

## QGWSS Episode 5: Writing a discussion section

N: Hello and welcome back! In this episode, we will see how to write the final section in an IMRD text, the Discussion. Many of the examples will come from this article.

V: “Words for what? Contrasting university students’ receptive and productive academic vocabulary needs”

N: To recap, the purpose of this article is to understand the range of academic vocabulary which students need for success at university. Receptive means being able to understand words when reading or listening. Productive means being able to use words when speaking or writing. As we’ve seen in other sections, the names of headings may vary. For instance, this section is divided into two parts called “Discussion” and “Conclusion.” We’ll treat them as part of a single broader discussion section. The discussion section concludes the article by setting the results in context: now that we know what the study found, what does it mean? So your job in the discussion is to explain the significance of your results, but how you do that depends on the nature of your research, and your topic. Here are some common approaches. One approach is to refer to the research questions, hypotheses, or objectives which were initially presented in the introduction, like this:

V: “This paper has presented an investigation into the productive academic vocabulary of university students.”

N: Another approach is to highlight the principle findings.

V: “So far it has been seen that by applying an existing approach for the identification of core academic words to a corpus of student writing, a gap is observable between the words which successful students use in their academic writing and those which they are likely to need in order to read academic texts.”

N: These strategies involve referring to previous sections. If you do this, be selective. Don’t repeat everything you’ve already written. Another strategy is to explain how your findings relate to earlier research. One way to do this is to say that your results confirm existing knowledge on the topic, like this:

V: “These findings reflect those of Webb (2008a) and Nation (2010).”

N: A second way to do this is to indicate if your findings challenge earlier research.

V: “This finding is in contrast to that of Smith et al. . . .”

N: The third way to do this is to draw attention to results which are new.

V: “A newly validated test of academic vocabulary has been presented here.”

N: Another strategy you can use is to suggest explanations for the findings.

- V: “This unexpected result may be due to the large proportion of university graduates in the sample.”
- N: Notice how the example says “may,” to indicate that this isn’t definitely the explanation. Language like this often appears when you’re explaining your findings. It’s called hedging, and you can learn more about it in episode 4, on the results section. Another approach you can use is to identify questions for future research.
- V: “Future research should, however, also carefully explore the relationship, and specifically any overlap, between such different ‘specific-purposes’ academic vocabularies.”
- N: Alternatively, you can suggest practical uses for the findings.
- V: “This subsection addresses pedagogical implications and offers recommendations for EAP relating to productive academic vocabulary from three points of view.”
- N: So to summarize, the Discussion section highlights the significance of the findings. A number of strategies can help with that, and the nature of the research topic and the findings indicate which strategies are most appropriate. If you’d like to see more examples of the language used to do these things, check out the Academic Phrasebank. Bye for now.