

2 Repeating or restating key words

Repeating or restating the important words in a paragraph binds the sentences together and keeps the paragraph's topic uppermost in readers' minds. In the next example, notice how the circled words relate the sentences and stress the important ideas of the paragraph:

Having listened to both **Chinese** and **English**, I also tend to be suspicious of any **comparisons** between the two **languages**. Typically, one **language**—that of the person doing the **comparing**—is often used as the standard, the benchmark for a logical form of expression. And so the **language** being **compared** is always in danger of being judged deficient or superfluous, simplistic or unnecessarily complex, melodious or cacophonous. **English** speakers point out that **Chinese** is **extremely difficult** because it relies on variations in tone barely discernible to the human ear. By the same token, **Chinese** speakers tell me **English** is **extremely difficult** because it is inconsistent, a language of too many broken rules, of Mickey Mice and Donald Ducks.

—Amy Tan, “The Language of Discretion”

This paragraph links sentences through their structure, too, because the subject of each one picks up on key words used earlier:

Sentence 1: Having listened to both **Chinese** and **English**, I tend to be suspicious of any comparisons between the two **languages**.

Sentence 2: Typically, one **language** . . .

Sentence 3: And so the **language** . . .

Sentence 4: **English speakers** . . .

Sentence 5: **Chinese speakers** . . .

In many incoherent paragraphs, such as the one on mummification on page 78, each sentence subject introduces a topic new to the paragraph so that readers have trouble following the thread. (See pp. 386–87 for more on linking sentences through their subjects.)