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**Journal of the Materials Development Association**

MATSDA

**In this issue:**

# TEACHING ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES (TESOL) MASTER OF ARTS (FULL TIME)

**SCHOOL OF MODERN LANGUAGES & APPLIED LINGUISTICS**

**UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK**
**OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH**

Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

The University of Limerick undertakes programmes of education and research to doctorate level in the following areas: business, computing, dance, education, engineering, humanities, mathematics, music, social science and science. The extensive modern campus of the University is located on the banks of the River Shannon at the heart of the 640 acre National Technological Park, approximately 3 miles from the centre of Limerick city. The University has excellent educational, cultural, sporting and residential facilities and accommodates some 13,000 students.

## INTRODUCTION

This one-year full-time MA in Teaching English to Speakers Of Other Languages (TESOL) provides teacher education for those wishing to become teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). It is also designed for experienced teachers who wish to update their knowledge and skills. The programme allows teachers to develop and reflect upon their understanding of the various theoretical and practical issues that impact upon the field of language teaching. It places particular emphasis on the notion of informed and critical teaching and the need for teachers to mediate between theory and practice in constructing pedagogies according to specific teaching/learning contexts in line with the most recent approaches in the field. Language technology, and corpus-based approaches to the study of language feature strongly in the programme. A balance is maintained between linguistic content, pedagogic content, and teaching-related research. The programme concludes with a 15,000 word dissertation giving students the opportunity to engage in empirical research, or with an internship allowing students to directly apply the theoretical and practical knowledge they learned on the programme. An alternative graduate diploma exit route is available for those who choose not to do the dissertation or internship.

## SAMPLE MODULES

- Language Systems
- SLA & Classroom Applications
- Research Methodology
- Teaching Practice
- Linguistics for Language Teaching
- Language Pedagogy for ELT
- Technology & Language Studies
- Blended Learning
- Internship

## CAREERS

Students graduating from this course have followed a number of career paths in the past. These include: teaching at various levels (including university) at home and oversees, school management, publishing, materials' development, technical writing, adult education and support, further study at PhD level.

## ENTRANCE REQUIREMNTS

A second or first class honours level primary degree or equivalent professional qualification (Primary degree: level 8 NFQ).

Candidates who do not meet the above degree requirements but have equivalent prior professional experience are welcome to apply for admission. All candidates will be required to attend an interview or online interview.

Applicants' qualification for entry to some of the modules, e.g. Teaching Practice modules, will be ascertained on the basis of prior teaching qualification/s and teaching experience.

International students require an International English language Testing System (IELTS) composite score in the range of 6.5 and not less than 6 in any one component, as for entry to all programmes in the Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences.

## APPLICATIONS

The programme commences in September of each year.
Apply online at: www.ul.ie/gps/
Contact: postgradadmissions@ul.ie
Telephone: +353-(0)61-234377

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Applicants who wish to discuss detailed elements of the programme may contact the Course Director: Elaine Vaughan School of Modern Languages and Applied Linguistics.
Email: Elaine.Vaughan@ul.ie

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For advertising and contributions please contact Freda Mishan, *Folio* Editor, email freda.mishan@ul.ie

www.matsda.org

SNAPSHOT OF MATERIALS IN USE IN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXTS: UZBEKISTAN

# Insights and innovations from AIM

*Diana McCray, Aziza Yunusova & Kamola Muradkasimova*

The Academic English Interactive Mentor (AIM) website is a comprehensive online resource developed as part of the project titled 'Empowering Language Teachers and Learners in Uzbekistan' with the aid of co-production methodology. Co-production is a collaborative approach that involves the active participation of stakeholders, i.e., teachers and learners, in the design, development, and implementation process. We used this methodology to ensure that our final product (the AIM website) is more relevant, effective, and tailored to the needs of its users (see Mazgutova et al., 2022). The AIM website has been successfully trialled and is still being widely used by teachers in Uzbek universities across the country.

The project, supported by the British ESRC and Lancaster University, was aimed to enhance the academic English reading and writing proficiency of university teachers and students in Uzbekistan. The website includes a number of self-contained pages users can access for classroom learning and out of class self-study purposes. The 'Home' and 'About' pages of AIM (see *Screenshots 1* and *2* in the Appendix) serve to introduce the main goals for designing this academic resource. AIM also contains some relevant 'Information for Students' and 'Information for Teachers' focused on possible ways to browse through the website and use its tasks and materials, providing instructors with effective teaching strategies and students with tools for independent learning.

## Needs analysis

The needs analysis was pivotal in the development of AIM, providing essential data that shaped its content. By aligning this interactive tool with the specific needs of Uzbek learners, AIM ensures a relevant and effective learning experience, ultimately enhancing the academic English proficiency of its users.

The needs analysis conducted for AIM followed a structured approach to gather data from English for Academic Purposes (EAP) educators across Uzbekistan. The survey comprised a detailed questionnaire designed to identify the linguistic and educational challenges faced by teachers and students in Uzbek universities. The questions focused on various aspects of academic writing in English, including argumentation and critical thinking, citation and referencing, the use of academic language and others. The respondents were selected from diverse universities across the country to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the national educational landscape. Besides multiple-choice and Likert-scale items, the survey included open-ended questions, allowing teachers to provide in-depth feedback and highlight specific issues not covered by the structured questions. This approach ensured a robust data collection, capturing both the breadth and depth of the educational needs in the region.

## Academic essays

AIM offers a collection of academic essays across various genres including persuasion, problem-solving, and professional writing, accompanied by detailed feedback on ideas development, structure, academic style, language accuracy and appropriacy. By addressing specific linguistic and educational needs identified through a comprehensive survey of EAP teachers, AIM ensures its resources are tailored to meet real-world academic challenges.

Every essay on the website is presented in two formats, i.e., the *Plain Text Essay* and the *Annotated Essay* (see *Screenshots 3* and *4* in the Appendix). The former contains the unmodified version of an assignment written by a student, which teachers could either 1) adopt as an online resource, inviting students to read the text on their tablets or laptops or 2) prepare a paper-based version of the essay and ask students to read it thoroughly and brainstorm possible strengths and weaknesses that they might have observed when reading the essay critically. All essays are supplemented with a list of 'Strengths and Weaknesses' (on the left-hand side of the essay) on various aspects of academic writing and 'Activities' (on the right-hand side of the essay) that could be either completed in class or as part of self-study.

The Annotated Essay version (see *Screenshots 5 and 6* in the Appendix) includes colour-coded comments focused on several aspects including ideas development, academic style, macrostructure, source use, lexical appropriacy, grammatical accuracy, spelling accuracy and punctuation accuracy. Teachers in Uzbek universities have used the annotated essays to facilitate a range of interactive activities in their academic writing classes.

One of these activities is the 'Annotation Matching Game', in which the teacher provides students with the plain text essay on one handout and annotations on several aspects of the essay on the other. Students are expected to match the annotations to the relevant essay sections and encouraged to provide the rationale behind each annotation.

Another activity suggested by teachers is 'Writing Workshops', in which the teacher divides the annotated essay into sections and has students in groups rewrite sections of the essay applying the feedback from the annotations. Analysing errors and identifying their sources seems to be an effective method for eliminating these errors in student essays.

The 'Annotations Creation Exercise' has also been increasingly popular in Uzbek classrooms. Students are expected to annotate the essay prior to comparing their own annotations with the ones provided on the website. This exercise helps students identify key aspects of academic writing as well as common problems.

Working with annotated texts and focusing on different aspects of writing could be particularly helpful during peer review sessions, in which students exchange their essays with classmates and use annotations as guidelines to provide feedback to each other.

## Common problems

Another component of the AIM website particularly valued and widely used by the teachers in Uzbek universities is *Common Problems*. This section highlights frequent issues encountered in students' writing, offering precise and clear examples as well as practical solutions. A section on *Common Problems* has been integrated into the website (see *Screenshot 7* in the Appendix) to enhance learning and teaching as well as provide insightful guidance on avoiding common errors. This website component has been used in academic writing classes to address and mitigate learners' writing challenges.

Teachers have been using *Common Problems* as a helpful feedback resource incorporating suggestions from AIM into their written response to students' essays. Illustrations from the website have been adopted to highlight specific errors made by Uzbek learners of academic English. If a student misuses

citation and referencing, for example, they could be directed to a relevant subsection of *Common Problems* on the AIM website.

Interactive Quizzes have been designed by Uzbek teachers based on the *Common Problems* presented on the website. For instance, after teaching a class with a focus on run-on sentences, a quiz could be used for reinforcement purposes, inviting students to restructure syntactically confusing sentences. Quizzes of varying difficulty levels can be developed by teachers to cater to different student abilities and needs.

Students might also be invited to use ideas from *Common Problems* to review their own written work prior to final submission. This encouragement of self-review has been considered particularly useful for self-editing purposes and has helped students to foster their independent learning.

## Links

The *Links* component of the website (see *Screenshot 8* in the Appendix) contains a series of valuable online resources designed by material writers and researchers in the area of academic writing to support teachers and students. This section includes a brief and clear description of the content and focus of each academic website supplemented by the actual link to the resource. To illustrate, teachers in Uzbek universities have found the links to Using English for Academic Purposes for Students in Higher Education (UEfAP) (*https://www.uefap.org/*) and the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) (*https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/*) particularly interesting and relevant for their students.

The materials cited in the *Links* section of AIM could be used productively during peer review sessions. Students could apply these materials as guides to review and provide feedback on each other's essays, enhancing their own and their peers' academic writing skills.

Teachers in Uzbekistan have also been using *Links* successfully for writing workshop sessions. Learners in small groups are assigned to focus on one specific challenging aspect of academic writing, such as building an argument, establishing coherence or constructing a thesis statement. Each group is asked to browse through the *Links* page of AIM, identify useful academic resources and create a presentation synthesising ideas from several websites. This is another opportunity for teachers to create a supportive environment in the writing classroom.

On the whole, AIM remains a valuable resource for students and teachers, offering a range of information and tasks to enhance academic writing skills. By integrating these materials into their learning and teaching routines, the users of the website can significantly improve their writing skills and academic performance. As reflected

by one of the teachers in Uzbekistan:

> *I addressed the website and faced so many useful materials for my classes. The variety of activities, authentic materials and theoretical basis for methodology in the website are very informative and helpful for my course. Students found the activities effective, creative and interesting and visited the subscribed website as a source for teaching and learning foreign languages. The website became great support and source for me to enrich materials, plan effective lesson and conduct productive teaching with eager students in motivated atmosphere.*

## References

AIM (2024). Academic English Interactive Mentor. Available at: *https://aeim.co.uk* (Accessed 1 July 2024).

Gillett, A. (n.d.). *Using English for Academic Purposes: A guide for students in higher education.* Available at: *https://www.uefap.org/* (Accessed 16 July 2024).

Mazgutova, D., Brunfaut, T., Muradkasimova, K., Khodjieva, R., Qobilova, G., & Yunusova, A. (2022). Evaluating co-production as a guiding philosophy for EAP teacher training course development. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 57. *https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2022.101098*

Purdue Online Writing Lab. (n.d.). *Purdue OWL.* Available at: *https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/* (Accessed 16 July 2024).

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**Kamola Muradkasimova** *is a Lecturer and teacher trainer at the Uzbekistan State University of World Languages. She has a PhD in Linguistics and her main area of investigation is Language Testing and Assessment (Language teacher assessment literacy). Kamola has publications in Journal of EAP, Folio, Asian Journal of Research, and International Journal of Humanities and Natural Sciences.*

## Appendix
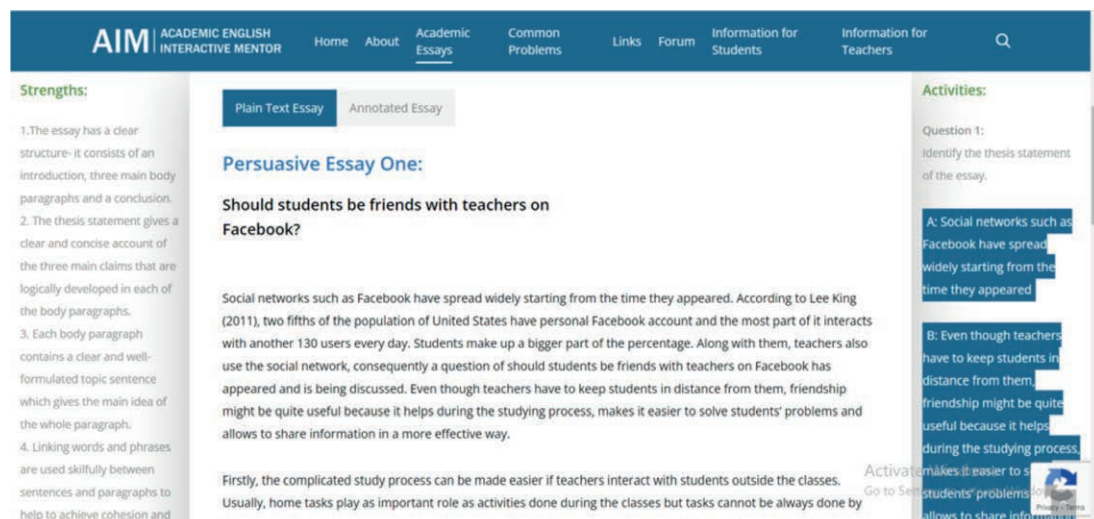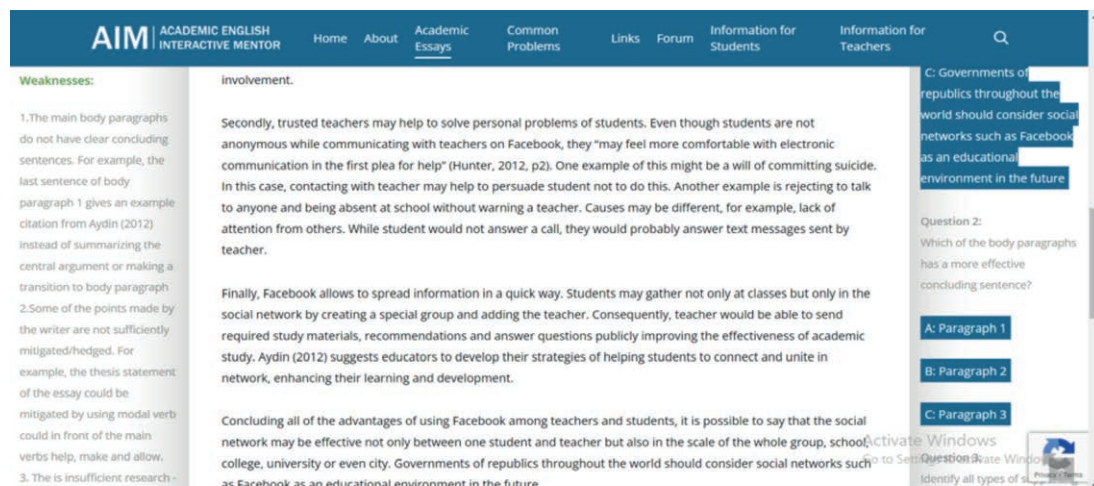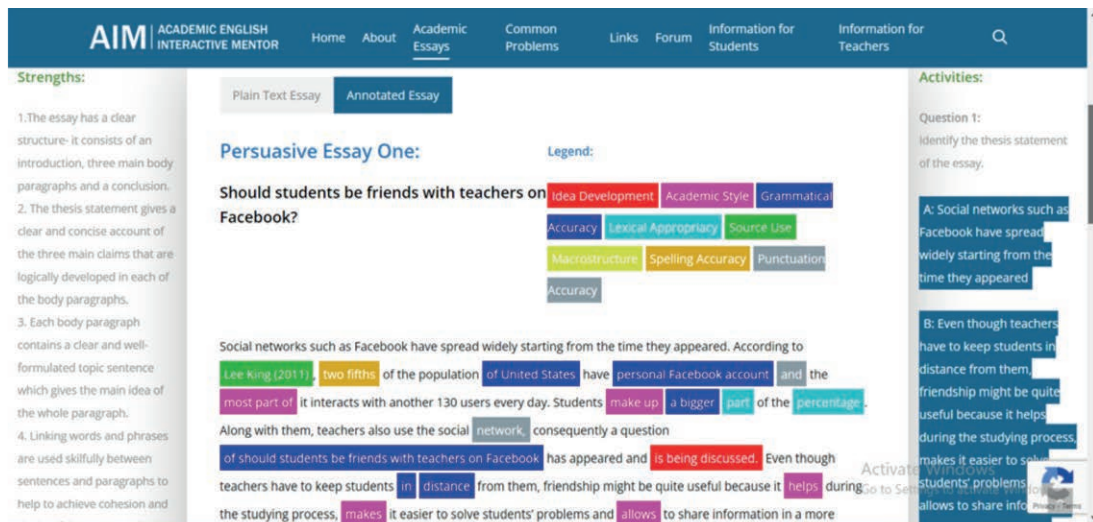


**Screenshot 1:** AIM Home page
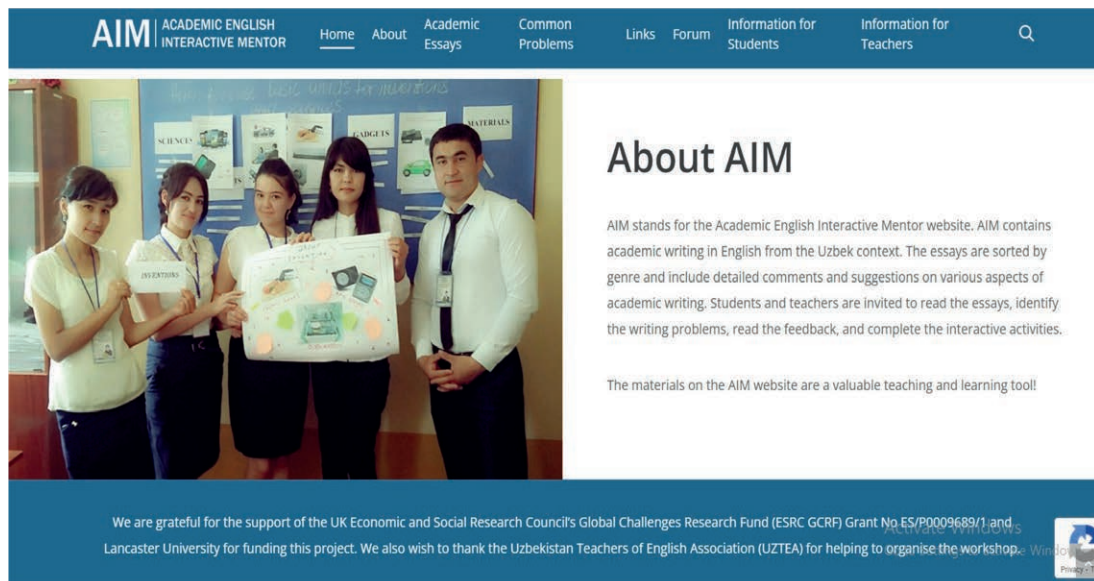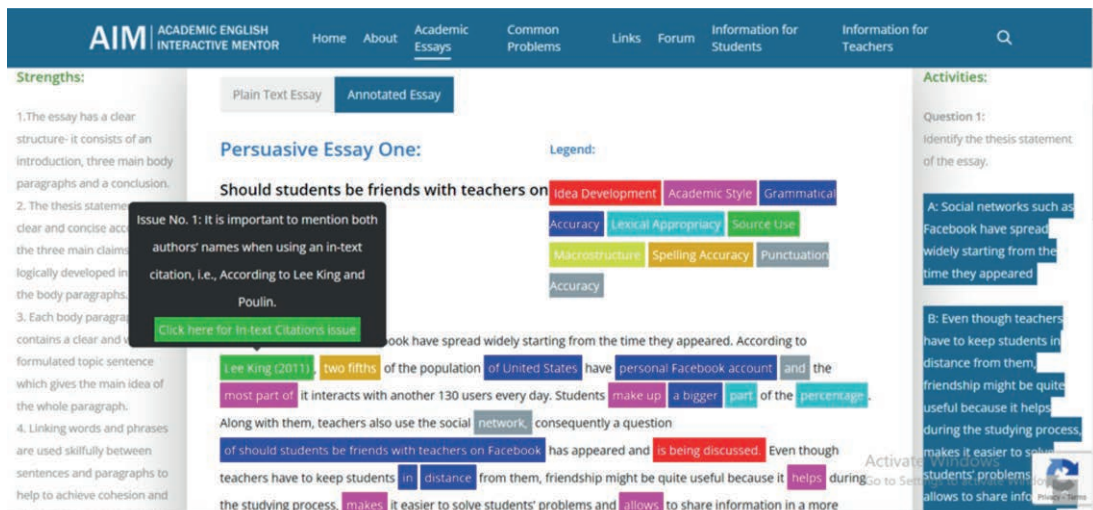
**Screenshot 2:** AIM About page

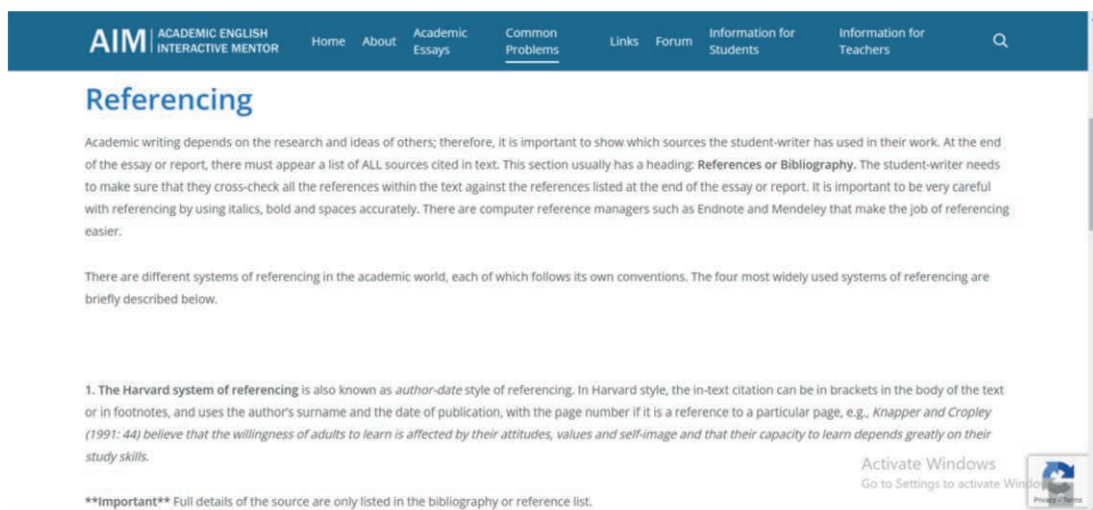**Screenshot 3:** AIM Academic Essays page (Plain Text Essay)

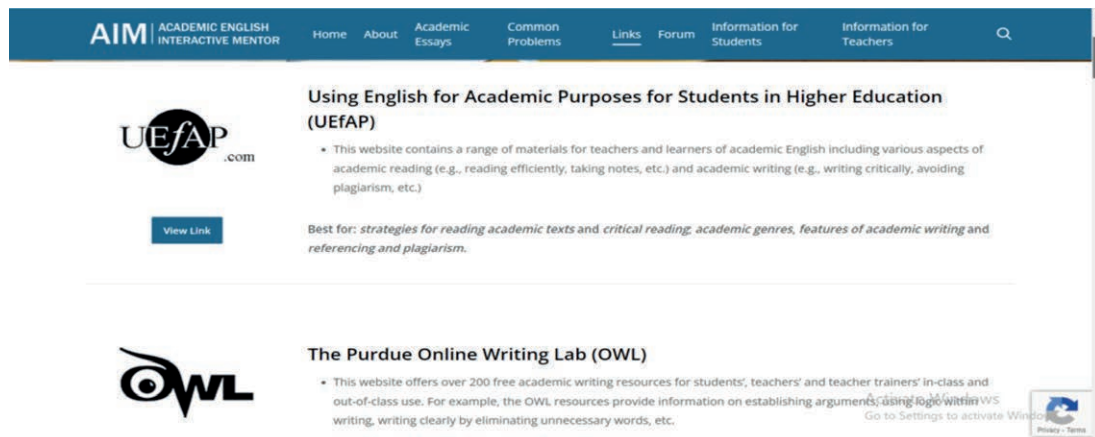**Screenshot 4:** AIM Academic Essays page (Plain Text Essay)

**Screenshot 5:** AIM Academic Essays page (Annotated Essay)



**Screenshot 6:** AIM Academic Essays page (Annotated Essay)



**Screenshot 7:** AIM Common Problems page

**Screenshot 8:** AIM Links page

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