Synthesizing Practice

Topic A

Source 1: As everyone who uses Microsoft PowerPoint knows, it is not actually used to communicate ideas, but rather to not communicate ideas. Forget the advertisement about how PowerPoint helps you to “organize, illustrate and deliver your ideas professionally.” It’s not used for anything of the sort. A PowerPoint slide presentation, with its neatly ordered bullets, generic clip art, bold, clear typeface and bright colours effectively hides the fact that you don’t really have very much to say.

Joe Jackson, 2001

Source 2: Most people use the same software for presentations and, inevitably, it makes us do things in a similar way. Everything is reduced to a few bullet points, which makes it hard to introduce complex ideas and guide people through a critical thinking process. PowerPoint turns almost every presentation into something similar to a sales presentation, when that’s not always required. Maybe the problem isn’t so much with the software as with the apparent lack of alternatives.

Selena Maranjian, 2003

Source 3: Despite PowerPoint’s bad reputation, it’s still possible to use it as a powerful tool to enhance your presentation; just follow these three simple steps. First, stop using the templates, they make the viewing experience boring. Second, don’t use text, fill your slides with images and colour instead. Finally, make the audience focus on you to explain everything in your presentation.

Cliff Atkinson, 2003

Step 1: Decide what the topic is
(PowerPoint)

Step 2: Decide how to present the topic
(the usefulness of PowerPoint for presentations, for and against)

Step 3: Decide on the relationship between the writers
(writers one and two are against PowerPoint, but writer three is for it, if it is used well)

Step 4: Organize the ideas
(it’s best to present the ideas of writers one and two together, as they are similar)

Step 5: Underline the key ideas in the first paragraph you are going to use:

As everyone who uses Microsoft PowerPoint knows, it is not actually used to communicate ideas, but rather to not communicate ideas. Forget the advertisement about how PowerPoint helps you to “organize, illustrate and deliver your ideas professionally.” It’s not used for anything of the sort. A PowerPoint slide presentation, with its neatly ordered bullets, generic clip art, bold, clear typeface and bright colours effectively hides the fact that you don’t really have very much to say.

Joe Jackson, 2001

Step 6: Introduce the first writer’s ideas with surname, year and a suitable verb
(e.g. Jackson (2001) claims that)

Step 7: Paraphrase the first writer’s ideas
(e.g. Jackson (2001) claims that people don’t use PowerPoint to communicate ideas; instead, they use it to hide the fact that they don’t really have any ideas to communicate.)
Step 8: Underline the key ideas in the second paragraph you are going to use:

Most people use the same software for presentations and, inevitably, it makes us do things in a similar way. Everything is reduced to a few bullet points, which makes it hard to introduce complex ideas and guide people through a critical thinking process. PowerPoint turns almost every presentation into something similar to a sales presentation, when that’s not always required. Maybe the problem isn’t so much with the software as with the apparent lack of alternatives.  

Selena Maranjian, 2003

Step 9: Introduce the second writer’s ideas
(e.g. Furthermore, Maranjian (2003) believes that)

Step 10: Paraphrase that writer’s ideas
(e.g. Furthermore, Maranjian (2003) believes that because so many people use the same software, it is inevitable that their presentations look similar. The problem may be lack of alternatives.)

Step 11: Underline the key ideas in the third paragraph you are going to use:

Despite PowerPoint’s bad reputation, it’s still possible to use it as a powerful tool to enhance your presentation; just follow these three simple steps. First, stop using the templates, they make the viewing experience boring. Second, don’t use text, fill your slides with images and colour instead. Finally, make the audience focus on you to explain everything in your presentation.  

Cliff Atkinson, 2003

Step 12: Introduce the last writer’s ideas
(e.g. On the other hand, Atkinson (2003) asserts that)

Step 13: Paraphrase the last writer’s ideas
(e.g. On the other hand, Atkinson (2003) asserts that while PowerPoint has a bad reputation, it can still be used to support presentations effectively.)

Step 14: Write a sentence to introduce the topic
Although PowerPoint is widely used to make presentations, there are conflicting ideas about its usefulness.

Step 15: Check the completed synthesis to make sure that there are no changes of meaning.

Although PowerPoint is widely used to make presentations, there are conflicting ideas about its usefulness. Jackson (2001) claims that people don’t use PowerPoint to communicate ideas; instead, they use it to hide the fact that they don’t really have any ideas to communicate. Furthermore, Maranjian (2003) believes that because so many people use the same software, it is inevitable that their presentations look similar. The problem may be lack of alternatives. On the other hand, Atkinson (2003) asserts that while PowerPoint has a bad reputation, it can still be used to support presentations effectively.
**Topic B**

**Follow similar steps with this topic. A suggested answer follows.**

**Source 1:** Most people have very few really close friends, but like to keep in touch with a lot more people from time to time and social networking sites like Facebook help them to do this. They can also make new friends with similar interests easily by looking at other people’s profiles. A recent survey of teenagers found that nearly one third of them had considered meeting face to face with someone they already knew from the internet.  

*Clive Bell (2007)*

**Source 2:** People become bored very quickly with online social networking sites and begin to dislike the unwanted messages, friend requests and advertisements. Traffic to all popular networking sites has fallen recently, My Space down 2 million visits and Facebook an incredible 5 million.

*Bill Gatterby (2008)*

**Source 3:** The creators of Facebook simply sit back and watch as millions of Facebook users upload their ID details, photographs and lists of their favourite consumer objects. Then Facebook sells the information to advertisers, or, according to Facebook founder Zuckerberg, “tries to help people share their information.” Facebook pretends to be about freedom, but really it is turning human relationships into a commodity.

*Terri Hodgkinson (2008)*

**Suggested answer**

Social networking sites have become very popular, but there are differing opinions about them. Bell (2007) suggests that sites like Facebook help people keep in touch with each other and to meet new friends. However, Gatterby (2008) believes that some negative aspects of these sites make people bored with them. Moreover, Hodgkinson (2008) insists that they are just a way for advertisers to get more information about people and that they turn relationships between people into a commodity.
**Topic C**

Follow similar steps with this topic. A suggested answer follows.

**Source 1:** Technology has solved many of our problems, but, in the process, it has created new ones. It has also increased human abilities, but some people use their abilities in good ways, some in bad. With additional technology, some doctors will be aided in their search for cures for diseases and some criminals in their pursuit of new ways to make money illegally.  
*Paul Lennon (1999)*

**Source 2:** The twenty-first century will be both very good and very bad for people everywhere. Science will free us from the need to carry out many of our daily tasks. Biotechnology will produce unlimited amounts of food, robots will do most of the work. However, the planet will hold twice as many people as it does now, more than ten billion. More people will mean more pollution; global warming will cause the biggest climate shift since the end of the Ice Age.  
*Carol Kennedy (2004)*

**Source 3:** Genetic engineering will greatly lengthen our life spans and increase our intelligence, but it may also have negative consequences. Some critics point out that genetically altered organisms, created by science, could get out of control, spreading new, incurable diseases or destroying agricultural crops.  
*Owen Paepke (2006)*

**Suggested answer**

Technology is an important part of our lives, but does it only bring advantages? Lennon (1999) believes that while technology has solved many problems, it has also created new ones. Kennedy (2004) agrees that science and technology have brought many advantages, but is concerned about population growth and global warming. Paepke (2006) argues that although genetic engineering has many benefits, it may also have many negative effects.