

Academic Paragraph Writing and How to Teach It to English Language Learners

“Write your first draft with your heart, the second draft with your head (Finding Forrester, 2000).”

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“I open at the close (Rowling, 2007, p. 698).”

“Writing is a complex process that includes prewriting, drafting and revising. Writers must formulate their thoughts, organize their ideas and produce comprehensible texts while bearing in mind the conventions of spelling and grammar (Vaddapalli & Woerner, 2012, p. 25).” Roybal (2012) asserts that the writing process begins before a pen is put to paper for the instruction of literacy skills such as reading, punctuation, grammar, and vocabulary all play a critical role in the act of writing (p. 7). Because of this, writing can be the hardest for English language learners to perform (Roybal, 2012, p. 6). Davidson and Dunham (1996) state that even if an English language learner follows the rhetorical modes and structures correctly, if the reasoning is weak, or the content is lacking, English language learners will struggle in English academic settings (p. 15). The process of developing academic writing skills will allow an adept English language learner to manipulate sentence parts to show simplicity or impressive elaboration (Cooper, Odell, & National Council of Teachers of English, 1999, p. 89).

“...accuracy [in academic writing] is required from the very beginning (Gugin, 2014, p. 24).” Anderson (2014) seconds this concept by suggesting that inappropriate use of liking adverbials can detract from writing quality (p. 2). Vocabulary is a challenge for English language learners as well (Roybal, 2012, p. 7). Francisco (2014) asserts that English language learners struggle with language issues while they develop academic writing skills (p. 335). Many times, English language learners are more comfortable resuscitating information than creating their own meaning (Roybal, 2012, p. 21). This struggle is compounded as Nowalk (2010) has suggested that “there is more to academic writing than paragraphs and essays (p. 58).” English language learners need explanations and clarification of writing facets that the English language instructor may take for granted (Francisco, 2014, p. 335). It is essential that the English language instructor allocates sufficient time to repeat instructor modeling for English language learners to practice procedures for better atomization of academic writing (Wei, Chen, & Adawu, 2014, p. 70).

“The sentence is ... the basic element of written communication (Gugin, 2014, p. 24).” As such, a sentence-level competency is needed before the language learner can develop paragraph writing ability

(Gugin, 2014, p. 24-25). Gugin (2014) suggests that some English language instructors will only teach essay writing only after sentence-level and paragraph-level mastery is achieved (p. 25). Resulting in a step by step language development (Gugin, 2014, p. 25). Gugin (2014) asserts that if English language instruction maintains the sentence-based strategy for developing writing, students will equate *writing as grammar* (p. 25). The great problem with this is simply that if an English language learner does not master English grammar quickly enough, or even ultimately for that matter, they will not be able to successfully write an academic paragraph, let alone an essay (Gugin, 2014, p. 25). Gugin (2014) suggests that a paragraph first approach to writing will result in students being able to produce acceptable, academic writing as organizational control develops faster than grammatical control (p. 25).

Wei, Chen, and Adawu (2014) have found that skilled second language writers plan more and have better written structure, that planning before writing allows for a less burdened short-term memory, and that planning, and organization are teachable skills (p. 61). Organizational structure should be taught before sentence grammar (Gugin, 2014, p. 25). Gugin (2014) claims that a well-organized paragraph or essay can be understood with sentence level errors while a poorly organized paragraph or essay though free from sentence level grammatical errors may be less understood (p. 25). As a result, Gugin (2014) urges that grammar should be considered secondary in the English language learner's writing education as organization and content should be the primary focus (p. 25).

The essay is the cornerstone for assessing learning and competence at the university level (Brown & Marshall, 2012, p. 654). Within a socio-cultural context, academic settings require a relatively static and conventionalized written linguistic structure to achieve purposes across university disciplines (Brown & Marshall, 2012, p. 653). Haluska (2012) provides a pattern to academic writing as follows: all introductions paragraphs have an opinion followed by interior paragraphs which explain that opinion with evidence, and then a concluding paragraph that restates the opinion. Fundamental paragraph design includes topic sentences, supporting sentences, concluding sentences, and an aspect of unity and coherence (Gugin, 2014, p. 26). The thesis is the topic sentence for an entire essay (Gugin, 2014, p. 29). "Conventionally, academic essays consist of an introduction [paragraph], a body [paragraph], a conclusion [paragraph] and reference list or bibliography (Brown & Marshall, 2012, p. 654)." The audience of an academic essay will be guided or oriented to the subsequent materials in the written work by a thesis (Brown & Marshall, 2012, p. 654). Brown and Marshall (2012) claim that the introduction paragraph of an essay must entice the reader to continue to read on as well as establish authority of the content to come (p. 654). As such, "... students need to have a good understanding of the substantive, structural, and linguistic conventions of the academic essay (Brown & Marshall, 2012, p. 654)." For example, Schaffer (1995) states that all topic sentences must contain an opinion. Schaffer (1995) suggests that English language instructors use many concepts, such as opinion, personal response, reflection, analysis, inference, and explication, to teach their English language learners how to write a sentence which comments on their topic sentence. "this says that" and "this also shows that" are catch all phrases in the Shaffer Method, which help English language learners begin to unpack their evidence and justify how the evidence relates to the opinion of their topic sentence (Schaffer, 1995, p. 41).

Brown and Marshall (2012) assert that introduction paragraphs can be challenging for expert writers and even more so for English language learners (p. 655). Brown and Marshall (2012) suggest that the introduction is more vital for an audiences' understanding of an essay than the conclusion (p. 654). Essays with well-formed introduction paragraphs have statistically significant higher grades (Brown & Marshall, 2012, p. 654). Brown and Marshall (2012) assert that “effective control of the introduction leads to better overall writing (p. 653).”

Academic writing demonstrates thinking, and celebrates authentic, authoritative voices (Campbell, 2014, p. 64). Francisco (2014) suggests that writing assignments must be meaningful challenging tasks which engage the English language learner with personal relevance and real-world application (p. 341). “In order to construct meaning, one has to be able to explore, imagine, analyze, speculate, observe, in short, to think (Cooper, Odell, & National Council of Teachers of English, 1999, p. 22).” Thoughtful reflection reinforces the value of writing as an act of discovery as it places value on talking about ideas after they have been structured through writing (Schaffer, 1989, p. 41).

Nimehchisalem, Chye, Jaswant Singh, Zaiuddin, Norouzi, and Khalid (2014) stress the importance to plan for writing by reading related texts looking for arguments and counter-arguments as well as to start with a claim and provide evidence for it when writing academically (p. 70). Writing is about thinking, evidence, and audience (Campbell, 2014, p. 63). Roybal (2012) states that without critical thinking and deeper reflection, writing is superficial, uninteresting, and difficult to follow (p. 5).

Gugin (2014) illustrates how a topic sentence about a single topic can be manipulated to demonstrate modes of academic writing in the following way (p. 26):

- “1. Yesterday I went out with a friend to buy a new cell phone.
2. Cell phones come in many colors, sizes, and types.
3. I use my cell phone in a variety of ways.
4. If you want to buy an inexpensive, quality cell phone, just follow these steps.
5. The new XXX cell phones are superior to the latest YYY cell phones.
6. The Xb cell phone is really not that much different than the previous Xa cell phone.
7. There are three main reasons why cell phones have become so popular.
8. Although cell phones have benefits, overusing them can have negative consequences.
9. It should be illegal for people to drive while using their cell phones.

Sentence 1 seems to begin some kind of story, so that would be a narrative paragraph. Sentence 2 is a basic description of current cell phones, so that would be a descriptive paragraph. Sentence 3 invites specific examples of the many ways the writer uses his or her cell phone, so that would be an exemplification (illustration) paragraph. Sentence 4 is a topic sentence for a how-to process paragraph. Sentence 5 suggests a comparison between two brands, but the phrase “superior to” indicates a focus on differences, so that would be a contrastive paragraph. Sentence 6 also suggests a comparison, this time between two models of the same brand, but the phrase “not that much different than” points to a focus on similarities, so that would be a comparative paragraph. Sentence 7 is a cause-and-effect

topic sentence, but the phrase “three main reasons” signals that the paragraph will discuss those reasons, or causes, with the effect, which is the widespread popularity of cell phones. Sentence 8 is a cause-and-effect topic sentence as well, but the phrase “negative consequences” signals that the paragraph will examine those consequences, or effects. Finally, although any mode can be used to make an argument (as opposed to just providing information), Sentence 9 will clearly start a persuasive paragraph, since any reader could possibly argue against the stated position that people should not be using their cell phones while driving (Gugin, 2014, p. 27-28).”

This detailed explanation of how different sentences can be formed around a single topic illustrates the immensity of the struggle English language learners face as they consider a topic as well as their own opinions.

The goal of teaching writing is to help the English language learner to convey their own thoughts for a reader to comprehend (Cooper, Odell, & National Council of Teachers of English, 1999, p. 10). Writing requires the writer to precisely convey meaning through their word choices to allow their thoughts to be justly represented in the reader’s mind (Roybal, 2012, p. 7). Critical thinking skills help English language learners communicate their thoughts clearly (Roybal, 2012, p. 16). “Writing is made of words put in logical order so that readers can make sense of it (Roybal, 2012, p. 7).” Proficient writing is seen when English language learners can convey meaning in a way their audience can understand (Roybal, 2012, p. 22). This type of dialogue in writing fosters problem solving skills as the English language learner reflects upon the writing produced versus their own thoughts versus the audiences’ understanding of the English language learner’s thoughts based off the produced writing (Roybal, 2012, p. 40). By teaching about audience, English language learners will develop skills to contend with writing outside the classroom (Cooper, Odell, & National Council of Teachers of English, 1999, p. 69). Cooper, Odell, and National Council of Teachers of English (1999) urge teachers to acknowledge and respect English language learner’s culture and rhetoric traditions as they educate about the American cultural expectation as their reading audience (p. 236).

Vaddapalli and Woerner (2012) suggest that writing proficiency is needed in an academic environment as well as in daily life (p. 25). A challenge to the English language learner is that “the style and structure of writing, the details required, and the references systems used across disciplines may differ from previous experience (Brown & Marshall, 2012, p. 655).” As such the English language learner must be flexible in their writing to ensure their ability to succeed. One criticism of teaching a blueprint writing methodology was raised by Cooper, Odell, and National Council of Teachers of English (1999) as they assert that “response is so rooted in context and human temperament that accepting diverse and even contradictory approaches of rhetorical styles may be more useful than searching for a single method ... (p. 314).” It is an injustice to teach the five-paragraph essay formula to help English language learners with limited writing ability (Campbell, 2014, p. 62). Campbell (2014) strongly asserts that the five-paragraph essay formula does not serve students well (p. 62). Roybal (2012) suggests that when English language instructors focus on structure to help their developing English language learner’s writing ability they stifle

the development of written content (p. 31).

Despite criticism, Jane Schaffer's method, a form of the five paragraph essay, provides useful tools of structure for weak writers (Roybal, 2012, p. 9-10). Roybal (2012) suggests that if English language learners do not develop writing competence in academic environments they will be less successful in the workplace and in their personal lives (p. 18). Therefore, to succeed in an academic environment, English language learners must develop the ability to understand, organize, synthesize, and communicate ideas and opinions while writing compositions, reports, term papers, and essay examinations (Roybal, 2012, p. 9). English language learners will need to develop vocabulary and discourse structure to complete essay writing tasks (Brown & Marshall, 2012, p. 655). Brown and Marshall (2012) find that practice, explicit instruction, peer and self-review, examples, and constructive feedback are needed to help English language learners learn English for academic writing (p. 655).

Russikoff (1994) expresses that assessment and teaching are social acts (p. 2). Cooper, Odell, and National Council of Teachers of English (1999) state that English language instructors have a responsibility to evaluate English language learners' writing to show what they are doing well and what needs improvement (p. 9). Evaluating an English language learner's writing can be difficult as various instructors will have a variety of qualifying factors, political agendas, and personal vendettas when reviewing a piece of writing (Cooper, Odell, & National Council of Teachers of English, 1999, p. 9). Roybal (2012) keenly surmises that when it comes to teaching essay writing, different teachers use different approaches (p. 6). For example:

“...if we say to a student that his or her writing seems illogical, what have we told this student? Do we mean that a particular statement is inconsistent with something he or she has said elsewhere? That the student is not considering the consequences of what he or she is proposing? That a claim is not based on reliable information? That the student has said something that we happen not to believe? (Cooper, Odell, & National Council of Teachers of English, 1999, p. 11)”

The English language learner may expect the English language instructor to identify errors and provide feedback that is familiar yet continues to develop language acquisition (Cooper, Odell, & National Council of Teachers of English, 1999, p. 321). It is not enough to leave a cheap comment along the margin of written work as we are obliged to show English language learners how their texts can be made more effective (Cooper, Odell, & National Council of Teachers of English, 1999, p. 15). “...assessment must serve not only to rank or grade students but also to give us information we can use in our teaching (Cooper, Odell, & National Council of Teachers of English, 1999, p. 33).” As English language instructors we must “develop strategies that do not condemn while they contest, strategies that are sensitive to the goals of particular courses, as well as the backgrounds and disposition of particular students and their own intentions of their papers (Cooper, Odell, & National Council of Teachers of English, 1999, p. 323).”

Our response of an English language learner's writing is heavily influenced by our attitudes toward the English language learner or the kinds of English language learners which attend the instruction. Cultural ideology influences how we think and respond to the writing of English language learners (Cooper, Odell, & National Council of Teachers of English, 1999, p. 319-320). Cooper, Odell, and National

Council of Teachers of English (1999) suggest that when assessing an English language learner's writing a first reading must take place which gives a holistic impression followed by a distraction free second reading which is used to provide careful feedback (p. 326). When assessing writing samples English language instructors must safeguard against one sample of writing influencing judgments of others (Cooper, Odell, & National Council of Teachers of English, 1999, p. 326). Another issue are rubrics as they cannot encapsulate all aspects of an English language learner's performance and so a rubric must be flexible for interpretation (Russikoff, 1994, p. 5). "Good teaching [in regard to assessment of written works] requires a highly complex process as we read, collect impressions, formulate an internal response, choose which of the many impressions and ideas the student [English language learner] should receive, and then decide what form the commentary should take, how long it should be, and what language and style it should be rendered in (Cooper, Odell, & National Council of Teachers of English, 1999, p. 326)." In addition, if we want our English language learners to self-assess their writing and self-edit their writing, or even their peers, we must take the time to teach them the skills needed to self-edit their writing in class through explicit examples, asking clarifying questions, and assessing their strengths and weaknesses found throughout their own writing (Cooper, Odell, & National Council of Teachers of English, 1999, p. 13). By continually asking honest, relative, and authentic questions about the writing of an English language learner, we can continue to grow as writers and thinkers (Cooper, Odell, & National Council of Teachers of English, 1999, p. 34).

And now it is time for the close.

This research represents a quest of sorts. I found myself questioning the teaching practices of my greatest writing teacher. It turns out that this great instructor of mine was using a modified Jane Schaffer method (Schaffer, 1995). I believe that the Jane Schaffer method has its merits, but is not quite the same thing as what my writing teacher taught me, nor is it exactly what I teach my English language learners. But credit must be given where credit is due, and for that I do salute the Jane Schaffer method and value its spirit for it is the closest methodology to the approach presented in this article.

Academic writing begins with the paragraph. The Jane Schaffer Method (Schaffer, 1995) suggests that each paragraph will be made up of a topic sentence, concrete detail, commentary, and concluding sentence. To say it in another way, each paragraph will have a topic sentence, evidence to support it, and a few sentences to justify and explain how the evidence supports the topic sentence, which is then followed by a concluding sentence which recaps the paragraph.

The paragraph can be assembled as though each sentence is a building block with distinct purposes. This is the key to helping English language learners develop academic writing. Helping English language learners become familiar with the building blocks and their specific purpose in the paragraph is vital. It is a highly structured paragraph with no flexibility of purpose. Though there is plenty of flexibility in content and thought. But the evidence cannot come before the topic sentence and once evidence has been stated it must be supported.

When the English language learners become familiar with the role of each sentence in the academic paragraph in this approach they can begin to see the pattern so well that they can even self-assess whether

their paragraphs are following the strict format. This allows English language learners to feel empowered to self-edit their own work effectively as well as peer review other English language learner’s work. Moreover, the strict format makes it very approachable as English language learners assess whether their sentences are in the right place and functioning properly within the paragraph. English language learner can no longer say, “*I don’t know what to write.*” Start with an opinion. Provide a fact. Explain how the fact relates to the opinion or supports it, and finish the paragraph off by restating what was just said.

Let’s examine each sentence function in the paragraph:

Type of Sentence	Rules of Function
Thesis Statement	1. Must contain a topic as well as an opinion. 2. Usually the last sentence in the introduction paragraph. 3. IT CANNOT BE A FACT. 4. Must relate to each following paragraph’s topic sentence.
Topic Sentence	1. Must contain a topic as well as an opinion. 2. Must be the first sentence in the paragraph. 3. IT CANNOT BE A FACT. 4. Must relate to the Thesis.
Evidence	1. MUST be a FACT, example, or quote.
Support	1. Must explain Evidence 2. Must give reason why evidence supports opinion in topic sentence. 3. It should answer the “Why do I care about this evidence or this opinion?” question in the audience’s mind.
Concluding Sentence	1. Can be a restatement of opinion or evidence in relation to topic. 2. Can include transition into the next paragraph topic. 3. Should include summarizing signposts (as a result, in conclusion, overall, etc.).

Sentence function is stressed with these functions clearly defined, one can ask, “Is this a fact?” Or does this explain a relationship between the opinion and the evidence? Etc. Writing an academic paragraph becomes so approachable that students end up plugging in one sentence after another. They become so excited that they know what must happen in the next sentence that their writing is not as overwhelming. Students find their voice thought structure.

Now it should be noted, that within the realm of academic writing, and writing in general, there is so much more that could be said about paragraph structure and sentence function. But when working with English language learners, I have found that too much information can overwhelm their ability to begin the process of writing. The structure of this approach limits the limitless freedom making academic writing approachable for the English language learner. Moreover, the structure provided, should it be followed effectively, is extremely potent. With such concise honing of the academic paragraph English language learners will be able to assemble their writing into clear passages of supported thoughts.

English language learners should be assessed on their ability to identify the different sentence functions as well as their ability to create sentences using a target function. A few examples follow:

1. Please provide evidence for the following topic sentence: The elephants of Vietnam are the most caring animals in the jungle.
_____.
2. Please provide support for the following topic sentence and evidence: (TS) Reading Harry Potter is the key to a happy life. (E) The New York Times conducted a survey which found that people who read Harry Potter are happier than people who do not.
_____.
3. Why is this an ineffective topic sentence? Christmas is coming.
_____.

After extensive practice, assessment, and more practice, English language learners will be able to produce compelling, concise, and thoughtful academic paragraphs. It should be noted that English language learners will still be developing their language ability and we cannot expect perfect error free sentences. But we can expect that the form and function of each sentence in the paragraph will be effective in its function.

While writing, it is important to stress cohesion. I do this by teaching about the contract in writing. A contract in writing, the key to cohesion, is found when known information is given in the subject place and new information is provided in the predicate (Cooper, Odell, & National Council of Teachers of English, 1999, p. 114). “The vague use of pronouns, especially this and that and it, ... is actually an example of breaking the contract (Cooper, Odell, & National Council of Teachers of English, 1999, p. 114).” Another effective tool in writing is the *It Cleft* which enables a writing to shift the emphasis to any slot in the sentence following *it was*, *it is*, or *it has been* etc. (Cooper, Odell, & National Council of Teachers of English, 1999, p. 120). When using tools and structures that work well, there is a possibility of the English language learner to overuse and abuse the tools. Cooper, Odell, and National Council of Teachers of English (1999) claim that any writing structure can be overused (p. 121). But it is better to overuse an effective tool if one must overuse a tool at all.

Each body paragraph will have a minimum of four sentences. One for each function. But this is where the functions can be flexible. I have found that it is better to have two supporting sentences per evidence, and though one sentence of evidence can be enough per opinion, it is better to have two or more when possible. Thus, making one paragraph is about adding as much evidence as possible followed but effective support of the evidence provided. Here is an example of a paragraph (Topic - How are ballet and football similar?):

Both ballet and football players coordinate their movements to achieve a goal. On the stage, the ballerinas coordinate their dancing to create a dramatic story displayed through the movements of their dancing. By collectively dancing together, the ballerinas achieve the goal of telling a story. Similarly, football players create unit based offensive plays which use coordinated movements to progress the movement of the ball. By running the play together, the football players can unite together through their specialized movements and functions to achieve the goal of progressing

forward with the ball. As one can see, coordinating movements to achieve a goal are vital aspects of ballet and football.

The effectiveness of the academic paragraph comes from the units of evidence and support. By chunking the two functions together the paragraph can be as long as there is evidence to support the opinion in the topic sentence.

Once the body paragraph has been relatively mastered I turn my focus onto the introduction paragraph. This introduction paragraph must always contain a hook, a bridge, and a thesis statement. The hook is often a narrative form short story which seems completely unrelated to the topic of the paper. The bridge is typically a single sentence which connects the seemingly unrelated hook to the thesis. The thesis is the topic for the entire academic essay. The introduction paragraph is an opportunity for English language learners to practice different forms of creative writing. Moreover, an effective hook stimulates the audience of the paper and entices them to invest in the topic of the academic writing. The academic paragraph is easy to master especially with the strict structure of this approach. Unfortunately, that cannot be said about the hook. It can require making unusual connections to a thesis or topic, presenting information from a different perspective, imagination, and sometimes down right lies. As such, the bridge is vital. It is the connection from the hook into the thesis topic. It brings the unrelated to the related. At times, the bridge can be found within the thesis statement sentence.

Some English language learners have lamented that though they can produce an academic paragraph in thirty minutes, they struggle for hours trying to find a suitable hook. Overtime, with plenty of trial and error, the English language learner will develop their own unique approaches to hooks in their introduction paragraphs. As the hook is singularly unique to the English language learner and the topic of the academic essay there are no rules to suggest. But if an English language learner is struggling to find a suitable hook, have them write a famous quote, poem, speech, or excerpt from a novel that relates to the topic. Though the hook will not be their own words, it will still be interesting to see how their literary work connects to their topic. Should an English language learner opt to use this secondary hook approach, they must use proper citation. Which is another skill not addressed in this research article, but one that often comes up in academic writing.

Let us look at an example of a hook introduction paragraph. How are ballet and football similar? With this question in mind let us consider the following:

The leaves blow in the wind as the winter air passes through the trees. A forest ranger's fire crackles and pops as the dry wood is consumed by flames. Standing close to the fire the forest ranger grips his night vision camera tighter and looks eagerly into the woods as the howl of wolves pierce the night sky. As the forest ranger readies his camera, he suddenly realizes how the wolves are exactly like ballerinas and football players. Like the wolf pack, ballet and football are similar as ballerinas and football players coordinate their movement to achieve a goal, communicate to each other using body language, and rely on an individual of the pack to be their leader.

Wow, how is the wind, a ranger, a forest, and wolves related to the similarities of ballet and football? This hook is extremely effective in capturing the audience's imagination and interest. For ease, the thesis statement has been underlined. The sentence preceding the thesis is the bridge. It is the first moment in the writing assignment that the true topic is mentioned. The hook is an extremely powerful tool in academic writing and if practiced, an English language learner can utilize it to great effect.

Once the introduction is well practiced and English language learners feel more comfortable in preparing hooks, I begin teaching concluding paragraphs. The concluding paragraph is a place which highlights the thesis statement and repeats the opinions of each topic sentence. The conclusion is also a good place to tie the story of the hook back into the essay. Though the conclusion paragraph cannot introduce anything new, it is one of the rare places where true creativity can be seen. To create a concluding paragraph that uses aspects of the hook takes a lot of imagination and time and so one must be patient with the English language learner's attempts. But with practice and support, the English language learners will create effective conclusions.

Teaching academic writing can be a very daunting task. Supplemental grammar, mini lessons on tone and vocabulary connotation, as well as many other topics can wriggle their way into the coursework of instruction. The countless hours of giving meaningful and quality assessment will tax the writing teacher's limits. But by focusing the major steps into developing a highly structured academic paragraph, the English language learner is better equipped to succeed in academic environments. And though the leg work is heavy at first, once the English language learner gets the hang of writing academically, the content of their writing and the structure it is presented in inspires and motivates ones English language instruction. Moreover, for the English language learner to develop the habit of supporting their opinions with evidence, explaining that evidence, and demonstrating how the evidence supports their opinion is an effective skill for any circumstance in daily life.

Sample Essay

Controlling Purpose: How are Ballet and Football similar?

The leaves blow in the wind as the winter air passes through the trees. A forest ranger's fire crackles and pops as the dry wood is consumed by flames. Standing close to the fire the forest ranger grips his night vision camera tighter and looks eagerly into the woods as the howl of wolves pierce the night sky. As the forest ranger readies his camera, he suddenly realizes how the wolves are exactly like ballerinas and football players. Like the wolf pack, ballet and football are similar as ballerinas and football players coordinate their movement to achieve a goal, communicate to each other using body language, and rely on an individual of the pack to be their leader.

Both ballerinas and football players coordinate their movements to achieve a goal. On the stage, the ballerinas coordinate their dancing to create a dramatic story displayed through the movements of their dancing. By collectively dancing together, the ballerinas achieve the goal of telling a story. Similarly, football players create unit based offensive plays which use coordinated movements to progress the

movement of the ball. By running the play together, the football players can unite together through their specialized movements and functions to achieve the goal of progressing forward with the ball. As one can see, coordinating movements to achieve a goal are vital aspects of ballet and football.

Ballerinas and football players often communicate to each other using body language. Before a major movement one ballerina locks eyes with their supporting ballerina and gives a subtle nod to indicate that they are ready to begin. By sending the nonverbal cue the magic of the stage is unbroken, but the ballerinas are still able to communicate effectively to start their performance. Football players also communicate using body language to initiate secret plays without a huddle which prevents the opposing team from preparing to counter their next strategy. By using body language, the football players can easily communicate across the field without letting their opponents understand. As a result, the use of body language to communicate is very common in ballet and football.

Ballerinas and football players rely on an individual of the pack to be their leader. The prima donna of the ballet stage is the leader of the troop and is expected to schedule practices, instruct, and inspire their fellow ballerinas. The ballerinas find comfort in a strong prima donna that helps them hone their skills, schedule practice, and inspires their dancing. Like the prima donna, the quarterback is the leader of the football team by assigning the plays on the field, being responsible for making the strategy for progressing the ball, and being the inspiration of his teammates to greatness. Without the leadership of the quarterback, the team loses the support needed to function as a unit on the field. In conclusion, relying on a leader is very important for both ballerinas and football players.

Though at first glance it seemed nearly impossible that ballet and football had any similarities. But after a closer examination ballet and football share coordinated movements to achieve a goal, communicating with body language, and they rely on a leader. The leaves blow in the wind and the winter air passes through the trees. Below the lush and dark branches, a fire crackles and pops as a forest ranger snaps photos of a pack of wolves, dancing though the trees, tackling one another, and every so often forming a huddle; only to break up and saute away into the night.

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