

ES1103

English for Academic Purposes



TUTORIAL 2 (PART B)

Centre for English Language Communication

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Synthesising Sources

Tutorial Learning Outcomes

By the end of this tutorial, you should be better able to:

- write a synthesis of several sources for a specific purpose
- use a range of language strategies to express your stance clearly and convincingly

Introduction

In Tutorial 2A, we considered the importance of being able to include and integrate the work others into your own writing through accurate use of APA in-text citation conventions, and by expressing your stance on the sources cited.

In this tutorial, we focus on synthesising sources, that is **integrating multiple sources accurately, effectively and seamlessly** into your own writing.



Synthesising Ideas

Synthesising involves **combining** ideas from several texts into one, **reorganising** them, and **rephrasing** them to serve a specific purpose. This is a very difficult craft and many academic writers struggle to do this well. The skill involves organising the sources and marshalling them for your own purpose.

Imagine you are the director of an orchestra and the sources are the instruments that you are using to make your point. What makes an academic text excellent is the ability of the writer not only to correctly report the sources, but more importantly to make them talk to each other and blend well to create something new in support of line of argument or the presentation of a case.



You orchestrate the sources to create something new.



Steps for effective synthesising of ideas

1. Identify **sources** that are **relevant to your purpose**.
2. Identify the **relevant ideas** in the sources.
3. Make sure you identify the **meaning relationships** between ideas. Do the ideas contradict, support, exemplify, extend or bring an element of doubt? Do the ideas support your stance or contradict it?
4. Organise the information you have. **Group similar ideas** together.
5. Decide on how you want to **express the relations between the groups of ideas**. Also, use appropriate expressions (e.g. reporting verbs, evaluative words) to **reflect your stance** on these ideas.
6. **Paraphrase** and **summarise** as necessary.
7. **Check** your notes with your original sources for **accuracy and relevance**. Make sure that your writing does not deviate from the intended meaning given in the original sources.
8. **Use linking words** and **transitional phrases** so that the ideas flow smoothly.
9. Check your work.
 - Make sure your main **ideas are clearly presented**.
 - Make sure the **language is correct**.
 - Make sure the **style is your own**.
 - Remember to **acknowledge other people's work**.



Remember, **it is necessary to cite all sources** paraphrased, summarised or directly quoted in a synthesis.

A synthesis without in-text citation is considered plagiarised work.

Integrating citations with grammatical accuracy

To ensure a smooth flow between your own writing and sources cited, it is necessary to consider and use an appropriate and accurate grammatical form within your sentences.

Task 1

Read the three examples of integrated citations on the following pages.

- Choose the best options to **make the author prominent citations grammatically correct**.
- Consider why the other options are **incorrect**.

Example 1

For example, Carry, Barnett and Cobbs (2012)

- a) explains that when there is massive loss of zooxanthellae in a hard-coral colony, the polyps become colourless and the underlying white skeleton shows through, making patches of the colony appear pale, white or 'bleached.
- b) they explain that when there is massive loss of zooxanthellae in a hard -coral colony, the polyps become colourless and the underlying white skeleton shows through, making patches of the colony appear pale, white or 'bleached.
- c) explain that when there is massive loss of zooxanthellae in a hard-coral colony, the polyps become colourless and the underlying white skeleton shows through, making patches of the colony appear pale, white or 'bleached.”

The best option is:

Example 2

According to Mendez (2002),

- a) he noted that “the Happy Planet Index is an efficiency measure that ranks countries on how many long and happy lives they produce per unit of environmental input” (p.23).
- b) “the Happy Planet Index is an efficiency measure that ranks countries on how many long and happy lives they produce per unit of environmental input” (p.23).
- c) the fact that "the Happy Planet Index is an efficiency measure that ranks countries on how many long and happy lives they produce per unit of environmental input"(p.23).

The best option is:

Example 3

As Liu (1998)

- a) maintains that coastal marine life is strongly affected by environment and pollution issues.
- b) she maintains that that coastal marine life is strongly affected by environment and pollution issues.
- c) maintains, coastal marine life is strongly affected by environment and pollution issues.

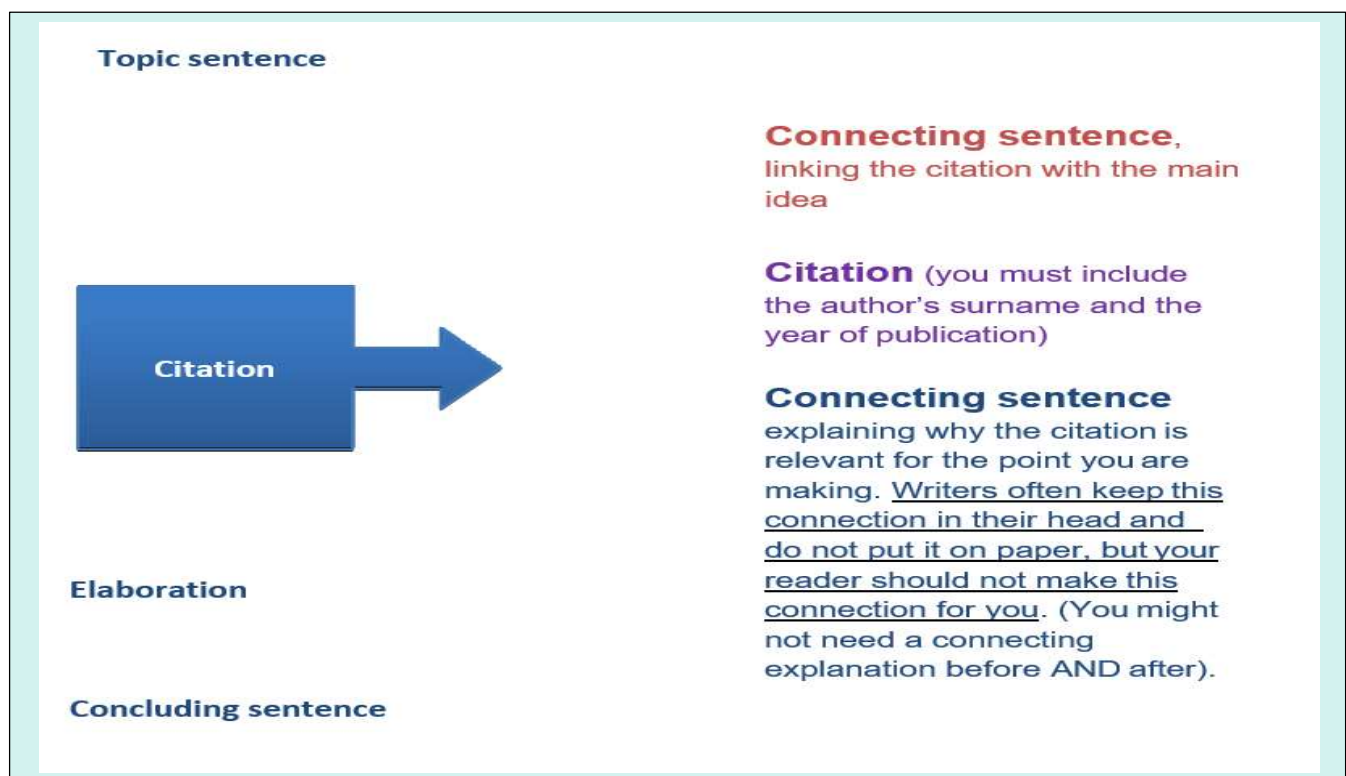
The best option is:

Building a source-based paragraph

A paragraph follows a fairly typical structure. The 'topic sentence' contains the claim or main idea or the most general information. The subsequent sentences develop, support, and provide evidence.

In academic texts, this support and evidence comes from reliable sources which you have to cite. Your citation must be well integrated into your paragraph.

The following structure can help you integrate citations logically into your paragraphs. After you become a more competent academic writer, you may not be required to follow such strict guidelines, but you will always need to connect your citations to your main idea in your topic sentence to show your reader why the citation is relevant.



Task 2

Read the paragraph below and highlight the citation.

Then identify

- the topic sentence
- the connecting sentences
- the elaboration sentences
- the concluding sentence

[A] A good field biologist has to have excellent ability to work in harsh conditions. [B] Depending on the ecosystem you are studying, work location might range from deserts to misty mountains, and might expose you to a variety of inclement weather. [C] According to Brenner (2000), a field biologist has to be able to adapt to conditions that lack basic comfort in terms of accommodation or food while retaining their ability to conduct their work effectively. [D] Indeed, field work always involves outdoor living, so skills in camping and hiking, basic survival knowledge such as first aid and dealing with wild animals are invaluable advantages. [E] The ability to enjoy a simple life style, and forgo the many conveniences our modern societies give us access to is also crucial. [F] When on a field assignment in a remote area, aspects of modern living such as internet connection, shopping and restaurants are unlikely to be available. [G] It is therefore essential for an aspiring field biologist to gauge whether they have the required skills in order to prepare themselves for this exciting, but challenging career.

[A]

[B]

[C]

[D]

[E]

[F]

[G]

Synthesising Practice

Now that you have some understanding of synthesis, let's practice synthesising sources.

Task 3

Integrate the following two sources to provide an overview of youth gang crime in the USA.

Consider the following questions:

- Are both sources on the same topic?
- Do they both express the same view?

Write a 1-2 sentence synthesis of the two to show how their meanings are related.

Source 1

We have reached a turning point in the battle against youth gang crime.

Foster (2012)

Source 2

From 2012 to 2020, arrests for gang-related crimes involving knives, guns and other weapons increased fourfold among 13 to 19 year-olds.

Institute for Youth Studies (2021)

Your synthesis

Task 4

Read extracts 1-11 on the following pages.

Select the sources you will use. You do not need to use all of them.

Write a 50-word paragraph explaining what is meant by the term 'culture shock'.

Be sure to acknowledge the authors for their ideas.

Extract 1

Culture shock refers to phenomena ranging from mild irritability to deep psychological panic and crisis.

(From H. Douglas Brown, *Principles of language learning and teaching*, 1980, page 131, Published by Prentice-Hall in Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.)

Extract 2

Culture...taken in its wide ethnographic sense is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as members of society.

(From: Tyler, Edward B. *Primitive culture*. Published in London by J. Murray in 1871. The quotation is from page 1.)

Extract 3

Cultures have to have something to mould. What they in fact have is an exceedingly complex arrangement of biochemical machinery, each piece containing certain instructions of a highly specific kind about its own development. Culture, too, provides a set of instructions about development. Man is thus subject to two sets of instructions, a cultural set and an organic set, both of which are with him from conception to death. The organic set is in the ascendancy before birth; after birth the cultural set become steadily more potent, until eventually, towards death, the organic set regains ascendancy.

(From: The biology of human action. By Vernon Reynolds, page 73. Published in Reading, UK, by W H Freeman in 1976.)

Extract 4

The future evolutionary and ecological success of the species in the face of an ever-accelerating rate of environmental change, associated with growing urbanisation and industrialisation, will depend entirely on the extent to which cultural adaptation continues to be effective. The success of cultural adaptation, in turn, will depend on the level of understanding in society of the increasingly complex interactions between natural processes on the one hand and cultural processes on the other.

(From a book by S V Boyden, page 436. The impact of civilisation on the biology of man. Australian National University, Canberra, 1970.)

Extract 5

Culture is man's medium; there is no one aspect of human life that is not touched and altered by culture. This means personality, how people express themselves (including shows of emotion), the way they think, how they move, how problems are solved, how their cities are planned and laid out, how transportation systems function and are organised, as well as how economic and government systems are put together and function.

(From pages 16 to 17 of a book by Hall, Edward. T. It was published in 1976 in New York by Doubleday and the title is Beyond culture)

Extract 6

A culture bump occurs when an individual from one culture finds himself or herself in a different, strange, or uncomfortable situation when interacting with persons of a different culture. This phenomenon results from a difference in the way people from one culture behave in a particular situation from people in another culture.

(From pages 170 to 171 of an article by Carol M Archer called "Culture bump and beyond". This article is on pages 170 to 178 of a collection of articles in a book called Culture bound. The book is edited by Joyce M Valdes and was published in 1986 in Cambridge by Cambridge University Press.)

Extract 7

Culture shock is what happens when a traveller suddenly finds himself in a place where 'yes' may mean 'no', where 'fixed price' is negotiable, where to be kept waiting in an outer office is no cause for insult, where laughter may signify anger.

(From Alvin Toffler's book: Future shock. Published in New York by Bantam Books in 1970. Page 3.)

Extract 8

A culture is the totally socially acquired life-way or life-style of a group of people. It consists of the patterned, repetitive ways of thinking, feeling and acting that are characteristic of the members of a particular society or segment of society. (Harris, 1975, p. 144).

(From a book by Melvyn Harris, published in 1975. The title of the book is Culture, people, nature: An introduction to general anthropology. It was published in New York by Harper and Row.)

Extract 9

According to George Foster in 1962, page 87:

Culture shock is a mental illness, and as is true of much mental illness, the victim does not usually know he is afflicted. He finds that he is irritable, depressed and probably annoyed by the lack of attention shown him.

(From the book: Traditional cultures, published in New York by Harper and Row.)

Extract 10

It is homesickness and more. First encounters with another culture can be shock. You do not have to visit another country to experience culture shock. As any who has kept a diary through important changes in life, such as a new job or going to college, we often go through changes of mood and attitude before coming to terms with the new situation.

(From a booklet produced by the British Council called Feeling at home. It was published in London in 1997 and the quotation is from page 10.)

Adapted from: Using English for Academic Purposes <http://www.uefap.com/writing/writfram.htm>

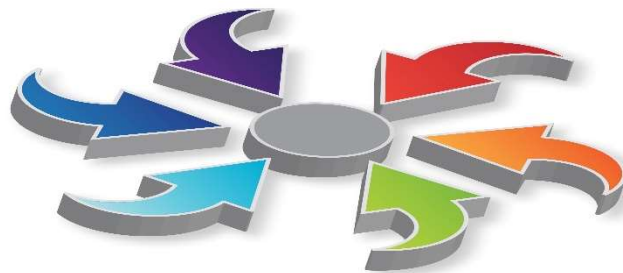
Your synthesis (about 50 words)

Task 5

Review your synthesis on culture shock and consider the following questions.

- How successful is the synthesis?
- Have you represented the ideas and information accurately?
- Is a clear stance taken?
- Does the synthesis flow well?
- Have all the sources been acknowledged and integrated correctly?

In this tutorial and in the previous tutorials, we have considered how to integrate sources accurately and appropriately into your own writing using in-text citation conventions of APA. We have also seen the importance of the writer's ability to express a stance on the works cited, and the need to synthesise sources to support and provide evidence for the ideas presented in an academic text.



CA1 Synthesis Task

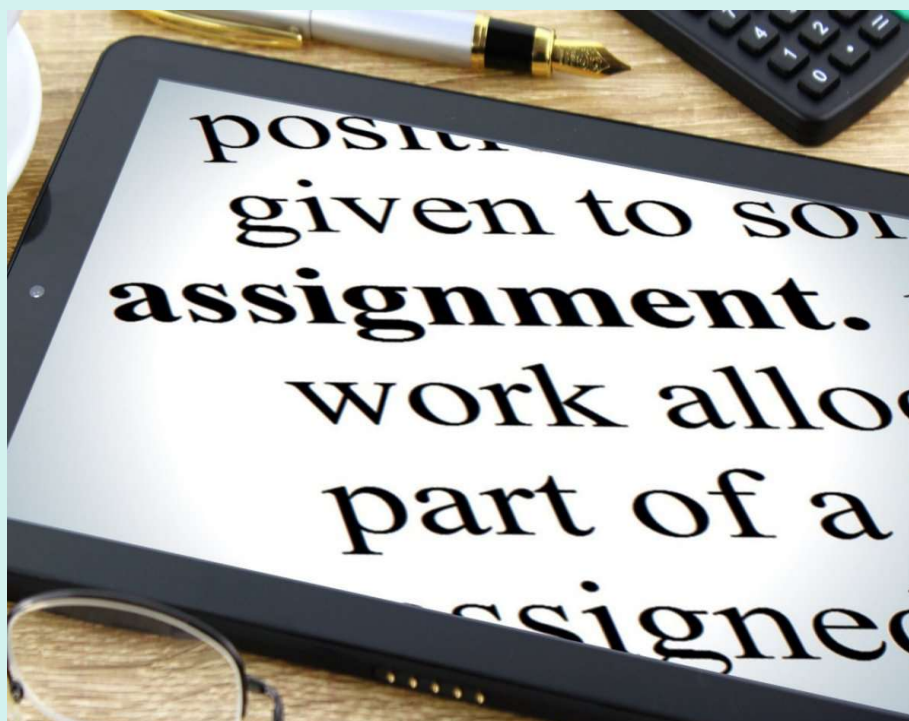
Now, we turn to combining all of these skills for your first assignment for ES1103.

Your tutor will give you the specific details of the assignment. These specifics are also available on Canvas.

However, here is some general guidance on the CA1 Synthesis Task.

CA1 Synthesis Task

You are required to **read six articles** and **synthesise the views** on the common issue. You should **indicate and defend** an **overall stance** on this issue and **use information from at least three of the given articles**.



CA1 Synthesis Task

Your synthesis should include:

- A short introduction, which should include your stance
- Two or more body paragraphs elaborating your main points
- A range of distancing and endorsing language to support your stance
- In-text citations for the sources you have used (note that end citations are not necessary)
- A short conclusion reiterating your thesis

Word range: 450-500 words



- Start working on the Synthesis Task.
- Upload it to the Synthesis Task submission folder on Canvas.
- Submit your synthesis by the scheduled deadline stated on Canvas.
- Run a plagiarism check and consult the report, and amend your synthesis if necessary.

