

# Developing Coherent Analytical Paragraphs Through Guided Writing in MYP Language Acquisition Classes

## Abstract

Analytical writing is a fundamental skill in MYP Language Acquisition, requiring students to organize ideas logically, support arguments with evidence, and communicate meaning effectively. However, many learners experience difficulties when producing coherent analytical responses independently. This article describes the implementation of a guided writing approach in Grade 8 Phase 3–4 Language Acquisition classes during Unit 5, *Global Awareness and the Individual*. The intervention was informed by Pauline Gibbons' Guided Writing framework and evaluated through Peter Dudley's Lesson Study model. Through the use of scaffolding strategies such as sentence starters, writing templates, model answers, academic language support, and student handbooks, learners demonstrated measurable improvement in Criterion B performance and analytical writing skills.

**Keywords:** guided writing, analytical writing, Lesson Study, MYP, Language Acquisition, Criterion B, scaffolding

## Introduction

Developing students' ability to write analytical paragraphs is an important component of Criterion B in MYP Language Acquisition. Students are expected to identify information, interpret ideas, justify opinions, and communicate their understanding in a structured and coherent manner. Despite regular reading activities, many learners struggle to organize their ideas logically and provide analytical responses supported by evidence.

The professional development goal for the academic year was:

*To develop students' ability to produce coherent analytical paragraphs through the method of guided writing.*

The need for this goal emerged from observations made during Olympiads, research projects, and the Personal Project process, where students demonstrated difficulties in analyzing texts and communicating their interpretations effectively. These challenges highlighted the need for a structured approach that would support learners in developing stronger analytical writing skills.

The intervention was implemented during Unit 5, *Global Awareness and the Individual*, with Grade 8 Phase 3–4 students.

## Theoretical and Methodological Framework

The intervention was informed by two complementary educational approaches: Pauline Gibbons' Guided Writing framework and Peter Dudley's Lesson Study model.

According to Pauline Gibbons, guided writing provides scaffolded support that enables students to gradually develop academic language and writing skills. The approach emphasizes structured assistance through language modeling, sentence frames, writing templates, academic vocabulary, and model texts. As students gain confidence, responsibility for the writing process is gradually transferred from teacher to learner.

The implementation and evaluation of the intervention were guided by Peter Dudley's Lesson Study model. Lesson Study provided a systematic process for identifying a learning challenge, planning targeted instructional strategies, observing student learning, collecting evidence, and refining pedagogical practices based on classroom observations and assessment data.

The combination of these approaches supported both student achievement and teacher professional growth throughout the intervention.

### **Identified Learning Challenge**

Initial classroom observations revealed several common difficulties among students. Many learners struggled to:

- organize analytical ideas logically;
- use appropriate academic vocabulary;
- support opinions with evidence;
- explain the significance of textual information;
- maintain coherence throughout a paragraph.

Students frequently produced descriptive responses rather than analytical ones. While they could identify information from texts, they often found it difficult to explain its meaning or significance.

These observations indicated a need for explicit instruction and scaffolding to support analytical paragraph writing.

### **Guided Writing Intervention**

To address these challenges, a range of guided writing strategies was introduced throughout the unit.

### **Writing Handbook**

Students were provided with a writing handbook designed specifically for analytical paragraph writing. The handbook included:

- paragraph structure guides;
- linking words and cohesive devices;
- analytical vocabulary;
- sentence starters;
- model analytical responses;
- success criteria aligned with Criterion B expectations.

The handbook served as a reference tool during classroom activities, formative assessments, and independent writing tasks.

### **Sentence Starters and Academic Language Support**

Students received structured language support through sentence starters and academic phrases designed to help them express analytical ideas.

Examples included:

- *The text suggests that...*
- *This demonstrates that...*
- *One possible interpretation is...*
- *This is significant because...*
- *As a result...*

These linguistic scaffolds helped learners develop confidence and improve the clarity of their responses.

### **Writing Templates**

Writing templates were introduced to support paragraph organization. Students followed a clear structure consisting of:

- topic sentence;
- evidence or example;
- explanation and analysis;
- concluding statement.

The templates reduced cognitive overload and allowed students to focus on developing analytical thinking rather than worrying about paragraph organization.

### **Model Answers**

Model responses were analyzed collectively in class. Students identified successful writing features, discussed paragraph structure, and examined how evidence and analysis were connected.

This process helped students better understand expectations and apply effective writing techniques in their own work.

### **Evidence of Student Progress**

Student progress was monitored through classroom observations, formative assessments, and Criterion B achievement data.

A comparison of average Criterion B scores before and after the intervention demonstrated positive growth across all observed classes.

<b>Class</b>	<b>Initial Average</b>	<b>Final Average</b>
8A	4.6	6.1
8B	5.2	6.8
10A	4.9	6.3
10B	4.8	5.9
10C	5.0	6.4

The most significant improvement was observed in Class 8B, where the average score increased by 1.6 points. Class 8A demonstrated a similar increase of 1.5 points.

In addition to quantitative improvement, students showed noticeable growth in their ability to:

- organize ideas logically;
- use analytical vocabulary accurately;
- provide explanations rather than descriptions;
- connect evidence to arguments;
- write more coherent and structured paragraphs.

Classroom observations also revealed increased confidence during writing activities and greater independence in applying analytical language.

### **Professional Reflection**

The Lesson Study process provided valuable evidence regarding the effectiveness of guided writing strategies. Repeated cycles of planning, observation, analysis, and reflection allowed teaching strategies to be adjusted according to students' needs.

One important finding was that students benefited most from explicit language support. Sentence starters, model responses, and structured templates provided a bridge between understanding ideas and communicating them effectively in written form.

The intervention also demonstrated that scaffolding does not limit student creativity. Instead, it provides learners with the confidence and structure necessary to engage in more sophisticated analytical thinking.

Furthermore, the Lesson Study process supported professional growth by encouraging evidence-based decision-making and continuous reflection on teaching practice.

### **Conclusion**

The implementation of guided writing strategies significantly improved students' ability to produce coherent analytical paragraphs in Grade 8 Phase 3–4 Language Acquisition classes.

Drawing on Pauline Gibbons' Guided Writing framework and Peter Dudley's Lesson Study model, the intervention provided students with structured support through writing handbooks, sentence starters, templates, and model answers. These strategies helped learners organize ideas more effectively, strengthen analytical thinking, and improve performance in Criterion B assessments.

The positive growth observed across all classes suggests that guided writing is an effective approach for developing analytical writing skills and supporting student success in Language Acquisition classrooms.

## **References**

Dudley, P. (2014). *Lesson Study: A handbook*. Lesson Study UK.

Gibbons, P. (2015). *Scaffolding language, scaffolding learning: Teaching English language learners in the mainstream classroom* (2nd ed.). Heinemann.

International Baccalaureate Organization. (2020). *MYP: From principles into practice*. International Baccalaureate Organization.

International Baccalaureate Organization. (2021). *Language acquisition guide*. International Baccalaureate Organization.