

RETHINKING ESSAY WRITING: THE MAJOR ISSUES REVISITED

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ABSTRACT

Essay writing is a mandatory academic activity for EFL learners across the globe but it is a daunting task for most learners because more often than not they fail to understand the type and topic of the essay from the question, and the major activities or supporting functions required in order to develop the main idea or the topic of a particular type of essay into a coherent text. Needless to say, they find it difficult to distinguish between cohesion and coherence often sacrificing the latter to the former. Last but not least, they end up writing humongous paragraphs each one dealing with multiple topics. This academic paper describes different types of essays and crosscultural variations in essay nomenclature, and shows how to understand the essay type and the topic from the question. It illustrates the difference between cohesion and coherence and establishes that cohesion alone may not result in coherence which is a more salient feature of discourse than cohesion. It also discusses the major modes of development of an essay which, like the ingredients needed for a particular recipe, vary according to the type and topic of the essay to be written. As for essay planning, the paper demonstrates the superiority of the solar system model of essay planning over the linear model. It also discusses the major elements of paragraph writing and illustrates how the length of a paragraph should be delimited by the topic of the paragraph the number of which should not be in excess of one. The last part of the paper is mainly for instructors which illustrates how to frame situational essay questions. Finally, it examines the various marking criteria as used by examiners and various examination bodies and recommends the most suitable ones for essay marking.

Key words: Essay Types and Topics, Cohesion and Coherence, Modes of Development, Paragraph Length, Essay Questions, Marking Criteria.

INTRODUCTION

Essay writing is a mandatory activity for students who are learning English as foreign- or a second language or are attending a composition class. But very often they face difficulty in writing a good essay because they are beset with multiple problems like they fail to understand the essay type and topic from the essay title, cannot plan the essay effectively, cannot develop the essay coherently (as a matter of fact, they cannot distinguish between cohesion and coherence), and have problems managing paragraph lengths; they often end up writing unwieldy paragraphs of enormous lengths or write up only one humongous paragraph for an essay.

Teachers, on the other hand, have different problems; usually they formulate vague essay questions instead of writing learner-friendly direction-giving essay titles, and when it comes to marking student essays, their marking is whimsically done instead of its being based on certain criteria or standards the essay writers are expected to attain.

This academic treatise puts the major beliefs and practices regarding the above essay writing issues under the microscope, discusses their strengths and weaknesses, and puts forth innovative and appropriate suggestions and recommendations on how learner writers can deal with these issues more effectively in order to emerge as more successful essay writers. Teachers, on the other hand, are supplied with pedagogic ideas on how to frame learner-friendly essay titles in which the embedded D-words (direction words) are expected to help student writers understand essay types and topics resulting in an improvement of their writing quality and, finally, on the criteria or standards of judgment to use in order to evaluate student essays more reliably. First, the discussion is on essay types.

ESSAY TYPES

Different views are available with respect to essay types. There also exist crosscultural variations regarding essay nomenclature. Werlich (1976) lists the following five types:

1. Descriptive (Subjective and objective)
2. Narrative (Subjective, personal and objective)
3. Expository (Definition, explication and interpretation)
4. Argumentative (Personal and scientific)
5. Instructive (Directions, rules, regulations and statutes)

Of these, item number five seems redundant because rhetorically it falls under the expository type, under these major sub-type of process:

1. Cause-effect
2. Problem solution
3. Classification
4. Comparison-contrast

5. Definition
6. Process

Conlin (1990) has the following categories in which categories 3 – 8 fall under one of the major categories known as the expository type. This categorization, by far, is the most accepted and globally used.

1. Narration
2. Description
3. Examples
4. Classification and division
5. Comparison and contrast
6. Process
7. Cause and effect
8. Definition
9. Argumentation and persuasion

It may be noted that argumentation and persuasion are similar with the difference between them being that “Argumentation should be rational and logical as opposed to emotional.” (Conlin, *ibid*, p. 338)

Pincas (1982) puts essay types under these categories:

1. Description
2. Narration
3. Expository (the subtypes have already been listed above)
4. Argumentation

One more list of essay types is put below which shows a few discrepancies.

1. Description
2. Definition
3. Comparison and contrast
4. Cause and effect
5. Narrative
6. Process
7. Argumentation
8. Critical
9. Expository
10. Persuasive

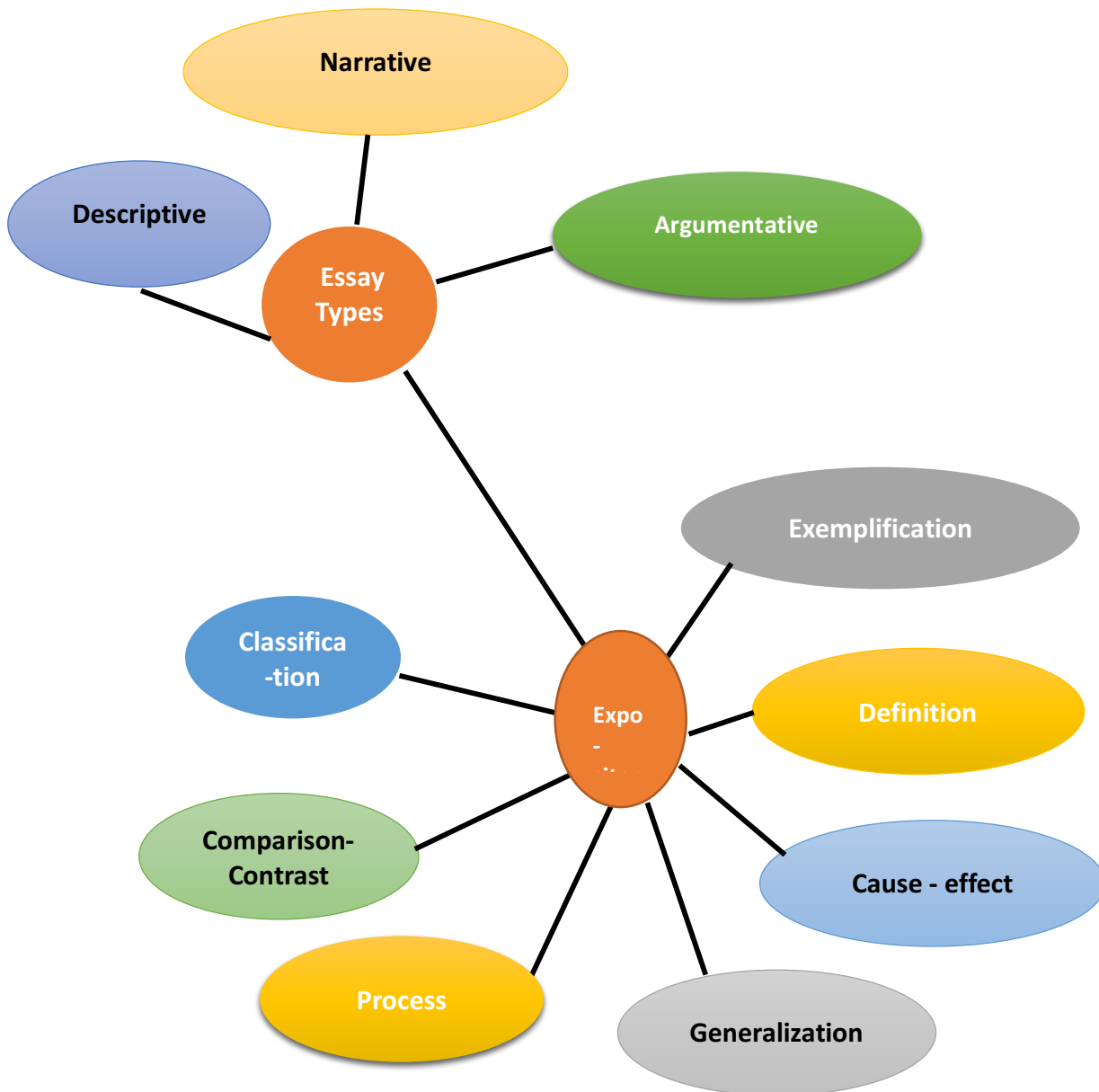
This list seems quite awkward because of two reasons: 1. Category 8 is actually a component of argumentation and 2. Categories 2,3,4, and 6 come under the umbrella of exposition. 3. Categories 7 and 10, though somewhat dissimilar, should still be put under the genre of argumentation.

As mentioned earlier, essay nomenclature varies crossculturally, too. Kachru and Philip (2008, p. 142) attest to the following essay types in Hindi:

1. Descriptive
2. Narrative
3. Deliberative
4. Argumentative

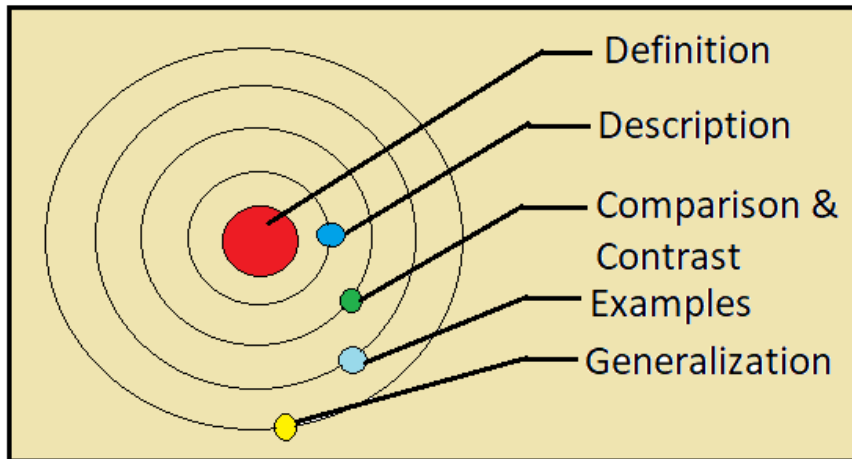
Category 3, deliberative, seems out of place because without deliberation, nobody can write anything, let alone essays; the three other categories, 1, 2, and 4, fit well into the universally acceptable categories. In Bengali culture, however, the essay types are almost the same as in Hindi with the exception that students are asked to write what is called a reflective essay, similar in essence to the deliberative type in Hindi. Having examined the various categorizations of essays, the following essay types are proposed for student practice:

Four types of essays

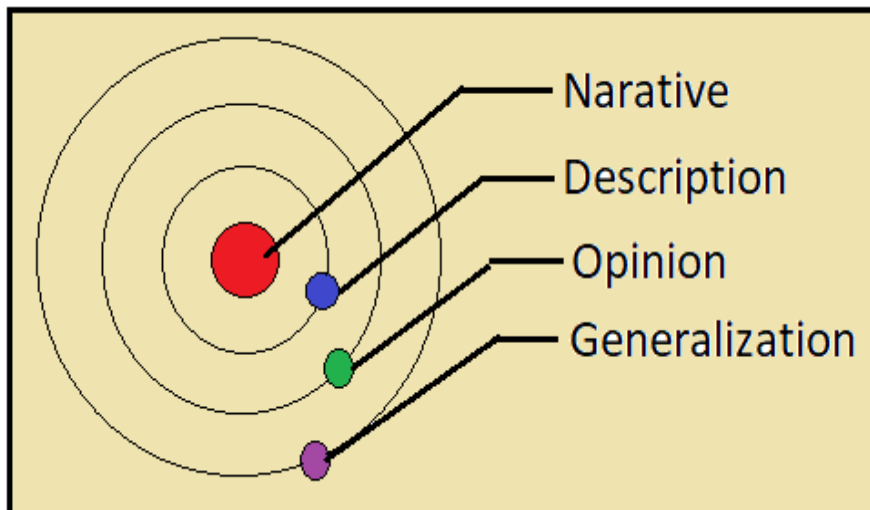


It is worth remembering that though essays are of the above types, none of the type can be developed with just one mode of development or one type of activity or rhetorical function; instead, any type of essay is a combination of co-centric circles of ideas coherently linked to one another. Having said that, in one particular type of essay, only one activity or mode must be dominant, qualitatively or quantitatively or both. The supporting ideas must not overwhelm the mode or activity which characterizes the essay type and topic. In a narrative essay, a journey, for example, the nuclear mode is narrative which may include other related modes but the narrative mode of development must not be overshadowed by the subsidiary modes of development. But like recipes for foods, where ingredients vary according to the foods themselves, in essay writing too, the activities or supporting ideas should vary according to essay type and topic. In addition to that, as some ingredients are unique to a particular dish, some modes of development constitute the basis for a specific type of essay without which the essay may become vague and pointless; for example, a descriptive essay is not possible without a definition and description. In other words, a particular type of essay would demand a few activities which are unique to that essay type notwithstanding the other types which may also be required for the development of the essay. Shown below are four essay titles of four different types illustrating *the solar system* representation of essay planning each with its own *planets* or essential developers.

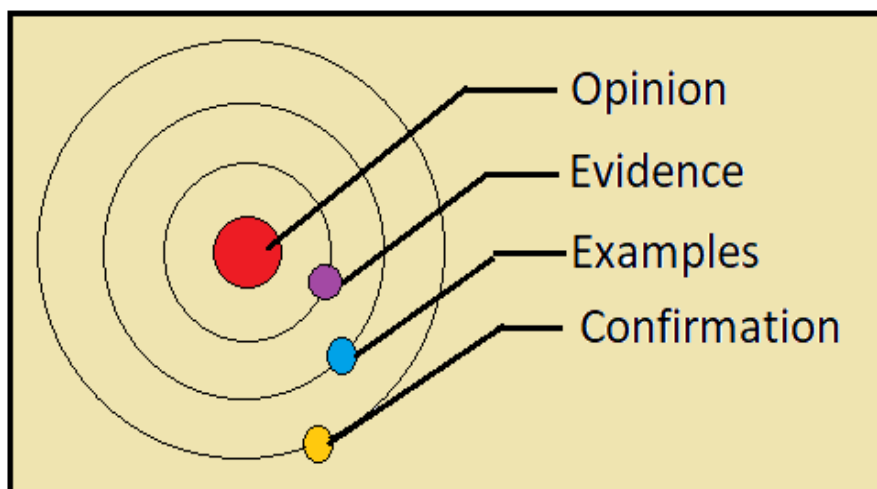
The tiger (Descriptive)



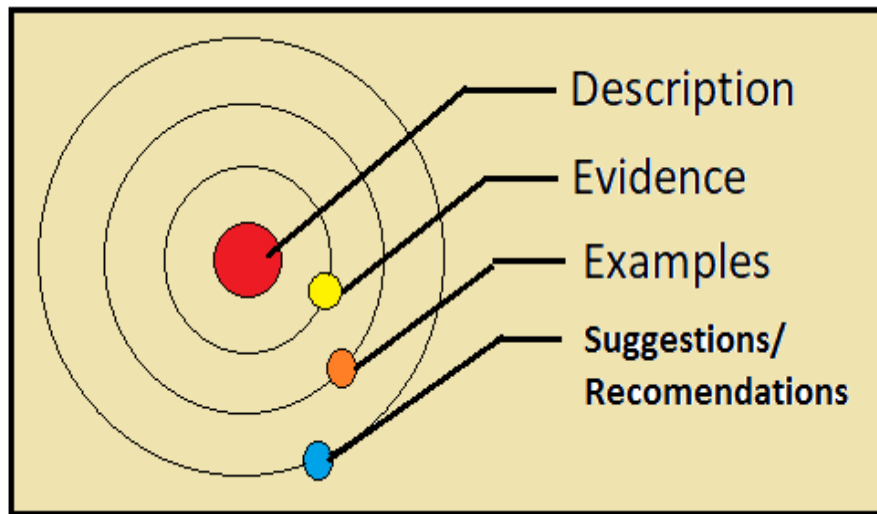
Visiting a historical place (Narrative)



Public smoking should be banned (Argumentative)



Global warming (Cause-effect - expository)

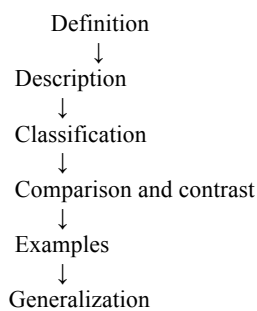


In our solar system, the Sun is in the centre with all its planets rotating round it and gravitating towards it. The Sun is the nuclear force attracting the planets without which its planets would get lost in space. Similarly, in *the solar system* representation and model of essay planning, the topic is the nucleus around which the supporting ideas rotate and are attracted to. If essay writers adopt this model for essay planning, they would never lose sight of the supporting ideas and their connection to the topic. At the pre-writing essay stage, therefore, students are encouraged to plan their essays using this model.

The question which may be asked is what is the advantage of *the solar system model* over *the linear model*? The answer lies in following example of *the linear model* of a descriptive essay:

Example of the linear model of essay planning

The tiger



In the linear model, the farther down the supporting ideas are from the topic, the more chances are of the writer's losing sight of the connections between them and the topic. Moreover, unlike in the linear model, the solar system model offers a panoramic view of all of the ideas that have been pooled for the essay to write. But the question remains: are there only a fixed number of developing ideas to go with an essay? The answer is: no; notwithstanding the use of the most essential developing ideas necessary for "cooking" a an essay on a particular type and a topic, depending on the scope, required size, and the writer's depth of knowledge about the topic, he is free to use any other developers coherently or in a logically connected way, to "garnish" the essay with. Coherence, then, is important and it comes next.

COHERENCE VERSUS COHESION

Regardless of what and how many supporting ideas are used for writing an essay, they must be put coherently into the text, but the truth is, learners often miss out the difference between cohesion and coherence. To Chiang (1999), cohesion is the means available in the surface forms of a text to signal relations that hold sentences and clauses together. Cohesion, in other words, is the surface manifestation of underlying links that bond the text. Halliday and Hasan (1976) formulated the following taxonomy of cohesive ties:

1. Reference
2. Substitution

3. Ellipsis
4. Conjunction
5. Lexical cohesion

To Chiang (*ibid*), coherence to the contrary, is the theoretical construct in text structure which refers to the underlying relations that hold between assertions or propositions and how the relations contribute to the overall theme or macro-structure of the text. In Wittte and Faigley's words (1981, pp. 189-204), while cohesion defines the mechanics which holds a text together, coherence defines the underlying semantic relations that allow a text to be understood. Cohesion alone, however, does not guarantee coherence as pointed out by Wittte and Faigley (*ibid*) who maintain that exclusive focus on syntax and other formal features of writing may not improve writing quality; neither will a narrow emphasis on cohesion produce significantly improved writing, they claim. They have given the following example of a text which is cohesive but not coherent:

The quarterback threw the ball toward the tight end. Balls are used in many sports. Most balls are spheres but a football is ellipsoid (p.201).

Cook (1989, p. 24) holds a similar view that "Formal links between sentences...are not enough to account for our feeling that a stretch of language is discourse." Cook gives the following example of a text which is cohesive but not coherent:

A: It's a mystery to me how the conjuror sawed the woman in half.
B: Well, Jane was the woman he did it to. So, presumably she must be a Japanese.

In spite of the formal links (so, she, etc.) cook observes, the text does not make sense, so it is not coherent. There are other examples of texts which may be cohesive but not coherent. Yule (1985, p. 106) has this example:

My father bought a Lincoln convertible. The car driven by the police was red.
That colour does not suit her. She consists of three letters. However, a letter is not as fast as a telephone call.

Cook (*ibid*) asserts that the connection between words in sentences is not enough to give meaning to a text. For a text to be coherent it needs a central topic (one only) to be developed through supporting ideas but it is the centrality of the topic which gives meaning to it and makes it coherent. An essay is a combination of several paragraphs each one having a topic of its own but related to the paragraphs before and after and to the central topic in the thesis paragraph usually located at the beginning of the text. The next example shows how the lack of a central theme would render a text incoherent, so meaningless.

A boy sat under a tree and looked at a girl sitting under another tree. Then a donkey came and started grazing nearby and the girl looked at the donkey. Next, a monkey appeared at the scene and, suddenly, it kicked the donkey. (Author's example)

This text is incoherent because it lacks a unifying central topic in spite of cohesive links like 'the', 'then', 'Next' and 'suddenly'. Essay writers are to be reminded of the need for coherence; in an extended discourse the focus should be on how naturally and smoothly the ideas develop into a paragraph and how several paragraphs develop into an essay. Because a paragraph must not have more than a single main idea of its own, it must not grow into a monstrous size (though some paragraphs written by EFL learners do). Conlin (1990, p.7) supports this view when she says, "A paragraph must be unified, meaning that it must deal with one single idea (the main idea) and that each sentence must be related to this idea." The next section illustrates this point.

PARAGRAPH LENGTH

Because a paragraph develops around one topic only, it cannot be incomprehensively long. In the article on the revival of the Brazilian automobile industry (appendix 1), the paragraphs are of reasonable length coherently connecting themselves to one another forming a well-organized essay. The paragraphs numbered 1-8 have the following individual topics:

1. The Brazilian automobile industry is experiencing a revival because of lower inflation rates.
2. Different companies, including GMB, are making profits.
3. This is for the first time that the industry has experienced such a revival since the 1970s.
4. The reason for the revival: Tax cuts on small cars bringing prices down and increasing production.
5. Not only has production of cars gone up but export of cars to Latin American countries has increased too.
6. One company, GMB, is targeting Europe and the USA for export of cars including Latin America. (Secondary topic, completed in the next paragraph: The boom will depend on cost and quality control).
7. Improved production techniques will keep costs down; consequently, its market share will go up, claims GMB.
8. This may come true or not; everything depends on the imminent presidential election and its outcome which may result in an economic boom or a downfall bringing hyperinflation back resulting in the industry's downfall as before.

As evident from the text, an individual paragraph in an essay must have a single idea to develop or, at best, allow just for an introduction of another related topic to be further developed in the following paragraph. It is evident that a well-written essay is

coherent where ideas are logically connected or they ‘hang together’ in spite of a lack of cohesion; the text in question uses a few cohesive devices or formal links throughout: ‘they’ (paragraph 1), ‘What’ (paragraph 4), ‘too’ (paragraph 5), ‘Although’ (paragraph 6), and ‘Maybe’ (paragraph 8). What follows is that ideas should be organized in a coherent manner in a text even though there might be few cohesive devices in it. Besides, one idea per paragraph should delimit its size preventing it from growing into incomprehensible proportions. An example of such enormity in paragraph size is provided in appendix 2 through a huge paragraph written by a university professor (from Syed, 2016, p. 86-87). On careful reading, several smaller paragraphs can be discovered according to the topics dealt with in the paragraph. Instructors need to caution their students against constructing such a humongous paragraph because it may pose great comprehension difficulty even to an efficient reader.

If teachers are reading this paper now, it is upon them to pass the information to their students and give them sufficient practice in essay writing by adhering to the principles discussed above. However, before the paper ends, there are two more important issues to address, namely formulating essay questions and setting out suitable essay marking criteria. The next few pages deal with essay questions and essay marking criteria and are especially directed at essay teachers.

ESSAY QUESTIONS

Usually, vague essay titles or questions are provided to students like the ones below:

Write Any One of the Following Essays:

1. Population explosion
2. Traffic jams
3. Environmental pollution

Such essay questions often fill students’ mind with great confusion because each of the above topics has different dimensions, so if the students are not given direction as to which aspect or dimension of a given topic to deal with, they will not be able to plan the essay in the shortest possible time (especially in an exam situation), let alone write it successfully. Better alternatives, therefore, are explanatory and directional essay titles or questions as illustrated by Wallace (1980, pp. 131-132):

Student-friendly essay titles:

1. How would you set up an aquarium?
2. Examine the view that the function of the family in industrial societies have been taken over by other agencies.
3. Compare and contrast Ibsen’s and Chekhov’s views on art as reflected in at least one play by each writer.
4. To what extent were the industrial ills of the 1920s a product of World War I?
5. Trace in outline the development of the British Labour Party as a political force between 1918 and 1929.

In each of the above titles, students’ focus is restricted by D-words or direction words which, directly or by implication, signal the type of essay to write.

The D-words in the above titles are:

1. **How:** A process description
2. **Examine:** Argumentation
3. **Compare and contrast:** Comparison and contrast
4. **To what extent:** Cause and effect
5. **Trace:** Narrative

A few more learner-friendly essay questions (Adapted from Conlin, 1990).

1. Do you remember any event in your life that has had serious impact on your life? Give an account of it. (Narrative)
2. Spend some time looking out of window and write an essay describing what you hear, and smell. Concentrate on concrete details, and try to order your description spatially. (Descriptive)
3. Think of a film, television or sports personality and describe how the person’s way of life has influenced you. (Descriptive)
4. Think of two cities or towns in your country. Write an essay describing how they are alike or different. (Comparison and contrast).
5. Capital punishment is given in many parts of the world. How do you view it? Are you in favour of the death penalty or not? Give reasons for your answer. (Argumentative)

ESSAY MARKING CRITERIA

The lack of a principled approach to student essay marking has been found to exist; more often than not, instructors have been found marking essays whimsically instead of basing their judgment on certain sets of standards or criteria for attaining. As a result, essay marking remains significantly unreliable. Alternatively, essay marking is also done by comparing one student’s performance with others’, a type of marking referred to as norm-referenced marking. Norm-referenced marking does not take into account of what the learner is really capable of doing; so it is demeaning and de-motivating. In criterion-referenced

marking, to the contrary, learner performance is measured against meaningful criteria (Hughes, 1989, pp.17-18). Hughes claims that criterion-referenced marking has these positive virtues:

Advantages of criterion-referenced marking:

1. They set standards of judgment in meaningful terms of what people can do.
2. Judgmental criteria do not change with people.
3. They motivate students to attain the standards.

Criterion-referenced assessment is of two types: holistic and analytic. Whereas in holistic marking an impression is made by considering the sum of the performance in the stated criteria, in analytic marking, performance in each and every individual criterion is separately recorded and is added up to a total mark. The advantage of analytic marking over holistic marking is twofold: it reduces subjectivity in teacher marking by providing the specific standards to follow increasing marking reliability and it also provides an opportunity to the marker to diagnose specific student problems reflected in the score received in the individual criteria whereupon the teacher can remedy a specific weakness.

The problem, however, is that different educators and different examination bodies use different sets of criteria for marking essays which may confuse novice teachers. The paper now examines a few globally used rubrics before recommending a suitable set of criteria for marking student essay marking criteria.

Cambridge Advanced English (CAE) essay writing criteria:

- 1: Content: This focuses on how well the writer has fulfilled the task or if he has done what he has been asked to do.
- 2 Communicative achievement: This focuses on how appropriately the essay has been written and whether the writer has used appropriate register.
- 3 Organization: This assesses if ideas have been put in a logical and orderly manner.

Review: All three items are relevant but a significant shortfall is the absence of grammatical accuracy as a criterion. Without correct language, fluency in formal or academic language use matters little.

Bacha's Model (1990) of writing criteria:

- 1 Content: Extent and relevance of subject knowledge
- 2 Organization: Coherence, fluency, clarity, and logical sequencing
- 3 Vocabulary: Mastery in richness, appropriateness and form of words
4. Language use: Grammatical accuracy
- 5 Mechanics: Paragraphing, spelling, capitalization and punctuation

Review: All four items are relevant but "form of words" in 3 is a morphological entity which should fall under a morpho-syntactic category. No. 3, therefore, may be re-written as "Choice of vocabulary" excluding word form.

Trzeciak and Mackay's Model (1995):

1. Relevance of content
2. Use of source materials
3. Organization
4. Cohesion and coherence
5. Language accuracy
6. Presentation and mechanical accuracy.

Review: "Use of source material" in 2 is not clear unless it means a literature survey for research reports or dissertations which is not important for simple essay writing at primary and secondary levels. "Presentation" (6) means how organized the ideas in an essay are; putting it alongside mechanical accuracy seems irrelevant.

University of Toronto (Canada) criteria:

1. Accuracy
2. Currency
3. Depth
4. Impact
5. Legibility
6. Originality
7. Succinctness
- 4.8 Relevance

Review: This list is overly verbose with words like impact (4), and succinctness (7). There is nothing about coherence which merits considerable attention.

Criteria from unknown source:

1. Relevance
2. Understanding of the topic
3. Organization/Coherence
4. Style (spelling, clear sentences, and punctuation)
5. References
6. Vocabulary (Use of writer's own words)
7. Appropriate language

Review: Except for item number 4, all of the other criteria seem relevant. Style actually refers to sentence structures and vocabulary. There seems to be no reasons for putting this aspect of essay writing along with punctuation which forms part of mechanics the other component being spelling.

IELTS essay marking criteria:

1. Task achievement (fulfilling the requirements of the task)
2. Coherence and cohesion
3. Lexical resource
4. Grammatical range and correctness

Review: Cohesion does not merit equal attention as coherence; as already observed, a text may be coherent without being cohesive. For that reason it enjoys a different but less significant status than coherence.

TOEFLiBT independent writing rubrics:

1. Task completion
2. Organization
3. Clarity
4. Coherence
5. Syntactic range
6. Appropriateness of vocabulary

Review: This set is a very good representation of essay writing criteria and it represents almost all of the standards universally adopted.

GRE Analytical (Essay) writing marking criteria:

1. Content: Relevance, persuasion, reasoning
2. Organization: Organization and cohesion
3. Language: Word choice, usage, syntax
4. Grammar: Standard written English and punctuation

Review: This set is somewhat intriguing. The first two items are claimed as the most important but in 2, cohesion is put alongside organization though it is already established that not cohesion but coherence, synonymous with a logically arranged organization of a text, is more important than cohesion. In addition, items 3 and 4 are causes of concern; word choice does not relate to syntax but word form does. Grammar is synonymous with language, punctuation falls under mechanics and standard written English is a matter of register-wise appropriateness.

Now that some of the major sets of essay marking criteria have been examined and the appropriateness and strengths of some questioned, the following more suitable criteria or standards of judgment against which academic essays are to be marked are proposed:

PROPOSED ESSAY MARKING CRITERIA

The criteria	Description of the criteria
Task completion	How successfully the essay has been written
Content	Whether or not the writer has written what he was asked to write

Coherence	The text having a central topic developed in a logically meaningful way
Grammatical accuracy and range	Use of a range of grammatically correct sentences
Appropriate vocabulary	Use of words, phrases and idioms which suit the genre, register and the purpose of the text
Depth and originality of knowledge	How much the writer knows about the subject and how much original the ideas are
Length	Writing the required number of words (in some cases, pages). Where no such stipulation is given, the criterion is irrelevant

So far, essay marking criteria in general have been discussed but dissertation marking criteria are yet to deal with. As a matter of fact, dissertations, in spite of their lengths, are nothing but higher-level research-based academic essays which need to be assessed against certain standards too. Not all of the usable criteria necessarily pertain to writing though; some are judgmental on oral skills, some are about the format and some are about the general look of the work as itemized in the following sets:

Dissertation marking criteria set 1(Exeter University, UK)

1. Quality and originality of thought
2. Treatment of topic
3. Understanding of current literature
4. Treatment of material
5. Organization
6. Mechanics
7. Grammatical accuracy
8. Relevance to the topic
9. Support/Evidence
10. Knowledge of the subject
11. Bibliography

(This list is based on mark descriptors for the upper class (80%+) through to the fail mark (30%).

Review: Clearly, most of the criteria apply to essay writing quality in general; items 3 and 11 are requisites for dissertation writing in particular. To check out how original the work is (item 1), not a duplication of others' ideas, probably, is the most essential for dissertation marking.

Set 2 (Source unknown):

1. Coherence
2. Analysis of information: A mere description of the information collected is not enough; analysis of it is important in dissertations or a research report.
3. Awareness of relevant literature
4. New knowledge: The dissertation should indicate that the author has learnt something new, either from the literature and/or the empirical research the author/researcher has carried out.
5. Depth of knowledge: A critical understanding of the specialist area the author has been interested in.

Review: All of the components of this are related and relevant to the protocols of dissertation writing; nothing related to language standards and general essay writing requirements is included in the set.

Set 3 (Followed at Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB), Bangladesh):

1. The proposal
2. Depth of knowledge
3. Literature survey
4. Data collection, data analysis and discussion
5. Coherence
6. Language accuracy

7. Length
8. References/Bibliography
9. Defence

Review: This set is unique in that two items, namely, the proposal (1), and defence (9), form part of the marking scheme. Their inclusion can be justified on the ground that a dissertation ought to be judged not only for its quality of writing but also against a few other criteria like the proposal and an oral component of defence or viva; some academicians may argue that since a dissertation is a written assignment, it is right to judge it on its quality as a piece of writing alone. Fair enough, but it would surely be worth the supervisor's while knowing that the writer himself has written the dissertation, not merely copied other people's work, if he can engage in a discussion and critically analyze his own work. Marking the research proposal separately is important too because it would not be unhelpful for the supervisor to understand that the writer understands his own work the fact being that a well-written proposal is akin to the dissertation itself with the only difference that whereas the proposal looks at the future, the dissertation looks at the past, the research being completed; almost all of the major components of a proposal find their way into the dissertation as well. Based on the three sets of rubrics for dissertation marking, the following criteria may be proposed for marking academic dissertations:

PROPOSED DISSERTATION MARKING CRITERIA

No	Criteria	Description of the criteria
1	Grammatical accuracy and range	A wide range of grammatically correct sentences
2	Coherence	A logically developed treatise centrally connected to the research question(s)
3	Vocabulary	Words and phrases are suitable for a formal academic piece of writing
4	Originality of thought	The writer's own ideas are expressed, not borrowed from others
5	Literature review	Critical analysis of current research and awareness of any gap that might exist between research already done and the research undertaken
6	Proposal	What the researcher intends to do - the research plan
7	Analysis of findings and discussion	A critical analysis of the data found and interpretive discussion of the findings including recommendations/suggestions if any
8	Length	The required length of the dissertation as stipulated
9	References	Agreement between in-text citations and end references
10	Viva or defence	Oral interview which tests how much critically aware the writer is of his own work

Note: In the above table, items 1-4 are akin to those used for essay marking in general; items 5-10 apply to dissertation writing protocols in particular.

CONCLUSION

This paper has dealt with the major issues of essay writing salient from the learner's perspective which are essay types and topics, essay planning, developing an essay into coherent discourse, need for writing paragraphs with one topic each which would delimit paragraph length. Though all of these elements are intended for learners, they might need teacher support and help to understand some them. In other words, students are to be informed of the nitty-gritty of essay writing by the teacher. They would, also, need a lot of practice in implementing the requirements of essay writing discussed in the paper, but, once again, they would very much be in need of the teacher's assistance. The two final issues, formulating essay questions and choosing appropriate essay marking criteria, have especially been directed at teachers who must know how to formulate learner-friendly essay questions and also know how to set out suitable criteria for marking essays as much reliably as possible.

Overall, the paper's significance rests on the fact that it challenges some widespread essay writing beliefs and practices and vouchsafes innovative suggestions about essay writing which, if followed, will significantly improve the quality of student essays. If teachers, on the other hand, rethink essay questions and essay marking as suggested, they will be able to give their students much needed direction about what to write in response to an essay question and will be able to mark their learners' work more honestly and reliably than they are probably doing at this moment instead of relying on objective judgment of their students' efforts.

One criticism of the paper may be the lack of discussion on appropriate and effective student activities needed at the different stages of essay writing practice. The answer to the criticism is that a discussion on essay writing practice activities is a huge area *per se* to which a whole paper can be devoted, but, unfortunately, there is not enough space available for this purpose and, more importantly, it is not within the scope of this paper.

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APPENDIX 1

The Revival of Brazil's Automobile Industry

1. Who cares about Brazil's imminent presidential election, or whether the country's latest economic plan will finally work? Not the country's newly revived car industry. During the days of 4,000% inflation the car makers shut down their factories because they could not recover costs. Now, with inflation down to a tolerable 2% a month, they are straining to keep up with booming demand.
2. In January, Autolatina a joint venture between Ford and Volkswagen, was producing 885 cars a day at its Anchetta plant on the outskirts of Sao Paulo. Now it is squeezing out a thousand a day. By November its managers hope to straighten enough bottlenecks to boost daily output by another 150 cars. Meanwhile the two assembly plants owned by General Motors de Brasil (GMB) will churn out close to 300,000 cars and trucks this year. GM plans to invest \$ 500m in a third plant, boosting capacity to 500,000. Even without the new plant, GMB's profits are greater than those from its parent's vast European operation.
3. Brazil's car industry has never been short of big ambition, but for the first time in 1970s, it may be about to live up to them. Vehicle output rose 29.5% to 1.39 units last year; Brazil overtook Italy and Mexico to become the world's tenth-largest producer. By the end of the decade Brazil's car industry could be world's fifth biggest, producing more than 2m units a year, claims Mark Hogan, GMB's president.
4. What started the industry's renaissance was an agreement in 1992 under which the government cut taxes on small cars provided the companies cut the prices of popular small cars. Autolatina responded by bringing back the VW Beetle while its rivals launched a host of new small cars. The results have exceeded even the most optimistic expectations. These measures are expected to help Brazil's small-car market to double in size this year, to 500,000.
5. Exports are booming too. The creation of the Mercosur free-trade area has boosted Brazil's vehicle exports to Argentina in particular. Brazil accounts for 150m of Mercosur's 200m inhabitants- and wants to become the region's car-making centre. If, as seems likely, GMB at least is expected to concentrate its Latin American operations in Mexico and Brazil.
6. Although Latin America and Africa are Brazil's natural export markets, GMB is looking further afield – to Europe and the United States. Later this year it will start shipping engines to Europe; Mr. Hogan hints that fully assembled vehicles could follow, probably a Brazilian version of the Corsa, a small car. But that depends on keeping a tight hold on costs and quality.
7. Brazil's manufacturing labour costs are only \$3 an hour – against \$25 dollars in Germany and \$16 dollars in the United States. However, cheap labour means little without productivity. Managers at Brazilian plants claim they have borrowed Japanese manufacturing concepts, such as just-in time inventory control and "screw-down" body parts. GMB claims it can break even operating at only 50% of capacity, which would make it the leanest factory in GMB's empire. Mr. Hogan's claim is to continue trimming costs by 5% a year while boosting its share of the Brazilian market from 22% to 30%.
8. Maybe. But both of GMB's main rivals, Autolatina and Fiat, are investing hard too. And for all of the car makers, success will depend partly on things like the October presidential election and the government's ability to keep the unwieldy economy under control. If Brazil rediscovers hyperinflation, its bustling car factories will fall silent again – no matter what they have learned about Japanese manufacturing techniques.

APPENDIX 2

A Humongous Paragraph

The economic isolation of Bengal villages was broken down by the rapid extension of foreign trade and commerce, introduction of a new land management system and consequent famines and monetization of rural economy. The chaos in the land revenue administration during the early years of the Company's rule led to the rise of superior peasants of the rank of lower class landlords. These superior peasants were undoubtedly the village oligarchs or village headmen known as *mandals*. The consecutive famines and recurrent natural calamities in the decades between 170-1790 resulted in large-scale desertion of population and increase in wasteland which finally brought spectacular changes in the existing land-man ratio in Bengal. Land became abundant in comparison with the density of population during this period. This situation gave a splendid opportunity to the superior *ryots* to increase their land holdings through reclamation through investing their reserve capital. The idea that can be gathered from the studies of Narendra Krishna Sinha, Ratnalekha Ray, Rajat Ray, Sirajul Islam is that roughly from the latter part of the eighteenth century to the earlier half of the nineteenth century the village oligarchies posed a challenge the *zamindars* (landlords) in land control. The distribution of land was under the control of the *mandals* or the village headmen of various titles who could dictate the terms of land management in the rural areas of Bengal. Resistance against the various processes of the *zamindari* administration was common in parts of Bengal. The *mandals* could agitate their villagers against the *zamindars* or landlords but most of the opposition and resistance directed by the *mandals* against the landlords ultimately satisfied their own interest and sometimes they were successful working in unison with the *patowaris* even at the expense of the *ryot's* interest. They acquired a better bargaining position and power vis-à-vis *zamindars* and the poor peasants. We are inclined to believe from the above discussion that the *mandals* were the leaders and spokesmen of the rural community during the period under review. The domination of the *mandals* as village oligarchs in land and rent management continued to operate in full swing until the abolition of feudalism in Bengal in the early 1920s.

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