The Essay Topic Selection Guidelines

Week 1 Lesson 2

English for Academic Purposes

Source: De Chazal, E., & Moore, J. (2017*). A Course in English for Academic Purposes. Advanced/C1*

Lesson Objectives

1

Analyzing and understanding the structure of a problem solution essay

2

Selecting an essay topic

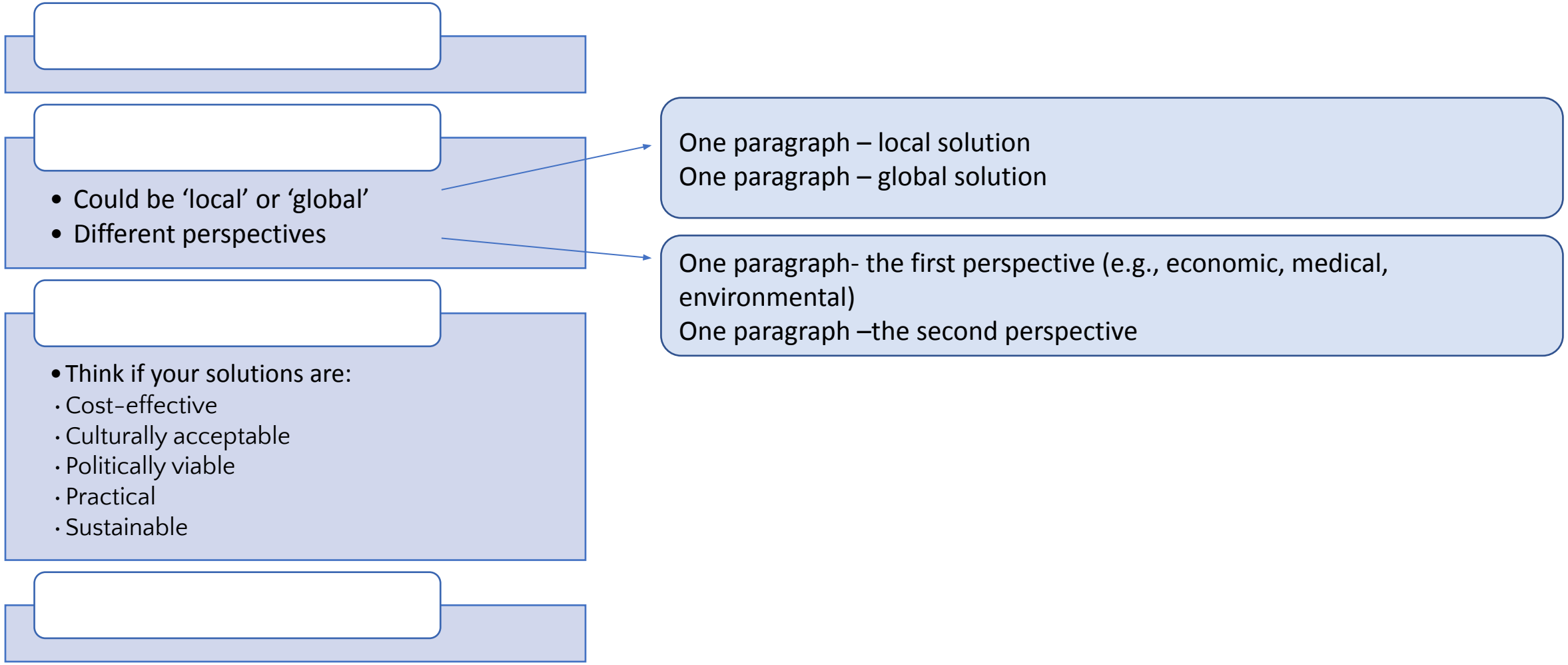
Warm-up

Work in pairs.

- Spend 7 min to select and discuss one current pressing issue in our society that needs to be addressed.

Problem-solution essay

Problem-solution essay is a type of essay that describes an issue and provides one or more ways of solving it.



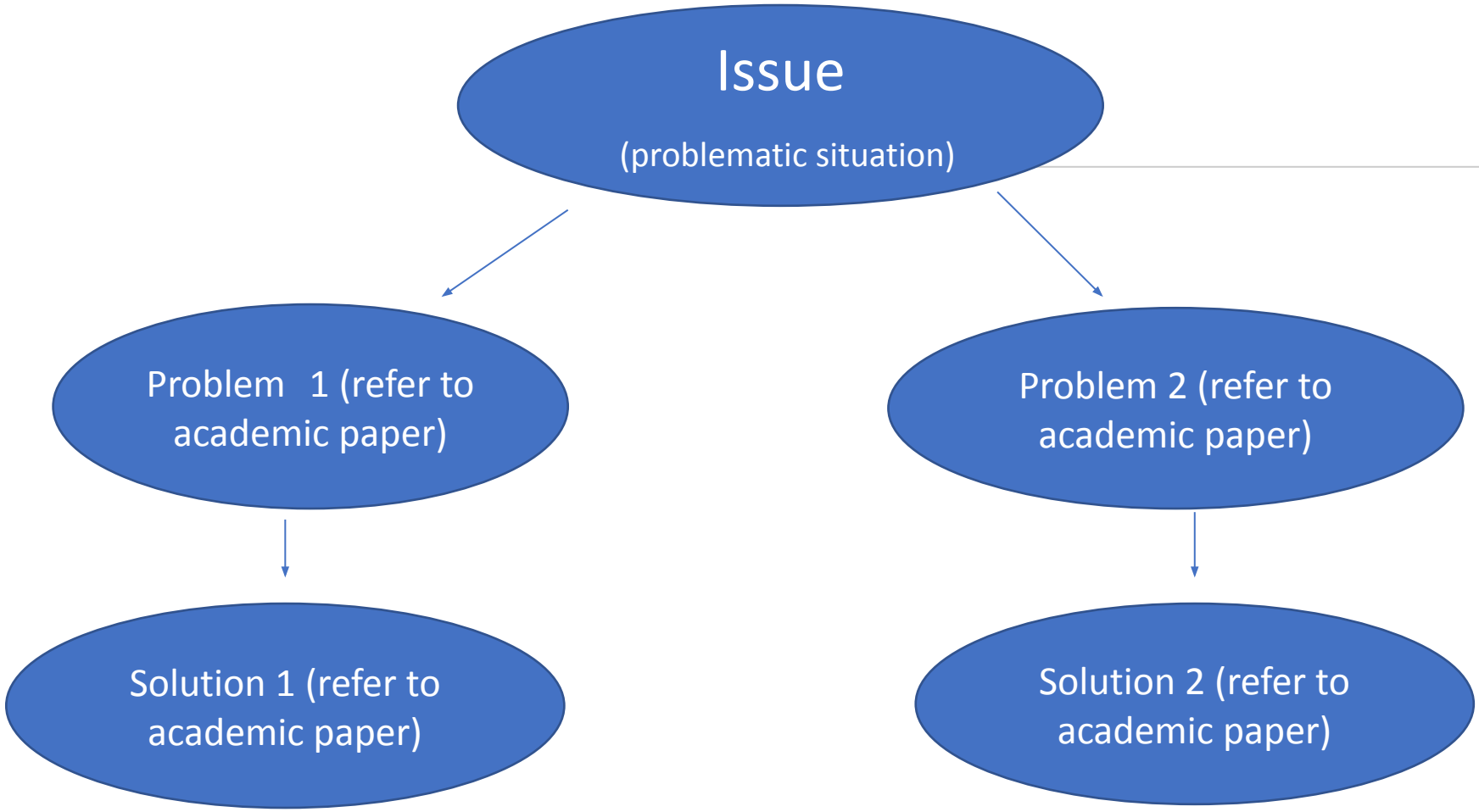
TOPIC SELECTION

Criteria for topics of a problem-solution essay:

- A topic should trigger urgent issues in the society, both nationally and globally;
- Topic area: social, economic issues, environment, and public policy;
- A topic should be known for the wide audience and shared by the majority, not specific for a certain group of professionals;
- It should refer to academic papers

The essay topic and outline

- Choose a general global issue
- Narrow it down to two specific problems associated with the global issue you chose
- Identify possible causes and effects
- Draw up a list of possible solutions and decide on two or more solutions


Issue
(problematic situation)
Problem 1 (refer to academic paper)
Problem 2 (refer to academic paper)
Solution 1 (refer to academic paper)
Solution 2 (refer to academic paper)

Example

Problems immigrants face in host countries

1. Choose a general global issue
2. Narrow it down to two specific problems associated with the global issue you chose
3. Identify possible causes
4. Draw up a list of possible solutions and decide on two or more solutions

1. Problems of immigrants (social minority)
2. Immigrants might have **difficulties integrating into society,** and they can also be **vulnerable to exploitation.**
3. War (asylum seekers, refugees), job opportunities (search for a better life)
4. Social inclusion of migrants; increased access to public services; post-arrival language training; awareness-raising; increase protections for victims and vulnerable migrants; Policy development; Focus research efforts on filling critical gaps in knowledge

Discussion

Situation

The provision of education, particularly, in tertiary contexts, is becoming increasingly globalized. This trend towards globalization is characterized by more internationalized and standardized curricula (particularly in STEM subjects), increasing movements of students to other countries to study, and the use of English as the medium of instruction.

What are the potential problems that might arise from the situation above?

- Students whose first language is not English may be at a disadvantage

Think of more problems arising from the situation using the following list:

Culture
National Identity

Think of solutions:

Practice

Work in groups

- Traditional foods are being replaced by international fast foods
- Brain drain from developing countries
- Internet addiction

Discuss and suggest for one of the topics:

- Examples of specific problems associated with the issue
- Possible causes
- Several possible solutions (local/global)

Assignment:

- **Select a topic of your essay. Do the outline of essay (identify the issue-> problems->solutions)**
- **Find 2+ scholarly articles linked to the essay topic from Google Scholar:**
  - **1+ article should relate to the essay problem**
  - **1+ article should be on solutions of those problems**
  - Also, you may find article(s) related to the causes/reasons which lead to the issue

The global issues could be:

- Health
- Children
- Climate Change
- Ending Poverty/Unemployment
- Food/Water
- Gender Equality/Increasing income inequality
- Ageing population
- Human Rights
- International Law and Justice
- Migration/ Refugees
- Peace and Security

Examples of essay titles (titles should be quite specific)

- 3D Bioprinting: Can advances in 3D printing benefit nature?
- Will artificial intelligence lead to a more unequal world?
- The Smell of Money: could we live without cash?
- The promise of noise cancelling headphones is enticing, but do they live up to the hype?
- The Rise of the Robots: Are we ready for artificial intelligences making decisions for us?

Useful sources:

Global Issues Overview (n.d.). *United Nations.* https://www.un.org/en/global-issues

Do you have any questions?

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