Teacher's notes

Understand and use signal words and phrases

Warm up

Introduce students to the idea of signal words and phrases. Ask them to think of a speech being made in public or in the media. Elicit various phrases that speakers use to link their ideas and keep the listeners focussed. There are many such devices but you can prompt, if necessary, with some obvious ones. For example:

I'm going to talk to you today about …
Now, you might be wondering …
What I mean by this is …
This is particularly true with …
For instance, …
On that same point, …

Point out that the signal words and phrases in *written* texts perform much the same functions (i.e. the functions of *explaining*, *providing an example*, *describing an effect*, *emphasising something*, etc.). The words and phrases are more finely tuned, however, because the writer cannot pause, adjust tone of voice, change speed, etc, in the same way a speaker can.

Explain that there are too many words and phrases to learn in one worksheet, but students will get a good idea of the main ones. Reassure them that they are not generally difficult to understand and the main focus of their attention will be in *using* a variety of them so that their own academic work benefits.

Using the Factsheet

There are three possible ways to use the factsheet:

1. Give students the factsheet before the lesson, so they can read it at home and come to the lesson prepared to do the worksheet. If you use this approach, start the lesson by checking that all students have read and understood the factsheet and answer any questions.
2. Give students the factsheet at the beginning of the lesson and start by working through it with the students.
3. Focus on the worksheet in the lesson, then give students the factsheet at the end of the lesson, so they can take it home and keep it as a reference or revision tool.

Answers to theory to practice (Factsheet)

1. for instance
2. Furthermore
3. However
4. This is largely because of
5. Fundamental to this

Using the worksheet

Ask students to read the information at the top of the page. Point out that they have seen many, many such words and phrases in the course of their English studies. Now they are going to focus on them so that they can incorporate them into their own academic work. Check that everyone understands before moving on to the exercises.

Practice

Note: Throughout this worksheet, students need to notice the finer details of the target words/phrases, such as when and how to use them, whether they begin a sentence, whether they are followed by a comma/gerund/clause, etc. Point these things out as they come up.

1 Look at the extracts below from texts in *C21 English for the 21st Century*, Level 5 and circle <u>two</u> phrases that could replace those in bold. Suggest ways you could use some of the wrong answers.

- Do the first extract together with students so that everyone knows what to do. Point out *as a result of* and elicit the function (explaining a *cause*). Ask, 'What can replace this phrase?' Elicit that both *due to* and *because of* perform exactly the same function and also fit grammatically in the sentence. Now ask, 'What's wrong with the other two answers?' and elicit that they convey the opposite meaning (explaining an *effect*). Ask students to use the wrong answers in a

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sentence. If there is any difficulty with this, you could write the following on the board to show that the meaning is the opposite of what is intended:

Water and sanitation facilities were getting worse as a result of / due to / because of a rapid rise in the population.
There was a rapid rise in the population leading to / resulting in water and sanitation facilities getting worse.

- Allow up to five minutes for students to do the other extracts. Ideally, they should work alone, but if they are having difficulty understanding, allow them to work in pairs. As you check the answers, encourage suggestions for how to use the wrong answers. Sentences could be on the same subject, as in the example above, or a different subject. Get the whole class to contribute, and make sure they are aware of the finer differences as mentioned in the **Note** above.

Answers

A due to / because of
(See above for suggested sentences)
B Nevertheless / However
C and / together with
D To put it simply / By this I mean
E In spite of the fact that / While

2 Use the words and phrases from Exercise 1 to complete the table.

- Explain the task. Tell students they are going to classify all the words in bold from Exercise 1 according to their function.
- Allow a few minutes for students to work alone and try to fill in the table. If, after a period of time, students don't seem to have found many points, allow them to compare notes with a partner.

Answers

Showing a cause/result	Adding points
due to leading to resulting in because of	as well as both together with additionally
Explaining	**Showing differences/contrast**
in other words to put it simply by this I mean to put it another way	on the other hand nevertheless although despite (this) however

3 Cross out the option that does not make sense. Use that word or phrase in a sentence of your own.

- Allow a minute or two for students to try to do the task on their own. Then, if you prefer, you can put them in pairs or small groups to compare ideas. As you check the answers, encourage suggestions for how to use the wrong answers, just as you did in Exercise 1. Accept any logical sentences.

Answers

1 because
2 Nevertheless,
3 despite
4 in other words
5 However
6 as well as being able to

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4 **In pairs or small groups, discuss your answers to Exercise 3. Say how the meaning changes with different options. Talk about the functions of the words/phrases. What do they tell us about the writer's intention?**

- Go through the example step by step, pointing out the different functions of the signal words and phrases.
- Allow up to five minutes for students to discuss items 2–6 in their pairs or groups. Elicit suggestions, accepting all logical explanations. If time allows, encourage discussion on some of the finer differences in meaning in the task. Make sure all the students have understood.

Reflect

5 **How good do you think you have become at understanding and using signal words and phrases? Look at the underlined sections in the sentences below and, in pairs or small groups, discuss their function. Can you suggest alternatives that would do the same job?**

- Encourage students to think about what they have covered with this worksheet. Explain that this task is a good indication of how much they have understood.
- Allow a minute or two for student to read the sentences on their own.
- After a suitable length of time, encourage them to share their views with other students and with you.

Answers
(Students' actual answers will vary)

1 Function: to express similarity; Alternatives: *Similarly, / In a similar way*
2 Function: to emphasise a point; Alternatives: *particularly / chiefly*
3 Function: to show a single cause; Alternatives: *purely because / only because*
4 Function: to explain; Alternatives: *hence* is best replaced with 'which is why (he had)'
5 Function: to express similarity; Alternatives: *in the same way as / like*
6 Function: to emphasise a point; Alternatives: *The main factor / The key*

6 **Discuss how the following signal words and phrases might be used.**

- Depending on the time available, you could do this orally in class, in writing in class or assign it for homework.
- Finally, refer students back to the table in Exercise 2 and tell them to refer to it the next time they do some academic writing. Remind students that the table has four categories, but that there are more, as they discussed in Exercises 4 and 5. Remind them too of the need to use a variety of these words/phrases in their own academic writing – not to rely on one or two often-repeated words/phrases. Students may like to make a new table so that they can add new words and phrases as they meet them. Alternatively, they may wish to keep a running list of such words/phrases. Either approach will help them monitor their own progress as they gradually add variety to their academic writing.

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