



ACADEMIC WRITING COURSE AUTUMN 2014
SESSION 5 (selected activities)



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- 1. PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF WRITING DISCUSSIONS/CONCLUSIONS**
- 2. PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE – FOCUS ON UNITY AND COHESION**

In the session the following areas will be covered:

- follow-up on introduction writing – practical aspects, skeleton writing
- summary of the general conventions governing paragraphs
- example analysis, error correction: reflection on student writing

E-learning:

<https://is.muni.cz/auth/el/1411/podzim2014/DSAJz01/index.qwarp>

DISCUSSION SECTIONS OF RESEARCH ARTICLES

Exercise 1: Read the following statements – do you agree or disagree with them?

- a. Discussion sections should be short and to the point. It is better to let Results sections speak largely for themselves.
- b. A long Discussion section shows that the author or authors are able to reflect intelligently on what was found.
- c. A long Discussion is just an opportunity for authors to promote their own research and thus themselves.
- d. Conclusions are rarely necessary. Readers can draw their own conclusions. If readers want a summary, they can always read the abstract.
- e. In these days of rapidly increasing numbers of published research papers, Conclusions are valuable because they can highlight the “take home message” of the study.
- f. There is no point in trying to decide whether short or long Discussion sections in a particular field are better. It all depends on the piece of research being reported. Some research projects will need an extensive Discussion section; others will not.

Hedging

It is often believed that academic writing, particularly scientific writing, is factual, simply to convey facts and information. However it is now recognised that an important feature of academic writing is the concept of cautious language, often called "hedging" or "vague language". In other words, it is necessary to make decisions about your stance on a particular subject, or the strength of the claims you are making. Different subjects prefer to do this in different ways.

Language used in hedging:

Introductory verbs:	e.g. seem, tend, look like, appear to be, think, believe, doubt, be sure, indicate, suggest
Certain lexical verbs:	e.g. believe, assume, suggest
Certain modal verbs:	e.g. will, must, would, may, might, could
Adverbs of frequency:	e.g. often, sometimes, usually
Modal adverbs:	e.g. certainly, definitely, clearly, probably, possibly, perhaps, conceivably,
Modal adjectives:	e.g. certain, definite, clear, probable, possible
Modal nouns:	e.g. assumption, possibility, probability
That clauses:	e.g. It could be the case that ... e.g. It might be suggested that ... e.g. There is every hope that ...
To-clause + adjective:	e.g. It may be possible to obtain ... e.g. It is important to develop ... e.g. It is useful to study ...

Exercise 2: Identify the hedging expressions in the following sentences.

1. There is no difficulty in explaining how a structure such as an eye or a feather contributes to survival and reproduction; the difficulty is in thinking of a series of steps by which it could have arisen.
2. For example, it is possible to see that in January this person weighed 60.8 kg for eight days,
3. For example, it may be necessary for the spider to leave the branch on which it is standing, climb up the stem, and walk out along another branch.
4. *Escherichia coli*, when found in conjunction with urethritis, often indicate infection higher in the uro-genital tract.
5. There is experimental work to show that a week or ten days may not be long enough and a fortnight to three weeks is probably the best theoretical period.
6. Conceivably, different forms, changing at different rates and showing contrasting combinations of characteristics, were present in different areas.
7. One possibility is that generalized latent inhibition is likely to be weaker than that produced by pre-exposure to the CS itself and thus is more likely to be susceptible to the effect of the long interval.
8. For our present purpose, it is useful to distinguish two kinds of chemical reaction, according to whether the reaction releases energy or requires it.
9. It appears to establish three categories: the first contains wordings generally agreed to be acceptable, the second wordings which appear to have been at some time problematic but are now acceptable, and the third wordings which remain inadmissible.

WHAT IS A PARAGRAPH?

A paragraph is the basic unit of composition. It consists of a group of related sentences that develop one main idea. It has three main parts; an introduction, a body of the paragraph and a conclusion. In other words, it has a topic sentence, a few supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence. Written work is divided into paragraphs in a meaningful way. The topic of one paragraph should follow logically from the topic of the last paragraph and should lead on to the topic of the next paragraph. The paragraphs have different functions, but all *develop* an idea - that is, they *add information, explanation, examples and illustrations* to the central theme or idea until the theme is fully developed.

What is **unity** in a paragraph?

Unity in a paragraph means that the entire paragraph should focus on one single idea. The supporting details should explain the main idea. The concluding sentence should end the paragraph with the same idea. Thus, a unified paragraph presents a thought, supports it with adequate details and completes it with a conclusion.

What is **coherence** in a paragraph?

Coherence means **establishing a relationship between the ideas** presented in a paragraph. It brings in the arrangement of the ideas which are introduced either in the chronological order or in the order of importance. Besides, transitions that **compare, contrast, illustrate, add or show cause and effect** build logical bridges. The ideas, thus expressed in the paragraph, flow smoothly from one to the other in a logical sequence. This helps the reader to understand the paragraph.

THE HUMAN BODY

(1) The human body is a wonderful piece of work that nature has created. (2) It is not beautiful like the body of a butterfly or peacock but it is shaped practically. (3) It can do many types of work which other animals cannot. (4) It is not strong like the body of a tiger. (5) But in place of physical strength it has a big and sharp brain. (6) By using this brain the human physique has been able to overcome many of its limitations. (7) By sitting in an aeroplane it flies faster than a kite, by riding a motorcycle it travels faster than a leopard, and by firing a machine gun it fights much better than a tiger. (8) In spite of all this, the human body suffers from many diseases because it has a weakness for habits such as smoking, drinking and overeating. (9) When it is healthy the body can give great pleasure but when it is sick it can cause great pain. (10) The wise man would always keep his body fit because a healthy mind can work only in a healthy body.

The **first sentence** states the main idea of the paragraph and claims the superiority of the human body over the rest of the creation. It enables the reader to expect the following ideas in the paragraph that explain and illustrate the qualities and attributes of the human body.

The **second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh** sentences compare, contrast, elucidate and justify the main idea or topic sentence. They establish the main theme with logical explanations and transitions. They create a graphic picture in the minds of the reader with suitable and appropriate language expressions. In brief, they develop the main idea of the paragraph.

The **eighth and the ninth** sentences interpret and analyze the limitations of the human body and prove the strength of the topic sentence. They, further, lead the main idea into a concluding thought.

Finally, the **tenth** sentence concludes with the idea that the human body should be well preserved for a proper functioning of the system and that a healthy mind can work only in a healthy body.

PRACTICE

Topic sentence: overview

This main idea of each paragraph is usually expressed somewhere in the paragraph by one sentence (the main or topic sentence). This sentence is usually found at the beginning of the paragraph, but can come at the end or even in the middle of the paragraph. The rest of the paragraph generally expands the theme contained in the main sentence, and each idea round the main theme is supported by information and evidence (in the form of illustrations and examples), and by argument.

Example A

<p>Topic sentence (expressing the “problem”)</p> <p>Expansion of point</p> <p>Evidence/ support</p> <p><u>Closing sentence</u> (e.g. solution)</p>	<p>The emphasis of the criminal justice system has until recently been on the battle between the offender/defendant and the state/prosecutor and not the actual harm experienced by the victim. <i>In Fact victims have had minimal participation in the criminal justice process; their role being primarily to provide information to the state prosecutor with no involvement in prosecution and sentencing.</i> McShane and Williams (1992, p. 260) contend that “victim neglect is not simply a result of indifference, it is a logical extension of a legal system which defines crime as an offence against the state”. <u>They argue that this neglect can be remedied by training of personnel within the criminal justice system and through victim support services.</u></p>
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Example B

<p>Topic sentence -main idea</p> <p><i>Expansion of point</i></p> <p><u>Comment</u></p>	<p>The research on anxiety suggests that like self-esteem, anxiety can be experienced at various levels (Oxford 1999). <i>At the deepest or global level, trait anxiety is a more permanent predisposition to be anxious. Some people are predictably and generally anxious about many things. At a more momentary, or situational level, state anxiety is experienced in relation to some particular event or act.</i> <u>As we learned in the case of self-esteem, then, it is important in a classroom for a teacher to try to determine whether a student’s anxiety stems from a more global trait or whether it comes from a particular situation at the moment.</u></p>
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Exercise 4: Identify the topic sentences in A and B. In C choose the best topic sentence.

A The population as a whole was unevenly distributed. The north was particularly thinly settled and the east densely populated, but even in counties like Warwickshire where there were substantial populations, some woodland areas were sparsely peopled. There was already relatively dense settlement in the prime arable areas of the country like Norfolk, Suffolk and Leicestershire. Modern estimates of England's total population, extrapolated from Domesday patterns, vary between 1 and 3 million.

B Atoms of all elements consist of a central nucleus surrounded by a "cloud" containing one or more electrons. The electrons can be thought of as occupying a series of well-defined shells. The behaviour of a particular element depends largely on the number of electrons in its outermost shells. Other factors, such as the total number of electron shells, also play a part in determining behaviour but it is the dominance of the outer electron configuration that underlies the periodic law and justifies the grouping of the elements into groups or families.

C The first is the wear-and-tear hypothesis that suggests the body eventually succumbs to the environmental insults of life. The second is the notion that we have an internal clock which is genetically programmed to run down. Supporters of the wear-and-tear theory maintain that the very practice of breathing causes us to age because inhaled oxygen produces toxic by-products. Advocates of the internal clock theory believe that individual cells are told to stop dividing and thus eventually to die by, for example, hormones produced by the brain or by their own genes.

1. *There are two broad theories concerning what triggers a human's inevitable decline to death.*
2. *Some scientists believe that human contains an "internal time clock" which forces them eventually to die.*
3. *We all must die some day.*
4. *My biology professor gave an interesting lecture Thursday.*

Closing sentence

D When it comes to the arts, there is a clear case for subsidy. The arts have nothing to do with making money. They exist in order to express certain essential truths about human beings by means of new kinds of poetry, music, painting, and so on. However, these new kinds of art may not be popular, and thus there may be little support by the general public for them, and so artists cannot rely on selling their work to provide them with an income. In fact, history shows that many artists have not been properly appreciated while they were alive. For example, Mozart, whose works are so popular nowadays, lived close to poverty for most of his life.

1. *Thus, in order to ensure their survival, it is essential for the arts to be subsidised.*
2. *If he had been subsidised, Mozart would not have been so poor.*
3. *When the arts have to make money, they are no longer fulfilling their true purpose, but instead become a branch of commerce.*

Exercise 5: Look at the following text about Leonardo da Vinci. The first sentence of each paragraph has been removed. Match the numbers with the letters.

The Genius of Leonardo.

1. He was the illegitimate son of a Florentine lawyer and property owner. His artistic bent obviously appeared at an early age for when he was 15 he was apprenticed to the painter Verocchio. In 1472 he was accepted in the painters' guild in Florence, where he remained until 1481.
 2. And among his early drawings were many sketches of mechanical apparatus and weapons, evidence of his interest in, and knowledge of things mechanical.
 3. His artistic achievements in Milan reached their peak with the mural 'The Last Supper' completed in 1497.
 4. In the 1490s he began monumental treatises on painting, architecture, human anatomy and mechanics. He set down his observations on these themes in voluminous notes and sketches, which he would later assemble in his notebooks. There remain of his notebooks a prodigious 7000 pages, all in characteristic 'mirror-writing'.
 5. He then went back to Milan and entered the service of the French King Louis XII. Later he was to work in Rome with Raphael and Michelangelo on designs for the new church of St Peter. In 1516 he settled in France, at Cloux, near Amboise, where he died three years later.
 6. He was no mere theorist advancing fanciful ideas. He was a practical man, who designed things that would work, because he could see how they would work.
 7. There is no evidence that Leonardo actually built the machines and mechanical devices he sketched and described. And in many cases their practical importance remained unrealised and unrealisable for centuries. There was neither the demand for them nor the technology.
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- a. Leonardo returned to Florence in 1499, where he painted that most famous painting 'The Mona Lisa' (1503).
 - b. Between 1482 and 1499 he was employed in the service of the Duke of Milan, to whom he was painter, sculptor, musician and technical adviser on military and engineering matters.
 - c. In whatever subject he studied, Leonardo laid absolute faith in the evidence of his eyes.
 - d. Leonardo da Vinci was born in 1452 in Vinci, a small village in Tuscany.
 - e. And it is in his 'things', his machines, that we are interested in this book.
 - f. By then Leonardo's expertise with paint brush and palette, pen and pencil was already well advanced.
 - g. But his creative energies now were turning more and more to scientific and literary pursuits.

Cohesion within paragraphs

Text cohesion is the way the writing holds together, to make sense. Each sentence should relate to the other sentences in the paragraph.

Exercise 6: Look at the two following paragraphs and decide which of them has a better overall plan.

A)

The ancient Egyptians were masters of preserving dead people's bodies by making mummies of them. Mummies several thousand years old have been discovered nearly intact. The skin, hair, teeth, finger- and toenails, and facial features of the mummies were evident. It is possible to diagnose the diseases they suffered in life such as smallpox, arthritis, and nutritional deficiencies. The process was remarkably effective. Sometimes apparent were the fatal afflictions of the dead people: a middle-aged king died from a blow on the head, and polio killed a child king. Mummification consisted of removing the internal organs, applying natural preservatives inside and out, and then wrapping the body in layers of bandages.

B)

The ancient Egyptians were masters of preserving dead people's bodies by making mummies of them. The process of mummification consisted of removing the internal organs, applying natural preservatives inside and out, and then wrapping the body in layers of bandages. It was a remarkably effective practice. Indeed, mummies several thousand years old have been discovered nearly intact. Their skin, hair, teeth, fingers and toenails, and facial features of the mummies are still evident. Their diseases in life, such as smallpox, arthritis, and nutritional deficiencies, are still diagnosable. Even their fatal afflictions are still apparent: a middle-aged king died from a blow on the head: a child king died from polio.

Cohesion through conjunctions

Conjunction shows meaningful relationships between clauses. It shows how what follows is connected to what has gone before.

*The whole Cabinet agreed that there should be a cut in the amount that the unemployed were receiving; where they disagreed was in whether this should include a cut in the standard rate of benefit. The opposition parties, **however**, were unwilling to accept any programme of economies which did not involve a cut in the standard rate of benefit.*

The word "however" shows that this statement is opposite to the ideas that have come before. Other words used are "for example", "as a consequence of this", "firstly", "furthermore", "in spite of this", etc.

Exercise 7: Identify examples of conjunction in the following texts:

A These two forms of dissent coalesced in the demand for a stronger approach to the Tory nostrum of tariff reform. In addition, trouble threatened from the mercurial figure of Winston Churchill, who had resigned from the Shadow Cabinet in January 1931 in protest at Baldwin's acceptance of eventual self-government for India.

B These two sets of rules, though distinct, must not be looked upon as two co-ordinate and independent systems. On the contrary, the rules of Equity are only a sort of supplement or appendix to the Common Law; they assume its existence but they add something further.

Cohesion through **lexis**: example : this is a way of achieving a cohesive effect by the use of **particular vocabulary items**.

A Patients who repeatedly take overdoses pose considerable management difficulties. The problem-orientated approach is not usually effective with **such patients**. When **a patient** seems to be developing a pattern of chronic repeats, it is recommended that all staff engaged in his or her care meet to reconstruct each attempt in order to determine whether there appears to be a motive common to each act.

B This first example illustrates an impulsive overdose taken by **a woman** who had experienced a recent loss and had been unable to discuss her problems with **her** family. During the relatively short treatment, the therapist helped **the patient** to begin discussing her feelings with her family.

C In each of these cases the basic problem is the same: a will has been made, and in it **a debtor** is left a legacy of *liberatio* from what he owes the testator. The question is, if he has subsequently borrowed more from the testator, up to what point he has been released from his **debts**. It is best to begin with the second case. Here there is a straightforward legacy to **the debtor** of a sum of money and also of the amount of his **debt** to the testator. This is followed by a clause in which there is a general *damnatio* and also a general trust that the legacies in the will be paid. **The debtor** goes on to borrow more money, and the question is whether that is taken to be included in the legacy too. The response is that since the words relate to the past, later **debts** are not included.

Exercise 8: Identify examples of lexical cohesion in the following texts:

A The clamour of complaint about teaching in higher education and, more especially, about teaching methods in universities and technical colleges, serves to direct attention away from the important reorientation which has recently begun. The complaints, of course, are not unjustified. In dealing piece-meal with problems arising from rapidly developing subject matter, many teachers have allowed courses to become over-crowded, or too specialized, or they have presented students with a number of apparently unrelated courses failing to stress common principles. Many, again, have not developed new teaching methods to deal adequately with larger numbers of students, and the new audio-visual techniques tend to remain in the province of relatively few enthusiasts despite their great potential for class and individual teaching.

B When we look closely at a human face we are aware of many expressive details - the lines of the forehead, the wideness of the eyes, the curve of the lips, the jut of the chin. These elements combine to present us with a total facial expression which we use to interpret the mood of our companion. But we all know that people can 'put on a happy face' or deliberately adopt a sad face without feeling either happy or sad. Faces can lie, and sometimes can lie so well that it becomes hard to read the true emotions of their owners. But there is at least one facial signal that cannot easily be 'put on'. It is a small signal, and rather a subtle one, but because it tells the truth it is of special interest. It comes from the pupils and has to do with their size in relation to the amount of light that is falling upon them.