Chapter 4 - Analysis and Interpretation of Data

4.1 Overview

This chapter will discuss the analysis and interpretation of data. The main reason for doing this is to answer the research questions as stated earlier in Chapter 1. The first research question was "What are the language cues reflecting higher–order thinking skills in Bloom's Taxonomy found in the four language components of the Malaysian University English Test? In order to answer this question, Bloom's Taxonomy was analysed for the language cues reflecting higher–order thinking skills. The second research question was, "What are the language cues of higher–order thinking skills in Bloom's Taxonomy found in the Malaysian University English Test syllabus and textbooks?" To answer this question, Bloom's Taxonomy will be superimposed upon the four language components of the Malaysian University English Test or MUET syllabus as well as on textbooks on MUET. **During analysis, the two research questions will be dealt with simultaneously.** Also each of the language components in the Malaysian University English Test or MUET will be dealt with separately. Another factor that was considered in this study was that students sitting for the Malaysian University English Test or MUET will have to sit for all the four language components.

4.2 The Use of Language Cues and Higher-Order Thinking Skills in the Listening Component

Paper 1 of the Malaysian University English Test is Listening. The paper code for this paper is 800/1. The duration of this paper is 30 minutes and the maximum score for this paper is 45 marks while the weightage is 15%. The possible genres used as a

stimulus for Listening are lecture, interview, briefing, news broadcast, meeting, telephone conversation, discussion, advertisement, announcement, instructions, documentary and talk.

Unlike previously where the students had to listen to three recorded texts twice and had to answer 15 four–option multiple–choice questions, the new format involves listening to 5 recorded texts twice and then answering 20 questions based on either information transfer, short-answer questions, three-option multiple-choice questions or four-option multiple choice questions.

In addition, during the course of the test, there are three parts to the recording which the students have to listen to, that is, Part 1, Part 11 and Part 111. The basic criteria used for this text selection based on the new MUET syllabus, is the length, text type and the level of complexity of the text which is inclusive of content and language. Hence, the new format evokes the critical thinking and analytical skills of those attempting the paper.

In Part 1, the recording is played first. Then the students are given one minute to answer Questions 1 – 8. For Question 1, the answer should not be more than three words. For Questions 2 – 4, the answer should not be more than five words. As for Questions 5 – 6, the answer should not be more than three words. The last two questions for this part are Questions 7 – 8 where the students have to circle the correct answers of a three–option multiple-choice questions. After all this, the students will have to listen to the recording again and at the same time check their answers. Another minute is given after the recording is played the second time for the students to finalize their answers. This helps the students to think quickly and be able to write the answers within the time frame.

The test then progresses to Part 2, for which another recording is played. After the recording ends, the students are given one minute to answer Questions 9 – 14. In Questions 9 – 10, the students will have to complete the sentences by picking what they think are the correct answer options from a given box using the letters A – F. As for Questions 11 – 14, the students will have to circle the correct answers from three – option multiple-choice questions. Having done this, the students will listen to the recording again and at the same time, check their answers. After the recording has been played for the second time, another minute is given to finalize the answers. This completes Part 11 of the Listening paper. Once again, students will have to think quickly to be able to answer accurately and within the given time.

With above, and the tape being played non–stop, the test proceeds to Part 111 of the Listening paper. In Part 111, there are three recordings. After listening to the first recording, the students are given one minute to answer Questions 15 – 16. Then the tape proceeds with the second recording of Part 111. After this, the students are given one minute to answer Questions 17 – 18. Then the students listen to the third recording of Part 111. After this, the students are also given one minute to answer Questions 19 – 20. When all this has been done, the recordings for Part 111 are repeated so that the students can check their answers, while listening to the tape. Then they are given one minute to finalize their answers. For Questions 15 – 20, the students are not allowed to write their answers in more than 5 words. Thus, it can be seen that, as compared to the previous format where it was a straightforward recording and answering of questions, the current format incorporates thinking skills which enables students to develop these skills from within them.

Hence, in 30 minutes, the entire Listening Paper for the Malaysian University English Test or MUET ends. This is also where the thinking skills of the students are tested.

Compared to the old format, the new format involves skills of critical thinking, summarizing, analysing and problem – solving which are reflective of higher-order thinking skills. The old format was very straightforward. In the old format also, there are five four – option multiple choice that is Questions 1 – 5 based on Part 1, followed by another five four – option multiple choice questions, Questions 6 – 10, based on the recording for Part 11. Similarly for Part 111, there are Questions 11 – 15 also five four – option multiple choice questions based on the recording for Part 111. Hence all in all, there are fifteen four – option multiple-choice questions. This merely reflected recalling information just heard and trying to pick out the right option. Hence, there was not much thinking skills involved. Besides the answers chosen were shaded on the OMR paper. In the new format this is not so. The answers are marked on the question paper itself before being handed in.

As seen earlier, the new format in Paper 1- Listening in the Malaysian University English Test or MUET places more emphasis on critical thinking, summarizing, analysing and problem – solving. The table below shows the test specifications of the Malaysian University English Test or MUET for the Listening paper which was put into application from end of 2008 onwards.

Component	Test Specifications
1. Listening	Candidates are assessed on their ability to comprehend various types of oral text on varying length and level of complexity (content & language) Assessment will cover the following: (i) Knowledge:

		* Recalling information
		* Recognizing main ideas
		* Recognizing supporting details

(ii) Comprehension

       * Deriving meaning of words, phrases, sentences from context

       * Paraphrasing

(iii) Application

       * Predicting outcomes

       * Applying a concept to a new situation

(iv) Analysis

       * Understanding language functions

       * Distinguishing the relevant from the irrelevant

       * Distinguishing fact from opinion

       * Drawing inferences

       * Identifying roles and relationships

(v) Synthesis

       * Following the development of a point or an argument

       * Summarizing information

(vi) Evaluation

       * Appraising information

       * Making judgements

       * Drawing conclusions

       * Recognizing and interpreting speakers' views, attitudes or intentions

Table 4.1 MUET, Listening Component (from latest MUET syllabus 2006)

Table 4.1 shows the lower–order thinking skills and the higher–order thinking skills of Bloom's Taxonomy fully applied in the Listening component of the Malaysian University English Test or MUET.

The researcher is of the opinion that the use of language cues along with the use of the higher-order thinking skills will help the students to some extent.

When students listen to recordings, they need to listen for certain important details and not focus on every word that is said. Not every word needs to be understood. Only certain key words or phrases need to be recalled. Students need to listen intently for these. This is what in some books, they say 'listening or recalling specific information.' (MUET, Skills, Preparation & Practice, 2009). So after looking at the questions while the recording is going on, the students must be able to select the areas that contain the relevant information. This is where the relevant language cues come in. This is also where certain words or phrases are commonly used and can be categorized as mentioned in Chapter 3 Methodology (pg 48).

If the recording is on any game, for example, like football, the students should listen to language cues such as:

(i) lost to ...... by three goals

(ii) beat ..... one nil

(iii) won by.....

(iv) penalty kick

(v) .... showed a yellow card.......

Similarly if the recording is on arrivals and departures of planes or trains or express buses, the language cues to look out for are:-

(i) .... is scheduled to arrive at......

(ii).....will land at.....

(iii)...... has been delayed by.....

(iv)...... is scheduled to take off at.....

(v)......due to arrive at......

Another technique to be employed in Listening is to look out for the main ideas in order to find out what is being said. This is a necessity if the recording is a news bulletin, a talk, an announcement or even a conversation. As mentioned earlier, not every word spoken is important but the gist of what was said so that the students will be able to summarize or rephrase it or if need be repeat it. This helps to identify the main theme spoken about. But if the talk, interview, lecture or briefing is long, it would be better for the students to take down notes while listening. This will help them to look out for the main points while at the same time they are summarizing or paraphrasing what they were listening to. It also helps them to form a rough framework of the information heard. Short forms or abbreviations can be used for convenience. According to the MUET textbook by Ang Yian Tze et al (2009), Federal Marshall Canvendish Education, good speakers use transition signals when moving from one point to another. The table below shows what they have come up with which in turn can also be interpreted as language cues.

Function	Transition Signals
To introduce a new point	Well Right Now Okay
To list the main points	For a start Firstly First of all

	Secondly
	Second of all
	Also
	Then
	Next
	Finally
	Lastly
To give an example or illustration	For example
	For instance
	Like
	Such as
	Let me illustrate
	Let me show you
	An example of..... is.....
To give the other side of an issue	However
	But
	On the other hand
	Conversely
	What is different is
To sum up	So you see
	In conclusion
	The end result is
	Let me sum up by saying

Table 4.2 Transition Signals

(Ang Tian Tze et al., 2009. *MUET skills, Preparation & Practice, Federal*)

These transition signals can be used as language cues here to help students who listen to the recordings to identify the main points faster. They should be able to pick

out the key words or phrases. This practice is particularly useful and helpful, in answering the new MUET - Paper 1 Listening format where the students have to answer certain questions in three words or in five words. Besides acting as language cues, these transition signals will help the students to know when the speaker/s in the recording are going to start on a new point or add on to the existing point or even when the talk is going to end and so on. Hence with these kinds of language cues, the students would probably be able to think and analyse for themselves. Critical thinking students should be able to pick out the salient points instead of painfully memorising everything, be able to think on feet in difficult situations, analyze and problem-solve.

Another aspect of the listening paper is that it helps the students to reason for themselves. When they hear the recording, be it in the form of a news bulletin, lecture, talk and so on, the students have to guess or predict in advance as to what is going to happen next. They have to use their own general knowledge and guess as to what is going to happen next. The tone of voice in the recording also plays a part. It helps the students to know what is to come and what is likely to happen next. If it is a process or procedure, words like 'First', 'Next', and 'Then' are used. These are the language cues the students have to look out for. Other language cues include words like 'Firstly', 'Secondly', 'Finally' and so on.

In the event of a conversation in the recording, we have to look at the nature of the conversation. From this we can guess the relationship between the people involved. Another aspect is the tone of voice involved – is it formal or informal; is it informal as between family members or friends; is it from a person of authority or among colleagues? Then again the nature of the conversation has to be looked into – is it a family discussion, is it a formal conversation, is it an argument, is it an enquiry and so

on. Now in the conversation how do they address each other – is it 'Daddy', 'Granny', 'Sir', 'Madam' or are people called by name?

Hence it can be seen that the role of the teacher is very important here, to be able to guide the students to listen critically. As mentioned in Chapter 3 Methodology, the language cues commonly used can be categorized and the teacher can use the questioning method to draw out the thinking skills of the students. So, when the students are taught to listen critically, they listen for what is beyond what is said in order to understand the gist, to be able to interpret and to evaluate. The recording will show whether there is emotion involved, logic involved, whether there it is blended with opinions or merely stated factually. If opinions are involved, one can come across cues such as "In my opinion...." and so on.

Another aspect when deciding on the tone and attitude of the speakers is to be able to draw inferences and come to a conclusion. Therefore, careful attention has to paid to words or phrases that are used. When listening, the students have to bear in mind roughly through listening the age, job, tone and other necessary features of the speakers in the recording. Sometimes the answers are not directly found in the recording and has to be figured out and critical thinking here helps out in multi-tasking.

Hence, it can be seen that every question in the Listening component of the Malaysian University English Test or MUET requires a specific skill of the higher – order thinking skills or HOTS. It will be a lot more easier if the students are familiar with the language cues that are commonly used in the various genres used here.
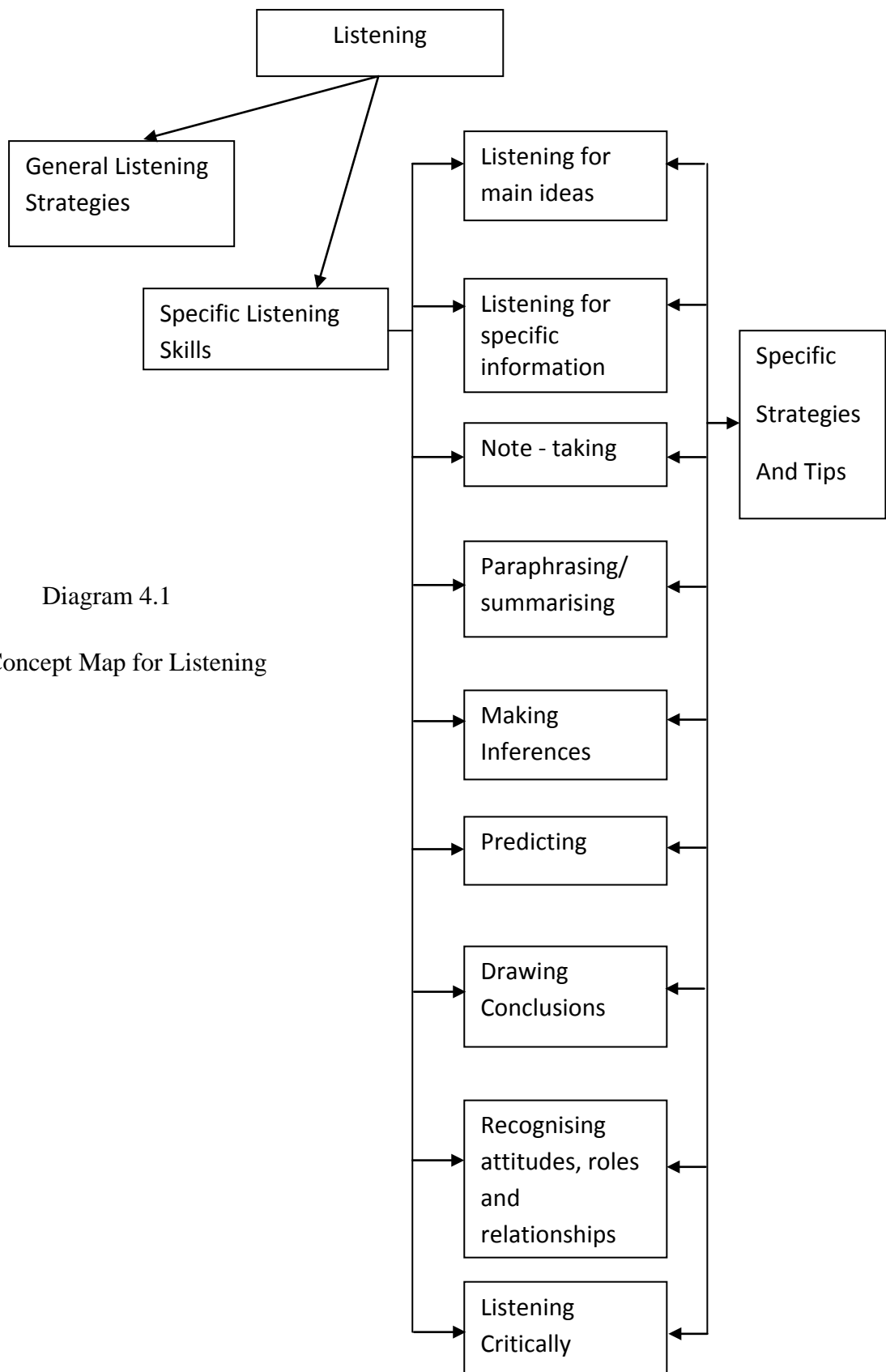
Diagram 4.1

Concept Map for Listening

(MUET, The Complete Text & Guide, 2006, Arah Pendidikan)

4.3 The Use of Language Cues and Higher-Order thinking skills in the Speaking Component

Paper 2 of the Malaysian University English Test is Speaking. The paper code for this paper is 800/2. The duration for this paper is also 30 minutes, the same as in Paper 1 - Listening. The maximum score for this paper is 45 marks while the weightage is 15%. It can be seen that it has the same maximum marks and weightage as in Paper 1. Although the marks and weightage are the same, the tasks required are different. The genre for this paper is on contemporary issues – anything dealing with socio-cultural issues, economic issues, science and technological issues, environmental issues, educational issues or even health care issues. Students who are learning to be critical must be aware of current issues and not expect to be spoon-fed all the time.

In the speaking component of the Malaysian University English Test or MUET, the students are required to do two tasks, Task A and Task B, that is, one is an individual presentation and the other is group interaction. Both Task A and Task B are carried out consecutively.

During the examination, the layout of the Speaking component is done in this manner. At any time the Speaking component examination is carried out, there are four candidates. These four candidates enter the room where the examination is held. Each candidate is given a question paper and a writing paper to jot down any notes. The test paper is made up of two tasks, that is Task A and Task B. First Task A is carried out and after this, Task B is carried out.

In the examination room, the four candidates are seated at a table with two of them facing the other two candidates. These are Candidate A, Candidate B, Candidate C

and Candidate D. There are two examiners seated, each at either end of the table and facing each other, like the candidates.
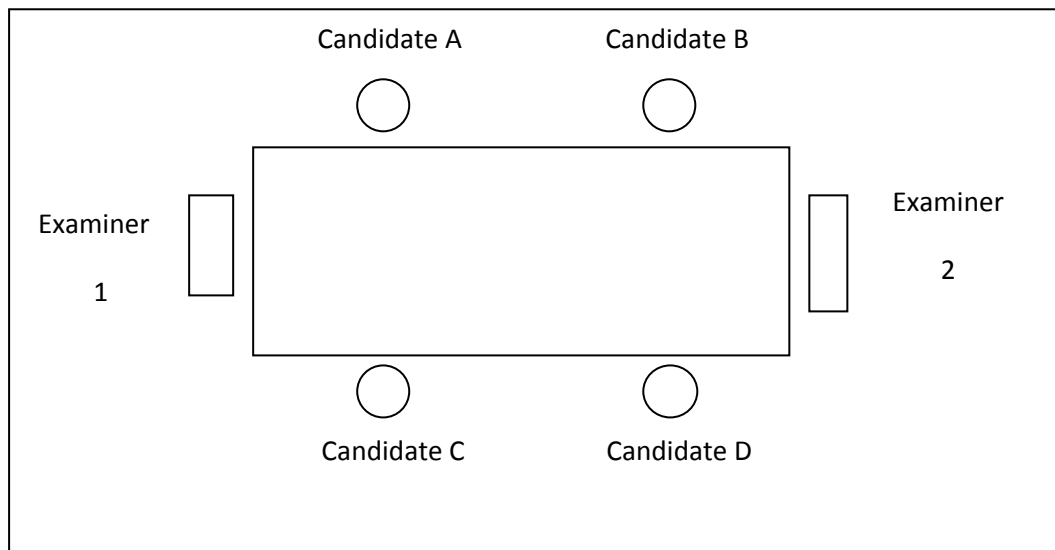
Diagram 4.2 In an examination room

Here in the examination room, the candidates are given one minute to read the instructions and the tasks they are required to do. This is when they can ask the examiners anything they do not understand. This benefit is given so that the students do not operate on misunderstood information and it also shows that students can think, ask and find out information on their own.

The first task that the students are required to carry out is Task A. Task A is individual presentation. Here all the four candidates are given a common situation. Candidate A has to prepare one aspect of the given situation. Candidate B is given another aspect of the same given situation. Candidate C is given yet another aspect of the same given situation. Similarly Candidate D is given another aspect of the situation. All four candidates are given two minutes to prepare their response. After the two minutes, each candidate has to present his viewpoint in another two minutes, giving his view on the situation and the topic given which he/she has prepared. Candidate A

speaks first, followed by Candidate B, Candidate C and then Candidate D while the rest will listen and take down notes which can be of use in the group interaction. After all the candidates in the group have spoken, Task A ends and the second part of the test begins. This is known as Task B.

In Task B, all the candidates in the group are given 2 minutes each, simultaneously to prepare their own discussion. This time they read the Task B in the same question paper given to each of them earlier and also write down any further points. When the two minutes are over, the group interaction begins and goes on for ten minutes. Any one of the candidates can start off the discussion. During the discussion each candidate can either maintain or change their view that was presented in Task A. Also during the discussion, candidates can either support or oppose the other candidates' views. During this time also, the discussion has to go on smoothly so that the examiners can understand what the candidates are saying. Towards the end of the ten minutes, the candidates have to come to some kind of common agreement. After this, Task B and the test ends. Note that for each task, the critical thinking required has to be done within the limited time and the fact that MUET trains them to do it both on their own as well as being able to work effectively with good team spirit.

Looking at the test specifications of the Malaysian University English Test - Paper 2 Speaking component, it can be seen clearly what the examiners are looking for.

Component	Test Specifications
2. Speaking	Candidates are assessed on their ability to make individual presentations and to take part in group discussions on a wide range of contemporary issues. Assessment will cover the following: (i) Accuracy ∗ Using grammatically correct language

	∗ Using correct pronunciation, stress and interaction
	(ii) Fluency
	∗ Speaking with confidence and fluency
	(iii) Appropriacy
	∗ Using language appropriate for the intended purpose and audience
	∗ Using varied vocabulary and expressions
	∗ Using varied sentence structures
	∗ Observing conventions appropriate to a specific situation
	(iv) Coherence and cohesion
	∗ Developing and organizing ideas
	∗ Using appropriate markers and linking devices
	∗ Using anaphora appropriately together with other cohesive devices
	(v) Use of language functions
	∗ Defining, describing, explaining
	∗ Comparing and contrasting
	∗ Classifying
	∗ Giving reasons
	∗ Giving opinions
	∗ Expressing relationships
	∗ Making suggestions and recommendations
	∗ Expressing agreement and disagreement
	∗ Seeking clarification
	∗ Asking for and giving information
	∗ Persuading
	∗ Drawing conclusions
	∗ Stating and justifying points of view
	∗ Presenting an argument

	(vi) Managing a discussion
	
	     ∗ Initiating
	
	     ∗ Turn – tasking
	
	     ∗ Interrupting
	
	     ∗ Prompting
	
	     ∗ Negotiating
	
	     ∗ Closing
	
	(vii) Task fulfilment
	
	     ∗ Presenting relevant ideas
	
	     ∗ Providing adequate content
	
	     ∗ Showing a mature treatment of topic
	
	Possible issues:-
	
	Socio – cultural, economic, science and technology, sports, environment, health

Table 4.3 MUET, Speaking Component (from the latest MUET syllabus 2006)

Sometimes, in the test situations given, the students are asked to express and discuss their opinions. Usually the opinions that students express are based on their experiences and what they know of the topic. However, the opinions can be prejudiced or can be supported by facts or reasons. They can also be opinions based on comparisons. When practising to use critical thinking not ALL opinions can be used. They must be able to link opinions with facts. Opinions must be relevant.

The table below shows language cues in the form of expressions that can be used when one has to ask for or express opinions.

Function	Expressions
Asking for an opinion	What's your opinion on....
	What do you think of.....
	What are your views on....
Giving opinions	I believe...
	I'm certain that...
	I must say...
	It's quite clear that...
	I'm sure that...
	As far as I'm concerned...
	From my point of view...
	In my opinion...
	I think that...
	I feel that...
	I would say that...
	It seems to me that...
	I think it would be fair to say that...
	I guess...
	I suppose...

Table 4.4 Expressions on asking & giving opinions

Ang Yan Tze et al, 2009, MUET Skills, Preparation and Practice

This shows that students need to develop on their thinking skills as well as on their language cues in order to effectively carry out the tasks.

For the individual presentation, each candidate will have to read and understand the task given to them to talk about. This will involve underlining the key words and phrases. This in turn will generate ideas. So, in order to stay focused on the required

task, and to be fast, the candidate can each develop their own mind map, somewhat like the one below.
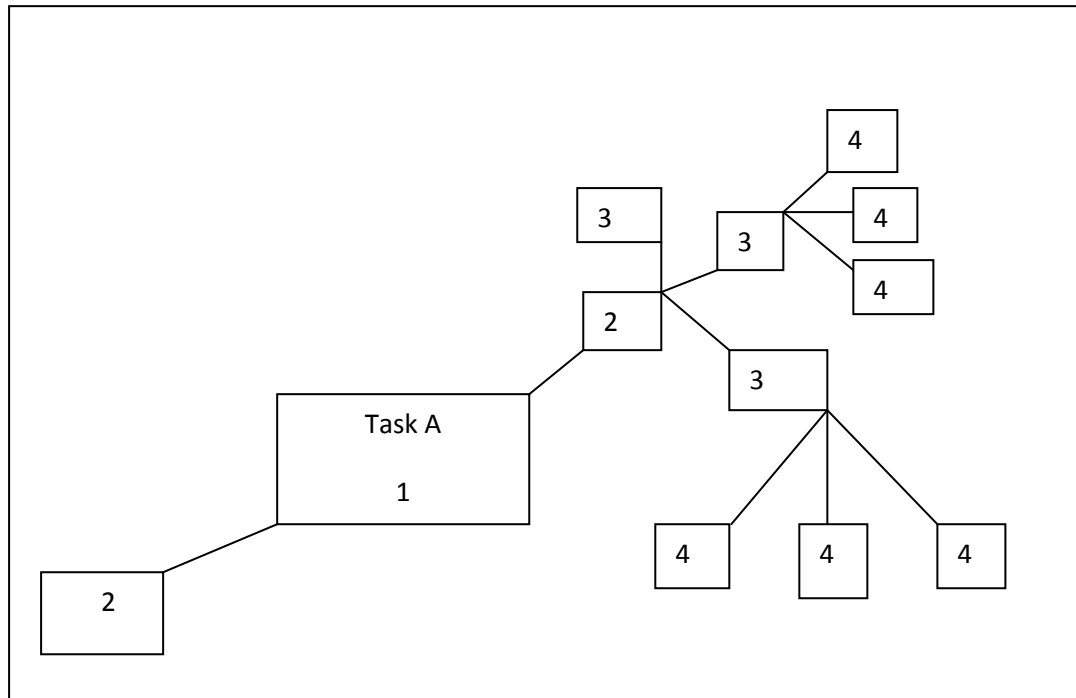
Diagram 4.3 Mind Map for Task A (Speaking Component)

Once the candidate has done this, the candidate has to quickly recognize his or her ideas, for example, like putting similar ideas under one heading and so on. Next the candidate has to present them with an introduction, body and conclusion as shown in the table below using the relevant language cues and expressions. In this also, the candidate has to use skills of analyzing and creative thinking.

	Tasks	Language Cues & Expression
Introduction	Greet the examiners and the other candidates Introduce yourself	Good morning/afternoon ladies and gentlemen/ma'am/sir/everyone I am..../My name is....
Body	Present your main point ∗ Give your suggestions ∗ Make your	I suggest that... I feel that... I strongly believe that

	recommendations	I think that... is the best suggestion...
		My suggestion is that...
		I recommend that...
	Support your points	This is because...
	∗ Give reasons	My first reason is...
		Firstly...
		The second reason is...
		Secondly...
		Another reason is...
	∗ Give examples	For example...
		For instance...
		An example is...
	∗ Quote statistics	According to...
		It was reported in the newspaper that...
	∗ Elaborate	In other words...
		That means...
		In addition...
		Furthermore...
Conclusion	Conclude/Sum up	I would like to conclude by saying that...
		Let me conclude by saying that...
		Therefore, I say again that...
		In conclusion, I think... is the best suggestion.
	Thank	Thank you/Thank you for listening

Table 4.5: Language Cues and Expressions for Task A (Speaking Component)

(MUET, The Complete Text & Guide, 2006)

It can be seen that while making his/her presentation for Task A, the candidate has to make use of the appropriate language cues and also he/she has to think and speak and not say whatever they think. The candidate has also to make his/her speech loud enough for all to hear, make eye contact, be pleasant and also avoid speaking with a dull voice. The candidate has also to learn to deliver his speech confidently and with clarity within time.

Now the language cues and expressions using the higher-order thinking skills for Task B of the Speaking components differ slightly. As stated earlier, the task has first to be read carefully and understood. Key words or phrases should be underlined. After this a discussion on the given stimulus takes place for ten minutes and at the end of the ten minutes all will have to come to a common agreement as to which is the best option. This also gives the opportunity for the candidates to make use of the various language cues which they have learned thus far.

The table below suggests a list of tasks, language cues and expressions that can be used when having a group discussion.

Tasks	Language Cues & Expressions
Greet the examiners & other candidates	Good morning/afternoon ladies and gentlemen/ma'am/everyone
Initiate discussion ∗ Any one of the candidates can initiate the discussion ∗ Do not waste time waiting for each other	We're here today to discuss... Today, we are going to discuss... Let's start by discussing... Our task today is to discuss...
Maintain the discussion	In addition.... Moreover....

	Other than that....
	As you've mentioned...
	I would like to add that...
Ask for opinion/suggestion/reason	What do you think about that?
	What is your view on...?
	What do you suggest?
	What about you?
	Why do you say that?
	Why do you think...?
	Which suggestion do you think is better?
Agree with someone's opinion	Yes, I agree with you.
	I agree that...
	I strongly agree with...
	I share... 's opinion that...
	I'm of the same opinion that...
	Yes, that's true.
Disagree with someone's opinion	I'm sorry but I do not agree with you.
	I disagree that...
	I do not think that...
	I beg to differ on that point.
	On the other hand....
	You have a point there but...
Interrupt	Sorry to interrupt but...
	Excuse me, but...
	I hate to interrupt you, but...
Make suggestions and recommendations	I suggest that...
	I recommend that...
	What about...

Conclude/Sum up	So, we've all agreed that...
	So, we can conclude that...
	I think we have come to the conclusion that...
	In conclusion, we all agree that... is the best suggestion. Thank you.

Table 4.6 Language Cues and Expressions on Task B (Speaking Component)

(MUET, The Complete Text & Guide 2006)

During the discussion of the Group interaction, students have to bear in mind to be polite to each other and not dominate the conversation. They must try to give each other a chance to speak, that is, take turns to speak and be patient with one another, allowing them to finish giving time for them to complete their opinions and suggestions. The students also have to bear in mind, not to raise their voice or to speak rudely if they happen to disagree with anyone in the group.

Chapter 3 Methodology mentions the use of language cues, questioning and 'wait time', which can be put into use. Language cues can be categorized according to the various needs and requirements. The teacher will play a very important role in evoking the thinking skills of the students through the questioning method as mentioned in Chapter 3 Methodology. Students should be encouraged to speak out to improve upon their communicative skills. This will help to improve upon their accuracy and fluency and the use of the appropriate language. Therefore higher-order thinking skills along with language cues can help improve social skills.

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                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │      Speaking       │
                    └─────────────────────┘
                              │
                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │     Strategies      │
                    └─────────────────────┘
                              for
         ┌────────────────────────┬────────────────────────┐
┌─────────────────────┐              ┌─────────────────────┐
│Individual Presentation│             │  Group Discussion   │
└─────────────────────┘              └─────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────┐              ┌─────────────────────┐
│   Understand Task    │             │   Understand Task   │
└─────────────────────┘              └─────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────┐              ┌─────────────────────┐
│    Focus on Task     │             │    Focus on Task    │
└─────────────────────┘              └─────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────┐              ┌─────────────────────┐
│    Generate Ideas    │             │    Generate Ideas   │
└─────────────────────┘              └─────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────┐              ┌─────────────────────┐
│    Organise Ideas    │             │      Discuss        │
└─────────────────────┘              └─────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────┐
│    Deliver Speech    │
│     Confidently      │
└─────────────────────┘
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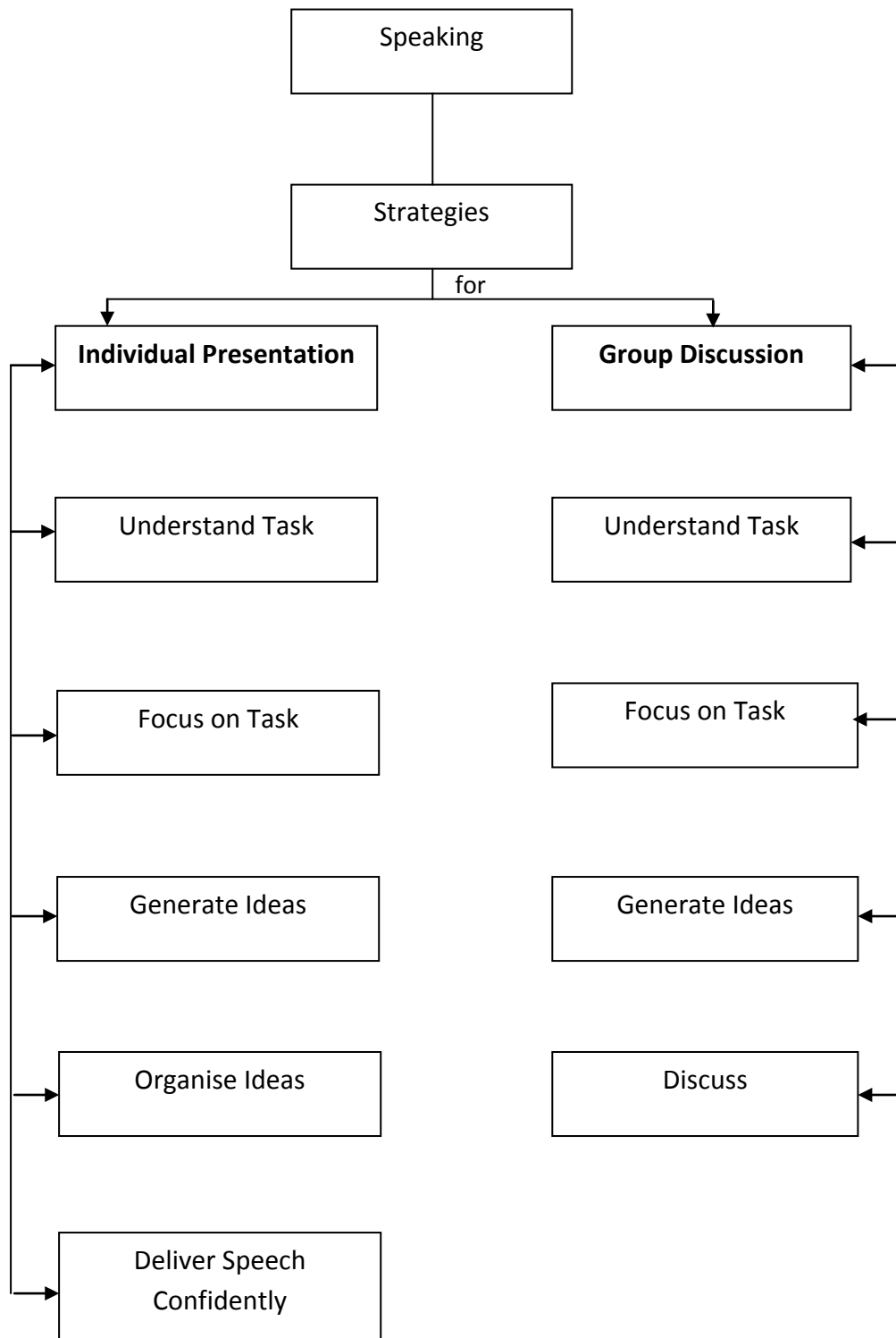
Diagram 4.4 Concept map for Speaking

(MUET, The Complete Text & Guide, 2006)

4.4 The Use of Language cues and Higher–Order Thinking skills in the Reading Component

Paper 3 of the Malaysian University English Test is Reading. The paper code for this paper is 800/3. The duration for this paper now according to the new format is 90 minutes as compared to the old format where the duration was 120 minutes. In the new format the weightage for this paper is 40% with a maximum of 120 marks as compared to the old format where the weightage was 45% and maximum marks was 135 marks.

According to the latest Malaysian University English Test or MUET syllabus the paper comprises 45 multiple – choice questions. These questions are based on six texts of which at least one is with graphics. The basic criteria for the text selection is the length (200 – 700 words), the level of complexity based on the content and language types and also the text type. The possible genres for this paper are articles from journals, newspapers and magazines, academic texts, and electronic texts. The rhetorical style used here is analytical, descriptive, persuasive, argumentative or narrative. The 45 multiple-choice questions can either be 3 – option multiple choice questions or 4 – option multiple choice questions (Latest MUET syllabus, 2006). In fact, Questions 1 to 29 are 3 – option multiple-choice questions while questions 30 to 45 are 4 – option multiple choice questions.

According to the latest Malaysian University English Test or MUET syllabus, the students will be assessed as shown below.

	Test Specifications
3. Reading	Candidates are assessed on their ability to comprehend various types of texts of varying length and level of complexity (content and language) Assessment will cover the following:-

	(i) Comprehension
	* Skimming and scanning
	* Extracting specific information
	* Identifying main ideas
	* Identifying supporting details
	* Deriving the meaning of words, phrases, sentences from the context
	* Understanding linear and non – linear texts
	* Understanding relationships
	- Within a sentence
	- Between sentences
	* Recognizing a paraphrase
	(ii) Application
	* Predicting outcomes
	* Applying a concept to a new situation
	(iii) Analysis
	* Understanding language functions
	* Interpreting linear and non – linear texts
	* Distinguishing the relevant from the irrelevant
	* Distinguishing fact from opinion
	* Making inferences
	(iv) Synthesis
	* Relating ideas & concepts
	- Within a paragraph
	- Between paragraphs
	* Following the development of a point or an argument
	* Summarizing information
	(v) Evaluation
	* Appraising information

	* Making judgements
	* Drawing conclusions
	* Recognizing & interpreting writers' views, attitudes or intentions
	Possible genres:
	Articles from journals, newspapers and magazines, academics, electronic texts

Table 4.7: MUET, Reading Component (Latest MUET Syllabus, 2006)

Thus it can be seen from the latest MUET syllabus, that (i) Comprehension and (ii) Application belonged to the lower-order thinking skills of Bloom's Taxonomy, while (iii) Analysis, (iv) Synthesis and (v) Evaluation belonged to the higher-order thinking skills of Bloom's Taxonomy. Therefore with the use of language cues, it is hoped that students will find the approach to the reading comprehension easier.

The first text given is usually a non-linear text. It is usually visual or graphic material. It can be in the form of a diagram, a pie chart, a bar chart, a bar graph, a line graph or a table. At a glance, it shows students how a text is organized graphically. Looking at this, students should be able to understand the sequence or the chronology of how the things, processes or events happen. Besides it also shows the relationships between ideas presented. From this also the students should be able to identify the main points and the less important ones. The application of higher-order thinking skills can be seen here. Apart from understanding and comprehending it, students should be able to analyze the non-linear text. They should be able to "distinguish the relevant from the irrelevant" (MUET syllabus 2006) and make inferences. Then they should be able to synthesize and be able to relate ideas and concepts and to be able to summarize the

information. Apart from all this, the students should be able to evaluate the given information.

As for the remaining texts, students must read the instructions carefully. They must also be able to manage their time well. As the students read one text after another in order to answer the questions they must be able to see the difference between the main idea and the topic. The subject of the text is the topic and it is usually comprised in two or three words. It can be a process, person, place or thing, or something abstract. Usually the topic sentence can be found in the beginning, middle or end of the paragraph. It can even be implied. The point that the text is trying to make is the main idea of the paragraph or passage. The language cue here is the question that students can ask themselves, namely, "What is the topic of the text and what is it all about?" It should be borne in mind that the main idea can be either directly stated or expressed indirectly, which is, implied. The text has to be read carefully so that the main idea that the author wants you to understand can be inferred, especially if the topic sentence that expresses that main idea cannot be found. As a result an inference has to be made based on what the author has mentioned in the paragraph. One other little detail which must not be overlooked is that the students must be able to distinguish or rather differentiate main idea/s from the supporting ideas which are usually in the form of examples, explanations or reasons and adding support either to the main idea in the topic sentence or to the implied main idea.

The table below shows examples of questions on main ideas and supporting ideas. They can be considered as language cues as well.

Examples of questions on main ideas:

1. The main point of the paragraph/passage is to...

2. The paragraph/passage is concerned with...

3. The author's primary purpose in this paragraph/passage is to...

4. The main theme of the paragraph/passage can be best described as...

5. Which of the following statements best expresses the main idea if the paragraph/passage?

6. Which of the following expresses the main idea of the passage?

7. What is the main idea of the passage?

Examples of questions on supporting ideas:-

1. According to the author/passage...

2. The author states all of the following except...

3. According to the paragraph/passage, which of the following is true of the...

4. Which of the following statements is best supported by the paragraph/passage?

5. Which of the following is not cited/mentioned in the paragraph/passage as evidence   of...

6. Which of the following is not mentioned as an example of...

7. Which of the following is not true about...

8. Which of the following is not discussed in the passage as...

Table 4.8 Question on main idea & supporting ideas

(MUET, The Complete Text & Guide, Pg. 106, 2006)

When reading texts, students must also know the difference between a fact and an opinion. Opinions are the viewpoints of authors. They may also be the judgements or the evaluation or the interpretations of authors. Words which show value judgement are said to be opinion words that are qualitative. Examples of words which reflect this are words like 'greatest', 'best', 'more', 'worst', 'most' and so on. On the other hand, facts

are based on what has taken place or happened or on what are assumed could have taken place. In MUET, the students, in doing this Reading component, are trained to look out for all these features.

Perhaps	Apparently
Presumably	One possibility is
One interpretation is...	In our opinion
According to	It seems likely...
In our view	In my/our opinion
I believe	I think
I believed	

Table 4.9: Signal words that reflect opinions
(MUET, The Complete Text & Guide, Pg.106, 2006)

In texts, the summing up of what is mentioned in the passage is said to be the conclusion of the passage. After reading the text for the topic, main idea, supporting idea, the supporting details the text has to conclude and some signal words for this are, to mention a few are:

In conclusion	As a result
Thus	Consequently
Therefore	To conclude
Finally	

Table 4.10: Signal words for Conclusion
(MUET, The Complete Text & Guide,Pg.108,2006)

Yet there are texts where the main ideas or the supporting ideas or the author's opinions or purpose or attitude or even feelings are not directly stated. This is where

they have to draw conclusions or inferences. "An inference is a reasonable guess or logical conclusion that we make based on the evidence or information presented in the text" (MUET, The Complete Text & Guide, 2006) To ensure the students understand, a few questions on inference were also suggested.

<div style="border:1px solid">

1. It can be inferred from the paragraph/passage that...

2. The author implies that...

3. The paragraph/passage suggests that....

4. Which of the following statements about.... can be inferred from the paragraph or passage?

</div>

Table 4.11 Examples of questions on inferences

(MUET, The Complete Text & Guide, Pg. 109, 2006)

Skimming and scanning are important when looking for important information. These are done much faster than normal reading. There are many methods that can be used when skimming. Some use the headings and subheadings, save read the first and last sentences of each paragraph while others use other types of organizers. Skimming is especially useful if one is looking for specific information like dates, names, places or reviewing charts, tables or graphs. In scanning, one looks for keywords or ideas that will help to answer the questions. Skimming and scanning the texts help the students to look for clues – such as the choice of words used by the authors, and whether they have a positive or negative tone. As the students are skimming and scanning the texts, they can ask themselves language cue questions like, 'What was the author's purpose of that text?' or 'What was the tone of that text?'

Texts in Paper 3 – Reading in MUET can touch on any subject matter such as music, education, science and technology, health and medicine and so on. An

interesting feature in texts is that there is always an organizational pattern of the information contained in the text which helps in understanding of what the author is trying to say.

The table below shows some of the common organizational patterns found generally in texts. The functions can be compared to the features of higher–order thinking skills while the signal words can be likened to language cues.

Organizational pattern	Functions/Conceptual Development of Ideas	Signal Words
Cause - effect	1. The cause or source of change 2. The effect of the result, of a particular change	Cause: because, is due to, is caused by, leads to, brings about Effect: as a result of, therefore, this resulted, consequently, so, as a consequence, yet
Definition	1. An explanation of the meaning of a word or phrase 2. There are different types of definitions: ∗ Definition by purpose ∗ Definition which explains - A description - An illustration - An analysis - A process/ procedure ∗ Definition with example	1. The definition may be stated directly as: "a/the... is... of" by the use of other words which tell you about the term to be defined 2. Watch out for words like: is, is defined as, this term means, known as, for example, for instance, to illustrate
Comparison - Contrast	The information is on the basis of opposing viewpoints, either alternative views, placing equal emphasis on both sides or indicating favour to one side, and presentation of similarities	Comparison: similar, similar to, similarly, resembling, parallel to, much the same, comparable, exactly like, as, just as, likewise, in the same way, also, equally,

		resembles, similarities, just like, alike same Contrast: But, however, yet, nevertheless, otherwise, on the other hand, contrary, on the contrary, in contrast, rather, although, even though, while, different from, oppositely, opposed, opposing, as opposed to, conversely, despite the fact, in spite of, instead, unlike.
and differences		
Description	Descriptive patterns try to create moods and experiences through language specially through the connotations or suggestiveness of words or the five senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch	Analyse words and what they suggest, for example, ∗ Nouns, adjectives and verb ∗ Denotations and connotations of words
Process - procedure	The information on a series of actions or operations performed to do, make or achieve something is organized in a sequence or ordered steps	and, then, next, subsequently, just then, at the same time, simultaneously, finally eventually, at last, then, after, after that, first, second, third etc.
Time - order	The pattern of organization involves date and time of events and dates of events and activities	The signals are dates and time expressions for example, then, after, before, since and last year.

Table 4.12 Organizational Patterns, Functions & Signal Words

(MUET, The Complete Text & Guide, Pg. 113-114, 2006)

Based on the table above, the categorization mentioned in Chapter 3 on Methodology can be seen. Categorization can be done by teachers for the students or by the students themselves to help students to quickly analyze with the help of the signal words, which can be taken as language cues here. The question method used by the

teachers, inclusive of 'wait time' will help to show the relationship between the various

features in the texts.

```
                           ┌──────────────┐
                           │   Reading    │
                           └──────┬───────┘
                ┌─────────────────┴─────────────────┐
                ▼                                    ▼
      ┌──────────────────┐              ┌──────────────────┐
      │ General Reading  │              │ Specific Reading │
      │   Strategies     │              │   Strategies     │
      └────────┬─────────┘              └──────────────────┘
               │
               │      ┌──────────────┐            ┌──────────────┐
               ├─────▶│   Before     │            │     Text     │◀──┐
               │      │  the test    │            │ with Graphics│   │
               │      └──────────────┘            └──────────────┘   │
               │                                                      │
               │      ┌──────────────┐            ┌──────────────┐   │
               └─────▶│   During     │            │Comprehension │◀──┤
                      │  the test    │            └──────────────┘   │
                      └──────────────┘                               │
                                                  ┌──────────────┐   │
                                                  │ Application  │◀──┤
                                                  └──────────────┘   │
                                                                     │
                                                  ┌──────────────┐   │
                                                  │   Analysis   │◀──┤
                                                  └──────────────┘   │
                                                                     │
                                                  ┌──────────────┐   │
                                                  │  Synthesis   │◀──┤
                                                  └──────────────┘   │
                                                                     │
                                                  ┌──────────────┐   │
                                                  │  Evaluation  │◀──┘
                                                  └──────────────┘
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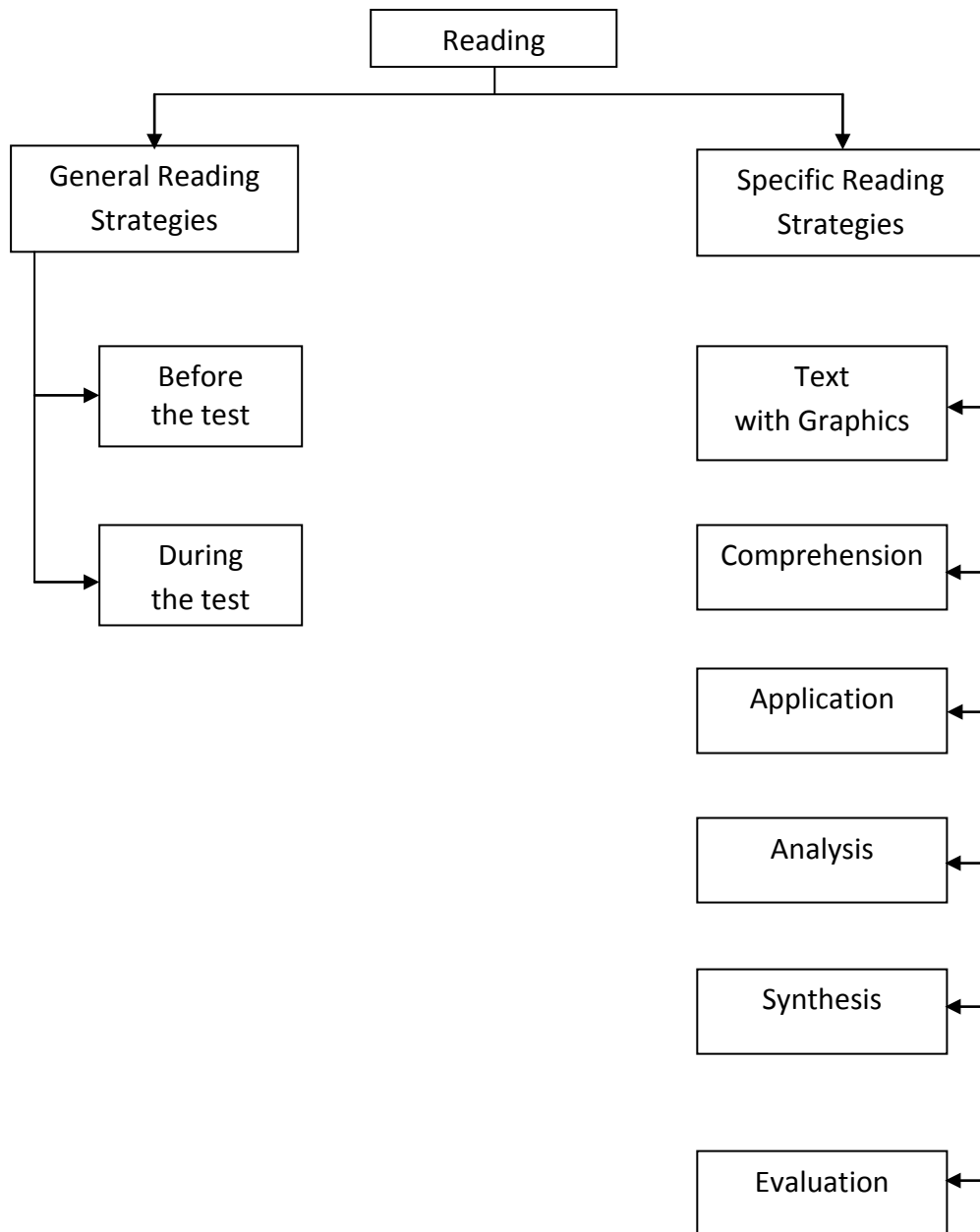
Diagram 4.5 Concept map for Reading

(MUET, The Complete Text & Guide, 2006

(slight changes with the latest format done by the researcher herself))

4.5 The Use of Language Cues and Higher–Order Thinking Skills in the

    Writing Component

Paper 4 of the Malaysian University English Test or MUET is Writing. The paper code for this paper is 800/4. The duration for this paper is 90 minutes or one and a half hours. The maximum score for this paper is 90 marks in the new format as compared to 75 marks in the old format. The weightage of this paper in the new format is 30% as compared to the old format where the weightage was 25%. The possible genres for this paper according to the new format are letter, report, essay and article as compared to the old format where there were none. The rhetorical style used for this paper may be analytical, descriptive, persuasive or argumentative. On careful examination, it can be seen that these words are what are found in higher-order thinking skills.

In this paper, the students are required to carry out two writing tasks. The first question or task, according to the new format is interpretation of information based on a specific stimulus provided and is to be written in not less than 150 words. It can be either a report, an article, a letter or an essay. Students are advised not to spend more than 40 minutes on this question. In the old format, Question 1 was summary writing which had to be written in not more than 100 words. Under the new as well as the old format, this question carried a total of forty marks. The second writing task in the new format is extended writing based on a given topic and it has to be written in no less than 350 words as compared to the old format where the Question 2 extended writing was no fewer than 250 words. Students are advised to spend about 50 minutes on this question. The question must be read carefully and must be answered accordingly, be it a description, discussion, opinion or comparison. The total marks for Question 2 in the new format as well as the old format is 60 marks. Although the marks given to both

questions in both formats are the same, the maximum score under the new format is 90

marks as compared to 75 marks in the old format.

According to the latest Malaysian University English Test or MUET syllabus of

2006, the students will be assessed as shown below.

Component	Specifications
4. Writing	Candidates are assessed on their ability to write various types of text covering a range of rhetorical styles. Assessment will cover the following: (i) Accuracy * Using correct spelling and mechanics * Using correct grammar * Using correct sentences. (ii) Appropriacy * Using varied vocabulary and expressions * Using clear varied sentences * Using language appropriate for the intended purpose and audience * Observing conventions appropriate to a specific stimulation of text type (iii) Coherence & Cohesion * Developing and organizing ideas * Using appropriate markers and linking devices * Using anaphora appropriately together with other cohesive devices (iv) Use of language functions * Defining, describing, explaining * Comparing and contrasting * Classifying * Giving reasons

	∗ Giving opinions
	∗ Expressing relationships
	∗ Making suggestions and recommendations
	∗ Expressing agreement and disagreement
	∗ Persuading
	∗ Interpreting information from non – linear texts
	∗ Drawing conclusions
	∗ Stating and justifying points of view
	∗ Presenting an argument
	(v) Task fulfillment
	∗ Presenting relevant ideas
	∗ Providing adequate content
	∗ Showing a mature treatment of topic
	Possible genres:
	Report, article, letter, essay

Table 4.13 MUET, Writing Component(latest MUET syllabus,2006)

Looking at what is required for the writing component, it is obvious that the superimposement of the higher–order thinking skills and the need to use language cues, especially in (ii)appropriacy, (iii) coherence and cohesion, (iv) the use of language functions and (v) task fulfilment.

The first question of the Writing paper is based on a non–linear text. So students have to interpret and write an analysis of it. The non–linear text can be in the form of graphic materials such as graphs, charts, diagrams or tables. The word 'analysis' as you would observe is a feature of higher-order thinking skills. Therefore by interpreting and

analysing the given text, students are actually carrying out the higher–order thinking skills. Apart from analyzing, the students are actually doing an evaluation as well, which is also a part of higher–order thinking skills.

In this question also, students should be able to transfer information from a non–linear text to a written form. To be able to interpret and analyse non–linear text, the students need to have background knowledge on the different types of non–linear texts or visual forms. First of all, identify the type of non–linear text. Not only this, in order to interpret correctly and accurately, students should be able to know the related objectives, features, and functions of the non–linear or visual forms. The question to this text should be focussed in the mind so as to draw attention to the purpose when interpreting the non–linear text. Attention should be paid to the title of the non – linear text as the title in a way explains the content and purpose of the non–linear text. Students also need to look out for other cues in the form of subtitles, expressions of time, labels, horizontal/vertical axes, colours, and symbols and so on. Sometimes students need to infer from the data given in the non – linear text.

The following two diagrams in a way summarize what has been said earlier and explain many things at a glance.
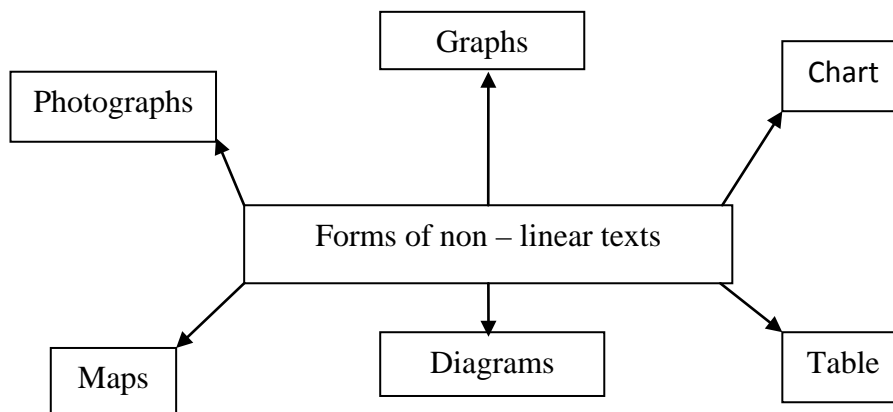
Diagram 4.6 Forms of Non–Linear Texts

(MUET, The Complete Text & Guide, 2006)

```
                        ┌──────────────┐
                        │ Show Process │
                        └──────┬───────┘
                               │
   ┌──────────────┐            │           ┌──────────┐
   │Show Comparison│           │           │   Show   │
   │ and Contrast │            │           │ Statistics│
   └──────────────┘            │           └──────────┘
```

General and Specific Functions of Non – Linear Texts

Show Process

Show Comparison and Contrast

Show Statistics

Show Distribution

Summarize

Show Changes

Show Trends/ Patterns

Show Relationships

Show Figures
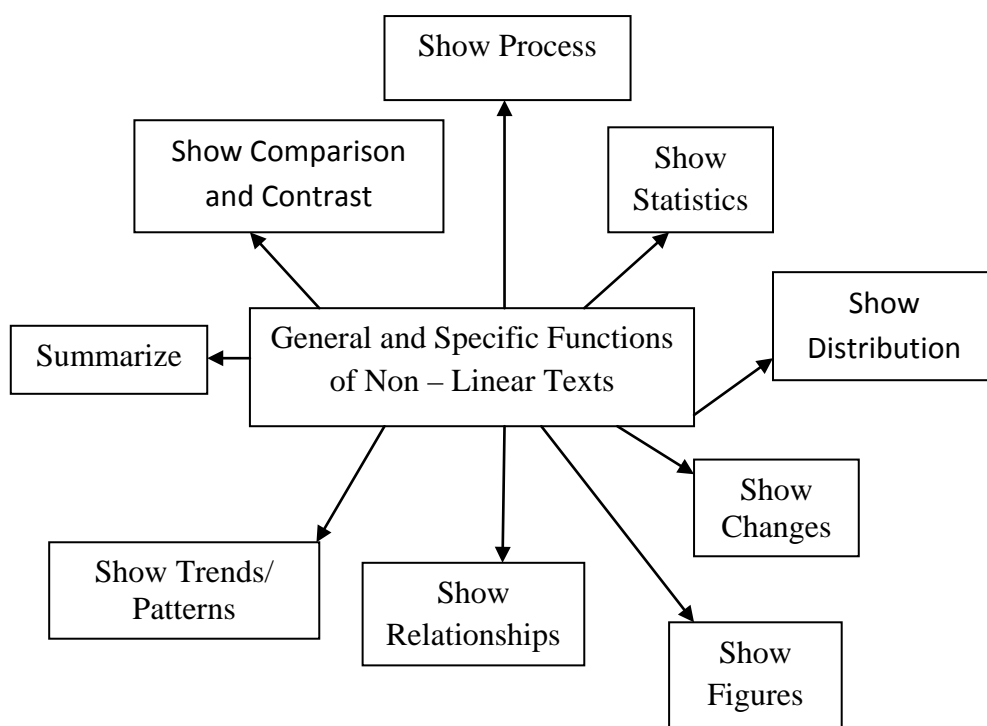
Diagram 4.7 General & Specific functions of non – linear texts

(MUET, The Complete Text & Guide,2006)

Students upon understanding these diagrams with the help of the teachers should be able to answer the task question as well as what is required.

Question 2 of the MUET Writing paper is extended writing. The students have to write a good essay of not less than 350 words. It is very important that the students read the question properly, underline the keywords or phrases and have an understanding of what is actually required.

The table below shows the process of writing a good essay.

Stages

```
┌──────────────┐          ── Examining the topic
│ Planning the │──────────┤
│ essay        │          ── Identifying the audience
└──────────────┘          │
        │                 ── Determining the purpose
        ↓
```

Brainstorming (listening, mind map, using an idea tree)

```
┌──────────────┐
│ Generating   │──────────┤
│ ideas        │
└──────────────┘
        │
        ↓
```

Organizing ideas in a text and understanding text organization (sequence, space, definition, exemplification, classification, cause & effect, comparison & contrast)

Writing effective sentence (employing good sentence patterns, varying sentence length & variety)

```
┌──────────────┐
│ Writing the  │──────────┤
│ essay        │
└──────────────┘
        │
        ↓
```

Writing a thesis statement, topic sentences & supporting details

Writing an effective introduction

Writing an effective conclusion

```
┌──────────────┐          ── Checking spelling
│ Editing &    │──────────┤
│ Revising     │          ── Checking punctuation
└──────────────┘          │
                          ── Checking grammar & usage
```

(a) Verbs (verb form, verb tense, subject – verb agreement, pronoun reference, pronoun consistency)

(b) Pronouns (pronoun form, pronoun agreement, pronoun reference, pronoun consistency

(c) Sentence fragments

(d) Non – on sentences

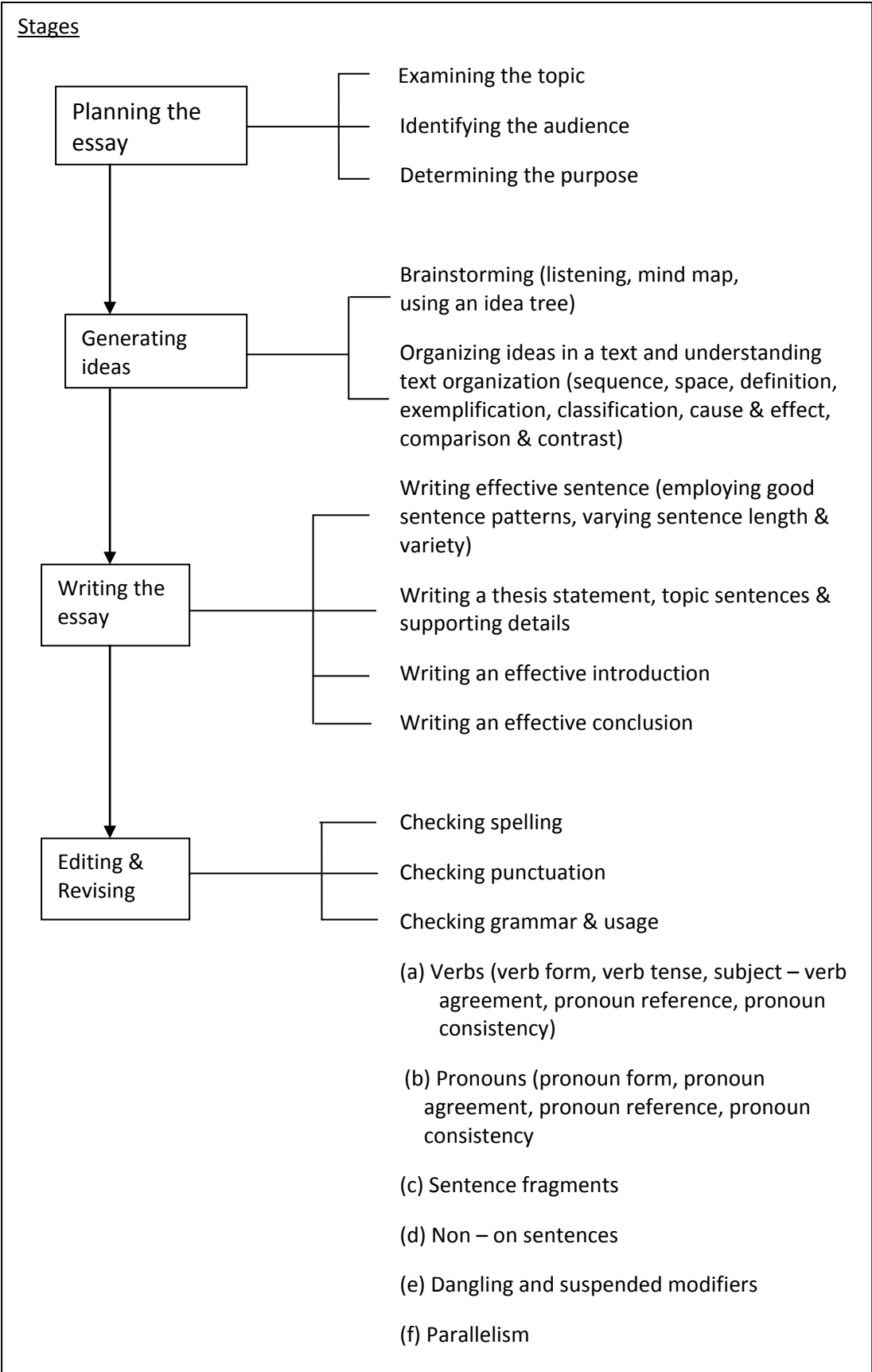(e) Dangling and suspended modifiers

(f) Parallelism

Table 4.14 Stages in Writing an Essay

(Ang Yan Tze et al., 2009, MUET Skills, Preparation and Practice)

It is very important to make sure that the essays that the students write are cohesive and coherent. The ideas mapped out have to be organized in a logical sequence with a suitable introduction and conclusion. Language cues in the form of transition markers have to be used to give a smooth transition flow. Hence, higher-order thinking skills along with language cues through MUET teaches the students to be organised.

The table below shows the language cues that can be used.

Function	Transition Signals
Addition	Also, in addition, too, moreover, and, besides, furthermore, equally important, then, finally
Example	For example, for instance, thus, specifically, namely, that is, to illustrate
Contrast	But, yet, however, on the other hand, nevertheless, nonetheless, conversely, in contrast, still, in spite of, notwithstanding, on the contrary, instead
Comparison	Similarly, likewise, in the same way
Concession	Of course, to be sure, certainly, granted, after all
Result	Therefore, thus, as a result, so, accordingly, otherwise, hence
Summary	In short, in brief, in summary, in conclusion, finally, on the whole, to summarize, to conclude.
Time sequence	First(ly), second(ly), third(ly), next, then, finally, afterwards, before, soon, later, meanwhile, subsequently, immediately, eventually, currently, after a short time, for as long as, as soon as, at last, at the same time, lately, presently, until, when, while
Place	In the background, nearby, in the distance, here, there, above, behind
Emphasis	Indeed, in fact, in particular, specifically

Table 4.15: Organizing ideas in a text

(Ang Yan Tze et al., 2009, MUET Skills, Preparation and Practice, Federal)

Generally authors feel that when writing an essay, there should be a draft essay. This is good if time permits. Therefore the next best alternative would be to prepare a good outline. "Remember a good outline is like a road map. It helps you to chart your journey, makes sure you include all the important points, stops you from wandering off course (out of point) and leads you safely to your destination, which is your conclusion." (MUET, The Complete Text & Guide, 2006)

It is generally felt that the introduction to a good essay should have a thesis statement which is specific and arguable. It also has to be concise and at the same time comprehensive. Apart from this, it also has to introduce the topic of the essay. The whole idea is to get the attention of the reader and at the same time to give a clear idea of what the whole essay is all about. This is also where the use of higher–order thinking skills as well as the use of language cuts come in. Each of the subsequent paragraphs, usually about 3-4 paragraphs, has a topic sentence along with supporting details and are in the form of statistics, definitions, examples, distinction, questions, experiences and anecdotes. Therefore in order to facilitate a smoother flow in reading and comprehension, language cues in the form of transitional devices or discourse markers are used. Some of the common ones are featured in the table below.

When you want to...	You can use...
Add similar points	Again, and, besides, then, further, furthermore, in addition, too, moreover
Compare points	But, yet, however, nevertheless, compared to, although, in contrast
Show change of direction	Yet, still, despite, however, in spite of
Give a reason/Prove something	Because, for, since, besides, as
Repeat or reinstate a point	In brief, as I have said

Emphasize a point	Obviously, absolutely, Naturally, Never, Certainly
Show sequence	First, second, third, next, then, after, finally, consequently, concurrently
Show time	Immediately, soon, finally, then, later, previously, formerly, first, next
Give examples	Such as, for example, for instance, to illustrate, to demonstrate
Conclude	In brief, to conclude, in conclusion, hence, thus therefore, as a result, consequently

Table 4.16 Discourse markers

(MUET, The Complete Text & Guide, 2006)

Finally, for conclusion, the students have to give an effective close in order to have a sense of completion. The table below shows some of the ways of writing conclusions:

```
                        ┌─────────────────┐
                        │   Conclusion    │
                        └────────┬────────┘
       ┌─────────────────────────┴─────────────────────────┐
```

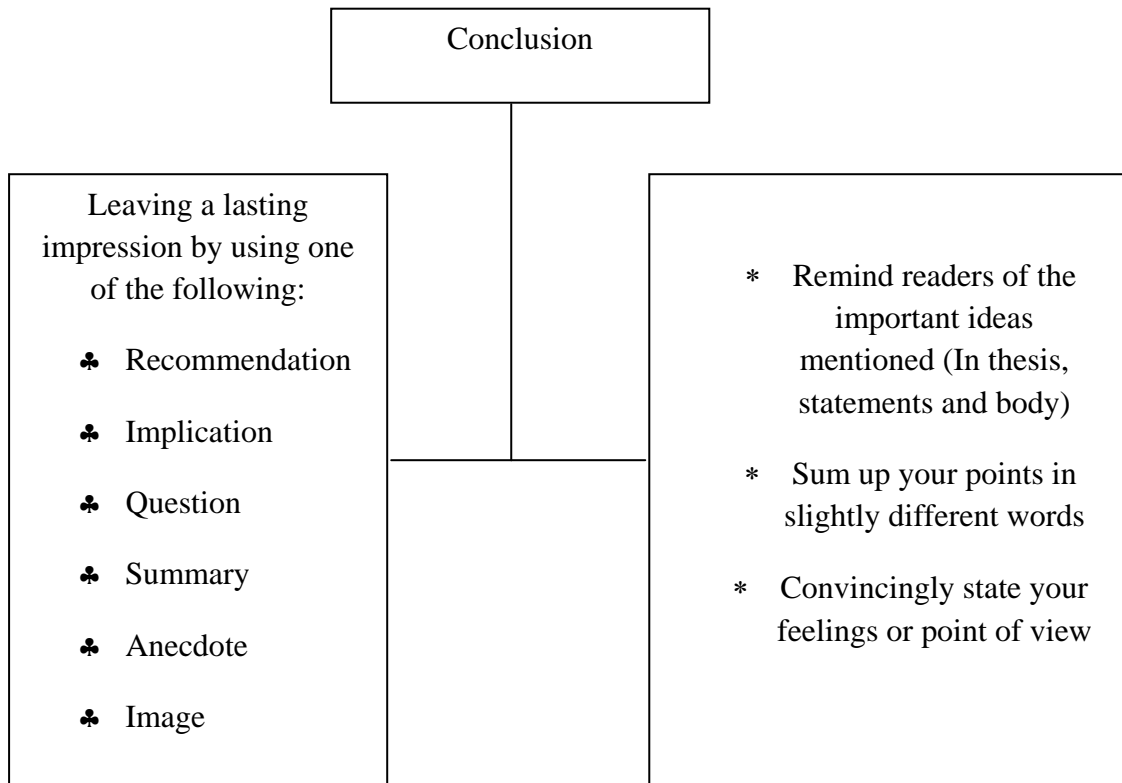| Leaving a lasting impression by using one of the following:	
♣ Recommendation ♣ Implication ♣ Question ♣ Summary ♣ Anecdote ♣ Image	∗ Remind readers of the important ideas mentioned (In thesis, statements and body) ∗ Sum up your points in slightly different words ∗ Convincingly state your feelings or point of view

Table 4.17 Conclusions

(MUET The Complete Text & Guide, 2006)

Notice the use of higher–order thinking skills in Diagram 4.7 General and Specific Functions of Non-linear Texts and the language cues illustrated in Table 4.16 Discourse markers. The use of language in higher–order thinking skills as seen in MUET is a successful combination.

4.6   The Need for Success in Using Language Cues along with Higher-order Thinking Skills

In order to be successful, students will need time to find out, read and to come up with their own cues and revise it and then to think and rethink on their own. In order to do this, they need to be exposed to a variety of texts.

One way of developing success in coming up with one's own language cues is by exposure to a lot of reading texts. For a start, students can select texts which are of interest to them. This will make them read, view and talk and create personal inquiry questions.

In goal-directed group activities, students have a tendency to learn from each other by combining ideas and negotiating meanings. Teamwork skills can be learnt by having activities such as brainstorming, sorting and predicting. It is felt that by having these kind of collaborative learning activities, it helps students to exchange ideas and perspectives, develop a sense and purpose and build a sense of community feeling. This will help in coming up with suitable language cues which will help in the speaking component of MUET.

Learning strategies in the form of demonstration, or instruction in the form of drama or writing, or creating something can be taught to students. Students will have to

come up with suitable language cues which will help them in the Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing components of MUET.

Teachers too play a great role in assisting these students. As the students go through the various texts, teachers can help them in using the appropriate language cues. In fact, in each of the language components in MUET, the teachers can provide sample cues for guidance and encourage students to come up with their own cues. In this way, the students can foretell what is coming up next and give them the necessary confidence.
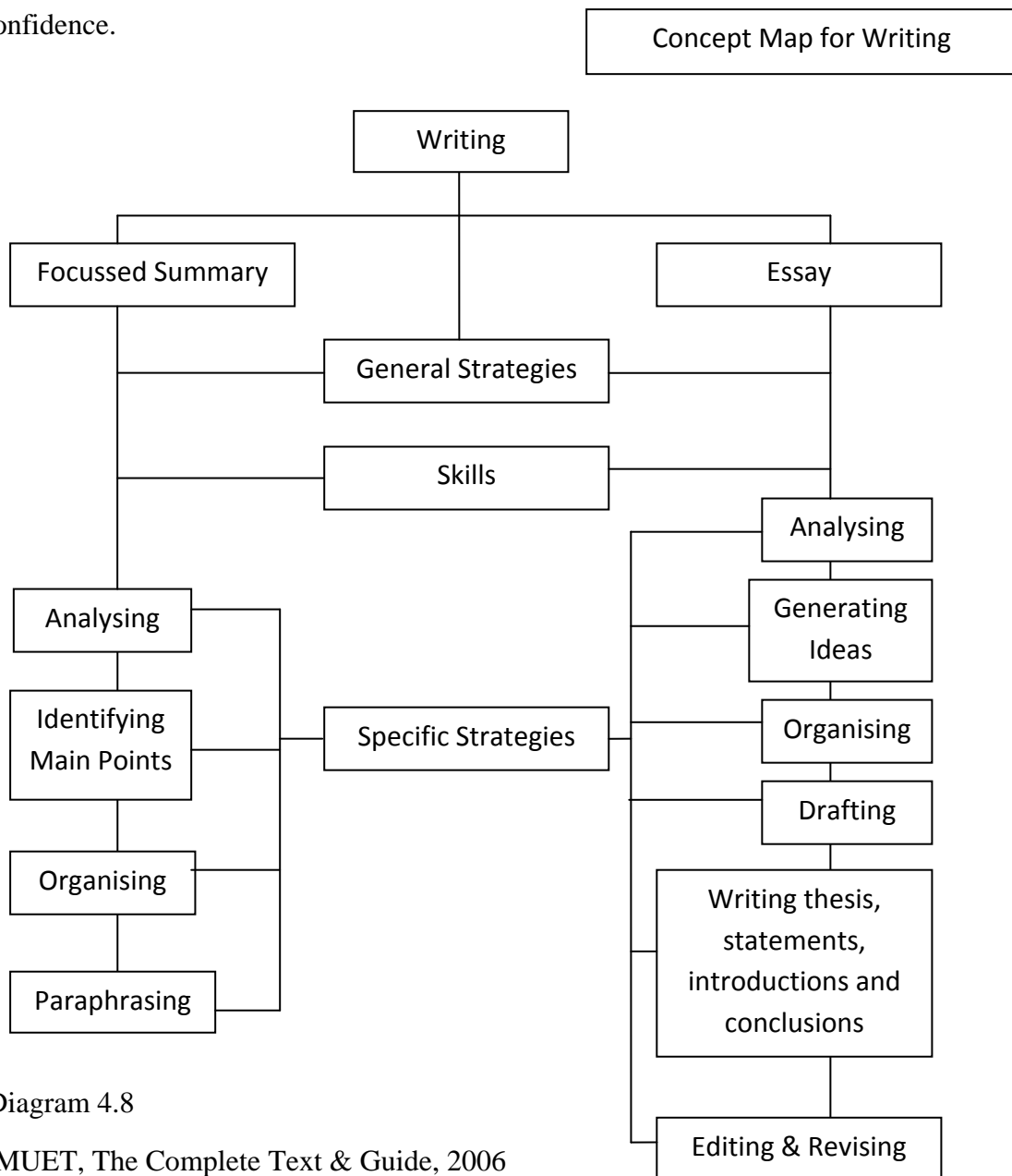
Concept Map for Writing

```
                        Writing

    Focussed Summary                    Essay

              General Strategies

                   Skills
                                        Analysing

                                        Generating
                                        Ideas

    Analysing                           Organising

    Identifying      Specific           Drafting
    Main Points      Strategies
                                        Writing thesis,
    Organising                          statements,
                                        introductions and
                                        conclusions
    Paraphrasing
                                        Editing & Revising
```

Diagram 4.8

(MUET, The Complete Text & Guide, 2006

(slight changes with the latest format done by the researcher herself)

94

4.7 Summary

In this chapter, each language component in MUET was analysed and interpreted separately. Each paper was looked into in depth and questions were analyzed making use of language cues and higher–order thinking skills. A short analysis on the possible success of language cues in higher–order thinking skills was also looked into.