

LECTURE 2

The Topic Sentence

Every good paragraph has a topic sentence, which clearly states the topic and the controlling idea of the paragraph.

A topic sentence is the most important sentence in a paragraph. It briefly indicates what the paragraph is going to discuss. For this reason, the topic sentence is a helpful guide to both the writer and the reader. The writer can see what information to include (and what information to exclude). The reader can see what the paragraph is going to be about and is therefore better prepared to understand it. For example, in the model paragraph on gold, the topic sentence alerts the reader to look for two characteristics.

جملة الموضوع دائماً تكون هي مفتاح القطعة ودليلاً.

Here are three important points to remember about a topic sentence:

1. A topic sentence is a complete sentence; that is, it contains at least one subject and one verb. The following are not complete sentences because they do not have verbs:

Driving on freeways.

How to register for college classes.

The rise of indie films!

جملة الموضوع تكون تامة المعنى دائماً.

2. A topic sentence contains both a topic and a controlling idea. It names the topic and then limits the topic to a specific area to be discussed in the space of a single paragraph.

TOPIC CONTROLLING IDEA
Driving on freeways requires skill and alertness.

TOPIC CONTROLLING IDEA
Registering for college classes can be a frustrating experience for new students.

TOPIC CONTROLLING IDEA
The rise of indie films is due to several factors.

جملة الموضوع تحتوي على الموضوع + الفكرة المسيطرة.

3. A topic sentence is the most general statement in the paragraph because it gives only the main idea. It does not give any specific details. A topic sentence is like the name of a particular course on a restaurant menu.

When you order food in a restaurant, you want to know more about a particular course than just "meat" or "soup" or "salad." You want to know generally what kind of salad it is. Potato salad? Mixed green salad? Fruit salad? However, you do not necessarily want to know all the ingredients. Similarly, a reader wants to know generally what to expect in a paragraph, but he or she does not want to learn all the details in the first sentence.

جملة الموضوع هي أكثر جزء عام مقارنةً بباقي الجمل في المقال. وذلك لأنها توجي بفكرة عامة ولا تعطي تفاصيل.

Following is a general statement that could serve as a **topic sentence**.

The Arabic origin of many English words is not always obvious. ✓

The following sentence, on the other hand, is **too specific**. It could serve as a supporting sentence but not as a topic sentence.

The slang expression *so long* (meaning "good-bye") is probably a corruption of the Arabic *salaam*. ✗

This sentence is **too general**.

English has been influenced by other languages. ✗

Position of Topic Sentences

The topic sentence is usually (but not always) the first sentence in a paragraph. Experienced writers sometimes put topic sentences in other locations, but the best spot is usually right at the beginning. Readers who are used to the English way of writing want to know what they will read about as soon as they begin reading.

من المستحسن أن تكون جملة الموضوع في بداية الفقرة. الكُتّاب المحترّفون وحدهم من يمكن أن يضعونها في مكان آخر.

Synonyms

Synonyms. words that have the same basic meaning. do not always have the same emotional meaning. For example, the words *stingy* and *frugal* both mean "careful with money." However, calling someone stingy is an insult, but calling someone frugal is a compliment. Similarly, a person wants to be

slender but not skinny, aggressive but not pushy. Therefore, you should be careful in choosing words because many so-called synonyms are not really synonymous at all.

Sometimes a topic sentence comes at the end. In this case, the paragraph often begins with a series of examples. Other paragraphs may begin with a series of facts, and the topic sentence at the end is the conclusion from these facts.

Medical Miracles to Come

By the year 2009, a vaccine against the common cold will have been developed. By the same year, the first human will have been successfully cloned. By the year 2014, parents will be able to create designer children. Genetic therapy will be able to manipulate genes for abilities, intelligence, and hair, eye, and skin color. By 2020, most diseases will be able to be diagnosed and treated at home, and by 2030, cancer and heart disease will have been wiped out. These are just a few examples of the medical miracles that are expected in the next few decades.

Exercise:

- a. A lunar eclipse is an omen of a coming disaster. → too specific
- b. Superstitions have been around forever. → too general
- c. People hold many superstitious beliefs about the moon. → best TS
- d. Is made of green cheese. → incomplete