

Autobiography and Statement of Purpose

0. Differences between the two

1. Autobiography: Components?

- ◆ Questions to think about
- ◆ Opening: Interesting and to the point;
- ◆ conclusion: summary needed.
- ◆ not a life story!
- ◆ story-telling **skills**

2. Statement of Purpose:

- Components & Questions to think about
- Where's the beef? Examples
- Things to Consider

Tone & Attitude

- ◆ Attitude: Positive (See five tips for Positive Writing)
- ◆ Tone: Enthusiastic (but not too passionate or flattering)
- ◆ Wording: personalized business/academic writing (straightforward & specific)

Tips for Success

Factors for Failure

Employers look for

- ◆ Unique and **specific** job experiences
- ◆ Descriptions of what you've learned from them
- ◆ Social welfare work described well
- ◆ Passion for & continued efforts in the field (“going an extra mile)
- ◆ **Variety** of skills needed
- ◆ **Knowledge of the organization**
- ◆ **Clear structure**

Employers dislike

- ◆ **Bad** grammar & spelling mistakes
- ◆ **Wrong** company names
- ◆ **No understanding** of the job/school one applies to or no training in the fields
- ◆ **Brief or vague** description that does not make one stand out

Differences and Similarities between the two

- ◆ Autobiography – for job application, more general account
- ◆ SOP – for school application, more academic
- ◆ But both needs:
 - 1) **distinctness;**
 - 2) **specificity (don't not use empty words or exaggerate!!!);**
 - 3) **substance**

Chinese Autobiography?

- ◆ 1.身世及出生地點
- 2.家庭狀況(包括親屬教育程度、職業及經際狀況)
- 3.幼年生活的回顧(敘述最愉快和最痛苦事情)
- 4.求學經過及感想
- 5.服務經過及心得
- 6.個人交往情形及觀感
- 7.最敬仰之人物(包括偉人、師長、親友等)
- 8.自我批評(性情、志趣、嗜好、專長、宗教信仰等)
- 9.將來之志願及抱負
- 10.其他自述 <http://www.1111.com.tw/homefolder/ejobe3.asp>

Autobiography: Questions to think about first

- ◆ What's special, unique, distinctive, and/or impressive about **you (personality, skills) or your life story (obstacles, special experience)**?
- ◆ What have you learned in **the courses** (English, linguistics, tesol, critical thinking, cultural differences, (leadership or managerial skills, for example) and in the **extra-curricular activities** of your **college years**, and how has that work contributed to your growth?
- ◆ When did you **become interested in this field** and what have you learned about it?
- ◆ What are your **career goals**?

Autobiography: opening

- ◆ **Interesting and to the point.**
- ◆ e.g. “My name is . . . I was born” Is this necessary?
- ◆ **Alternative?** My friends usually call me Kate. I like it, because it sounds more mature than Katie and more determinate, efficient and resolute than Katherine.

Opening (2): to the point, suggesting the structure (applying for 國 貿人員、業務助理)

- ◆ I am now a senior in English Department and a minor of Business Management in Fu Jen Catholic University. The reason I choose English as my major is that I have always been interested in English since I first learned it. In addition, English is the international language which could be a beneficial tool for me in my future life. Being an English major is just what I want. However, **merely equipping the tool is not enough.** I need to gain more knowledge about the field of my interested future career which is about international trading. Therefore, I decided to become a minor in Business Management Department.

Opening (2): Revision (applying for 國貿人員、業務助理)

. When seeing my broad smile, people tend to get the impression that I am outspoken and organized. What they can't tell at first glance is that I am also fluent in English and resolute in working on my goals. **How can I not be fluent** when I have an interest in English for my whole life and study in a Department which requires speaking in English in all the classes and encouraging students to do so also outside of class? **With all the heavy work load in the English Department, I took a minor in Business Management Department and got involved in organizing many department activities.** Why? Working in the field of international trade is my career goal.

What follows



Opening (2): to the point, suggesting the structure (applying for 國 貿人員、業務助理)

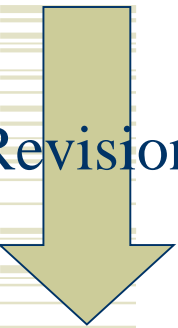
What follows:

- ◆ What she learned in the English department and Business Management; (Don't just list the course titles)
- ◆ 2. **The management and interpersonal skills** she acquired from extra-curricular activities and part-time job.

Autobiography: conclusion applying for 國貿人員、業務助理

- ◆ With the knowledge I acquired in the four-year training in both English and Business Management Departments, and the skills I learned from the extracurricular activities and my working experiences, I believe now I am prepared to enter the field of international trade. I believe the working opportunity you offer **would be an excellent chance for me to put what I learned into practice.**

Revision



Autobiography: conclusion

applying for 國貿人員、業務助理

- ◆ **What next, after** gaining the knowledge I acquired in the four-year training in both English and Business Management Departments, and improving the skills of management and interaction in the extracurricular activities and my working experiences? Applying for a job like what you offer, definitely! This job, I believe, will be **an excellent chance** for me to put what I learned into practice and **learn even more** practical knowledge about international trade.

Revision





Autobiography

2. Not a life story!

- No need to start with the moment you decided your direction unless it does show your strength. If you do, make it short and don't just focus on that singular event.
- Remember to focus on and specify your strengths and preparation.

Not a life story! Example.

Job: document secretary in charge of translation, editing and proofreading.

It was two long hours for a bunch of young learners of age ten to twelve who had no experience of English before. They watched their foreign teacher talking in a language that they had no idea of at all. . . . Two hours passed, parents took the confused learners home. However, not all of them felt it was two long hours. A girl told her mother that she wished the class would be longer. To her mother's surprise, she loved the class and wanted to learn more.

This is the scene that kept coming back to my mind as I grew up. I, the little girl, was attracted to the language

Not a life story! Example.

Job: document secretary in 留學公司

What more to include:

- What computer skills?
- What filing and editing work you did.
- Experience of studying abroad.
- Understanding of foreign cultures.

Showing of strength in a story-telling mode

- ◆ “Liz, you have the making for being a secretary!”
After I transferred to Fu Jen Catholic University, I have been told about this several times because I usually play the role as a reminder among classmates. **Disliking forgetting things in daily life, I always have the habit of writing things down.** Whenever I review my own schedule, I habitually remind the classmates who have to meet the same deadlines as I do.

Showing of strength in a story-telling mode (2)

- ◆ One of my foreign friends argued about “pledge” with me once. He could never persuade me to believe in pledge. I do not believe in vows because a lot of people can hardly keep their words. I consider myself to be the kind of person who would rather take actions than making empty or grand promises. Before I can be sure about how my own limit and ability, I prefer doing things silently.

Statement of Purpose: Components

- ◆ 1. *Your purpose in graduate study*
- ◆ 2. *Future Objectives: The area of study in which you wish to specialize.*
- ◆ 3. *Future Goals: Your future use of your graduate study.*
- ◆ 4. *Past Preparation: Your special preparation and fitness for study in the field.*
- ◆ 5. *Special Mentions: Any problems or inconsistencies in your records or scores, or any special conditions that are not revealed elsewhere.*

SOP: Questions to think about

- ◆ Your goal: **When** did you become interested in this field and **what** have you learned about it (and about yourself) that has further stimulated your interest and reinforced your conviction that you are well suited to this field?
- ◆ Your education: **How** have you learned about this field--through classes, readings, seminars, work or other experiences?
(explanation: gaps or discrepancies in your academic record or experience)
- ◆ Your **experience, personal characteristics & career goals?**

Statement of Purpose: Where's the beef?

- ◆ Job experience is good, especially with a pertinent analysis of the skills and issues involved.
- ◆ **But you have to include 1) your academic training; 2) a study plan (possibly including the courses you'd like to take).**
- ◆ e.g. Hotel management –training of: English abilities; understanding of various cultures.
- ◆ **Your application should emerge as the logical conclusion to your story.** (http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/pw/p_perstate.html)

SOP for TEFL: Introduction

"Try to guess again!" I urged Jane in a vocabulary-matching exercise. Looking upon what she had written down, a gentle satisfaction lit up my face. She then asked, "But, can't we use *slaughter* instead of *depopulate* in this sentence: The Hong Kong government passed a measure last month to slaughter chickens, in an effort to stave off chicken flu?" I replied, "Of course, you can. Actually, *depopulate* is a euphemism for a blunter word, like slaughter."

SOP for TEFL: Introduction (2)

Euphemism, what's that---? Um, it's a kind of discourse strategy, whose function is to make something seem less unpleasant. Language has a magical power; to me, it's the most complex and fascinating ability God gave to humankind. I discovered my interest in learning foreign languages at junior college, thoroughly enjoying diverse courses in language study. Being aware of my additional aptitude for education, based upon my working experience, I came up with the goal of becoming an English teacher.

SOP for TEFL : Beef – your study plan

First of all, different factors, like age, gender, environment, aptitude, and learning strategies determine the success of language acquisition. Having gained an overview of research based upon child language and second language acquisition in university I would like to unearth additional theory and undertake research to derive **a more realistic picture of things**. Profound understanding of the **learning difficulties** in foreign language acquisition, and the **similarities and differences between L1 and L2 development**, will facilitate anticipating obstacles students confront, the causes of errors and their solution.

SOP for TEFL: Beef – your study plan (2)

- . . . Thirdly, English is the global lingua franca and, nowadays, more and more countries advocate bilingual education. Concentrating on relevant issues in bilingualism, I wish to search for explanations to the following questions that I have had for a long time.

SOP: Beef – your study plan (3)

Is there an optimal age for starting second language acquisition? To what extent, is second language acquisition similar to first language acquisition in terms of the underlying acquisition process and facilitative factors? Can learners really develop competence in communicating and reading in a second language? How is performance in a first language facilitated or impeded by the acquisition of a second language? In addition, perhaps because I was taught English in junior high school using a grammar-translation approach, I particularly notice the role of grammar in teaching. The pedagogy of grammar is one topic I want to learn in my postgraduate study.

SOP for LIT.: Beef – your academic experience (4)

... This unpleasant experience, of which I am still extremely sorry, triggered my interest in gender as a topic in literary studies.

Intriguingly, stereotypes categorize and simplify gender; however, among a lot of these seemingly *strict* stereotypical gender frameworks, many identities are actually undefinable. It is this gray zone in gender that inspired the **idea of my research project**: “Gay Theatres and Cultural Practice: A Comparative Study of *Angels in America* and *Love Homosexual in Chinese*,” which not only won me a 1999-2000 National Science Council Research Grant but also concreted my conviction of studying gender in literature

SOP for LIT: Beef – your knowledge

Although I chose English as my major in the university, which is another interest of mine, along these years I have been actively reading books on media and communication. Gradually I realized the interrelationship of advertisement (as tools) and its sales tactics under the surface (embodying its central principal of selling); the complex partnership between organizations and media, and even the current trend of the global enterprises' trying to impress consumers by building an entire brand image rather than depending on singular advertising project for a particular product.

SOP: Expressions to Avoid

- ◆ **Avoid USING ADJ. WITHOUT EXPLANATION** Significant, Invaluable, appealing to me, interesting, challenging, enjoyable, I can contribute, helping people, meant a lot to me, etc.

(<http://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/gcallaghan/graduate/winningstatement.htm>)

SOP: Things to Consider

- ◆ Read what questions are asked first. Best to address different programs' strengths differently.
- ◆ Keep within the page no. limit?
- ◆ Do some research before you start.
- ◆ You are not committed to pursuing the specific direction you propose in the Statement.

Reference

- ◆ **WRITING A WINNING STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

<http://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/gcallaghan/graduate/winningstatement.htm>

- ◆ **Writing the Personal Statement**

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/pw/p_perstate.html