COHERENCE OF A WRITTEN TEXT
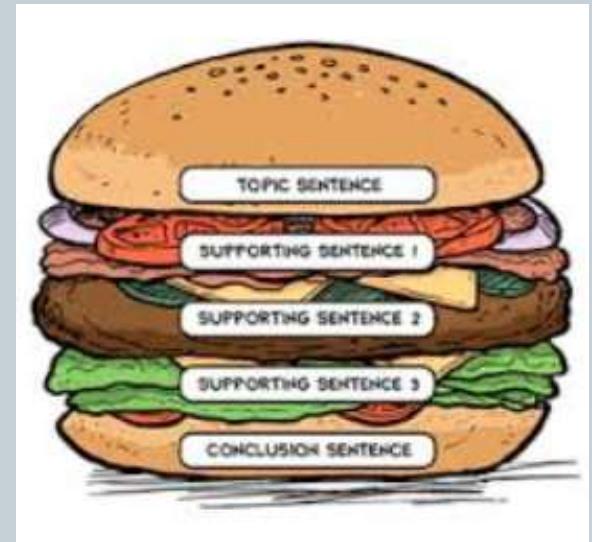
ACADEMIC WRITING

WORKSHOP

WITH

OLGA DOLGANOVA

ACHIEVING COHERENCE (OSHIMA &HOGUE, 2006)

Paragraph structure

Unity of a paragraph

Repetition of key nouns

Use of consistent pronouns

Transition signals

Logical order

COHERENCE

'The Latin verb cohere means 'hold together'. In order to have coherence in writing, the sentence must hold together; that is, the movement from one sentence to the next (and from one paragraph to the next) must be logical and smooth. There must be no sudden jumps. Each sentence should flow smoothly into the next one' (Oshima & Hogue, 1999:40)

COHERENCE

'Text coherence is the relation of all sentences or utterances in a text to a single global proposition. The establishment of a global meaning, or topic for a whole poem, e-mail message, ...or novel is an integral part of both expression and interpretation and makes possible the interpretation of the individual sentences that make up the text' (Savignon, 2002: 9).
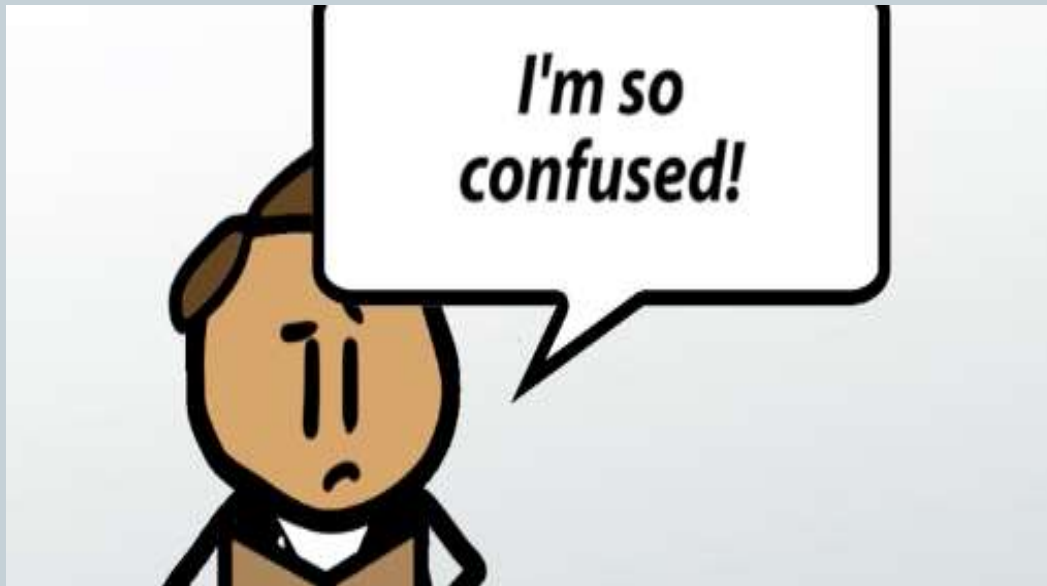
COHESION & COHERENCE

'A text is cohesive if its elements are linked together. A text is coherent if it makes sense'. It should be clear that these are not the same thing. That is, a text may be cohesive, i.e. linked together, but incoherent, i.e. meaningless' (Thornbury, 2007).

EXAMPLE OF INCOHERENCE

'I am a teacher. The teacher was late for class. Class rhymes with grass. The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence. But it wasn't' (from Thornbury, 2007).

.

I'm so confused!

COHESION & COHERENCE

Cohesion is a formal feature of texts (it gives them their *texture*), while coherence is "in the eye of the beholder" - that is to say, it is the extent to which the reader is able to infer the writer's communicative intentions. Thus, cohesion is objectively verifiable, while coherence is more subjective. A text may be coherent to you, but incoherent to me (Thornbury, 2007).

COHESION & COHERENCE

Apple computers have become increasingly popular, especially in educational and media circles. With their user-friendly, no bells and whistles style they soon became a standard. Apple computers offer virtually an endless resource to simple, yet effective software. Software is key to building success in a global world. When the world became globalized many difficult issues begin to emerge.

COHERENCE: KEEP YOUR READER IN MIND

'Coherence has a lot to do with the way that the propositional content of texts is organized. If the content of a written text is organized in such a way that it fulfills the reader's expectations, it is more likely to achieve its communicative effect. Good writers are able to "keep their reader in mind". Keeping your reader in mind does not guarantee coherence, but it would seem to be a prerequisite' (Thonbury, 2007).

THE TYPOLOGY OF CULTURAL WRITING PATTERNS

English   Semitic   Oriental   Romance   Russian
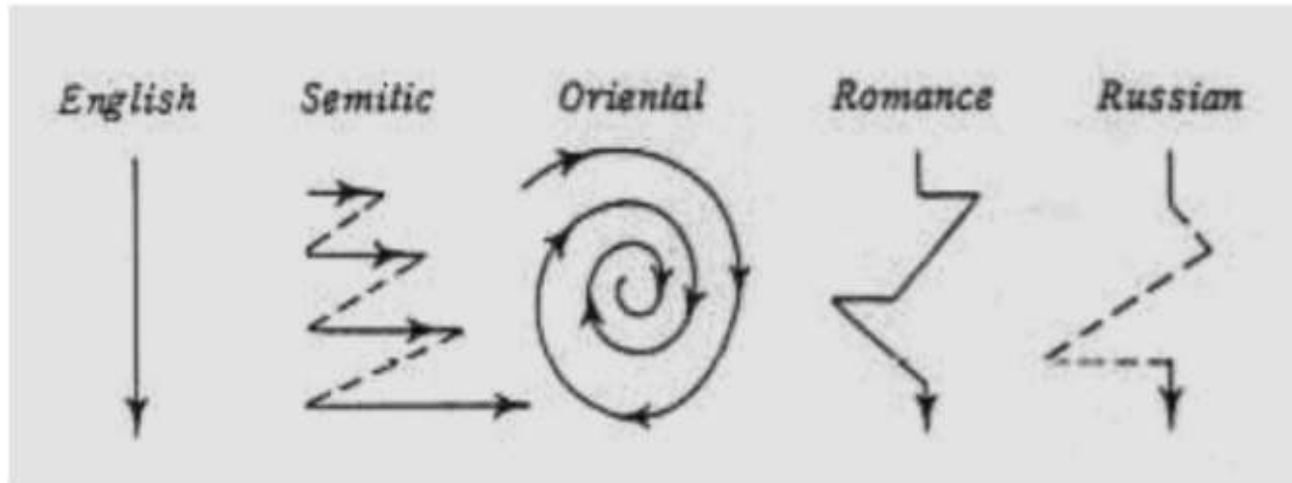
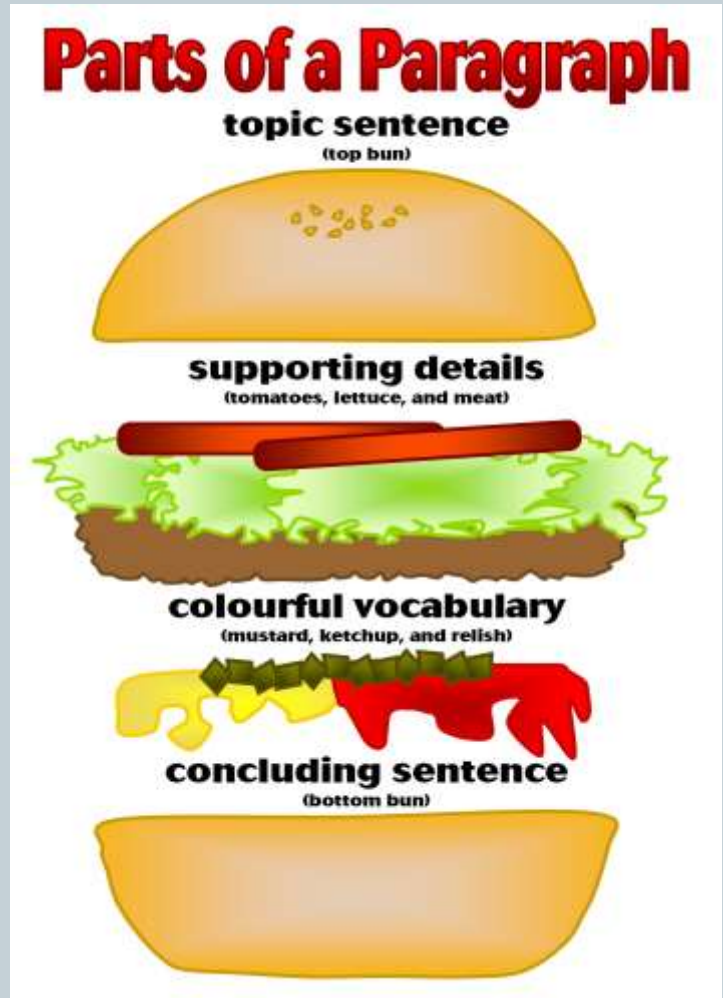# COHERENCE OF A PARAGRAPH

Topic sentence

Supporting sentences

Concluding sentence

Parts of a Paragraph

topic sentence
(top bun)

supporting details
(tomatoes, lettuce, and meat)

colourful vocabulary
(mustard, ketchup, and relish)

concluding sentence
(bottom bun)

THREE PARTS OF A PARAGRAPH

The topic sentence states the main idea of a paragraph and limits the topic to an area that can be discussed in the space of a single paragraph

Supporting sentences develop the topic sentence. They explain the topic sentence by giving reasons, examples, facts, and quotations.

The concluding sentence signals the end of the paragraph and leaves the reader with important point to remember.

THREE PARTS OF A PARAGRAPH

Gold, a precious metal, is prized for two important characteristics. First of all, gold has a lustrous beauty that is resistant to corrosion. Therefore, it is suitable for jewelry, coins, and ornamental purposes. Gold never needs to be polished and will remain beautiful forever. For example, a Macedonian coin remains as untarnished today as the day it was minted twenty-three century ago. Another important characteristics of gold is its usefulness to industry and science. For many years, it has been used in hundreds of industrial applications. The most recent use of gold is in astronaut suits. Astronauts wear gold-plated heat shields for protection outside spaceships. In conclusion, gold is treasured not only for its beauty but also for its utility

EXAMPLE OF A PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE

TOPIC SENTENCE

SUPPORTING SENTENCES

CONCLUDING SENTENCE

Gold, a precious metal, is prized for two important characteristics. First of all, gold has a lustrous beauty that is resistant to corrosion. Therefore, it is suitable for jewelry, coins, and ornamental purposes. Gold never needs to be polished and will remain beautiful forever. For example, a Macedonian coin remains as untarnished today as the day it was minted twenty-three century ago. Another important characteristics of gold is its usefulness to industry and science. For many years, it has been used in hundreds of industrial applications. The most recent use of gold is in astronaut suits. Astronauts wear gold-plated heat shields for protection outside spaceships. In conclusion, gold is treasured not only for its beauty but also for its utility.

UNITY OF A PARAGRAPH

It is perhaps worth noting that even before the planning of a research project begins there are two important questions that a researcher would need to consider. These questions may themselves present dilemmas for some researchers, but I have not included them in my TEN since in most cases they no longer apply to my work. First, is a qualitative research approach the most appropriate for answering the research question? To answer this, you would need to have a good idea about the aims and scope of the study, what its purpose is, and what is achievable with the time and resources available. In contrast, quantitative research is the systematic empirical investigation of observable phenomena via statistical, mathematical, or computational techniques, which is widely used in research studies. Second, is a qualitative research approach the most suitable for you as a researcher? In other words, is it compatible with your research skills and your interests in the way research is or should be done; does it fit with how you see yourself and how you feel as a researcher? I find this second question to be hugely important. From my experience and observations there is nothing worse than being stuck in a project where you feel out of place and thus uninterested and unmotivated (from Barkhuizen, 2018)

REPETITION OF KEY NOUNS

Gold, a precious metal, is prized for two important characteristics. First of all, **gold** has a lustrous beauty that is resistant to corrosion. Therefore, it is suitable for jewelry, coins, and ornamental purposes. **Gold** never needs to be polished and will remain beautiful forever. For example, a Macedonian coin remains as untarnished today as the day it was minted twenty-three century ago. Another important characteristics of **gold** is its usefulness to industry and science. For many years, it has been used in hundreds of industrial applications. The most recent use of **gold** is in astronaut suits. Astronauts wear **gold**-plated heat shields for protection outside spaceships. In conclusion, **gold** is treasured not only for its beauty but also for its utility.

REPETITION
OF KEY NOUNS (CONT.)

Very simply, a dilemma is a situation when a difficult choice has to be made between two or more alternatives. In research, dilemmas never go away—they emerge every time I am engaged in a new project. I see them also in the research of my colleagues and the graduate students I supervise. And I see them in the many articles I review for research journals; sometimes they are presented as dilemmas and the researcher explains how they were resolved during the research process, or at least an explanation is given as to why they were not, but sometimes they are swept under the carpet and not addressed at all.

REPETITION OF KEY NOUNS (cont.)

English has almost become an international language. Except for Chinese, more people speak **English** than any other languages. Spanish is the official language of more countries, but more countries have English as their official or unofficial second language. More than 70 percent of the world's mail is written in it. It is the primary language on the Internet. In international business, **English** is used more than any other language, and it is the language of airline pilots and air traffic controllers all over the world. Moreover, although French used to be the language of diplomacy, **English** has displaced it thoughout the world. Therefore, unless you plan to spend your life alone in a desert island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, **English** is a useful language to know.

USING CONSISTENT PRONOUNS

Three studies of mine illustrate how I managed the number-of-participants dilemma. The first is my doctoral study briefly, which focused on the first-year classroom experiences of only one teacher. A single participant was appropriate in this case since my aim was to gain an in-depth, intensive understanding of the teacher's interactional patterns that exemplify beginning language teaching. Having more than one participant during that same period (the first six weeks of the semester) would have diluted my goal.

TRANSITION SIGNALS

Member checking means going back to the original research participants to get their opinions on various aspects of the study. **For instance**, they could check the accuracy of the data (e.g., interview transcripts), volunteer additional relevant information, confirm the researcher's interpretations, or challenge those interpretations (which could mean re-thinking and increasing the trustworthiness of the original interpretations). **Another** advantage is that checking is ethically appropriate—returning data and interpretations to participants informs them of progress with their contribution and allows them to retain some form of ownership of the project. The dilemma arises, **however**, when there is limited or no time to do member checking, and its benefits are then lost. As they would be if participants choose not to member check. **Furthermore,** member checking can be a "risky business"? What if the participant totally disagrees with your interpretations, or denies having said something, or demands that you delete some data, or withdraws altogether from the study because of what they see? **Finally**, some qualitative researchers are sceptical of member checking arguing that it assumes a verifiable truth; that experience can be reduced to a set of facts, which are proved to be or not to be the case in the process of member checking.

LOGICAL ORDER

Logical division of ideas

Chronological order

Comparison/contrast

LOGICAL DIVISION OF IDEAS

It is a common method of organising ideas to give a (paragraph) text coherence. Ideas are put into groups, and each group is discussed one after the other. Transition words such as *first, second, third* can introduce each group.

CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

When using chronological order you would expect to find a lot of time expressions:

First, next, after that, before the last war, after 1990, since then, while working on the project, etc.

COMPARISON/CONTRAST

In a paragraph showing similarities (comparison), you would find these expressions:

Similarly, as expensive as, just like, just as, compare with, in comparison

In a paragraph describing differences (contrast), you would find these expressions:

The most noticeable difference, larger than, unlike, on the other hand, in contrast, differ from

ACADEMIC PHRASEBANK

Academic Phrasebank

The University of Manchester

Introducing Work | **Referring to Sources** | **Describing Methods** | **Reporting Results** | **Discussing Findings** | **Writing Conclusions**

Home Page

GENERAL LANGUAGE FUNCTIONS

Being Cautious

Being Critical

Classifying and Listing

Compare and Contrast

Defining Terms

Describing Trends

Describing Quantities

Explaining Causality

Giving Examples

Signalling Transition

Writing about the Past

The Academic Phrasebank is a general resource for academic writers. It aims to provide you with examples of some of the phraseological 'nuts and bolts' of writing organised according to the main sections of a research paper or dissertation (see the top menu). Other phrases are listed under the more general communicative functions of academic writing (see the menu on the left). The resource should be particularly useful for writers who need to report their research work.The phrases, and the headings under which they are listed, can be used simply to assist you in thinking about the content and organisation of your own writing, or the phrases can be incorporated into your writing where this is appropriate. In most cases, a certain amount of creativity and adaptation will be necessary when a phrase is used.The items in the Academic Phrasebank are mostly content neutral and generic in nature; in using them, therefore, you are not stealing other people's ideas and this does not constitute plagiarism. For some of the entries, specific content words have been included for illustrative purposes, and these should be substituted when the phrases are used.The resource was designed primarily for academic and scientific writers who are non-native speakers of English. However, native speaker writers may still find much of the material helpful. In fact, recent data suggest that the majority of users are native speakers of English. More about **Academic Phrasebank**.

This site was created by **John Morley**. If you could spare just two or three minutes of your time, I would be extremely grateful for any feedback on Academic Phrasebank: Please click **here** to access a very short questionnaire. Thank you.

TYPICAL STRUCTURE OF A RESEARCH ARTICLE

The common IMRaD structure

- Introduction
- Method
- Results and Discusssion
- Conclusion

SOME ADVICE FOR WRITERS

You can write your sections in any order. Many recommend writing your *Results*, followed by *Methods, Introduction, Discussion*, and *Abstract*

We suggest authors read their manuscripts out loud. Look for evidence of MEGO, "My Eyes Glaze Over" (if your **eyes glaze over**, they become dull and lose all expression, usually because you are bored or are thinking about something else). Modify as necessary

Every single paragraph should be lucid

Every paragraph should answer your readers' question, "Why are you telling me this?

(from Cooper, 2015)

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Cooper, ID. (2015). How to write an original research paper (and get it published), J Med Libr Assos, 103, 67-8

Oshima, A., Hogue, A. (2006). *Writing academic English.* Addison Wesley Longman.

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THANK YOU!

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