

Academic writing

Lesson 4
Paragraphs and the magic number 3
 Register

Paragraphs

- ◎ TASK 1: Rearrange the sentences to reconstruct the original paragraphs.
 - Did you have any difficulties in the sequencing?
 - Where? Why?
- ◎ TASK 2 : Complete each paragraph with the sentence which *introduces* its content.
 - What relation does that sentence have with the rest of its paragraph?
 - Read the first sentences in the correct sequence: how do they relate to the text as a whole?

Paragraphs

- ◎ In Task 2, you should have noticed that the first sentences, read in the correct sequence, give you a summary of the essay content.
 - This may seem unimportant for a well-known figure like Leonardo, but if you *are not* already familiar with somebody's life and works, it is very useful indeed.
 - Reading the first sentences is a form of speed-reading – use this technique for long texts.

Paragraphs

- ◎ If you can write a tight, coherent paragraph, you can write an essay, a dissertation, a thesis or a full-length monograph: the principles are exactly the same:
 - Say what you're going to say
 - Say it
 - Say you've said it
→ and remember the magic number three!

Paragraphs: the magic #3

- ◎ In other words:
 1. Introduce the topic
 2. Present the main arguments in sequence
 3. Draw these together in a summary/conclusion

Paragraphs: the magic #3

- ◎ Present the main arguments in sequence
 - 3 arguments is good (2 is too few; 5 is the max.)
 - 1. Start with what is common knowledge or a common preconception
 - 2. Then introduce your new (correcting/surprising) facts/ideas/information
 - 3. Finally, introduce a specific aspect of your new (correcting/surprising) facts/ ideas/ information

1. Common knowledge

1. John McHardy Sinclair : linguist.
2. Career spent in Birmingham (UK)
3. Retired in 2000

2. More detail

1. John McHardy Sinclair made major contributions to **3 areas of applied linguistics**.
2. He stayed in Birmingham **for the whole of his formal university career but he travelled extensively**
3. He **formally** retired in 2000, **but continued to teach and research**

3. Additional detail

1. **Three related areas of applied linguistics:**
(i) language in education, (ii) discourse analysis, (iii) corpus lexicography.
2. **Travel abroad:**
Honorary doctorates: Gothenburg (Sweden), and Erlangen (Germany)
Honorary professorships: Jiao Tong University (Shanghai, China), Glasgow University, Scotland
3. He retired **but still taught & researched** attracted international linguists & students to the Tuscan Word Centre, which he founded in Italy.

Paragraphs: the magic #3

- ◎ Once you have your core, contextualise!
 - Add details such as:
 1. A time clause, relating to common knowledge, current or recent research in the field, etc.; This often occurs in the first or second sentence of the paragraph;
 2. Contrasting clauses, connecting existing and new information;
 3. Projecting clauses, indicating that further information will be provided later in the paragraph/section/text. These typically occur at the end of a paragraph.

Paragraphs: the magic #3

- ◎ (1) John McHardy Sinclair (**June 14, 1933–March 13, 2007**) made major contributions to three related areas of applied linguistics: language in education, discourse analysis, and corpus lexicography. (2) **Although** he stayed in Birmingham for the whole of his formal university career, **he travelled extensively** in many countries. **He was awarded honorary doctorates** from the Universities of Gothenburg, Sweden, and Erlangen, Germany, and **honorary professorships** from the Universities of Jiao Tong in Shanghai, China, and Glasgow, Scotland. (3) He formally retired in 2000, but continued to teach and research, **and to attract leading linguists and students from around the world to the Tuscan Word Centre, an institution which he founded in Italy.**

Paragraphs: the magic #3

- ◎ Now expand your paragraph
 - For each of your 3 arguments, include:
 1. An overview sentence describing the argument
 2. A sentence providing background
 3. A sentence which comments (approves or discards) the argument.

- John McHardy Sinclair (June 14, 1933–March 13, 2007) made major contributions to three related areas of applied linguistics: language in education, discourse analysis, and corpus lexicography. He was born and grew up in Edinburgh, Scotland. He studied and later lectured at the University of Edinburgh, and in 1965, at the age of 31, he was appointed to the foundation Chair of Modern English Language at the University of Birmingham, England. Although he stayed in Birmingham for the whole of his formal university career, he travelled extensively in many countries, and introduced large numbers of young researchers to work in linguistics. He was awarded honorary doctorates from the Universities of Gothenburg, Sweden, and Erlangen, Germany, and honorary professorships from the Universities of Jiao Tong in Shanghai, China, and Glasgow, Scotland. He formally retired in 2000, but continued to teach and research, and to attract leading linguists and students from around the world to the Tuscan Word Centre, an institution which, together with his second wife, Elena Tognini-Bonelli, he founded in Italy. He died at his home in Florence in March 2007.

* M. Stubbs (2013) "Sinclair, John". In Carol A. Chapelle (ed.) *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Paragraphs: the magic #3

Congratulations!

- You have just turned a paragraph into a short essay.
 - You expanded each sentence of your original paragraph into a paragraph in its own right.
 - In other words, from 3 sentences, you have generated 3 paragraphs (perhaps even 3 sections of a chapter)

Paragraphs: the magic #3

- If you like, expand it further
 - Elaborate on these sentences by providing:
 1. Statements of fact (examples)
 2. Contrasting/mitigating/additional information
 - However, ... Yet... On the other hand, ...
 - [although/even though] this is... , [but] ALSO...,
 - Moreover,... Furthermore,... Additionally,...
 3. A conclusion.
 - Thus... So.... Therefore... It follows [from this] that... As a result [of this], it would therefore appear that...

Paragraphs: the magic #3

- ...and further still
 1. Expand a statement of fact by becoming more and more focused (general → specific → detailed)
 2. Expand contrasting/mitigating/additional information by commenting/ offering perspectives which further reinforce your argument
 3. Expand a conclusion by adding more details about foreseen consequences/ repercussions.

Paragraphs: the magic #3

- Then expand your time clause
 1. Relate present research to past research
 1. Similarities
 2. Differences
 3. Significance of the differences
 2. Describe limitations of past research
 1. Give reasons for these limitations
 2. Explain how things have changed
 3. Explain what the implications of these changes are
 3. Describe importance/potential of new research
 1. Where the idea fits with existing work
 2. How it expands on existing work
 3. What it contributes to knowledge of the field/topic.

Paragraphs: the magic #3

- Then expand your projecting clause
 1. For each of your 3 main arguments, indicate:
 1. The precise nature of the point to be investigated
 2. How it is to be investigated
 3. What the findings are expected to be/reveal
 2. Then (for each argument), add:
 1. How the findings relate to existing knowledge
 2. What new information they contribute
 3. How they inter-relate
 3. Finally, provide a sequential outline of the text stating where each argument is discussed.

Paragraphs: the magic #3

- ◎ To turn your essay into a full chapter:
 1. Expand each paragraph sentence by sentence
→ section
 2. Expand the body text further by exemplification (literature overviews, case studies, data, etc.)
→ subsections
 3. At the end, you should have (effortlessly!) produced an article with introduction, 3 sections (with subsections), and conclusions.

Paragraphs

- ◎ TASK 3: write a folklore article!
 - Use the grid provided on your worksheet to write 5-8 complete academic sentences. Try to arrange them so that the ideas “flow” from one sentence to the next.
 - It is supposed to be *tongue-in cheek* (humorous)

Register

- ◎ It is important to avoid informal and/or colloquial expressions in academic writing.
 - Dictionaries indicate formal/informal register
 - As a general rule, the more Latinate the expression, the more formal it is
 - You need not use idiomatic expressions at all (including most phrasal verbs!)
 - You may have to learn common metaphorical meanings of common words e.g. head, foot,...

Register

- ◎ TASK 4
 - A-C The first sections of this task test your existing knowledge: how formal are these ‘synonyms’?
 - D – This tests the flexibility of your vocabulary : provide synonyms for the words listed
 - E – This tests vocabulary and related elements, such as syntax and punctuation: provide synonyms for the words in bold, re-working the text if necessary.

Passives

- ◎ A further feature associated with the academic register is the use of passive and impersonal forms.
 - Many style guides now explicitly ask for “personal, active” forms
 - The impersonal is falling out of use: too formal!
 - The passive is necessary when the “agent” is not known.
 - The passive is also used as a more authoritative version of “I” or “we”

Translating across registers

- ◎ TASK 5: Converting passives
 - Re-work each passive clause to make it active
 - Use a *dummy subject* when necessary.
 - - Existential *it*
 - - Impersonal pronouns (somebody/ nobody etc.)
 - - General nouns (people; researchers)
- ◎ TASK 6
 - The abstract from *Calcified Tissue International* has been jumbled up. Use the non-academic paraphrase to reconstruct the original.