

Synthesis

Aim: To understand and be able to synthesise sources.

Time: 60 minutes & homework task.

Delivery: This lesson can be delivered face-to-face or online. For online delivery, each worksheet could be placed in a class document on OneDrive.

Lead in

- Distribute **worksheet 1**. Students complete **tasks 1 & 2**.
- Feedback: nominate students to give their answers, and display or project **ANSWERS**.
- Students discuss questions in **task 3**.
- Feedback: distribute or project the **writing criteria** for your course if you have one. Point out where synthesis is assessed.

Language Review

- Distribute the **language focus: synthesis** information sheet.
- Students read the information and ask the teacher questions if something is unclear.

Guided Practice

- Distribute **worksheet 2**. Students complete **task 1**: synthesising at sentence level.
- Feedback: distribute or project **worksheet 2 task 1 ANSWERS**.
- Distribute **worksheet 3**. Students complete **task 1**: synthesising at paragraph level.
- Feedback: distribute or project **worksheet 3 task 1 MODEL ANSWER**.

Freer Practice

- Distribute or project **worksheet 4 task 1**: researching sources and synthesising at paragraph level.
- Feedback: students do peer feedback using the given checklist.

Homework

- Students choose a topic connected to their studies and write a paragraph to practise synthesising two or more sources.
- Feedback: teachers take in and mark. Use our error correction code: <https://www.academic-englishuk.com/correction-code>

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Worksheet 1: Introduction to synthesis

Task 1

1. Read the following paragraph: London’s congestion charge and its impact on pollution.
2. How many references can you see?

London’s congestion charge and pollution

The congestion charge in London was introduced in 2003 with the aim of limiting the number of cars entering the city centre from outside areas in order to reduce traffic and ultimately, pollution. Initially, the idea was successful as, according to Transport for London, overall traffic decreased by 25% (Badstuber, 2019). The Centre for Public Impact (2016) also claimed that emissions of nitrous oxide reduced by up to 20%. However, the impacts could be seen as short-lived. Despite a rise in the number of bus passengers in the beginning, there was also an upsurge in the number of journeys made by taxis. A study conducted by Green (2018) showed that the “sharp increase in NO2 emissions [...] is likely to reflect the shift towards diesel-based transport”. As taxis and private hire cabs were exempt from paying the congestion charge, Badstuber (2019) also confirmed that the number of new minicab registrations increased almost two-fold in one year alone. Although private hire firms such as *Uber* and *Addison Lee* are no longer exempt from paying the charge, London’s black cabs still are, and they have been found to be the most polluting. ICCT (2018) argued that “NOx emissions from London taxis consistently exceeded diesel passenger car emissions” and this has continued to be the case for the past five years. This has now led to the Mayor of London proposing major changes to taxis entering the city centre of London from 2021 including financial incentives for taxi drivers who convert their older, more polluting vehicles to cleaner, greener ones (Heart of London Business Alliance, 2021).

Sources:

Badstuber, N., 2019. *London congestion charge: what worked, what didn't, what next*. [online] The Conversation. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/london-congestion-charge-what-worked-what-didnt-what-next-92478> [Accessed 6 August 2021].

Green, C., 2018. *London congestion charge increased harm from pollution*. [online] Res.org.uk. Available at: <https://www.res.org.uk/resources-page/london-congestion-charge-increased-harm-from-pollution.html> [Accessed 6 August 2021].

Heart of London Business Alliance, 2021. *Mayor and TFL launch bold plans to reduce congestion, clean up taxis and tackle London's air pollution - Heart of London Business Alliance*. [online] Heart of London Business Alliance. Available at: <https://heartoflondonbid.london/update-mayor-and-tfl-congestion-update/> [Accessed 6 August 2021].

ICCT, 2018. *NOx and particulate emissions from London's taxis | International Council on Clean Transportation*. [online] Theicct.org. Available at: <https://theicct.org/publications/fact-sheet-nox-and-particulate-emissions-from-londons-taxis> [Accessed 6 August 2021].

The Centre for Public Impact, 2016. *London's congestion charge*. [online] Centre For Public Impact (CPI). Available at: <https://www.centreforpublicimpact.org/case-study/demand-management-for-roads-in-london> [Accessed 6 August 2021].

Task 2

1. Complete the table with the points made and references from task 1.

Point Made	Reference	Reporting Verb

Task 3

Discuss the following questions and write your answers in the boxes.

1. What is synthesis? Use your own words to explain.

2. Why is synthesis important in academic writing?

3. What are in-text citations? What information do you need to include?

4. What feedback have you already been given on synthesis and referencing?

5. How will synthesis and referencing be assessed on the course you're currently on?

Language Focus

Synthesis is a key feature of analytical academic writing. It is the skill of being able to combine a number of sources in a clause, paragraph or text to either support an argument or refute it. We also synthesise sources to be able to compare and contrast ideas and to further expand on a point. It is important that the writer shows the reader that they have researched the subject matter extensively in order to not only demonstrate how a variety of sources can agree or disagree but also to present more balanced arguments.

Example 1

The congestion charge in London was introduced in 2003 with the aim of limiting the number of cars entering the city centre from outside areas **in order to reduce traffic and ultimately, pollution**. Initially, **the idea was successful as**, according to Transport for London, **overall traffic decreased by 25%** (Badstuber, 2019). The Centre for Public Impact (2016) also claimed that **emissions of nitrous oxide reduced by up to 20%**.

- The writer synthesises two sources to be able to support their argument that the congestion was initially successful in reducing traffic and pollution.

Example 2

ICCT (2018) argued that **“NOx emissions from London taxis consistently exceeded diesel passenger car emissions”** and this has continued to be the case for the past five years. **This has now led to the Mayor of London proposing** major changes to taxis entering the city centre of London from 2021 including **financial incentives for taxi drivers who convert their older, more polluting vehicles** to cleaner, greener ones (Heart of London Business Alliance, 2021).

- The writer synthesises two sources to be able to expand on their previous argument that because of increasing emissions from London’s black cabs, changes will need to be made.

When synthesising sources, it is important to incorporate and reference them accurately. This can be done in two ways:

1. **Integral** citations are where the author is the main subject of clause and only the year is placed in brackets. A reporting verb (*argue, claim, suggest etc.*) is required to introduce the rest of the clause.
2. In **non-integral** citations, both the author and year is stated in parenthesis at the end of a clause. There must also be a comma separating the name and year.

Type of citation	Example
Integral (singular verb)	<i>Jones (2021) states that the cost of the global pandemic could be almost as much as £400 billion to the UK.</i>
Integral (plural verb)	<i>Jones et al. (2021) state that the cost of the global pandemic could be almost as much as £400 billion to the UK.</i>
Non-integral	<i>It is believed that the cost of the global pandemic could be almost as much as £400 billion to the UK (Jones, 2021).</i>

Worksheet 2: Guided Practice

Task 1

- Using the information in the table, practise synthesis using the prompts to help you.
- Don't forget to paraphrase the points, use accurate in-text citation (integral or non-integral) and the correct transition words.

Johnson (2018)	Williams (2019)	Prompt
The main goal of the World Bank is to reduce poverty and foster economic growth in developing countries.	There has been an increase in the level of poverty in Africa.	Counter-argue

1. _____

Jones (2017)	Smith (2018)	Prompt
The amount of traffic entering most major cities has decreased.	The introduction of bike lanes has reduced the number of cars entering city centres by almost a third.	Support/Agree

2. _____

Jensen (2015)	Kennedy (2015)	Prompt
Printed newspaper sales will have decreased by up to two-thirds in the next two decades.	Online newspaper paywalls have begun to boost printed sales.	Compare

3. _____

Browne (2018)	Robertson (2020)	Prompt
The number of diesel cars sold in the UK has declined dramatically in the last decade.	The number of electric cars purchased in the UK has increased only slightly in the last five years.	Contrast

4. _____

Arnold (2019)	James (2020)	Prompt
The decline of printed newspapers is due to increased online activity overall.	The more time we spend online, the more likely we are to use search engines and blogs for news.	Build on former view

5. _____

Worksheet 3: Guided Practice

Task 1

- Now that you have practised synthesising some information from two sources, can you write a paragraph using three sources? The topic and concluding sentences have been provided.

Source 1	Source 2	Source 3
<p>Ruiz (2017)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More than 17 million people uploaded footage to Facebook. Videos were watched 10 billion times. Donations netted \$115 million which went to the ALS Association. 	<p>ALS association (2019)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Donations enabled them to increase its annual funding for research around the world by 187%. Funds had a direct impact on the fight against ALS, including the discovery of five new genes connected to ALS. Researchers used their funding for new clinical trials to test potential treatments. 	<p>Baker (2017)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 in 4 participants did not mention ALS in their videos and only 1 in 5 mentioned a donation. Global digital networks to propel positive social change is balanced by the shallow, short-lived nature with anything viral.

Write your paragraph here:

Viral charity campaigns

In today's globalised world, news can travel fast and almost anything can go viral. In recent years, charities seem to have benefited greatly from constant uploading and sharing on social media, with campaigns such as the *Ice Bucket Challenge* being a notable example.

Therefore, although campaigns such as the *Ice Bucket Challenge* can have some positive impacts for the charity in the short-term, if a charity aims to successfully engage with the public over a longer period of time, then perhaps it cannot simply rely on trending on social media networks.

Sources

Baker, C., 2017. *Viral charity campaigns have a psychological 'recipe' and all-too-brief lifespan*. [online] University of Cambridge. Available at: <https://www.cam.ac.uk/research/news/viral-charity-campaigns-have-a-psychological-recipe-and-all-too-brief-lifespan> [Accessed 6 August 2021].

Ruiz, R., 2017. *The secret sauce that makes charity campaigns go viral*. [online] Mashable. Available at: <https://mashable.com/2017/02/14/how-charity-campaigns-go-viral/?europa=true> [Accessed 6 August 2021].

The ALS Association, 2021. *Ice Bucket Challenge dramatically accelerated the fight against ALS*. [online] The ALS Association. Available at: <https://www.als.org/stories-news/ice-bucket-challenge-dramatically-accelerated-fight-against-als> [Accessed 6 August 2021].

Worksheet 4: Freer Practice

Task 1: Write a paragraph on the raw food movement.

Stages:

1. Research and select at least two sources (these could be in support of each other or in opposition).
2. Read and select the content you wish to use.
3. Take and organise a set of notes.
4. Write your paragraph, making sure you paraphrase and reference accurately.
5. Proof read your work carefully.
6. Swap paragraphs with a partner. Use the peer feedback checklist to analyse your partner's work.

Write your paragraph here...

Peer Feedback Checklist

Has your partner...?	Yes / No / Not Sure
shown evidence of synthesising two or more sources in one paragraph?	
synthesised their sources to support a previous point made?	
been able to synthesise two or three sources to demonstrate a counter-argument?	
provided examples of both integral and non-integral in-text citations?	
accurately referenced their sources in line with Harvard?	

Synthesis ANSWERS

Worksheet 1 / Task 1

London's congestion charge and pollution

The congestion charge in London was introduced in 2003 with the aim of limiting the number of cars entering the city centre from outside areas in order to reduce traffic and ultimately, pollution. Initially, the idea was successful as, according to Transport for London, overall traffic decreased by 25% (Badstuber, 2019). The Centre for Public Impact (2016) also claimed that emissions of nitrous oxide reduced by up to 20%. However, the impacts could be seen as short-lived. Despite a rise in the number of bus passengers in the beginning, there was also an upsurge in the number of journeys made by taxis. A study conducted by Green (2018) showed that the “sharp increase in NO2 emissions[...]is likely to reflect the shift towards diesel-based transport”. As taxis and private hire cabs were exempt from paying the congestion charge, Badstuber (2019) also confirmed that the number of new minicab registrations increased almost two-fold in one year alone. Although private hire firms such as Uber and Addison Lee are no longer exempt from paying the charge, London's black cabs still are, and they have been found to be the most polluting. ICCT (2018) argued that “NOx emissions from London taxis consistently exceeded diesel passenger car emissions” and this has continued to be the case for the past five years. This has now led to the Mayor of London proposing major changes to taxis entering the city centre of London from 2021 including financial incentives for taxi drivers who convert their older, more polluting vehicles to cleaner, greener ones (Heart of London Business Alliance, 2021).

Task 2

Point Made	Reference	Reporting Verb
25% reduction in traffic	Badstuber (2019)	N/A
NO emissions decreased by a fifth	The Centre for Public Impact (2016)	claim
Increase in taxi journeys leads to increase in NO emissions	Green (2018)	show
Twice as many new minicab firms	Badstuber (2019)	confirm
NO emissions from taxis higher than any other form on transport in the past 5 years	ICCT (2018)	argue
Mayor of London to offer financial incentives to taxi drivers to convert to greener and cleaner taxis	Heart of London Business Alliance (2021)	N/A

Worksheet 2: possible responses

Task 1

1. Although the main goal of the World Bank is to reduce poverty and foster economic growth in developing countries ([Johnson, 2018](#)), [Williams \(2019\)](#) highlights that there has been an increase in the level of poverty in Africa.
2. [Jones \(2017\)](#) has observed that the amount of traffic entering most major cities has decreased. This is seconded by [Smith \(2018\)](#) who has found that the introduction of bike lanes has reduced the number of cars entering city centres by almost a third.
3. Despite the claim that printed newspaper sales will have decreased by up to two-thirds in the next two decades ([Jensen, 2015](#)), [Kennedy \(2015\)](#), by way of comparison, argues that online newspaper paywalls have begun to boost printed sales.
4. On the one hand, [Browne \(2018\)](#) states that the number of diesel cars sold in the UK has declined dramatically in the last decade. On the other hand, it has been argued that the number of electric cars purchased in the UK has increased only slightly in the last five years ([Robertson, 2020](#)).
5. [Arnold \(2019\)](#) asserts that the decline of printed newspapers is mainly due to increased online activity overall. As we spend more time on the Internet in general than we did ten years previously, the more likely we are to search for news stories through search engines or blogs ([James, 2020](#)).

Worksheet 3 / Task 1: suggested paragraph

Viral charity campaigns

In today's globalised world, news can travel fast and almost anything can go viral. In recent years, charities seem to have benefited greatly from constant uploading and sharing on social media, with campaigns such as *Ice Bucket Challenge* being a notable example. When it first went mainstream, it was reported that the 17 million plus videos which were uploaded to Facebook were watched 10 billion times ([Ruiz, 2017](#)). Thanks to these videos, [Ruiz \(2017\)](#) confirmed that being able to share such footage worldwide raised \$115 million for the ALS Association. [The ALS Association \(2019\)](#) highlighted that these donations has helped to fund further research into "the discovery of 5 new genes [and] clinical trials to test potential treatments". Nevertheless, a few weeks after the first videos were posted, it seemed participants began to forget the reason for making such a video. It was reported that one point "1 in 4 participants did not mention ALS in their videos and only 1 in 5 mentioned a donation" ([Baker, 2017](#)). Although it appeared that this resulted in a decline in the public's interest, [Baker \(2017\)](#) argues that it was not necessarily due to the lack of engagement but more that "global digital networks to propel positive social change is balanced by the shallow, short-lived nature with anything viral". Therefore, although campaigns such as *Ice Bucket Challenge* can have some positive impacts for the charity in the short-term, if a charity aims to successfully engage with the public over a longer period of time, then perhaps it cannot simply rely on trending on social media networks.