

# LANG1062: Introduction to Language and Communication Essay Writing

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# Overview

- The task
- Interpreting task
- Processes
- Writing critically
- Essay structure
- Integrating evidence (referencing)
- Paraphrasing and Summarising
- Reporting verbs



# The task

Format : Argumentative Essay

Word limit : 1500

Due date : 15 May 2015

Weight : 35%

Choose **one** of the topics presented in the 'Essay' page of your Learnonline course site.

The screenshot shows the University of South Australia Learnonline interface. At the top, the university logo and name are on the left, and the user's name 'Shashi' is on the right. Below this is a navigation bar with links for 'Introduction to Language and Communication - SP2 2015', 'My Courses', 'My Dashboard', and 'Course Offerings'. A green banner below the navigation bar displays 'HOME / LANG 1062' and a 'full screen' button. The main content area features a large blue banner with the text 'LANG 1062: Introduction to Language and Communication' and a 'Your progress' link. Below the banner is a horizontal menu with tabs for 'Week 1', 'Week 2', 'Group assignment', 'Essay', 'Portfolio tasks', and 'Textbooks'. A red arrow points from the word 'one' in the text above to the 'Essay' tab. On the right side, there is a 'COURSE ESSENTIALS' sidebar with a list of items: 'Course Outline Internal - Magill', 'Course Outline External - Magill', 'Extensions', 'Feedback forms', 'Grades', 'ePortfolio', 'Lecture Recordings', 'Manage lecture recordings', and 'Virtual Classroom'.

# Interpreting topic 1 (Example)

Language and communication are quite distinct concepts, although there is overlap. Language cannot be treated as just a subpart of communication.

What is language?  
What is communication?  
How are they similar?  
How are they different?  
Is language a subpart of communication?  
Why isn't language a subpart of communication?

<https://lo.unisa.edu.au/mod/resource/view.php?id=310447>

What

When

Why

Where

How

Be critical

# Processes for writing your essay

- 1) Read widely to gain an understanding of the topic.
- 2) Critically read about the issues.
- 3) Identify your stand (proposition): Agree/Disagree?
- 4) Identify the factors that will support your stand.
- 5) Set boundaries for your discussion (limit the factors and discuss them in depth).
- 6) Find evidence to support your discussion (minimum 2/3 references for each issue).
- 7) Tell a logical story about the topic and support with evidence (writer controls the discussion).
- 8) Demonstrate that you understand the topic by paraphrasing, summarising and quoting when appropriate.
- 9) Revise your draft a few times to produce high quality writing.
- 10) Proofread and edit your work before submitting.



# Descriptive vs critical

## Descriptive

Define  
Describe  
Summarise  
Give examples

## Critical

Analyse  
Compare  
Contrast  
Critique  
Evaluate  
Examine

<https://lo.unisa.edu.au/mod/resource/view.php?id=311738>



# The essay structure



## Introduction (10% of word count)

- Introduce the topic (general statement)
- Identify key issues/problems
- State your thesis statement (your proposition)
- Identify aims (What is the purpose of the paper)
- Provide the scope (How is the discussion organised)

## Body (80% of word count)

- Topic sentence (introduce key point)
- Expand point with supporting statements (evidence & justification)
- Provide example (if appropriate)

## Conclusion (10% of word count)

- Restate thesis statement (main message)
- Interpreting key ideas
- Conclude argument



# Essay structure: introduction (example)

Humans and animals differ in their communicative abilities.

There is much debate in the field about the communicative abilities of humans and animals. Some scholars identify that humans and animals are different because of linguistic aspects and the way information is managed. Others reject this idea because there is growing evidence that suggests some animals have the ability to acquire those grammatical aspects often associated with humans. This essay will argue that human communication differs from animals by identifying three characteristics, namely, 1).....; 2).....; and 3)..... The discussion will first begin with..... Next, the factors will be discussed in detail with reference to some examples. Finally, the conclusion will highlight the key arguments discussed in the paper and establish that humans and animals are different in their communication abilities.

General statement about topic

Key issues related to the topic

The aim of this essay

The scope of this essay

# Essay structure: body

Literature highlights that humans and animals are different because of particular linguistic features. Researchers from the discontinuity tradition distinguish human communication into 'narrow and broad language faculties' (Taxler, Boudewyn & Loudermilk 2012, p. 611). According to Fitch, and Hauser (2004), the broad language faculty considers factors such as perception and cognition which is often employed for language input and output. These aspects are also shared with other perceptive and thinking activities as well as non-human animals. The narrow language faculty on the other hand does not share those features used for language with any other actions (Chomsky 2005; Fitch & Hauser 2004)....XXX

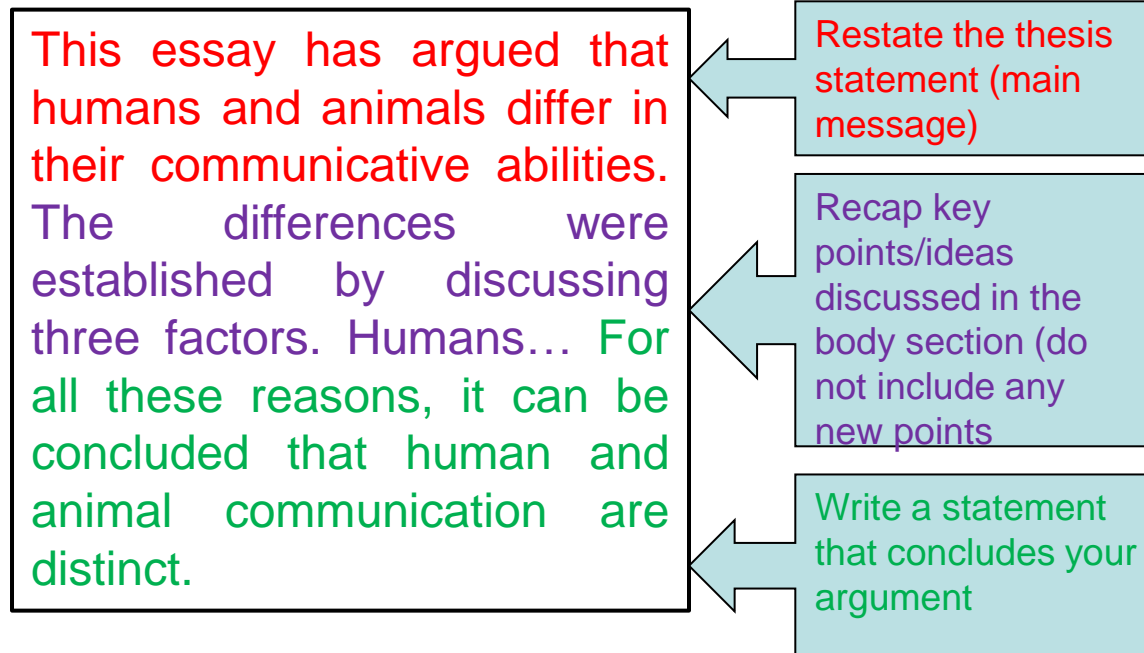
Topic sentence  
(to introduce the  
point that will be  
discussed)

Expansion of  
the point with  
evidence (min of  
two references  
for each point;  
argument  
should highlight  
the linguistic  
features that  
distinguish  
humans from  
animals in a  
logical and  
coherent  
manner)

Have a concluding statement(s) at the  
end of this point to interpret what this  
means for your proposition



# Essay structure: conclusion (example)



# Integrating evidence in your essay

## Author prominence

Gerntner et al. (2006) studied European starlings to determine whether they could discriminate between strings generated by a context-free phrase-structure grammar and strings generated by a finite-state grammar.

## Information prominence

Critics of the starling research have noted that birds could pass the discrimination test without actually computing the embeddings or keeping track of long-distance dependencies (Corballis 2007; van Heijningen et al. 2009)

# Different ways of integrating evidence

|              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Quoting      | It is generally found that 'observers of human and animal communication systems seek to understand the cognitive mechanisms and processes that underlie their respective abilities' (Traxler, Boudewyn & Loudermilk 2012, p. 611). |
| Paraphrasing | Traxler, Boudewyn & Loudermilk (2012) suggest that the features associated with the enabling of human communication is often studied by scholars in this field.                                                                    |
| Summarise    | It is highlighted that researchers who study human and animal communication often investigate its enabling underlying aspects (Chomsky 2005; Fitch & Hauser 2004; Traxler, Boudewyn & Loudermilk 2012)                             |

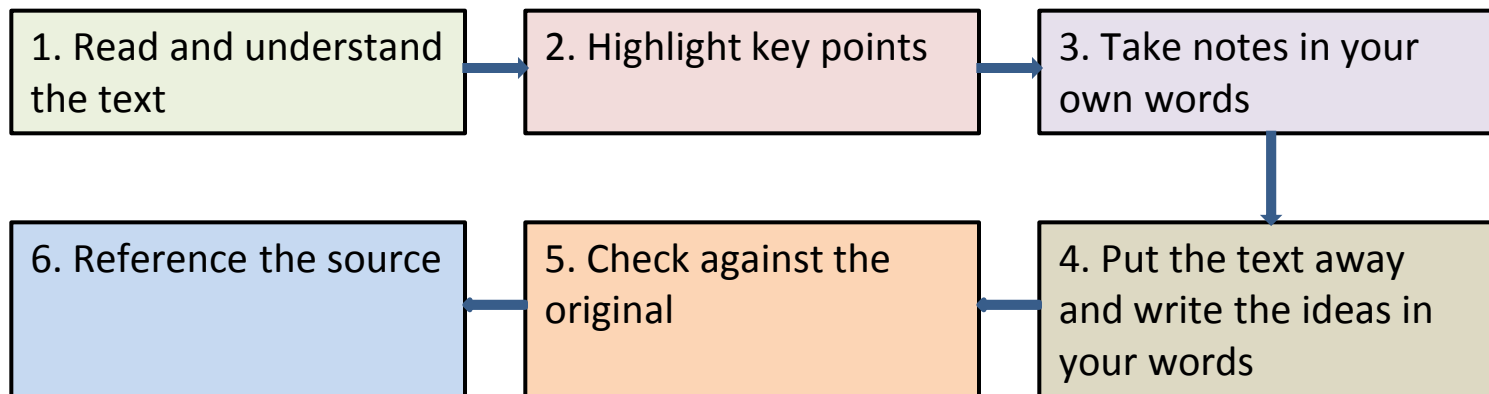
[unisa.edu.au/referencing](https://unisa.edu.au/referencing)



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# Paraphrase and summarise

- Your tutors want to see if you have understood the topic & debate.
- Replacing one/two words from the original can result in high similarity percentages.
- Copying chunks from the original, results in descriptive writing.
- Using the thesaurus to change word for word can result in miscommunication.



<http://lrs.unisa.edu.au/ess/echo/presentation/698a7b68-8929-4336-98db-33da5e232c04>

# Reporting verbs

**W**

Weak

**N**

Neutral

**S**

Strong

|                  |          |            |          |
|------------------|----------|------------|----------|
| According to ... | <b>W</b> | Insists    | <b>S</b> |
| Adds             | <b>N</b> | Maintains  | <b>N</b> |
| Affirms          | <b>N</b> | Mentions   | <b>W</b> |
| Agrees           | <b>N</b> | Notes      | <b>W</b> |
| Analyses         | <b>N</b> | Outlines   | <b>W</b> |
| Argues           | <b>S</b> | Insists    | <b>S</b> |
| Asserts          | <b>S</b> | Points out | <b>W</b> |
| Believes         | <b>N</b> | Predicts   | <b>N</b> |
| Challenges       | <b>S</b> | Presents   | <b>W</b> |
| Claims           | <b>S</b> | Proposes   | <b>N</b> |
| Clarifies        | <b>N</b> | Proves     | <b>N</b> |
| Comments         | <b>N</b> | Questions  | <b>S</b> |
| Concludes        | <b>N</b> | Recommends | <b>N</b> |
| Concurs          | <b>N</b> | Refers to  | <b>W</b> |
| Considers        | <b>N</b> | Refutes    | <b>S</b> |

# Resources for essay writing:

<https://lo.unisa.edu.au/mod/resource/view.php?id=299198>

<https://lo.unisa.edu.au/mod/resource/view.php?id=309305>

<https://lo.unisa.edu.au/course/view.php?id=4074>

