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Essay II

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HELLO EVERYONE!

On page 52 in the book (Effective Academic Writing), there an exercise that says:

Write a three-paragraph descriptive essay on one of the following topics. (Three-paragraph: introduction, one body paragraph, and a conclusion).

- A holiday celebration or family tradition.
- A particular or favorite place or time of day.
- A work of art (painting, sculpture, photograph, etc.)
- A piece of architecture (bridge, skyscraper, etc.)

Study these essays and learn them by heart, so that if they come up in the exam, you can write them, and in the case of a descriptive essay, only one body paragraph would be required. We're going to cover three units from the book, and all the essays that may come up in the exam are from the book. There won't be surprises.

Give me a sentence with an adjective.

Student: The film is boring.

Instructor: Where is the adjective?

Student: Boring.

Instructor: What is the noun that the adjective describes?

Student: Film

Instructor: Can you give me an adjective that describes a noun?

Student: a wide area.

Instructor: So the adjective precedes the noun. This is basic English grammar.

Using Adjectives in Descriptive Writing

Adjectives are words that describe nouns - people, places, and things

Adjectives appear in different positions in the sentence.

Adjectives usually come after an article and before a noun.

- We sat in the *roaring* sun.

Adjectives can also occur after stative verbs such *appear, be, become, feel, look, seem*. Use *and* to separate two adjectives that follow a verb. Separate more than two adjectives with commas and the word *and*.

-I was *hungry*.

-He became *thoughtful*.

-He was *sick and tired*.

-We were *excited, nervous and anxious*.

There is a common mistake in your essays, and that is that you don't use commas when you have multiple adjectives. If you have more than two adjectives, separate with commas, and before the last adjectives, use

the word *and*. You also make another common mistake, which is that you capitalize letters in places where no capitalization is needed. Capitalization is important in English. Sometimes in your essays, I find a capital letter in the middle of the word! So be careful.

Read the following sentence. Circle the adjectives, and underline the nouns they describe.

- The beach was (quiet) and (still).
- Many crabs were walking slowly on the (white) sand.
- The traps looked like (round) cages.
- There were some (small), (fragrant) fish in the traps.
- The (fishy) smell made the crabs hungry
- The smelled the (strong) smell of the (dark), (oily) fish.
- The meat was (white), (pinkish) and (tender).
- It tasted (sweet).

Formation of Adjectives

Adjectives may be formed from verbs. Many of these adjectives are formed by adding *-ing* to verbs.

- Entertain → entertaining (an entertaining film).
- Excite → exciting (an exciting novel).

The past participle of verbs can function as adjectives.

- Break → broken (a broken arm)
- Excite → excited (an excited child)

Nouns may also function as adjectives when they are used to describe or modify other nouns. They are called noun modifiers.

- A store that sells shoes → A shoe store.

Describing Feelings

Some adjectives ending in *-ing* and *-ed* can be used to talk about feelings and emotions, for example, *interesting, interested, boring, bored, confusing, confused*.

Adjectives ending in *-ed* (past participles) describe how people feel about something.

- The interested students listened to the story. (= The students felt interested.)

Adjectives ending in *-ing* describe the noun that causes the emotion or feeling.

- The students heard an interesting story (= The story is interesting.)

Can you give an example of a past-participle verbs?

Student: I'm tired.

Student: My bag is lost.

Instructor: Can you give me an example of an -ing adjective that describes a noun?

Student: The starving student.

Instructor: The starving student... Are you hungry?

The next exercise is important.

Circle the correct adjectives in each sentence.

- The movie was very (bored/**boring**).
- The audience was very (**confused**/confusing) by the story.
- As a student, I found the class very (**interesting**/interested).
- The speaker was very (exciting/**excited**) by the topic. (Passive voice)
- The children were (**tired**/tiring) by the game.
- The new tastes were (**stimulating**/stimulated) to the chef.

The next exercise is the most crucial one, which will be based on the following rule, which is about how we order the adjectives when more than one adjective describe the same noun. It's not random:

Order of Adjectives

Adjectives appear in a particular order, according to their function, as shown below:

	Function	Examples	
1	Quality/Opinion	Interesting	boring
2	Size	Huge	Small
3	Age	Old	New
4	Shape	Round	Square
5	Colour	Blue	White
6	Origin	Mexican	European
7	Material	Wooden	Iron
8	Purpose / kind	Picnic	Wedding

**We put out huge plates of Mexican food out on the wooden picnic table.
Mother had a beautiful, small, antique, Tahitian pearl necklace that she wore for special occasions.
Rosa and Pablo bought gold wedding rings.**

Rewrite the sentences placing the adjectives in the correct order.

- It was a (metal/new/fantastic) sculpture.
- **It was a fantastic new metal sculpture.**

(fantastic: quality, new: age, metal: material)

-They walked down the (old, elegant/marble) staircase.

- **The walked down the elegant, old, marble staircase.**

(elegant: quality, old: age, marble: material)

-The museum had (wooden, entrance/beautiful) doors.

- **The museum had beautiful, wooden, entrance doors.**

(beautiful: quality, wooden: material, entrance: purpose or kind)

-There were (blue/huge/bright) lights to mark the entrance.

- **There were bright, huge, blue lights to mark the entrance.**

(bright: quality, huge: size, blue: color)

-The food was served in (simple/tiny) portions on (small/dinner/modern) plates.

- **The food was served in simple, tiny portions on modern, small, dinner plates.**

(simple is quality, and tiny is size) (modern: quality, small: size, dinner: kind)

-The women wore (velvet/new/stunning) dresses.

-**The women wore stunning, new, velvet dresses.**

(stunning: quality, new: age, velvet: material)

At this point, we have finished the descriptive essay. I advise you to look up the essay topics, and write an essay for each one, and memorize it, so you can pass the exam easily.

Student: Will there be multiple essay topics to choose from in the exam?

Instructor: Yes. There will be many essays to choose from, but they will all be the same type of essay.

Comparison and Contrast Essays:

A comparison and contrast essay can be used to show the similarities and differences between one idea or image and another. Often these comparisons help us to see the image or idea in a new way.

Student: If we're asked to write a comparison essay in the exam, do we include both the similarities and the differences in our essay?

Instructor: It depends on the question, so you need to read it carefully. But generally comparison and contrast involves both similarities and

differences.

Student: Do we need to write one paragraph about similarities, and one paragraph about differences, or can we merge them together?

Instructor: As long as it is coherent and logical... You can write differences and similarities regarding one aspect in the same paragraph. That's one strategy that you can use, but the important thing is that you need to have a pattern that your essay follows. You can also write similarities in one block, and then write about the differences in another. It's up to you. So if in one body paragraph you write about both the similarities and the differences, you need to do the same thing in the next paragraph, and so on. It's your own essay, but I need to sense that it's organized and coherent.

*

In the following essay, an economist called Mohammad Yunus describes his experience as a PhD student in the United States. So, he's from Bangladesh, and he traveled to the US for his PhD studies, and in this essay he compares between the universities in Bangladesh and the universities in the United States.

Learning About Differences

Despite my success, I still wanted to study and teach. So when I was offered a Fulbright scholarship in 1965, I jumped at the chance to get a PhD in the United States. This was my third trip abroad. As a Boy Scout I had gone to Niagara Falls, Canada, in 1955, and to Japan and the Philippines in 1959. But this time I was on my own, and I was in for some surprises. At first the university of Colorado campus in Boulder was quite a shock. In Bangladesh, students never called professors by their first names. If one spoke to "sir", it was only after being invited by "sir" to speak, and then one spoke in *enormously* respectful terms, but in Boulder, professors seemed to consider themselves friends of the students. I often saw faculty and students *sprawled out* on the lawn *barefoot*, sharing food, joking and chatting. Such familiarity was totally unthinkable in Bangladesh. And as for the young female students in Colorado, well, I was so shy and embarrassed I did not know where to look. At Chittagong College, female students were the minority. Of a student body of eight hundred, no more than one hundred and fifty were women. Women were also *segregated*. They were usually confined to the Women's Common Room, which was off-limits to male student. Their participation to student politics and other activities was limited. When we staged plays, for example, women were not allowed to participate, so men wearing women's dress and makeup would take on

female roles.

My female students at Chittagong university were extremely shy. When it was time for class, they would *huddle* in a group just outside the Teacher's Common Room and then follow me to class, *clutching* their books and looking down at their feet so as to avoid the stares of the boys. Inside the classroom they sat apart from the boys, so I learned not to ask them questions that could embarrass them in front of their classmates. I never talked to them outside the classroom.

- **enormously**: extremely
- **sprawled** out: sitting or lying in a relaxed manner.
- **barefoot**: without shoes
- **segregated**: separated.
- **huddle**: stand closely together.
- **clutch**: hold tightly.

So what is the first difference between the university in Bangladesh and the university in Colorado?

Student: The way the students address the professor.

Instructor: The relationship between the students and the professors. What was the relationship like in Bangladesh?

Student: Very respectful.

Student: Very strict.

Instructor: So the students and the professors don't treat each other as friends in Bangladesh, whereas in the United States it's quite the opposite. So in Bangladesh, the relationship is official. What was the example in the essay that made that point?

Student: The students call the professors "sir".

Instructor: Yes. So what was the proof that the relationship between the professors and the students in the United States is friendly?

Student: They call the professors by their first name. Secondly, they share fruits, and they sit with the professors on the lawn of the university.

Instructor: So it's very casual, isn't it?

Student: Too casual.

Instructor: So this is the first contrast in the essay. How did he order his essay?

Student: He takes a point and points out the similarities and differences between the two countries.

Instructor: No, there are no similarities mentioned. He was only mentioning the differences. The second point of difference was about the behavior of the females. In Bangladesh, the females were shy and they

were excluded from discussion in the class. When it comes to the United States though, he didn't mention how the situation was like for the females there. However, he described how he felt "And as for the young female students in Colorado, well, I was so shy and embarrassed I did not know where to look." So, what can you tell from reading this sentence?

Student: There were so many girls.

Instructor: Yes, he was surrounded by females, while in Bangladesh, the number of females was small.

So in the structure of this essay, he didn't talk a lot about the females in the university of Colorado, but because the essay was coherent, and the language is beautiful and correct, the essay is good. So this tells you that there are no rigid rules for writing an essay. As long as you're writing in good English, and your essay makes sense, then things are fine. The main problem with your essays is the language actually.

This essay is not an academic essay. For example, there is no conclusion. But for you, if I asked you to compare between two things, you need to tell me the similarities and the differences, and you need to make paragraphs. Of course, if you write such an essay, you are going to pass... And I remind you, you can't write well unless you practice. Without reading and writing, theory alone is useless. Read the book and do the exercises.

Brainstorming and Outlining

The first thing you do when you want to write an essay is thinking about the subject and creating ideas. The initial stage of thinking about the subjecting and coming up with ideas is called brainstorming. For example, in the following exercise, we have to compare between two cities, which are Washington DC and Tokyo.

(Page 110 from "Effective Academic Writing")

Washington, D.C.	Common to both	Tokyo
USA Large parks	Large city capital	Japan Skyscrapers

You can see in the intersection that both cities are capitals.

1- What two cities are compared in this diagram?

Tokyo and Washington DC.

2- What are their contrasting characteristics?

Tokyo is known for its skyscrapers, while Washington is known for its large parks.

3- What are their common characteristics?

They are both large capital cities.

*

When you compare two things, there must be some connection between them. For instance, Tokyo and Washington are both large cities and capitals.

In this unit, you will write a three-paragraph comparison and contrast essay about two places you know. They could be places you have lived in or visited.

Now we are going to compare two cities that we are familiar with. Damascus and another city. Do any of you come from a different city? Are you all native to the capital?

Students: No.

Student: A village

Instructor: So you can compare between the place you used to live in, which could be a village, and Damascus. The way your hometown is and how you feel about it, and how it compares to Damascus in terms of similarities and differences.

Student: How about the capital of India and Damascus?

Instructor: I lived in Amman for twenty years. I can compare between Amman and Damascus. They are both capitals. Amman is modern, whereas Damascus is old. Damascus is the oldest capital in history, while Amman is only a hundred years old. This is the main point of contrast. Amman has buildings that are more modern. It's more developed in terms of infrastructure because it's a new town. However, since I don't think you're familiar with Amman, we're going to compare Damascus with another town in Syria.

Writing an Outline

- Introduction

Two places to be compared:

1. Damascus 2. Small town

Hook.

Thesis statement.

- Body:

- Body Paragraph 1

Topic sentence about similarities.

Details.

- Body Paragraph 2
Topic sentence about differences.
Details.

- **Conclusion**

Summary sentence.

We're going to compare Damascus and a small town. In the **hook**, you're going to tell me **why you're going to compare the two places**.

Student: Can we say: "Living in Damascus is a little different from living in a small town"?

Instructor: You can tell me that you used to live in a different place, and now you moved to Damascus, and there are similarities and differences between the two places. So this is one of the possible contexts: that you have changed places. So now I live in Damascus. I have some longing for my hometown. So this is one of the common contexts to introduce such an essay, can you think of other ones?

Student: I think we should describe some locations in both places.

Instructor: This belongs in the body paragraphs. Here, you are telling me why you are comparing the two places.

What other contexts can you think of? Like, for example, you found a job in the capital, and vice versa: in the small town, so you had to move. So this also could be the hook.

Student: I wonder which country is the best to travel to in order to learn English.

Instructor: Any country whose native language is English, whether it's England, USA, Canada or Australia. Actually, in the Netherlands and Sweden, they speak very good English as well. Although they speak it as a second language, they speak it very fluently.

What's the thesis statement going to be?

Let's say you have written in the hook that you go to your hometown on holidays, and that you have a different experience there from that of being in Damascus.

In the thesis statement, you are going to tell me that *you're going to list the differences and similarities*. You can only talk about the differences if you want, but you have to tell me that in the thesis statement. For example, tell me **I will list the contrasts**. It's up to you. But let's talk about both. So now we're going to the first body paragraph.

Student: We can mention the difference in infrastructure for example.

Student: They are completely different.

Instructor: Like in the countryside you may have single houses, while in the city you have buildings. What about the traffic in the streets? The city is more crowded.

You can talk about the differences and similarities between the two places in terms of architecture, infrastructure and weather.

What about the conclusion? A reasonable conclusion would be to tell me how you feel about the two places. So you talk about your own impression or opinion. For example, if I'm to write this essay, I would say that I long for my hometown (I miss it). I would talk about what I miss about my hometown.

Give me two places to compare, not necessarily cities. For example, has any of you graduated from another university?

Student: Yes. The Health Institution.

Instructor: You attended lectures daily?

Student: Yes.

Instructor: So if you want to compare your education here and there, what is your thesis statement, or maybe your hook sentence?

Student: After I graduated from the Health Institution, I continued my higher education, and I feel that there are many differences between the two stages?

Instructor: Why did you decide that you want another degree?

Student: I wasn't satisfied.

Instructor: Okay, this is a good reason. So after you tell me why you wanted to continue your education, you're going to list the differences and the similarities. What are they? This is the thesis statement.

Student: In the Institution, there aren't many students, but the doctors that lecture us in both places are highly educated. I didn't feel the difference actually. These are the similarities.

Instructor: In terms of effort, how do both experiences compare? Which one is harder?

Student: Both are the same. So I would list that as another similarity. The difficulty of studying is the same.

Instructor: What about when it comes to attending daily?

Student: No actually, daily attendance, in comparison to going only on Friday and Saturday, is a big difference. It's more convenient. Open learning is not that convenient for me. It gives you too much space and freedom during the week. So that's the only difference I can think of. So

there are three similarities and one difference.

Instructor: It's okay. It doesn't matter. That's a good essay.

In the exam, I might ask you to compare two places, but it's up to you to choose those two places. I won't specify.

Now we have an essay that sets a good example. You can imitate it in terms of its **structure** in your own essay.

Student: How do we find a suitable title for our essay?

Instructor: You have to come up with the title. It's your mission. When I write a research paper, I finish writing it, and then I write the title.

My Two Homes

There are two places that have had a profound impact in my life. One of them is New York City, and the other is Quetzaltenango, Guatemala. When you compare them, they seem like dramatically different places, but they have some things in common, and I love them both.

There are many reasons why New York seems like my home away from home. Both cities are striking and distinctive. For example, each has its own nickname. Everyone knows New York is "the Big Apple." Quetzaltenango is known as "Xela" (Pronounced Shey-la), which is a lot easier to say! Second, both cities have a "Central Park" where people like to go and walk. Although Central Park in Xela is smaller, its tropical flowers and colonial architecture mean it is just as beautiful as New York's. Furthermore, when you walk around Xela, you find many tourists and people from around other countries, just like New York. For me, this means conversations in Xela are just as interesting as conversations in New York.

Despite their similarities, these cities are different. Life in Xela is more colorful and the pace of life is slower. For this reason, whenever I return to Xela, it is like an escape. When I arrive, the first thing I notice is the color. In New York, many people wear black to be stylish, but in Xela, stylish clothing is the rainbow-colored clothing of the indigenous people. And because Xela is smaller, the beautiful green mountains outside the city are always visible. The second thing I notice is the pace of life. They say New York never sleeps, and it must be true, because I always see people walking and cars on the streets, even late at night. In the evening, my Guatemalan city definitely sleeps. Some younger people go out dancing and some families take a walk in the city's Central Park, but by ten O'Clock the streets are pretty deserted. On the other hand, New Yorkers are often in such a hurry, they don't even stop to eat. For breakfast they buy food on the street, and eat it while they are walking or on the subway. At lunch they order food from work and eat at their desks. In Xela people eat their breakfast at home and most come home from work for a much more

relaxed and long lunch.

In conclusion, these are two cities I love. For me, both are home, are unique, and are filled with interesting people. These cities represent the best of both worlds. New York is more hurried and rushed when I need energy, and Xela gives me a slower pace when I need to relax. Together they keep me balanced.

The **hook** in this essay is that **both places had a big impact on the writer's life**. That's the reason why he's comparing them. That's what you need to do in your essay as well.

“When you compare them, they seem like dramatically different places, but they have some things in common, and I love them both.” You can use this as your thesis statement too.

In the first body paragraph, the writer of the essay discussed the similarities between the two cities.

The second body paragraph starts with the topic sentence “Despite their similarities, these cities are different.” This is a good topic sentence that you can use in your essay. As you can see, you can imitate the essay.

The writer compared the two places in terms of their inhabitants' food habits and clothes fashion, and in terms of the traffic and the speed of life (In Xela, people sleep early, whereas New York never sleeps). You can do the same when you compare a city and a small town in the countryside in your essay for example.

The following are questions to test your understanding of the essay:

1- What two places does the author compare?

New York and Quetzaltenango (Xela).

2- Write the thesis statement.

“When you compare them, they seem like dramatically different places, but they have some things in common, and I love them both.”

3- What do the two places have in common?

(From the first body paragraph)

Both cities are striking and distinctive. They both have nicknames and Central Parks, and tourists are common in both cities.

4- Re-read the second body paragraph. What details support the two points of contrast mentioned in the topic sentence of the paragraph?

Point of contrast 1 (color):

In New York, people wear black to be stylish, while in Xela, the fashion is to wear colorful clothes, like the indigenous people.

Point of contrast 2 (pace of life):

In New York, the city never sleeps, people have their breakfast while walking, and they have their lunch at work.

In Xela, the streets are deserted early, and people have breakfast and lunch leisurely at home.

5- Look at the conclusion. In your own words, describe the writer's feelings about the two places.

He loves living in both places. New York energizes him, while Xela relaxes him.

The thesis statement tells me the general idea of your essay, and the topics that are going to be discussed in your essay. For example, if you want to compare and contrast two persons that you like.

Student: My mother and father.

Instructor: What's your hook going to be? How do you want to introduce the topic to me?

Student: My father and mother are the soul of the entire house.

Instructor: The most important two persons in our life are our mom and our dad, and we love them both. So what is your thesis statement? You are going to compare and contrast your father and your mother who you both love. What is the thing that links them together? In what way are they similar? You love them both. How are they different, for you?

Your mother is a housewife for example, and your father is a breadwinner. What else?

Student: My mother is tenderer, and my father is tougher.

Instructor: So what is the thesis statement, which describes the main idea of the essay?

Student: Although I love them both equally, there are many differences between them, and I would like to discuss them in my essay.

Instructor: Good. This is actually the easiest part. Just tell me what the essay is all about. The general idea.

In comparison and contrast essays, there are two forms of comparison:

1- The block format, in which you discuss the similarities in one paragraph, and the differences in another.

2- point-by-point format in which you discuss the similarities and differences of one point after another.

For example, the father and the mother in regards to age. The father is usually older than the mother is, and in regards to the physical features, the father is taller.

Choose the points that are the easiest for you to compare. For example,

in the first paragraph compare and contrast their physical appearance, and in the second paragraph you may discuss their differences in terms of their rules in the house, or what they do in the house or in life. In the conclusion, you're going to restate the similarities and the differences.

When I write the comparison essay, I need certain vocabulary to create **coherence and unity** in my essay. What do you think these vocabulary and phrases are? They are words and phrases like: *similar, in contrast, like, unlike*.

Comparison and Contrast Connectors

In comparison and contrast essays, connectors help create coherence by indicating the relationship between ideas in sentences.

Connectors that show similarity

Use connectors such as *like* (+noun phrase) or *similarly* to show similarity.

Like her sister, Angela was very tall.

I grew up overseas in Shanghai. **Similarly**, my wife spent her childhood abroad in Laos

Connectors that show contrast

Use connectors like *unlike* (+noun phrase), *in contrast*, or *on the one hand... on the other hand* to show contrast.

Unlike the fathers in Morelia, the fathers in Houston do not watch their teenagers as carefully.

The pace of life in New York is very rapid. **In contrast**, life in Xela is slower.

On the one hand, I enjoy the fast pace of New York. **On the other hand**, the pace of life in Xela relaxes me.

If two things are similar, use *like*, and *similarly*. If two things are different, use *in contrast*, and *unlike*. These words make your writing **clear** and strengthen your language. The problem with a lot of you in this subject is your language actually, not in creating ideas.

So if Noor is tall, and her friend Sonia is tall. How do you combine the two sentences?

Like Sonia, Noor is tall.

If you want to compare your father and mother. For example, the father is hot-tempered, whereas the mother is more tolerant. How can you say that using the aforementioned connecting words?

Student: Unlike my father, my mother is patient.

Instructor: good.

Let's do this exercise.

Rewrite the following sentences to show similarity or contrast. Choose the correct connector in parentheses to add more coherence.

1- Lemons are yellow. Limes are green. (Unlike/Similarly).

- **Unlike lemons, limes are green.**

2- Many families can live in an apartment building. Only one or two families usually live in a house (one the one hand... on the other hand/ like)

- **On the one hand, many families can live in an apartment building. On the other hand, only one or two families usually live in a house.**

3- A frog can live in water or on land. A fish cannot (like/unlike).

- **Unlike fish, a frog can live in water or on land.**

4- A parrot can fly. An ostrich cannot (similarly/ in contrast).

- **A parrot can fly. In contrast, an ostrich cannot.**

5- Rome is a city rich in history. Athens is too (like/ in contrast).

- **Like Athens, Rome is a city rich in history.**

6-Mozart composed his first Opera at the age of 12. Mandelsohn composed his first masterpiece in his teens (in contrast/ similarly).

- **Mozart composed his first Opera at the age of 12. Similarly, Mandelsohn composed his first masterpiece in his teens.**

(Because the age 12 is also a teenager age. So they were similar in age).

*

Complete the paragraph. Write like, similarly, on the other hand... on the other hand or in contrast in the blanks.

The Eiffel tower in Paris, France, and the Statue of Liberty in New York City, may seem to be very different structures. However, they have many similarities. **like** the Eiffel tower, the Statue of Liberty was designed by a French architect. Similarly, the Statue of Liberty and Eiffel tower both represented great advancements in metalwork. The Eiffel tower, however, is taller than the Statue of Liberty. The Eiffel tower measure 986 feet. **In contrast**, the Statue of Liberty is only 305 feet from the water to the top of her torch. **On the one hand**, you have the elegant black frame and sharp point of the Eiffel tower. And **on the other hand**, you have the long flowing robes and lifelike torch of the Statue of Liberty. Both monuments are equally beautiful.

Next time, we'll study the **superlative**. We'll discuss a common mistake called 'run-on sentence'.

In the exam, you will only have two types of essay: **The description essay and the comparative and contrast essay.**

Thank You

...