tourism does more harm than good. Do you agree or disagree?

Tourism has increased rapidly over the past decades with over 1 billion people travelling to another country for a holiday in 2015 (The World Bank, 2016). However, tourism has many negative effects including damage to the environment, commercialisation of indigenous culture and loss of community. Thus, tourism does more harm than good.

Tourism causes serious [...]
construction of tourist [...]
of forests and beaches [...]
important habitats. For [...]
hotels and tourists have [...]
where loggerhead turtl[...]
2014). This damage h[...]
as well, creating a sen[...]
biodiversity. Consequ[...]
the natural environme[...]

Another harmful aspe[...]
symbols, art and danc[...]
many visitors to Austr[...]
designs and they have [...]
at a tourist location lik[...]
culture, but also hide t[...]
extreme social and eco[...]
indigenous culture to n[...]

In conclusion, tourism [...]
indigenous culture an[...]

References

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249.

Rutkosi, K. (2015). Bal[...]
http://bali.balim[...]

Roberts, R. P., & Chen,[...]
Press.

The World Bank. (2016[...]
http://data.worl[...]

Focus on writing: introduction to argument essays

Remember that there are three things that you must know if you want to understand a new genre and write it well.

1) **Purpose**
2) **Structure**
3) **Grammar**

Purpose:
What job do you want the text to do? What effect should your text have on the reader?

Structure:
What information comes at the beginning [...]
What information does the text's topic a[...]
develop the writer's ideas?

Grammar:
What are the typical grammar features o[...]
Do the NGs often refer to people or thing[...]

Activity

Look again at the argument essay about [...]
general. What job do they do? Choose th[...]

Arg[...]		
Purpose	a) To make readers da[...]
	b) To think look at idea[...]
	c) To persuade readers [...]
	d) To give facts about a[...]

Essay structure

An argument essay has three main part[...]
mixed up. Think about how the informat[...]
essay's structure.

Section name	Purpose of secti[...]
Restatement of position	a) **presents** ideas t[...] make these ideas [...]
Statement of position	b) clearly states the[...]
Arguments	c) **talks** the reader [...] opinion.

Can you complete the table below using [...]

Power grammar

Can you remember how power grammar is different from [...]

Power words are directly related to specific topics. If the to[...]
as well. However, power grammar can be used by all acad[...]
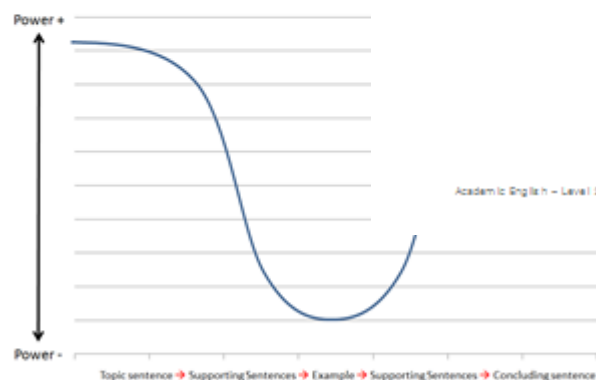subject area is.

Power grammar words are nominalisations – nouns which [...]
or even linkers. Using these words allows academic writers [...]
writing and to organise it more easily.

Activity

Look closely at the argument paragraphs from the model o[...]
of power grammar as you can. What words do these nomin[...]

For example, from the first paragraph you could underline [...]
construction (verb = construct) and **destruction** (verb = [...]

The wave

Look at the places in the paragraphs where power words a[...]
appear in every sentence? Can you see the wave in the pa[...]

Topic sentence ➔ Supporting Sentences ➔ Example ➔ Supporting Sentences ➔ Concluding sentence

Another view of th[...]

Thinking about pow[...]
paragraph change[...]
wave. You can als[...]

In a good paragrap[...]
general. The noun [...]
things than those in[...]
people and actions[...]
what effects they h[...]
sentence but less s[...]
ideas and things in[...]

You can think abou[...]
paragraph.

Ideas & (nominalised) things

More specific ideas & things

People & actions

Use the table below to help you write one argument paragraph about the topic you have been given. Don't forget to think about purpose, structure and grammar of argument essays.

Remember a paragraph must focus on one main idea & have a clear, wave structure.

Topic sentence: Tell the reader what this paragraph will be about.
Topic NG and main idea of the paragraph. Power +. Ideas & (nominalised) things.
Supporting sentences: Give more details and explain the main idea of the paragraph.
Power +. More specific ideas & (nominalised) things.
Example: Include a real example of the main idea.
Power -. People and actions
Supporting sentences: What is the effect of the examples like this? What can be learnt from this example? Why is it important?
Power +. More specific ideas & (nominalised) things
Concluding sentence: Remind the reader of the paragraph's main idea and your opinion.
Topic NG + main idea of the paragraph. Power +. Ideas & (nominalised) things

Student Waves

Happiness at work builds motivation and can produce high productivity. This is because of when employees are happy, satisfied, and feel secure with their job, their work rate increases and they produce a high quality of work for their company. For example, there are several companies using ROWE, which is a human resource management strategy that emphasizes objectives, such as Sun Microsystems, AT&T and IBM and the result of using ROWE is the increasing of productivity by 35% on average. This is may also leads to employees get promoted and high salary. Thus, job satisfaction is important because it can increase business productivity.

Student Waves

Environmental damage is the most important problem for the world because it directly threatens human life. Environmental damage caused by changing the earth's climate causes to natural disasters such as floods and storms. For example, in October 2016, some 50 people were reported killed as a result of Hurricane Matthew – a powerful Caribbean storm (Hurricane Matthew, 2016). Inattention to environmental damage will increase deaths due to natural disasters. Therefore, environmental damage is a severe problem and risks human life. The international community should legislate special priority to eliminate environmental damage.

Student Waves

Stress reduction is the major benefit of job satisfaction. stress is a significant cause of sickness in the modern world and work-related stress is very common cause of injury. For example in Australia in 2004 - 2005 the government paid $139.3 million to workers who had been injured connected to workplace stress. So reducing stress level can make people work harder and save money. Therefore, job satisfaction is more important.

Cycling is ___ activity and ___ transportation
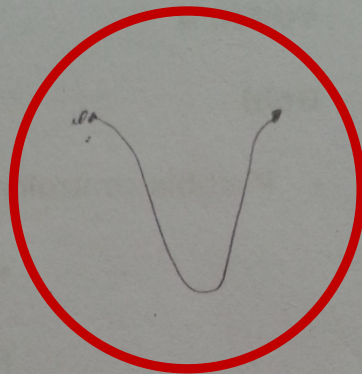
is healthy.

have OR,

vided into many parts of learning
, reading and writing, English.
e. By listening and speaking
English. In addition,
y fun but also useful for
to be done by regularly
in interesting and make

Recommended reading

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Thank You

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in Richard Ingold

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