

Transitions Lesson Plan

General Information	
Lesson Title	Transitions
Class/Student Information	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. upper-level undergraduates in an ecology or physiology course OR 2. multi-major undergraduates in an introductory technical writing course
Length of Class/Activity	30 mins
Overall Instructional Goal	To teach students how to use transitions in their technical and scientific writing
Lesson Objective(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the five functions of transitions • Learn how student and professional writers use transitions • Investigate how transitions are used in technical and scientific writing
How will you measure each objective?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The in-class activities measure if students can identify the transitions that fulfill the five functions • The homework assignments measure if students can (a) identify transitions and (b) select appropriate transitions based on their intended function. • The formal writing students complete after this instruction will be measured for frequency and variety of transitions and be compared to the formal writing completed by the control students.
Justification for Lesson	Transitions help organize and communicate ideas in technical and scientific writing. This unit is designed to teach students <i>when</i> to use transitions and how to select appropriate transitions.
Materials	<p>You will need access to the following documents:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This file, which outlines the lesson 2. Presentation slides for Orientation and Presentation activities 3. In-class activities for Engagement activities (on tan paper) 4. Homework file for Expansion activities 5. Fact sheet for Expansion activities <p>In addition, all student computers should be running AntConc, which should be loaded with the Student Writing data set and the Professional Writing data set.</p>

The Lesson Plan	Why and How
<p>Orientation (10 min.)</p> <p>Before the lesson begins, ensure that AntConc as well as the Student Writing data set and the Professional Writing data set are available to students (NOTE: Data sets will be housed in the My Documents folder of TECM lab computers).</p> <p>Display Slide 1 of the presentation as students enter the lab or as you orient students to the lesson. Distribute a copy of the in-class activities (printed on tan paper).</p> <p>Transition into the “Take a Look” activity. Read the direction outloud. Ask students to analyze and then discuss the concordances of <i>however</i>. Repeat for the concordances <i>though</i>.</p>	<p>Students work in pairs for the “Data Digging” activity, so one student will complete it with the Student Writing data set and the other with the Professional Writing data set. If possible, these data sets can be preloaded for students.</p> <p>Students will be familiar with the term <i>transitions</i> but orient them to the examples on Slide 1. Forecast that transitions fulfill five functions that organize and clarify ideas.</p> <p>The concordance lines for this first in-class activity are provided in a paper handout to focus students’ attention on the content rather than engaging them with the content AND the technology.</p> <p><i>However</i> is typically used to show contrast. However (HA!), notice that objects are often the focus of the contrast rather than specific people (e.g., reason [Line 1], method [Line 2], the paper [Line 3]). <i>However</i>, can also be used as a concession or qualification of a statement [Line 6].</p> <p><i>Though</i> is also used to show contrast/concession (e.g, Line 3). Similar to the previous example, <i>though</i> is often used to contrast objects (e.g., bass [Line 4], differences [Line 8], future [Line 9]) and integrates some passive voice construction (Lines 1, 6, and 7).</p> <p><i>Though</i> is also flexible with placement – for example, notice that Line 3 and 10 use it at the beginning of sentences. <i>However</i>, is less flexible, functioning mainly at the beginning of the sentence or as a sentence connector.</p> <p>But <i>though</i> appears to be less forceful than <i>however</i>. For example, there are several instances of <i>though</i> that link past results with future actions that the writer/researcher will take. Notice the use of personal pronouns in Lines 2, 3, and 10.</p>

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<p>Transition</p> <p>“Examples like <i>however</i> and <i>though</i> are used to express contrast between ideas, but you can see from the concordances that both are used to achieve different rhetorical purposes. Transitions can also be used in a multitude of other difference ways.”</p>	
<p>Presentation (4 min.)</p> <p>Transition to Slide 2.</p> <p>We’ve already discussed the ways that transitions can be used to express contrast, but there are four other ways to use transitions: express results; provide examples; list, add, or conclude points; and restate or expand an idea.</p> <p>Can anyone give me an example of a transition that would perform one of these other four functions?</p> <p>Transition to Slide 3.</p> <p>Research also shows us that students use transitions in their writing differently than professionals.</p> <p>In 2013, a researcher taught technical writing to forestry students using some of the computer assisted tools we’ve worked with like AntConc. The researcher of this study found that these data-driven approaches improved students’ overall use of transitions in their writing as well as the variety of transitions that they used.</p> <p>However, the study also found that students still underused transitions like <i>thus</i>, <i>hence</i>, <i>rather</i>, <i>i.e.</i> (“that is”) and <i>e.g.</i> (“for example”), which were much more common to professional writing.</p> <p>Why do you think this is?</p>	<p><i>Thus</i> and <i>hence</i> are both typically used to express results, and <i>rather</i> is typically used to express contrast. Students are using words that are more familiar to them to perform these same functions but remind them that language variety is an important part of acculturating into a discipline and that transitions within a single function might have different strengths (e.g., the <i>however</i> and <i>though</i> activity that both expressed contrast).</p> <p>Students might also respond that they didn’t know what <i>i.e.</i> or <i>e.g.</i> meant and/or they thought the abbreviations were too informal to include in technical or scientific writing.</p>
<p>Engagement (5 min.)</p> <p>Start the data-digging activity.</p>	<p>This second activity extends off the research findings on Slide 3. Encourage students to explore these less-familiar words in the data sets. Also encourage student to consider where certain transitions are placed within a sentence.</p>

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<p>Evaluation (5 min.)</p> <p>The information on Slide 3 of the presentation lists commonly used transitions as well as transitions that are frequently found in student and professional writing.</p> <p>With a partner, explore how some of these transitions are used by students and professionals. One of you can explore transitions in the student writing data set while your partner can explore the same transitions in the professional (or published) writing data set.</p> <p>What patterns do you observe between the two data sets? Are certain transitions used more frequently or differently? Also, note the language trends found in previous research—for example, students tend to use transitions like <i>hence</i> and <i>e.g.</i>, less frequently than professionals. Do you and your partner observe similar trends between the data sets?</p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Word</th> <th>Student</th> <th>Professional</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><i>however</i></td> <td>171</td> <td>1784</td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>therefore</i></td> <td>53</td> <td>781</td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>then</i></td> <td>105</td> <td>1476</td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>for example</i></td> <td>14</td> <td>782</td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>thus</i></td> <td>30</td> <td>1120</td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>hence</i></td> <td>3</td> <td>308</td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>rather</i></td> <td>18</td> <td>682</td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>i.e.</i></td> <td>6</td> <td>672</td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>e.g.</i></td> <td>0</td> <td>748</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Word	Student	Professional	<i>however</i>	171	1784	<i>therefore</i>	53	781	<i>then</i>	105	1476	<i>for example</i>	14	782	<i>thus</i>	30	1120	<i>hence</i>	3	308	<i>rather</i>	18	682	<i>i.e.</i>	6	672	<i>e.g.</i>	0	748		<p>Above are some data that students might pull from the data sets. Note that student and professional data sets are two different sizes (118,320 words compared to 1,3130,62, respectively), so students need to consider frequencies proportionally.</p> <p><i>For example</i> often occupies the sentence-initial position, but <i>e.g.</i>, if often placed toward the end of a sentence.</p>
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<p>Summary Statement(s)</p> <p>Students are likely familiar with the concept of transitions, but they now should be more aware of the five functions that transitions serve, the variety of transitions options, and some of the differences between how students and professionals use transitions in their writing.</p> <p>Transition into a discussion of the homework for this unit.</p>																																	
<p>Expansion (3 min.)</p> <p>Refer students to the two homework assignments.</p> <p>The first assignment asks them to identify transition words and their functions.</p> <p>The second assignment asks them to choose transition words based on their understanding of a context. Refer students to the Fact Sheet for this task.</p>	<p>The homework assignments do not require students to engage with AntConc or the data sets. However, students must apply some of the data-driven principles they learned during this unit.</p> <p>The first homework assignment measures if students can identify transitions within a paragraph.</p> <p>The second homework assignment measures if students understand what types of transitions to use (depending on the function of the sentence).</p> <p>The Fact Sheet on this unit should provide students with all the information they need to complete the homework. This document also contains all the slides included in the Presentation</p>																																

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	activities.