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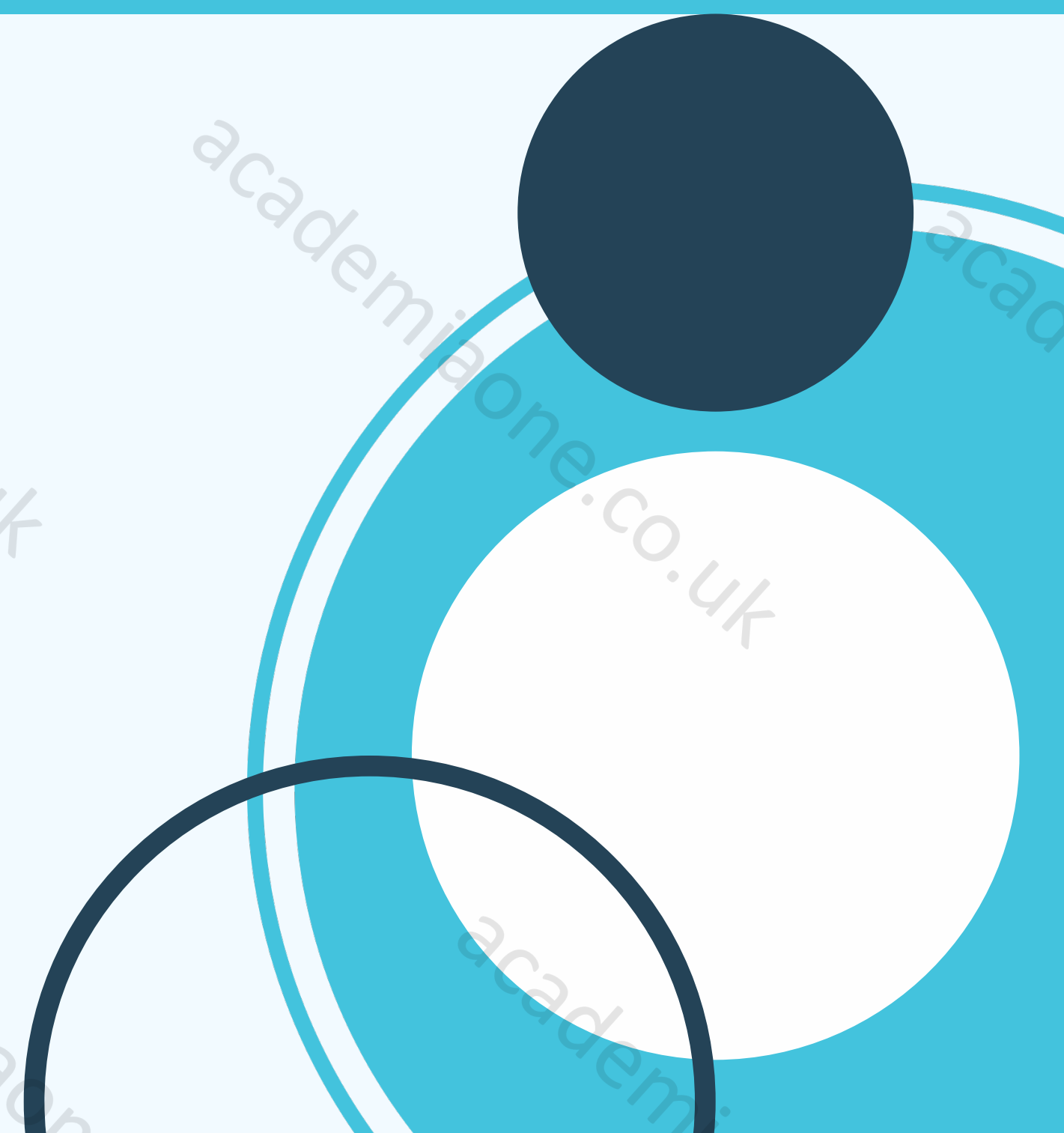


INNOVATION
& ENTERPRISE

ACADEMIAONE

Topic sentences and paragraphing

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IN THIS SEMINAR...

KEY LEARNING OUTCOME: WRITING CLEAR TOPIC SENTENCES AND COHERENT PARAGRAPHS

- group reflections on the home exercise & feedback on examples from you
- theory: common mistakes in writing paragraphs, 4-step paragraph structure example & topic sentences
- Interactive exercises:
 - Paragraph editing using FocusWriter
 - Live marking a few paragraphs in a MA dissertation
- Questions and discussion

Home exercise - topic sentences and paragraphing

Let's share some general comments about the exercise, before looking at examples from you...

- How do you usually approach your paragraph structure? Do you follow any rules of thumb for topic sentences, order of ideas or paragraph length?
- What have you learnt from the exercise?
- Was it challenging to identify the topic sentences in your writing? How about the example provided?
- Did you reorder any sentences in the examples?
- What were the main areas of improvement you identified in your own example and in the example provided?

Your examples – topic sentence restructuring



“In this essay, I will demonstrate the fact that if children should do unpaid care work in developed countries, using data and the result from ethnographic work mainly based on the US, the UK and Australia.”

“In this essay, I will use case studies mainly based on the US, the UK and Australia to demonstrate, discuss and testify under what circumstances children should, or should not work as caregivers for free.”

Your examples – own paragraph

Topic Sentence- Modified

The history of how cancer can be caused by viruses can be traced first to the transmissible avian, sarcoma RNA virus demonstrated by Peyton Rous in 1910 and it eventually led to the discovery of c-src, the first cellular proto-oncogene in 1976. (3,4)

First Structure

Viruses discovered in mammals in the 1930s: Shope papillomavirus that causes keratinous carcinoma from the cottontail rabbit, mouse mammary tumour virus transmitted to young mice in their milk factor, mouse leukaemia virus, mouse polyomavirus led to the search for possible cancers of viral aetiology in humans. (5-9).

Second Structure

The first human tumour virus, Epstein Barr Virus (human herpesvirus 4- HHV4) and its association with Burkitt's Lymphoma was discovered through preparations using cell cultures of the tumour examined under electron microscope in 1965 (10-12).

Third Structure

Hepatitis B Virus was discovered in the 1970s and linked to hepatocellular carcinoma. (13, 14).

Fourth Structure

Also, in the 1970s, HPV was established as the aetiology of Human Papilloma Virus as proposed by Zur Hausen (15-17).

Evidence

The epidemiologic relationship of HPV16 and HPV18 as the aetiology of cervical carcinoma was established in the 1990s. (10,18,19).

Around the same time, a retrovirus from cell lines derived from a cohort of leukaemia cases in Japan was isolated which had homology with human T-cell leukaemia virus type 1 (HTLV-1) as they were named as the new retrovirus. (20-22).

Your examples – own paragraph

Part A

Urban development projects in Korea have multiple tensions among multi-stakeholders. First, decentralisation has led to local governments having increased power in the decision-making process. Thus, in the Songdo development, tensions emerged surrounding the regulation of Songdo between the Incheon city government and the central economic planning department (Shin, Park and Sonn, 2015). Second, there were tensions between the public and private sectors. Previous governments had for decades been used to pursuing state-led developmental policies, which meant that the state was able to fully influence every developmental project. However, as the state's influence began to loosen, the private sector used this advantage to seize control and made an impact on mega-urban development where the private sector could contribute massively because of their capital funds. In short, the emergence of multiple stakeholders in the development of Songdo created novel issues that the state had not previously experienced.

What can go wrong in a paragraph? Some common mistakes...

IT STARTS WITH SOMEONE ELSE'S WORDS

It is recommended to start your paragraph with your own words. Examples and references can be used in the body. Starting your paragraph with e.g. 'Smith (2009) stated that...' is not the best strategy to show synthesis, critical thinking & originality.

IT STARTS WITH IRRELEVANT SENTENCES OR FILLER WORDS

Read your first sentence or couple of sentences. Are they too vague? Do they relate to the argument? Or are they too general and not adding anything substantive to the paragraph?

IT'S TOO SHORT

Do you have any paragraphs that are 2 sentences or perhaps a long single sentence? 'Orphan sentences' should be merged into other paragraphs if relevant or edited out of the work if not adding anything to the argument.

IT'S TOO LONG

In research and academic writing, paragraphs are usually 100-200 words long, but some may go up to 250 if using more complex examples. In most cases, paragraphs over 250 words can be divided in 2 paragraphs.

4-STEP PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE TECHNIQUE

"TOPIC, BODY, TOKENS, WRAP"



TOPIC

Start your paragraph with a short sentence that summarises the main ideas and alerts the reader to the change in topic or focus.

BODY

Continue your paragraph with a set of closely linked sentences that construct your argument, elaborating and explaining your theoretical/empirical points.

TOKENS

Throughout your body sentences, add sentences containing examples, references to literature or data, or other supporting evidence, depending on your argument.

WRAP

Usually, a final sentence wraps the paragraph – but avoid being too repetitive. This sentence can also be used to link (signpost) to the next paragraph.

Topic sentences

- Topic sentences are **mini-thesis statements for each paragraph**.
- They are general enough to encompass the key message in the paragraph, but specific enough to link with your argument.
- Keep it **short**!
- A good planning strategy is to have your overall thesis statement first – then you can draw an outline of topic sentences, paragraph by paragraph, to assess the coherence of your argument.
- Topic sentences are often very simple in the draft phase of your writing – do revise & refine them throughout the process and change the wording if needed.
- Topic sentences can **perform different roles**: emphasising, expanding, anticipating, comparing, bridging.
- Usually, topic sentences are the first sentence of a paragraph, but sometimes they are preceded by a transition sentence from the previous paragraph.

3 questions to ask when proofreading

ORDER OF IDEAS

- Do the sentences in my paragraph flow in a logical way?
- Can I improve the order of my ideas?

Tip:

Place each sentence of your paragraph on a separate line. Read the sentences one by one. Is this the most logical order?

RELEVANCE OF IDEAS

- Is the content of my paragraph A. relevant to the topic sentence and B. relevant to building towards the overall argument of my dissertation?

Tip:

If you are unsure about the relevance of a sentence, copy the paragraph in a new file, delete the sentences you were unsure about, and read the paragraph. Does it make sense without the sentences you removed? Is there any gap in the logic? Perhaps you can see the relevance of the sentence you deleted, but at a different point in the paragraph or the dissertation?

TRANSITIONS

- Do I use transitional words and phrases when it is relevant?

Some situations:

- giving examples ("for instance")
- showing addition ("moreover")
- contrasting ("though")
- noting time, place and direction ("while")
- underlining the logical relationship ("consequently")

LIVE DEMO - IMPROVING YOUR PARAGRAPHS USING FOCUSWRITER

- FocusWriter is a free writing software that limits distractions. It helps you focus on your writing.
- A strategy to improve your paragraphs is to identify the weaker paragraphs, copy paste them individually on a blank page and think about their structure.
- Let's try FocusWriter to look at topic sentences and sentence order.

LIVE ESSAY MARKING - HOW MARKERS ASSESS YOUR PARAGRAPHS

- MA dissertation, SOAS, London
- Title: "Exploring the Ethics of the Musée Chinois and World Museum Liverpool in relation to Tibetan objects: applying the ICOM ethics code"



QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION



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Next week

Seminar 6: Evidence and referencing (with Kari)

An exercise on using different types of evidence will be sent via email and discussed in the seminar.
Home exercises will be emailed to you every Monday morning – make sure to check your inbox before the Thursday class.