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# Understanding the Body Paragraph: A Handbook for EFL Teachers & Students

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University of San Francisco

# **Understanding the Body Paragraph: A Handbook for EFL Teachers & Students**

A Field Project Proposal Presented to  
The Faculty of the School of Education  
International and Multicultural Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Second Language

By  
Terpsithea P. Papadopoulos  
May 2018

# **Understanding the Body Paragraph: A Handbook for EFL Teachers & Students**

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

in

TEACHING ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

by

Terpsithea P. Papadopoulos  
May 2018

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this field project (or thesis) has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

Approved:

  
Instructor/Chairperson

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Date

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## ABSTRACT

English learners have a significant gap in their English language learning in that they have difficulty writing paragraphs. This difficulty appears to be the result of a combination of factors: foreign English language teachers' lack of training and support to teach writing, the manner in which English is taught abroad, and students not learning or understanding the logical flow of a paragraph in English academic writing. This project aims to reduce the gap in students' inability to write effective body paragraphs and foreign English language teachers' knowledge of paragraph writing. The handbook created in this field project provides supplementary materials that present the body paragraph in an understandable and practical manner. This project is designed for English language students studying English outside of the United States who intend to go to a university there and then work for a multinational company. In addition, this handbook provides foreign English teachers with materials to help them better understand paragraph writing and thus teach their students how to organize and write body paragraphs in the English style. The handbook includes a variety of explanatory and practice materials to facilitate teaching the body paragraph structure piece by piece. My hope is that with this handbook, both foreign EFL students and teachers will be more comfortable and competent in their understanding of body paragraphs and writing in English.

## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

### **Statement of the Problem**

Statistics from the Institute of International Education show that in school year 2014-2015, a record number of 975,000 foreign students enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities (Zong & Batalova, 2016). Why are so many foreign students coming to study in the United States? Many of my English language (EL) students have told me a degree from a U.S. university opens doors to job opportunities with multinational companies that would otherwise not be possible. Last summer, I tutored a Korean student who intended to transfer from an intensive English language school to a four-year university in the United States. However, when I saw the first draft of his application essay, I was surprised by the lack of cohesion that characterized his writing. I have found this lack of cohesion and organization in writing from other Korean students as well as Chinese, Brazilian, Saudi Arabian, and Japanese students who have come to study in the United States. Details which should have been presented in one paragraph were spread throughout the paper. Zhou (2016) asserts that Chinese thought is influenced by circling, Taoist patterns whereas English thought is straightforward and linear, but the issue with paragraph writing seems to go beyond cultural differences and national borders. In English writing, paragraphs need to be concise, focused on one topic, and organized in a specific order to logically convey the writer's argument or point of view, and many EL students cannot write paragraphs in the English style (Zhou, 2016).

When I decided to teach English as a language, I had the opportunity to go to another country and teach at a private language school. In spite of the fact that I was a credentialed high school English teacher in California, I did not have any formal training in teaching English as a language; my selling point was that I was a native speaker of English. I enjoyed the experience

so much, that when I returned home, I enrolled in an evening class TESOL certification program. I could have enrolled in an online or intensive, all-day program, but I preferred the in-person experience. At the same time, I was hired to teach English part-time at an intensive English school, so I was able to learn about TESOL and gain experience concurrently. Several of my fellow teacher trainees, however, were new to teaching, making a career change, going into teaching as a post-retirement activity, or volunteering in different kinds of language teaching situations. We all took similar classes on linguistics, language acquisition theories, methods of teaching, and so on, yet our coursework did not address how to teach a specific skill, such as writing, unless we chose to specialize in it by taking additional courses. Furthermore, unless we were already teaching in some capacity, the practicum at the end of the program would be the first time some of my peers would take over a class and teach. Was this the same situation and experience for EL teachers abroad?

One reason contributing to students' poor writing skills is EL teachers' preparation for the classroom and a combined ignorance of and lack of motivation to teach writing. Many English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers, such as the ones interviewed in Al-Jarrah and Al-Ahmad's study (2013) in Jordan, receive little to no training in how to teach writing and must rely on what they feel is needed once they are in the classroom. I have found this to be true in my case as well based on my own certification process and from my experience teaching English in Brazil from 2010-2011. The Brazilian teachers at my school did not hold specific teaching certificates, such as a CELTA (Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), let alone have specialized training in the teaching of writing. Many were in fact graduates of the audio-lingual method prevalent in many EL schools in Brazil. For EL teachers who do enroll in English teaching certification programs, the programs do not provide specific training in



language skills, such as writing (Korumaz & Karakaş, 2014), nor enough time for in-class training (Agudo, 2017). Furthermore, low pay, crowded classes, and no support for professional development deter teachers from providing much needed feedback on students' writing (Naghdipour, 2016). For these teachers, the teaching of English writing is generally viewed as laborious and time-consuming, so they have little knowledge and desire to do it. There is one other situation that appears to contribute to a lack of motivation to teach writing by EFL teachers, and that is the lack of repercussions for incompetent teachers who have gone into teaching solely for job security (Nezakat-Alhossaini & Ketabi, 2013). In these cases, the teachers not only lack knowledge and motivation to teach writing but perhaps also the skills and an affinity for the profession as well, which cannot but impact students' learning.

Another significant factor for English language learners' (ELLs) problems with paragraph writing can be attributed to the nature of English language instruction abroad. For example, a significant amount of English instruction in China is test oriented (Ren & Wang, 2015). As these tests are objective or multiple-choice tests where students do not need to produce writing, academic writing is not stressed (Ren & Wang, 2015). However, at 31 percent, students from China make up the largest group of foreign students at U.S. universities (Zong & Batalova, 2016), indicating that this group may be particularly in need of writing instruction. In addition, Zhang, Yan, and Liu (2015) noted in their report on the International Conference on English Language Teaching in China that one of the plenary speakers, Qiufang Wen, stated that at the college level, text-centered, input-based English teaching approaches are still the predominant methods used in mainland China. In other words, productive skills are not the priority. Furthermore, Naghdipour (2016) found that in Iran, the English curriculum largely ignores productive skills, such as writing, at the middle to high school levels. At the university level,

only English majors are required to take writing courses, with essay writing offered in the fifth semester Naghdipour (2016). Moreover, the grammar-translation method is still in use which does not impart the phrasing of English thought (Naghdipour, 2016). With respect to English language teaching (ELT) in Brazil, Rajagopalan and Rajagopalan (2005) acknowledge that English is taught in grammar and high schools in varying degrees of thoroughness because the quality of instruction depends on the economic resources available in each state. Going to private language schools in which the audio-lingual approach still dominates is the path most middle and upper- class students pursue to further their English skills (Rajagopalan & Rajagopalan, 2005), so these students also seem to receive little to no writing practice. It is clear that the methods used to teach English abroad are inconsistent, and generally focused on receptive skills and speaking, leading to weaknesses in students' English writing abilities.

English learners abroad, therefore, have a significant gap in their English language learning when it comes to writing. Their difficulty in writing paragraphs appears to be the result of a combination of factors: English teachers' lack of training and motivation to teach writing, the methods which are used to teach English abroad, and students own lack of knowledge and understanding of the logical flow of a paragraph. This project aims to reduce the gap in students' abilities and address foreign EFL teachers' weaknesses in paragraph writing by providing supplementary materials that present paragraphs in an understandable and practical manner.

### **Purpose of the Project**

This project is designed for EL students studying English outside of the United States who intend to go to a university here and then work for a multinational company. These students are generally 18-23 years old, high school graduates, and attending or graduated from college in their home countries yet still taking English classes. The students' level in English should be at

least B1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (Cambridge Assessment English, 2018). Since essay writing is still a major form of assessment in college, the ability to communicate in writing is an essential component of student life as well as any job (Fernandez, Peyton, & Schaetzel, 2017). Paragraphs need to exhibit a recognizable structure in which ideas are communicated clearly and accurately, without confusion or ambiguity for native English readers (Shahhoseiny, 2015). Therefore, this handbook of supplementary paragraph materials will help learners seeking a college degree or currently looking for a job offer write more effectively and logically in English.

In addition, this handbook provides foreign EFL teachers with materials to help them understand paragraph writing and teach ELLs how to organize and write paragraphs in the English style. Although teachers in U.S. colleges or in language schools can utilize these materials, they may be of more use to teachers in non-English speaking countries. In fact, it was non-native English-speaking teachers who I thought about more than native English-speaking teachers when I was creating this project. Even though many EFL teachers abroad lack the specific training to teach writing, they are the most accessible experts to students learning to write (Yang & Gao, 2013), and therefore, these teachers need as much support as possible. This project gives them materials to supplement their texts or to adapt that are not linked to a specific sequence of lessons or embedded in a larger, thematic unit. Also, as each component of the paragraph is presented and described separately, teachers can pick and choose what they feel is most helpful for them and their students. Thus, the teaching and practice of paragraph writing in English will be practical yet not overwhelming for both teachers and students.

The handbook includes a variety of materials, such as model paragraphs, practice activities, explanatory materials, rubrics and so on, to support understanding of the body

paragraph structure for instruction and practice. The presentation and explanation of model examples for students to work with in individual, paired, or group work on writing are important components of this project as it is inspired from the theory of scaffolded language instruction and collaborative learning environments (Walqui, 2006). Checklists for student to engage in self and peer editing are also included so teachers do not have to create them. My hope is that with these materials, both teachers and students will be more comfortable and competent teaching and writing English.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This project is informed by the educational concept of scaffolding derived from the work of cognitive psychologist Lev Vygotsky and developed by David Wood, Jerome Bruner, and Gail Ross in the 1970s (Gibbons, 2015). Scaffolded instruction is done with a skilled expert, such as a teacher or more capable peer, whose guidance helps less-skilled students learn new information and skills that they would not have been able to grasp alone (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976).

The cognitive gap or distance between what learners can do alone and what they can do with the guidance of an adult or in collaboration more capable peers is what Vygotsky refers to as the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which is where learning actually takes place (Vygotsky, 1978). Support from the mentor gradually lessens as the learner becomes more and more competent, so at its core, scaffolding is temporary and designed to help a learner become autonomous (Gibbons, 2015). With regard to this project, the teacher is the expert who with the materials in this handbook will guide students to write in the English style.

Since scaffolding involves a tutorial relationship, learning is based on a social interaction in which both the teacher and student take active roles in learning (Gibbons, 2015). Collaborative

activities, student-centered classrooms, and mediated instruction all contribute to the social environment in which learning takes place (Walqui, 2006). When it is implemented effectively, scaffolding reduces students' dependence on an expert as understanding of new concepts and ability to perform new tasks increases (Gibbons, 2015). Ideally, students become more competent at selecting and applying the best strategy to a language task at hand or in the future. Through scaffolded instruction, students can internalize English paragraph structure and produce paragraphs in the English style with less dependence on a skilled tutor.

Assessing or activating prior knowledge is also central to scaffolding (Walqui, 2006). Tapping into prior knowledge helps create schema, or interconnected meanings, by weaving new information into what students already know (Walqui, 2006). Establishing a link or making a connection between the material and a student's life is also crucial for schema building (Walqui, 2006). If students cannot relate in some real way to the material, they will not be able to retain it. For the EFL students intending to continue their education in U.S. colleges, they frequently need to demonstrate what they have learned over the course of time in written form (Karim, Maasum, & Latif, 2017). The more skilled they are at writing, the better able they will be, I believe, to express their accumulated knowledge. Using what students already know about writing and content material, and building upon it, is the very essence of scaffolding. Therefore, scaffolding is the underlying theoretical framework for this project which aims to bridge the gap between what students can write and what they need to be able to write.

### **Significance of the Project**

This project will benefit EFL students planning to come to the United States and those newly arrived here. In either situation, professors, teachers' assistants, and peers must be able to understand ELLs' academic writings. Whatever their field of study at university, students must

be able to convey the knowledge they have acquired in written form (Karim et al., 2017).

Paragraphs are the building blocks of an essay, and all students must be able to write comprehensible, academic essays in English. Furthermore, the ability to communicate in writing is essential through all stages of a job search once students have acquired a college degree (Karim et al., 2017). Therefore, this project addressing paragraph writing will be applicable to EL students beyond the academic world.

EFL teachers who have little knowledge and practice in teaching writing to EFL students will also benefit from this project. Writing is a crucial, productive skill, yet a number of EL teachers have little training in teaching it (Al-Jarrah & Al-Ahmad, 2013). Many EFL training programs focus on field knowledge, teacher education (pedagogy), general knowledge, and teaching practices but not specifically on writing instruction (Korumaz & Karakaş, 2014). Moreover, the practicum following the coursework is not long enough for new EL teachers to learn how to teach writing (Kong, 2017). Researchers and new teachers both seem to agree that EL teachers need more preparation and materials to teach good writing. By providing practical and adaptable materials, this project facilitates the teaching and learning of writing so that both new and experienced EL teachers will not be overwhelmed by addressing the entire essay writing process.

Another way that this project is significant is that paragraph instruction is presented in a step-by-step process, beginning with the central component and building upon it following the principles of scaffolding. This approach may not be familiar or common in other parts of the world. In her paper on English language teaching in South Korea, Taie (2015) addresses Korean culture's emphasis on rote learning, competition, devaluation of play, and an authoritarian relationship between teachers and students. For these students, and others from similar cultures,

direct instruction is what they are accustomed to, and to some degree, expect. However, in many U.S. universities and international companies, group work and team projects with staggered due dates throughout the creative process have become common practice (Yang, 2014). Therefore, the more familiarity and practice foreign students have in scaffolded processes, the better prepared they will be for real-world interactions and writing tasks.

### **List of Acronyms**

**CEFR** = Common European Framework of Reference

**EFL** = English as a foreign language

**EL** = English learner

**ELL** = English language learner

**ELT** = English language teaching

**L1** = first language

**L2** = second or foreign language

**NEST** = native English-speaking teacher

**NNEST** = non-native English-speaking language teacher

## CHAPTER II REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### **Introduction**

There are three themes which I found to be central for this project. This review of literature explores EFL teacher training and experiences abroad, methods of English writing instruction abroad, and problems that exist in EFL students' writing in English. Many EFL teachers feel their training programs do not adequately, if at all, prepare them to teach or assess writing (Korumaz & Karakaş, 2014). What non-native English-speaking language teachers (NNESTs) learn about language teaching and how they learn about it directly affect their own instruction. In western education, the process approach to teaching writing, involving drafting and revising, has largely been the norm since the 1980s (Gibbons, 2015). Exploring the current state of writing instruction outside of the United States is relevant in order to understand what students coming to study and work here have learned and what they will be expected to do in writing. Furthermore, acquiring the rhythm and phrasing of English in written form is a challenge for many ELLs. Chinese EFL students, for example, cannot perceive how their L1 thought patterns affect their English writing (Ren & Wang, 2015). Looking at the errors that exist in ELLs' writing is incredibly important as they are visible proof of students' proficiency in English and in writing ability. Thus, the following literature review of NNESTs' training, English writing instruction abroad, and foreign students' English writing skills is essential to understanding how and why foreign students struggle to produce comprehensible and cohesive paragraphs.

### **Non-native English-speaking Language Teachers (NNESTs)**

The training for English language teaching is rather similar across the globe. Prospective teachers take a selection of theoretical courses, and then in the last year or semester, they do a



practicum in which they go into the classroom and teach a series of lessons. But the reality of teaching EFL varies among levels of instruction (primary through to tertiary), different regions in the world, and pre-service training courses through to being on the job in the classroom. This section, based on a review of nine research studies and surveys ranging from Europe to the Middle East to the Far East, focuses on five factors that influence NNESTs outside and inside the classroom: motivation, coursework, the practicum, proficiency in the target language, and classroom management.

One factor that seems to influence the quality of NNESTs' instruction is their motivation to teach (Mukminin, Rohayati, Putra, Habibi, & Aina, 2017; Nezakat-Alhossaini & Ketabi, 2013). One can easily imagine a teacher who goes to school only to get a salary may not be inclined to spend extra time on professional development or helping students improve their language skills. One can also picture a teacher who loves what he or she is doing, no matter the paycheck, who stays in the classroom after hours and takes personal time to help his or her students succeed. Nezakat-Alhossaini and Ketabi (2013) explain that in Iran, teacher applicants become employed by the Ministry of Education when they begin their studies. What this fact means is that these candidates are guaranteed a teaching job upon completion of their coursework no matter their academic performance. Their professors note that the applicants often do not complete assignments, are not prepared for class, and do not study hard as a high GPA does not impact their job prospects (Nezakat-Alhossaini & Ketabi, 2013). The extrinsic appeal of job security rather than a genuine interest in the subject matter seems to be a central motivation to enter teaching. In Indonesia, on the other hand, EFL teacher participants mostly cite intrinsic motivations for going into teaching (Mukminin et al., 2017). Opportunities for academic development, inspiration from other teachers or mentors to become teachers, and interest in the

teaching profession itself were some of the reasons given for becoming teachers (Mukminin et al., 2017). Furthermore, the majority of participants viewed teaching and being able to shape the future of children as socially worthwhile endeavors (Mukminin et al., 2017). Such extreme differences among EFL teachers' motivations cannot but impact the quality of their language instruction.

A second factor appearing to impact language teachers is the structure of their certification programs. Many of these programs across the globe, and even in the United States, emphasize learning theories (Agudo, 2017; Akcan, 2016; Al-Jarrah & Al-Ahmad, 2013; Nguyen, 2015). Novice teachers abroad agree that while coursework in theory is relevant and important, the practical aspects of language teaching is lacking or insufficient (Agudo, 2017; Akcan, 2016; Al-Jarrah & Al-Ahmad, 2013; Nguyen, 2015). In Akcan's study (2016), new teachers felt that despite learning about important teaching strategies, there was no integration of theory and practice. These teachers wanted to be able to utilize the theories they had learned so they could see what worked or did not work in practice (Akcan, 2016). The teachers in Agudo's article (2017) responded that they preferred less theory and more practice in the practical aspects of classroom teaching. In fact, they would have welcomed simulations of classroom teaching experiences prior to going into the classroom to learning about theories (Agudo, 2017) in order to have a better sense of what to do in the classroom. Ultimately, new teachers receive little classroom training outside of their practicum, let alone training in how to teach writing, and the theories they do learn about only seem to become relevant as they gain experience over time.

In conjunction with the theoretical coursework, many novice teachers have issues with the practicum (Agudo, 2017; Akcan, 2016; Carmel & Badash, 2017; Nguyen, 2015; Senom, Zakaria, & Shah, 2013). In terms of preparedness and readiness to teach, Carmel and Badash's

study (2017) on new teachers in Israel related that the practicum can be the deciding factor on whether a new teacher stays in the profession or leaves it. The majority of new teachers in Akcan's study (2016) in Turkey stressed the need for more teaching practice that began earlier and lasted throughout their program rather than being offered only in the final year as the culminating experience. Moreover, because the practicum occurs after university courses have been completed, there is no chance to practice concurrently what is being learned or to rely on much needed support from one's mentors, as participants in Nguyen's research (2015) in Vietnam revealed. Despite a generally positive review of their training program, which does offer some degree of specialization, participants in Agudo's study (2017) in Spain also felt they needed more practice in the classroom and less theory. All in all, new teachers do not believe they are ready to handle the demands of language teaching (Senom et al., 2013), let alone teach a specific language skill, even though they have a certificate that qualifies them to do so.

EFL teachers are expected to have proficiency in English in reading, writing, listening, and especially speaking, yet it is another weakness that seems to be common among NNESTs (Agudo, 2017; Carmel & Badash, 2018; Moodie & Nam, 2016). In Israel, EFL teachers must have a high level of proficiency in English, but as most of these teachers are NNESTs, mastery of English content and teaching methods can be difficult to achieve as English is their second language (L2), too (Carmel & Badash, 2018). In Iran, EFL teachers' L2 proficiency is such that their own students can recognize the grammatical mistakes and mistakes in pronunciation made by the teachers (Nezakat-Alhossaini & Ketabi, 2013). Participants in Agudo's study (2017) complained that their low level of English proficiency was due to insufficient communicative practice in the classes they took for their own studies. In addition, many of them recommended that degree programs need to offer more courses to improve teachers' linguistic competence

(Agudo, 2017). In South Korea, secondary teachers are supposed to use English exclusively under the Teaching English through English (TETE) policy (Moodie & Nam, 2016). However, this is not the reality because of perceived or actual lack of proficiency in the target language and a lack of consensus as to what the TETE policy considers to be exclusive use of English (Moodie & Nam, 2016). Moreover, the use of English in the Korean classroom has become reduced or abandoned even by highly proficient teachers because of a strong culture of test preparation (Moodie & Nam, 2016). Another result of this test culture is a reliance on traditional approaches that teach to the test rather than communicative approaches which aim to improve total communication abilities and skills (Moodie & Nam, 2016). In light of teachers' own lack of confidence or true proficiency in the English language, it is somewhat understandable that EL students may be reluctant to take instruction from someone who may not have the qualifications to teach and assess language learning.

Finally, classroom management is especially challenging for novice teachers because it involves the utilization of practical skills that are not usually imparted in teacher certification programs (Carmel & Badash, 2018; Moodie & Nam, 2016; Senom et al., 2013). Classroom management can simply be expressed as maintaining order in the classroom, but it is an umbrella term that covers all the daily procedures, routines, and behaviors that the teacher performs to create and maintain a safe and productive learning environment. The 910 new teachers who participated in a Malaysian study (Senom et al., 2013) reported that they experienced moderate problems with classroom management during their first year. In their study of South Korea, Moodie and Nam (2016) found that difficulties maintaining classroom management was one reason that teachers stopped using the target language in the classroom. Carmel and Badash's study (2018) revealed that participants rated good classroom management skills as an important

reason for teacher retention and poor skills as a contributor to attrition. Thus, a practical skill that teachers believe they need to develop and receive instruction on is one that is mainly avoided in training programs both abroad and in the United States.

This section focused on a variety of factors that impact new and usually inexperienced language teachers, particularly NNESTs. Intrinsic versus extrinsic motivations for teaching, theory over practical knowledge in the training programs, practicum experiences that are too short and perhaps too late in their training, questions of teachers' own level of proficiency, and how to manage classrooms are the issues that new teachers face before they even start teaching (Agudo, 2017; Akcan, 2016; Al-Jarrah & Al-Ahmad, 2013; Carmel & Badash, 2018; Moodie & Nam, 2016; Mukminin et al., 2017; Nezakat-Alhossaini & Ketabi, 2013; Nguyen, 2015; Senom et al., 2013). These issues must create feelings of anxiety and insecurity within these teachers who by the nature of their profession, must present a front of confidence and expertise in their subject matter. The conclusion that must be drawn here is that in spite of the courses they take and the amount of English they know, new teachers need more instruction and guidance, and in some cases accountability, in the practicalities and realities of language teaching.

### **Writing Instruction Abroad**

This section of the literature review shifts the focus from the teacher to the way language instruction, specifically writing, is structured outside of the United States. Within the United States, students have been learning to write essays via the process approach since the 1980s (Gibbons, 2015). Outside of the United States, however, English language learners have not had the same, lengthy exposure to an approach to writing instruction that involves writing multiple drafts before submitting a last or final draft. ELs experience vastly different writing curricula and teachers who are not necessarily trained or willing to teach writing. In fact, some students do not

receive advanced writing instruction at all (Afrin, 2016; Al-Jarrah & Al-Ahmad, 2013; Ren, 2017). This section will explore literature on how classroom writing instruction abroad has been delivered and the extent to which students have access to writing instruction.

A factor impacting EFL students' English writing instruction is inconsistency in the kinds of classes offered, required, and available to them at the university level. At Yarmouk University, an institution representative of state universities in Jordan, only English majors are required to take writing classes (Al-Jarrah & Al-Ahmad, 2013). The three classes offered to them are: paragraph writing, essay writing, and writing on literature (Al-Jarrah & Al-Ahmad, 2013). Non-English majors take reading comprehension, grammar, and/or vocabulary classes, but their exposure to writing is basically what they have had in primary and secondary school (Al-Jarrah & Al-Ahmad, 2013). The first-year writing courses that Ezza and Al-Mudibry (2014) compared at three Arabic universities in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Morocco do not address genre analysis, contrastive rhetoric, or discourse analysis, courses which could help ELLs write in a more English style. In Bangladesh, non-English major students can enroll in English courses, but there are not enough courses available for students to take (Afrin, 2016). At some universities in China, no mandatory writing course is offered to non-English majors, so writing is taught in tandem with reading classes (Ren, 2017). In contrast, one university in China has a different approach. It now teaches English for general academic purposes to undergraduate non-English major students in a series of courses that integrate reading and writing on one academic genre per course: expository, argumentative, literature review, and project-based reading and writing (Du, Chen, & Liu, 2016). These examples provide a glimpse into the limited range of writing classes offered to EFL students and how vastly different and extreme the offerings are from region to region.

In many parts of the world, English language instruction is delivered in traditional or outdated ways which are very different from the communicative approach common in the United States (Afrin, 2016; Du et al., 2016; Ezza & Al-Mudibry, 2014; Liao & Li, 2017; Naghdipour, 2016; Rajagopalan & Rajagopalan, 2005; Rasskazova, Guzikova, & Green, 2017; Ren, 2017; Zhang et al., 2015). In English classrooms abroad, one can easily find the teacher at the center of the educational experience, doing most of the talking in lectures, directing all the activities, and controlling all of the content (Liao & Li, 2017; Rasskazova et al., 2017). With regard to writing instruction, this traditional, outdated approach can be seen in the continued use of the grammar-translation method (Naghdipour, 2016; Rasskazova et al., 2017) or the bottom-up method that looks at grammar correctness at the sentence level rather than addressing writing as a communicative skill (Ezza & Al-Mudibry, 2014). The writing approach at the university level in Bangladesh is a traditional one that emphasizes the finished product, not the process which would be more student-centered and allow for more opportunities for students to practice and improve their writing (Afrin, 2016). However, there is resistance from both EFL teachers and students to move towards a more progressive, student-centered, and communicative learning experience (Liao & Li, 2017; Ren & Wang, 2015). Many EFL teachers feel pressure to prepare students for national exams, and they rely on traditional methods which are familiar to them and known to the students who still expect to receive correct answers from teachers (Liao & Li, 2017). It can be difficult to let go of what is comfortable and invest time and energy into new approaches. However, if new approaches, such as process writing, collaborative or peer work, and student-centered activities are the norm in U.S. education (Gibbons, 2015), experience with this approach would help students transition easier to academic life in U.S. universities and to the team-based environment of many international companies.

Despite the persistence of traditional teaching methods, some institutions have been initiating changes in EFL instruction, especially in the teaching of writing (Liao & Li, 2017; Rasskazova et al., 2017). Ural Federal University in Russia participated in a pilot program to assess teachers' classroom practices, and Rasskazova et al. (2017) surveyed teachers and students one year into the program. Despite a small sample of 22 teachers and 255 first-year students who responded to the same questionnaire, a shift was noted of moving away from teacher-centered, grammar-translation writing instruction towards a more communicative, student-centered approach. Liao and Li's study (2017) examined a year-long, freshman writing course for all non-language majors at Beijing Foreign Studies University, one of China's top foreign studies universities. The course was redesigned in response to reforms in China's national higher education policies to integrate language and intercultural and communication skills (Liao & Li, 2017). The aim was for students to produce coherent, analytical writing and develop skills to relate, compare, and evaluate materials (Liao & Li, 2017). Qualitative findings suggest that participants noticed a shift in their writing knowledge from sentence level to text level e.g., essay structure, organizational methods, development of ideas, and beyond, as well as starting to gain a sense of what authentic English is (Liao & Li, 2017). Though many universities still cling to their accustomed teaching methods, it appears that adopting communicative approaches can affect student learning even in a short space of time.

Around the world, English instruction is thriving, but instruction in writing is not consistent or comparable among the various countries. Some regions and universities are still only offering instruction at the basic sentence level (Al-Jarrah & Al-Ahmad, 2013; Ezza & Al-Mudibry, 2014) whereas others are addressing writing at a genre-based communicative level (Du et al., 2016; Liao & Li, 2017; Ren & Wang, 2015). In light of these extreme differences in ELLs'



English learning environments, EFL students who plan to study in the United States will surely need extra support and practice writing paragraphs and essays. In addition, these students will need to become used to and familiar with the process approach favored in U.S. schools, so that they understand that they will most likely be expected to write multiple drafts prior to the one they submit.

### **Problems in Foreign EFL Students' Writing**

The first two themes looked at the training NNESTs receive to teach writing in English and the methods used to teach English in classrooms abroad. The third theme presents problems evident in foreign students' English writing because these issues are heavily influenced by what they have learned, how they learned it, and the conditions under which they learned. And yet, other characteristics in students' writing suggest that the problems cannot all be placed on the teachers and the methods of teaching. First language (L1) interference, proficiency in the target language, and the specific errors made in grammar, structure, and cohesion in EFL students' writing also contribute to ELLs' writing difficulties.

#### **L1 Interference, Frequency of Errors, and Proficiency**

A selection of studies concerning the influence of L1 on the target language (L2) are examined in this section. This influence can be positive or negative depending on how the learner's first language helps (positive transfer) or interferes (negative transfer) in production of the target language (L2) (Brown, 2007). This sampling of studies reveals the extent to which L1 interferes with students' writing (interlingual) (Brown, 2007). It also explores the frequency of errors made plus the kinds of errors tracked, revealing specific weaknesses in students' L2 proficiency (intralingual) (Brown, 2007).

A study of 28 third-year EFL students in a basic writing course at Thaksin University, Thailand, found that students' L2 writings and paragraphs were influenced by L1 (Thai) grammar structure, vocabulary, and discourse, yet this interference is a negative language transfer (Bennui, 2008). Although the students, ages 20-22, were not required to take a grammar course prior to the writing class, they had been studying English for over 10 years (Bennui, 2008). This fact suggests that their proficiency in English was weak (Bennui, 2008), so their first language interfered in many aspects of their English writing.

In their study, Dolores and Teodora (2015) focused on the frequency of intralingual writing errors in 56 essays from 42 secondary students in Spain. In addition, the researchers hypothesized a relationship between the length and the quality of the writing (Dolores & Teodora, 2015). Intralingual errors outnumbered interlingual errors and were mostly those of morphology, while most transfer errors were in lexis and syntax (Dolores & Teodora, 2015). In addition, the shorter essays produced by less proficient students had a higher percentage of total errors (58%) compared to the longer essays of the more proficient students (42%) (Dolores & Teodora, 2015). This data suggests that students' L2 proficiency affects the lengths of their essays and number of errors (Dolores & Teodora, 2015).

Marzban and Jalali (2016) also studied essays, looking at 78 Iranian EFL students' essays written on the same topic, in Persian and English, to determine the relationship among L1(Persian) writing skills, L2 (English) writing skills, L2 proficiency, and positive transfer of writing skills. The results indicated that for more proficient students, writing problems occur in L2 because they have writing issues in their L1, whereas for low proficiency students, their difficulties occur because of lack of knowledge in L2 and the need more L2 writing practice (Marzban & Jalali, 2016). Moreover, L2 proficiency was a stronger predictor of L2 writing skills

for lower level students, and L1 writing skills were more significant for predicting L2 writing skills for advanced students (Marzban & Jalali, 2016).

These three studies taken together highlight the importance of writing skills in any language but especially how L2 proficiency is necessary for strong L2 writing skills. Without a strong foundation in the target language, students' L2 writing will also be weak (Bennui, 2008; Dolores & Teodora, 2015; Marzban & Jalali, 2016).

### **Categories of Errors**

Since errors do occur in EFL students' writing, what kinds of errors are they making? Jung's research (2013) focused on form-based and meaning-based errors as well as the categories of errors/mistakes made by 42 Korean college students of intermediate level. The studies analyzed 264 essays over the course of nine months and also involved peer feedback as well as teacher feedback (Jung, 2013). The results showed that students made significantly more errors in article usage, grammar, and punctuation (1114 form-based errors) than errors related to comprehension (115 meaning-based errors) (Jung, 2013). The peer feedback data revealed that students made mistakes in pointing out errors and did not provide many comments on peer work, suggesting that students may not be able to recognize certain form-based errors nor know how to assess or describe meaning-based errors (Jung, 2013).

Afrin's study in Bangladesh (2016) also looked at writing problems in two timed writings and answers from a questionnaire. Eighty-nine non-English major undergraduates aged 20-23 years enrolled in a private university where English is the language of instruction participated in the study (Afrin, 2016). Their paragraphs were found to lack structure, unity, and transitional phrases, pointing to students' inability to plan their writing, express ideas clearly, and stay focused on the topic even though they were instructed to prewrite before the final draft (Afrin,

2016). Afrin (2016) concludes that 90% of these students cannot organize their ideas. Data from the questionnaire reveals that 88% of the students who responded feel they do not have command of sentence structure, 74% do not feel confident about expressing their ideas in writing, 63% do not use prewriting, and 91% do not practice writing outside of the classroom or at home (Afrin, 2016). This data (Afrin, 2016) confirms that both EFL teachers and students recognize writing in English is a serious problem.

Another study, conducted by Marzoughi and Ghanbari (2015), involved 80 Iranian undergraduate medical students in the first semester of 2014-2015 completing three questionnaires: a general English proficiency test, a questionnaire for background information, and an essay writing test. The researchers wanted to know if a significant difference existed between kinds of essay writing errors the students committed and to determine the significance of the committed errors (Marzoughi & Ghanbari, 2015). 77.5% of students made errors with articles, 72.5% with verb tense, 56.5% in spelling/word form, and 52.5% with prepositions usage (Marzoughi & Ghanbari, 2015). On the essay writing test, 52.5% made errors in recognizing topic sentences, 61.5% in supporting sentences, 61.5% in supporting details, 61.5% in closing sentences, and 60% in recognizing the thesis of the essay (Marzoughi & Ghanbari, 2015). It is clear that at least half of the students in this study (Marzoughi & Ghanbari, 2015) are making errors at both the sentence and text levels.

These three studies (Afrin, 2016; Jung, 2013; Marzoughi & Ghanbari, 2015) underscore the idea that EFL students simply do not know enough about English grammar, and they have little understanding of paragraph structure. The majority of students in Jung (2013) and Marzoughi and Ghanbari (2015) made a significant amount of grammar errors. Considerably more than half of the students in Afrin (2016) responded that they do not have confidence in

their writing skills, which seems to deter them from trying to improve, and about the same percentage in Marzoughi and Ghanbari (2015) could not successfully recognize the different components of a paragraph. As for the students in Jung (2013) who identified a low number of meaning-based errors via peer feedback, this data suggests that perhaps they, too, do not know how to recognize the parts of the paragraph. Therefore, more instruction and practice in both areas is necessary.

### **Problems with Cohesion and Organization**

Moreover, studies on cohesive and organizational elements in students' writing reveal significant issues: repetition of lexical elements, a limited vocabulary, and a lack of understanding of paragraph form (Adiantika, 2015; Kadiri, Igbokwe, Okebalama, & Egbe, 2016; Shahhoseiny, 2015). The study conducted by Kadiri et al. (2016) sought to discover the lexical elements used for cohesion in a representative sample of essays written by 200 final year students from five different departments at the University of Nigeria in Nsukka. The tallies came to 1,098 repetitions, 106 synonyms and 29 lexical sets for a total of 1,233, or 89% use of repetitions, 9% use of synonyms, and 2% use of lexical sets (Kadiri et al., 2016). Clearly, repetition is the most used element for cohesion indicating that students, even in their last year of university, have limited understanding and use of a variety of cohesive elements. This repetition, indicative of the most basic form of cohesion, exposes students' need more academic writing instruction.

Adiantika (2015) also explored the occurrence of cohesive devices in a case study of nine 12<sup>th</sup> grade public high school students in Kuningan, Indonesia, who wrote an expository essay. In these essays, cohesive devices occurred 651 times, with lexical cohesion the most common (322), then conjunctions (181), references (146), and substitution (2); however, there were no

occurrences of ellipsis for cohesion (Adiantika, 2015). The researcher concluded that lexical cohesion was realized by repetition in an attempt to mask a lack of vocabulary, and although conjunctions were common, they were to some extent overused or misplaced leading to incoherence in the students' texts (Adiantika, 2015).

Lastly, Shahhoseiny's study (2015) attempted to look at errors in paragraph structure, namely topic, supporting, and concluding sentences, of 70 first-year translation students, aged 19-28, at Bushehr University of Applied Science and Technology in Iran. Students provided three timed paragraph samples over the course of their second semester (Shahhoseiny, 2015). Although the researcher does not specifically state the nature of the errors the students made, she cited that total numbers of errors were: 58 in the topic sentence (81.6%), 69 in supporting sentences (97.2%), and 38 in concluding sentence (53.5%) of students' error. The data from Shahhoseiny's study (2015) suggests that students do not understand the rules of paragraph writing. Thus, these studies (Adiantika, 2015; Kadiri et al., 2016; Shahhoseiny, 2015) highlight that what EFL students are learning about organization and cohesion is happening too late, too infrequently, or too superficially for them to truly learn to write fluently in English.

Although interference, a high frequency of grammar and writing errors, L2 proficiency, and issues with cohesion and organization characterize EFL students' writing, we can see that L2 proficiency and interference from L1 play the largest roles in the nature of what students write no matter which corner of the world they come from. Errors in their writing at the sentence level, therefore, will continue to occur if proficiency is not at the appropriate level for university standards and affect students' academic performance. Finally, issues with structure and organization in paragraph and essay writing cannot be avoided if students are not exposed to and frequently practice writing in the target language. However, there is one silver lining of sorts.

Many L1 English speakers enroll in the same first-year college writing courses as L2 students; therefore, issues of coherence, objective and extended argumentation styles, conciseness, etc. are not only L2 writing issues (Staples & Reppen, 2016). If students, no matter where they come from, cannot write properly, they will not be able to communicate their knowledge effectively, and their chances of success in a U.S. university or international company will be significantly lower.

### **Summary**

The three themes in this literature review were the training of EFL teachers abroad, English writing instruction abroad, and the characteristics of foreign students' writing. The first theme explored five issues related to teacher training: motivation, the training program, the practicum, English proficiency, and classroom management. The motivation for going into the EFL teaching profession ranges from the promise of job security with few repercussions for poor job performance to a true desire to effect change in the world (Mukminin et al., 2017; Nezakat-Alhossaini & Ketabi, 2013). Next, shared opinions emerged among teachers across the globe that their training programs provide too much theory, not enough practical knowledge about language teaching (Agudo, 2017; Akcan, 2016; Al-Jarrah & Al-Ahmad, 2013; Nguyen, 2015), and that the practicum at the end of the training program comes too late and is too short (Agudo, 2017; Akcan, 2016; Carmel & Badash, 2017; Nguyen, 2015; Senom et al., 2013). Proficiency in English, or rather the lack of proficiency, also impacted English teachers' in the classroom (Agudo, 2017; Carmel & Badash, 2018; Moodie & Nam, 2016). Lastly, the lack of effective, practical, classroom management skills and practice impacts novice teachers just starting out. All these factors together point to teacher training that does not address practical issues, provide

sufficient training, allow for a lengthy practice, or help teachers learn how to teach the main skill of this project: writing.

The second theme addressed English writing instruction abroad. The literature exposed inconsistencies in class offerings and the continued use of outdated teaching approaches, but it also shed light on reforms in writing instruction. In some universities, English writing instruction is still focused on grammar and sentence level issues, whereas at others, courses in various genres of writing are offered to all students, not just English majors (Al-Jarrah & Al-Ahmad, 2013; Du et al., 2016; Ezza & Al-Mudibry, 2014; Ren, 2017). It also became clear that traditional, teacher-as-expert, teacher-centered classrooms, especially at university level, are still common around the world (Afrin, 2016; Ezza & Al-Mudibry, 2014; Liao & Li, 2017; Rasskazova et al., 2017; Ren, 2017; Du et al., 2016). What was a surprise is that some universities, and countries, are attempting to change the status quo so that students can improve all of their English skills, but especially writing (Liao & Li, 2017; Rasskazova et al., 2017). The picture that emerges of English writing instruction abroad is a lack of standardization within a country and extremely disparity when one compares them across various countries.

The third theme looked at problems that characterize EFL students' writing. The main issues were L1 interference, both positive and negative, intralingual and transfer errors, writing proficiency in both L1 and L2, form-based and meaning-based errors, cohesion and organization, and basic paragraph structure. Studies in this section suggest that the lack of L2 proficiency lies at the heart of most of students' writing errors (Bennui, 2008). Intralingual errors occur more often than transfer errors (Dolores & Teodora, 2015), but at higher levels of L2 proficiency, students' L1 writing abilities are more significant (Marzban & Jalali, 2016). In addition, the length of a student's writing was relative to his or her level of proficiency and number of errors



(Dolores & Teodora, 2015). To establish cohesion, repetition and conjunctions were the most used devices (Adiantika, 2015); however, students still do not understand the rules of paragraph writing (Shahhoseiny, 2015).

This literature review emphasizes some of the many disparities among teachers, teaching methods, and students' abilities to write. However, the most salient issue is that teachers do not get trained specifically in teaching writing, yet they are expected to teach it. Thus, EFL teachers, particularly new ones, are inadequately prepared to teach the complexities of English writing. Therefore, this project seeks to fill the gap between their training and the needs of the students who must be able to write effectively for success in U.S. universities.

## CHAPTER III THE PROJECT AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

### **Brief Description of the Project**

This field project is in the form of a handbook that contains supplementary materials on paragraph writing. The handbook is not an official text nor a replacement for a language book, but I hope that it provides, in a concise and comprehensible manner, an alternative experience with paragraph writing. While not an instructional unit in the traditional sense, the handbook was created with NNESTs and students studying English abroad in mind. It provides explanatory materials to help understand paragraph structure and writing in order to better teach, assess, and produce body paragraphs. The handbook provides students with a variety of paragraphs as well for them to become familiar with the format, understand the differences among the components, and evaluate the quality of the various parts of the paragraph. It is designed to allow flexibility for teachers to utilize the materials as they see fit and for students to use what is most helpful to them.

The materials in the handbook address the six areas of the body paragraph: the paragraph as a whole, topic sentences, transitions, examples/evidence, explanation/ commentary, and concluding sentences. Each section begins with a definition of the specific part of the paragraph and explains its function in the paragraph. Next, there are some examples and practice exercises so that teachers and students can engage with the material. There is also a paragraph frame that students can use as a template for writing a body paragraph to make sure they have included all the basic parts of the paragraph. Also included are rubrics and checklists which may be used for self or peer editing or editing and assessment by the teacher. In the end of the handbook are keys or answer sheets for teachers' reference or for students to access. Ideally, this handbook will not

only will aid NNESTs teach writing, but also help students better understand body paragraph structure.

The last aspect of the handbook that I think is important to note is its face validity. It was important to me that the handbook have a characteristic look and consistent style. Therefore, from cover to cover, the text in the handbook is written in the same font. Each page has a border which I feel holds the page together. Every heading on every page is highlighted in bright red and directions and other important sections are highlighted in yellow. Lastly, all of the pages have an image which relates to the content on the page. Most of these same images are repeated on the keys or answer sheets to better match with if the pages are used out of sequence. The images were found on Google search, and they are images which have been labeled for noncommercial reuse with modification with usage rights listed as free to use, share, or modify. The basic, almost primary, color scheme of the handbook was purposely chosen to reflect how I see the body paragraph - as the basic unit of writing.

### **Development of the Project**

I had the opportunity to teach at a language school in Brazil where speaking and listening were the main skills students developed. Yet when I started teaching English to foreign students in San Francisco, the communicative approach ensured that all four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing would be practiced and developed. I began to see that a number of students, from low to high levels and from different corners of the world, could not write paragraphs that were organized in a logical manner from the topic sentence through to the concluding sentence. In fact, many paragraphs often lacked topic and concluding sentences as well as not providing enough evidence or commentary about the topic. Furthermore, organization within the paragraphs was missing. Where there should have been a focus on one topic or aspect of a thesis,

many ideas and examples were lumped together in one paragraph when they should have been separated into different paragraphs. In short, everything but the proverbial kitchen sink could be found in many of my students' paragraphs.

As I considered the various issues in ESL/EFL education for this project, I thought of these students and their writing. I wondered how they were taught to write in their home countries and recalled how native English-speaking students learned to write here in the United States. I also looked at course offerings at community colleges to see what classes students needed to take to meet their English language requirements. I found a large number writing classes being offered, indicating to me that EFL students needed more instruction and practice in paragraph writing. Then I remembered my Korean student who asked for help with his college application essay last summer, and the seed of this project was sown. Making paragraph writing more comprehensible and easier to teach would be the focus of this project.

In preparing this project, I realized that I would need to focus on three areas: what EL teachers abroad knew about teaching writing, how foreign EL students were learning to write before they came to the United States, and what EL students could and could not do in English writing. Moreover, I would focus on English instruction at the tertiary level, as my target audience would be foreign students who intended to study in U.S. universities or work for multinational companies. The literature I found revealed great differences in the abilities and attitudes of NNESTs, the basic writing skills of students from different countries, and the access to writing instruction based on students' majors. However, I also discovered surprising similarities in EFL teacher training programs, the approaches to language instruction abroad, and the kinds of issues ELLs had with paragraph structure.

I began to doubt how I could fill a gap that seemed so wide and diverse, but that was when I thought back to my Korean student, his college essay, and the high number of foreign students in U.S. universities. I realized that what I wanted to do for NNESTs and their students was to give them materials that break down the body paragraph into its components, explains each component, and illustrates how to put it all back together. I also thought about how the process approach could be incorporated into the handbook, as many students in the United States learn to write via the process approach (Gibbons, 2015). I organized the handbook to begin with an overview of the body paragraph but then to build out from the examples. Examples are often the result of brainstorming a writing topic, which is a step in the process approach. In this way, English students abroad can have some experience of paragraph writing, structure, organization, and logic the way students in the United States learn about paragraph writing, by learning about the body paragraph from the inside out.

I hope the materials in this handbook benefit both students and teachers.

### **The Project**

The project in its entirety can be found in the appendix.

## CHAPTER IV CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Conclusions**

English paragraphs are supposed to contain specific elements in an expected order, such as a topic sentence, evidence, explanation of the evidence in relation to the topic, and a concluding thought that ends the paragraph. In my teaching experience, many EFL students cannot write paragraphs that follow this basic pattern. In the course of doing research for this project, I have found that this weakness in students' English language skills can be traced to NNESTs' lack of training in teaching writing, a lack of standardization in how English is taught abroad, and students' lack of exposure to paragraph writing instruction. The purpose of this project is to fill these gaps with supplementary materials that present paragraphs in a comprehensible and practical manner. This project was designed with specific foreign EL students in mind, namely those who intend to go to a university in the United States and then seek employment with a multinational company. Therefore, this handbook will help these students understand how to write more effectively and logically in English. Additionally, EFL teachers will also benefit from this project which offers them explanatory and practice materials with which to teach paragraph writing.

By focusing on one component of writing, namely the body paragraph, this project takes what I think of as the smallest unit of sustained writing and breaks it down into its components, thereby facilitating the teaching and learning of academic writing. Students and teachers can zero in on specific parts of the paragraph, they can look at the whole structure, or they can do both. Long pieces of writing repeat the same structure over and over, so once students acquire the structure, they can focus their attention on the content. In addition, the bulk of materials can be used for teachers' enlightenment and/or as activities for students, so explanations are given in

addition to the correct answers on keys. In doing so, questions from students are anticipated, and teachers are better situated to answer those questions. The templates/frames and samples of body paragraphs, assist teachers and students to visualize the structure and sequence of the paragraph. While there are areas of paragraph writing that are not addressed, as a set of supplementary materials, this project more than fulfills its purpose.

### **Recommendations**

Although this project does not address essay writing in its entirety, the body paragraph is, in my estimation, the most important part of an essay - next to the thesis. The bulk of an essay is composed of many body paragraphs; therefore, an understanding of the body paragraph is critical. A recommendation for using this handbook would be to do so in conjunction with teaching the academic essay. No matter the subject a student is studying at university, he or she will have to write essay an or term paper. EFL students who come from abroad will have to be able to produce the same level of writing as native English-speaking students, so EFL teachers could consider using this handbook when teaching the essay or solely for teaching paragraphs.

Furthermore, this project does not explain or provide instruction on the process approach to writing, yet it does assume a degree of pre-writing, such as freewriting for ideas and gathering evidence, would precede the paragraph writing stage. Teachers could lead brainstorming and other pre-writing activities for both specific examples and for topic sentences. Therefore, one recommendation I would make is for NNESTs to learn about and incorporate the process approach to writing prior to using these materials for paragraph structure instruction and practice. With the process approach, teachers and students complete writing tasks in steps or stages to allow time for edits and revisions. In conjunction with this recommendation is a call to have students think of writing as a series of drafts with the last one - *not* the first - representing their

best efforts. In this way, students and teachers should feel freer to make the changes, deletions, and revisions needed to best convey the students' thoughts.

Additionally, I was surprised to learn that in some countries, teaching jobs are sinecures, and this fact may be influencing those teachers' attitudes about what they teach and whether they teach anything at all (Nezakat-Alhossaini & Ketabi, 2013). It would be interesting to learn to what degree teachers' motivations for going into the profession influence their teaching behaviors, so I would recommend some sort of study to be conducted. Moreover, it should be conducted in countries where this sinecure situation exists but also where it does not for a more balanced view. EFL students need to master many aspects of a language, especially the productive skill of writing. They need teachers who are invested in their progress and success in language acquisition, or they will not be equipped with the skills to be successful in a global economy or community.

Another discovery I made in my research was a suggested correlation between students' English proficiency and their writing abilities (Bennui, 2008; Dolores & Teodora, 2015; Marzban & Jalali, 2016). I would recommend that students develop a strong command of sentence construction, especially compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences. I have found that EFL students often repeat the same sentence structure in short and long written responses. Knowing how to construct different sentences types allows for a variety of transitions between parts of a paragraph through the use of different conjunctions, subordinators, and clause placements. Also, having a variety of sentence structures reflects a student's proficiency in the target language, which in turn will sound more native-like and perhaps indicate a student's readiness to attend a U.S. university or work for an international corporation. Perhaps a review of sentence structures and practice would be an addition that could be made to the handbook in the



future. In the section on transitions, a handout or practice worksheet on sentence types and different kinds of conjunctions and subordinators would be advisable. I would also recommend adding more kinesthetic activities or activities with manipulatives to better understand the various sentence structures in addition to paragraph structure.

Moreover, my research for this project revealed that EFL teachers around the globe shared similar opinions about their training programs' lack of practical training in specific skills, including writing. As English is now largely accepted as the language of international business and communication, perhaps some kind of standardization in English writing instruction methods across national borders should be considered. Students from different countries would learn the paragraph structure in the same manner that native English speakers in the United States learn it, so they would already know the structure prior to coming here or beginning a job with a multinational. In this way, the handbook I have created could be one example to be used as a reference of the structure or as practice material.

This project is further informed by my experiences teaching paragraph writing to both native and non-native speakers of English. It is my attempt to share with NNESTs and EFL students how to think about and write paragraphs the way native speakers approach the task. While it does not include a wide selection of examples, I hope that it demonstrates to EFL teachers how they could break down the body paragraph into comprehensible units not only for their students but for themselves, too. In future additions to the handbook, I suggest adding a selection of practice writing prompts for students to do in class ones. They would then be able to work on pre and during writing activities together and engage in in other collaborative writing experiences.

My last recommendation based on the project is this: the handbook presents body paragraph writing as following a specific sequence from topic sentence to concluding sentence because this sequence is the one used in much of academic writing. Since this handbook is geared mainly for EFL students planning to attend a U.S. university or work for an international firm, it focuses on the linear, focused organization all paragraphs need to have. I am aware that many writers in the real world do not follow this structure. These writers, however, have learned the rules and know that they are breaking them. However, EFL students need time and practice to master the basic format. Once they can produce paragraphs that follow this frame, I recommend they read and analyze other paragraph structures. In a future edition of this handbook, examples of paragraphs that do not follow the structure could be added for such students. These would not be paragraphs that are jumbled and need to be put in order, but more sophisticated and creative examples written by noted essayists, novelists, journalists, etc. Students would be able to see how a topic sentence does not always appear at the beginning of a paragraph, but it must be somewhere in the paragraph. In this way, students who are ready to break out of the frame can find their own voice and writing style.

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## APPENDIX

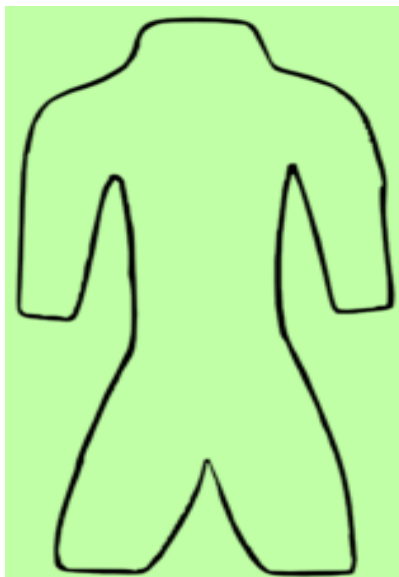
***UNDERSTANDING***

***THE BODY***

***PARAGRAPH***

***A Handbook for EFL Teachers & Students***

***By Terry Papadopoulos***



# LETTER TO TEACHERS

May 18, 2018

Dear EFL teachers,

*This handbook was created to help you teach the body paragraph and its individual components. You can use these materials to supplement any text you are using or as a whole when introducing the paragraph structure. They are not tied to any specific theme or lesson, so you can choose when you use the materials with your students.*

*After reviewing the paragraph as a whole, the handbook then examines using and choosing examples and transitions, evaluating relevant explanations, and determining topic sentences and concluding sentences. Then, there are sample paragraphs provided for review, as well as templates, checklists, and rubrics for self, peer, or teacher assessment.*

*The examples and explanations were assembled so that your students can study them on their own, in collaborative activities, or under your guidance. Furthermore, with the focus just on the body paragraph, you do not have to teach the entire essay writing process if your students are not ready for it. Although the materials can be used separately from each other, the order in which they have been assembled supports writing the paragraph from the inside out, as would be done in the process approach to writing.*

*My hope is that with these materials is two-fold: EFL teachers will feel more comfortable teaching the body paragraph structure, and students will gain an understanding of the body paragraph and be able to produce it.*

Happy writing!

Terry Papadopoulos



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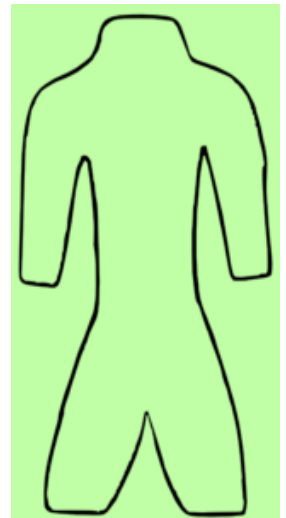
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## WHAT IS A PARAGRAPH?

*In academic writing, a paragraph is a unit of writing, usually several sentences in length, that focuses on a specific topic. A paragraph can be part of a longer piece of writing, such as an essay or a story, or it can stand alone. No matter where a paragraph occurs, it must follow a specific, logical pattern so that the reader can follow the writer's train of thought.*

*There are different kinds of paragraphs depending on where they are placed. There are introductory paragraphs, body paragraphs, and concluding paragraphs. In a formal essay, the first paragraph is the introduction (or introductory paragraph), and it must contain a thesis statement. The last paragraph is the conclusion (or concluding paragraph), and it must provide closure for the entire essay without bringing in new information.*

*The paragraphs in between the introduction and the conclusion are the body paragraphs. Modified body paragraphs are also commonly used as long answer responses on exams or questionnaires. No matter where they are written, body paragraphs also have a structure and requirements different from other paragraphs.*



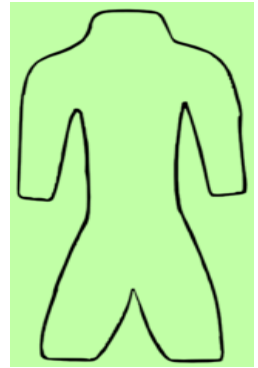
## WHAT IS A BODY PARAGRAPH?

*Body paragraphs are usually the middle paragraphs of an essay. As such, they comprise the majority of the writer's thoughts on or about the topic of an essay. The body paragraphs must provide examples and the writer's thoughts on those examples in a way that proves or supports the main point of the essay, or thesis.*

*On its own, a body paragraph is rather like a miniature essay. It introduces the main idea of the paragraph in the topic sentence, supports it with evidence, provides the writer's thoughts about the topic of the paragraph, and then ends the topic/paragraph with a final thought. The only focus of the paragraph is the idea presented in the topic sentence.*

*A body paragraph must have the following items, and they should go in this order: a topic sentence, a sentence that provides an example or evidence, explanation or commentary about the example, and a concluding sentence. In general, for each example given in a paragraph, write two sentences of commentary or explanation. If you do so, then a body paragraph with one (1) example should be at least five (5) sentences.*

# WHAT IS A BODY PARAGRAPH?



A) ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS WITHOUT REFERRING TO YOUR NOTES OR HANDOUT.

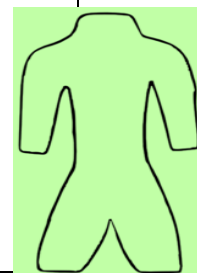
B) WHEN YOU FINISH, CHECK YOUR ANSWERS WITH A PARTNER.

C) REFER TO YOUR NOTES/HANDOUT TO CLARIFY ANSWERS AFTER CHECKING WITH A PARTNER.

1. *Where does a body paragraph appear in an academic essay?*
2. *What are the four (4) components of a body paragraph AND what in what order?*
3. *Briefly describe each of the four components of a body paragraph:*
  - a)
  - b)
  - c)
  - d)
4. *How long must a body paragraph be?*
5. *How many topics should a body paragraph address?*

# DIRECTIONS FOR TERMS FOR THE BODY PARAGRAPH

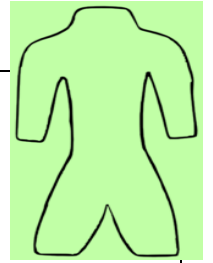
<p><b>DIRECTIONS:</b></p>	<p><i>This activity can be done in different ways.</i>  <b>THREE</b> versions of the activity are listed below.  <i>However, you can choose the best way to deliver the information to your students.</i>  <i>The complete chart can be found in the appendix.</i></p>
<p><b>1</b></p>	<p><b>*JIGSAW:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Each student receives one version of the chart.</li> <li>b) One term in the body paragraph is given and its definition or explanation.</li> <li>c) Students form groups so that each of the four terms is listed.</li> <li>d) Students verbally share their term with each other and note down the missing information on their charts.</li> <li>e) Whole class review the end of the activity.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2</b></p>	<p><b>*DICTATION:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Students receive a blank chart.</li> <li>b) All the terms of the paragraph and their explanations are posted on a table apart from the students.</li> <li>c) Students are placed into groups of four (ideally).</li> <li>d) One student from each group goes to the table, reads one of the items, returns to the group, and dictates the information to the group. This student cannot take notes.</li> <li>e) Each student goes to the table to do the dictation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3</b></p>	<p><b>**TEACHER LECTURE:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Students receive a blank chart with just the terms of each component listed.</li> <li>b) The teacher gives a short lecture where he or she provides an explanation or definition of each term.</li> <li>c) Students fill in the chart with the appropriate information.</li> </ul>



\*more student-centered approach

\*\*more teacher-centered approach

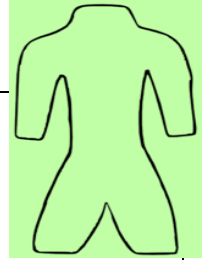
## TERMS FOR THE BODY PARAGRAPH



<p><b>TOPIC</b></p> <p><b>SENTENCE</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>the first sentence of the body paragraph</i></li> <li>• <i>the main idea or focus of the paragraph</i></li> <li>• <i>does not explain, give an example, or provide evidence</i></li> <li>• <i>states what the writer will prove, analyze, describe, etc. in paragraph</i></li> <li>• <i>may be an opinion that others can agree or disagree with</i></li> </ul>

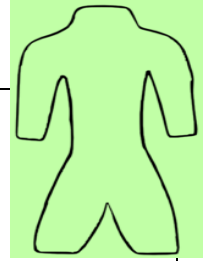


## TERMS FOR THE BODY PARAGRAPH



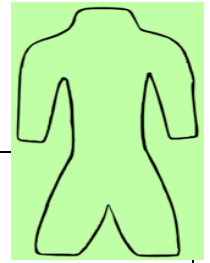
<b>EXAMPLE(S) / EVIDENCE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>specific example, event, words, phrases, lines, narration, dialogue, quotation, information, etc. from a literary work or other source(s) that relates to the topic of the paragraph</i></li> <li>• <i>also called support or proof (of the topic sentence)</i></li> <li>• <i>has to relate directly to the topic of the paragraph</i></li> </ul>

## TERMS FOR THE BODY PARAGRAPH



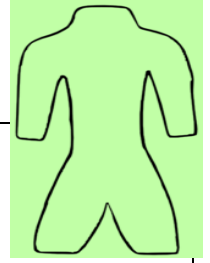
<b>EXPLANATION / COMMENTARY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>analyzes or comments on the example(s)/evidence provided</i></li><li>• <i>also called interpretation, inference, evaluation, and explication</i></li><li>• <i>illustrates your thinking process / how you have made connections between the example(s)/evidence and the topic of the paragraph</i></li><li>• <i>makes clear to the reader how or why the example(s)/evidence support the topic of the paragraph</i></li></ul>

## TERMS FOR THE BODY PARAGRAPH



<b>CONCLUDING SENTENCE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>the last sentence of the body paragraph</i></li><li>• <i>no examples or evidence in this sentence</i></li><li>• <i>does not repeat the topic sentence</i></li><li>• <i>a final comment on the relevance of the paragraph</i></li><li>• <i>if the paragraph is in an essay, the concluding sentence connects the idea of the body paragraph to thesis of the paper</i></li><li>• <i>sometimes transitions to the next paragraph (if followed by another paragraph)</i></li></ul>

# TERMS FOR THE BODY PARAGRAPH



<p><b>TOPIC</b></p> <p><b>SENTENCE</b></p>	
<p><b>EXAMPLE(S) /</b></p> <p><b>EVIDENCE</b></p>	
<p><b>EXPLANATION /</b></p> <p><b>COMMENTARY</b></p>	
<p><b>CONCLUDING</b></p> <p><b>SENTENCE</b></p>	

# PARAGRAPH ORGANIZATION



## A) Can you find the topic sentence?

Read each paragraph carefully. Underline the letter and the sentence that expresses the main idea of the paragraph and is the topic sentence.

## B) Which is the concluding sentence?

Re-read each paragraph. Draw a circle around the letter and the sentence that is the concluding sentence. It provides a final thought on the content of the paragraph or finishes the ideas of the paragraph.

## C) What is the correct order of sentences?

Read each paragraph one last time. Write the letters corresponding to each sentence in the order that is the correct sequence for each paragraph.

---

1. (a) Alex loves the game of poker because it is a game of luck and an opportunity to study how people behave under pressure. (b) He carefully observes the faces and gestures of other players to see if they give any unconscious hints that they may not have a strong hand. (c) When he sees one of these hints, or 'tells,' he bets accordingly so that he minimizes his losses yet maximizes his wins. (d) One might think Alex's behavior is an example of cheating or taking advantage of others, but it isn't. (e) His ability to read a player is just as important in poker as knowing how to play the game.

**CORRECT SEQUENCE:**    \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

2. (a) For example, she is having trouble sleeping at night which causes her to fall asleep in class. (b) Furthermore, she has gained a lot of weight because she doesn't go out and exercise. (c) In addition, because she sits in front of her computer for such a long time, she has developed aches and pains in her back and shoulders. (d) She needs to deal with her Internet addiction before it causes irreversible damage. (e) Sherry spends too much time on the Internet and doing so is affecting her health.

**CORRECT SEQUENCE:**    \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

3. (a) Lastly, the beach and boardwalk offer amusement for the entire family, so no matter your age, you can find something that will appeal to you. (b) Firstly, you can drive there in about one and a half to two hours from most places in the Bay Area. (c) Secondly, it is less expensive than the more well-known town of Carmel, famous for its golf course and scenic drives. (d) Santa Cruz is a great place for a day trip for tourists and residents from the San Francisco Bay Area. (e) With so much to offer, why not plan a getaway to Santa Cruz today?

**CORRECT SEQUENCE:**    \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

4. (a) Hopefully, RPAs will make our lives easier, if we can afford them! (b) In the future, owning a robotic personal assistant, or RPA, will be the norm. (c) RPAs will resemble humans in every way to make interacting with them easy. (d) Advances in artificial intelligence, or AI, will also enable RPAs to learn specific tasks and adjust their performance to better meet the demands of their owners. (e) Unlike human assistants, RPAs will not need time off for vacation or sickness.

**CORRECT SEQUENCE:**    \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

5. (a) Here are just a few reasons in favor of home schooling. (b) Children's interests direct the content, not a political organization, and the content determines the best learning tasks. (c) Home schooling provides a more meaningful and realistic educational experience for young children. (d) There are no unnatural testing situations or meaningless homework assignments given just to fill up time. (e) Children learn to manage their time and studies not by an unnatural school schedule but by the realities of their daily chores and lives.

**CORRECT SEQUENCE:**    \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_



## ***EVIDENCE IN BODY PARAGRAPHS***

*A body paragraph needs to provide **evidence** or proof that directly relates to and supports the topic of the paragraph. Evidence can be any of the following but not limited to this list:*

- *specific examples of the topic*
- *historical events / actions*
- *data / numbers / percentages*
- *phrases / sentences / written passages*
- *lines of poetry / drama / lyrics*
- *quotations / descriptions / narration*
- *charts / tables / diagrams*



*There may be many examples that support what you want to say in a paragraph or essay. It is your job to choose the evidence that best work together to support the point of your paragraph. Always ask yourself*

*Each paragraph should have **at least two (2) examples** or pieces of evidence in order to give more weight to the purpose of your paragraph.*

*In an essay, each body paragraph supports an aspect of the thesis statement. So, each paragraph presents a set of examples that support one argument, position, etc. which in turn relates back to the thesis.*

# SELECTING EXAMPLES

## or EVIDENCE

# FOR A BODY PARAGRAPH



**DIRECTIONS:** Read the topic sentence provided below. Then, look at all the possible examples generated by the topic. Select the examples that best support the topic sentence by putting a checkmark next to them. Explain why you chose those examples and excluded the others.

**TOPIC SENTENCE:** *Sending teens to boarding school helps them become independent.*

**EXAMPLES/EVIDENCE:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ *students must follow dress and behavior codes*
- \_\_\_\_\_ *parents are not around*
- \_\_\_\_\_ *students are generally not allowed off campus without supervision*
- \_\_\_\_\_ *many teachers live on the premises*
- \_\_\_\_\_ *students usually have to share rooms*
- \_\_\_\_\_ *playing sports teaches teamwork*
- \_\_\_\_\_ *students rely on each other for help with school*
- \_\_\_\_\_ *the schools tend to be located far from students' homes*
- \_\_\_\_\_ *only wealthy families can afford to send their children to boarding schools*
- \_\_\_\_\_ *the schools are usually single gender*
- \_\_\_\_\_ *uniforms are required*
- \_\_\_\_\_ *there are many rules to follow*
- \_\_\_\_\_ *the food and laundry service are provided for all students*
- \_\_\_\_\_ *students can focus on their studies most of the time*
- \_\_\_\_\_ *senior or upper level students usually report on lower level students' behavior*



## ***TRANSITIONS IN BODY PARAGRAPHS***

**Transitions** are words or phrases that make your writing flow smoothly. They guide the reader through your thinking process in a linear way, from the beginning to the end of a paragraph. Transitions connect sentences to each other by showing a relationship between the sentence before (either the topic sentence or a sentence of commentary) and after (the next example or the concluding sentence). The transition words you use depend on which part of the paragraph you are writing. Also, evidence needs to be integrated into one's writing using transitions. The following are just a few sample transitions and how to use them. Remember to use the appropriate punctuation.



- **First example or evidence:** for example / for instance / an example is / an example of this is
- **To add information:** also / another / furthermore / moreover / in addition
- **To compare/contrast:** although / despite / in the same way / nevertheless / on the other hand / however /
- **Chronological:** first / next / later / then / eventually / finally
- **Importance:** least important / more importantly
- **To conclude:** as a result / therefore / thus / so / because of / because / due to

# **TRANSITIONS IN A BODY PARAGRAPH**



**DIRECTIONS:** Use all of transitional words or phrase in the blank spaces below.  
Add punctuation and capitalize if necessary.

**another**

**in addition**

**so**

**because of**

**moreover**

**therefore**

**for example**

**so**

**thus**

Requiring primary and secondary students to wear uniforms to school saves money.

\_\_\_\_\_ uniforms are designed for every day and formal occasions.

\_\_\_\_\_ this fact, families need not buy additional clothes for school-

related occasions. \_\_\_\_\_ uniforms do not often change,

\_\_\_\_\_ students can wear them for months or years while at school for

class or for ceremonies. \_\_\_\_\_ way uniforms are economical is that

they can be recycled. Children often attend the same school as their older brothers or

sisters; \_\_\_\_\_ uniforms can be passed down to younger siblings.

\_\_\_\_\_ the material used for uniforms is durable, and the clothes are

well-made, \_\_\_\_\_ parents do not need to keep buying new uniforms for

each child every year. \_\_\_\_\_ school uniforms offer families significant

economic savings in the long run.

# TOPIC SENTENCES

*In a body paragraph, the topic sentence is the first sentence of the paragraph. It states clearly and concisely what the main idea or focus of the paragraph is. Think of the topic sentence as an umbrella – everything after it in the paragraph is related to the topic sentence.*



*Another way to think of the topic sentence is that it is a guiding statement. It presents only what the writer will prove, analyze, describe, present, etc. in that specific paragraph. All the examples and commentary must directly connect to the topic sentence for the paragraph to have unity and coherence. Furthermore, the topic sentence may present an opinion that others may agree or disagree with.*

*The topic sentence must be one sentence in length and be a declarative sentence. It should not provide an explanation, give an example, or ask a question.*

**DIRECTIONS:** Below are four incomplete paragraphs. They need topic sentences. Write a topic sentence in the boxes below corresponding to the letter of the paragraph. Then, compare with a partner.

<b>A</b>	
<b>B</b>	
<b>C</b>	
<b>D</b>	

**A**

*For instance, he traveled to all the continents and sailed across all of the oceans before he was thirty. Moreover, he has met at least five living world leaders and been interviewed for international news services.*

**B**

*First, the offense must work together to score even if a player has to make a sacrifice play. In addition, the defense has to work like clockwork to quickly prevent any hits from becoming possible runs.*

**C**

*One reason for this is that everyone knows each other, so people care more about what happens to people they know. Another reason is that there are fewer opportunities to get involved in dangerous activities because not much happens there.*

**D**

*For example, most people are too busy to do anything for fun these days. It is not uncommon for people to work overtime and on weekends. In fact, some people work at more than one job just to pay their bills.*

## **EXPLANATION / COMMENTARY**



*The bulk of a body paragraph is made up of explanation or commentary. **Commentary***

***is your opinion, comments, analysis, interpretation, inference, evaluation, explication, reflection (on), etc. of the examples or evidence you have chosen to support the topic of the paragraph.***

*The explanation / commentary is entirely **your own words** and goes after the example(s). Commentary should **be at least two (2) sentences** in length but not repeat each other. Each example or piece of evidence in a paragraph needs to be explained. For every example, you should write at least two sentences of explanation. If you are writing about literature or explaining quotations, your commentary should not paraphrase or reword the passages, nor should it summarize plot points.*

*Remember, the examples alone do not prove your topic sentence or the thesis of a paper. You must demonstrate in writing how the evidence is connected to the topic. In this way, writing a paragraph, or an essay, is a little like being a lawyer in a trial. You must explain how the evidence or examples work together to support one main idea. Being able to express in writing how the examples prove your point is effective commentary.*

# EXPLANATION / COMMENTARY

**DIRECTIONS:** Below are various examples of explanation / commentary on a topic. Examples that support the topic have been provided. As you review each sample of commentary, note which ones are ineffective because they are superficial or obvious observations or unrelated pieces of information, and which are effective due to the way they explain the significance or relevance of the evidence.



**TOPIC:** Technology brings people together.

**EXAMPLE:** For instance, the Internet allows people across the globe to communicate easily and quickly with each other.

- a) Social media is a great way to keep in touch with relatives in different places. Many people have access to the Internet which allows for almost immediate contact.
- b) Unfortunately, young people have become so used to texting, that they do not know how to behave when in the same room with each other. Moreover, they cannot seem to go beyond a five-minute stretch without looking at their phones for no reason at all!
- c) Older people are uncomfortable using computers, so they will not willingly go onto the Internet to communicate. In addition, they do not usually own computers or smartphones.
- d) There are a number of internet dating websites through which people from around the world can meet. However, most of the people on these websites misrepresent themselves by posting old photos and lying about their ages, interests, and professions.
- e) Internet service is available in many corners of the world, so more people than ever before have access to communication apps and social media websites that offer audio and text features. Furthermore, Internet speeds are so fast that connecting to someone is practically instantaneous.

## CONCLUDING SENTENCES

*The last sentence of body paragraph is the concluding sentence. It is like a bookend that marks the end of the paragraph and yet holds the paragraph together.*

*The concluding sentence provides a final comment on the paragraph or its relevance without verbatim repetition.*

*Additionally, no examples or evidence are given in the concluding sentence. It reflects on the content of the paragraph in relation to the topic.*

*If the paragraph is part of an essay, then the concluding sentence makes a connection to the thesis as well. Be advised that in some essays, the concluding sentence makes a transition to the next paragraph. Check with your teacher or the guidelines for your academic subject.*

**DIRECTIONS:** Below are four incomplete paragraphs. They need concluding sentences. Match the letter of the concluding sentence in the boxes below to the paragraph it matches.

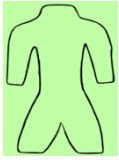
<b>A</b>	<i>Thus, every player must do what is best for the team to win.</i>
<b>B</b>	<i>It is no wonder, then, that many families are moving to the country.</i>
<b>C</b>	<i>Therefore, it is no surprise that people have no time to meet anyone.</i>
<b>D</b>	<i>His life should be turned into a movie for all to see.</i>

\_\_\_\_\_ *Of all the team sports that exist, baseball involves the most cooperation. First, the offense must work together to score even if a player has to make a sacrifice play. In addition, the defense has to work like clockwork to quickly prevent any hits from becoming possible runs.*

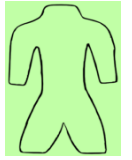
\_\_\_\_\_ *Dating is more difficult now than it was in the past. For example, most people are too busy to do anything for fun these days. It is not uncommon for people to work overtime and on weekends. In fact, some people work at more than one job just to pay their bills.*

\_\_\_\_\_ *My uncle is an extraordinary person. For instance, he traveled to all the continents and sailed across all of the oceans before he was thirty. Moreover, he has met at least five living world leaders and been interviewed for international news services.*

\_\_\_\_\_ *Small towns are safer than urban metropolises for raising a family. One reason for this is that everyone knows each other, so people care more about what happens to people they know. Another reason is that there are fewer opportunities to get involved in dangerous activities because not much happens there.*



# **BODY PARAGRAPH FRAME A – 5 SENTENCES**



TOPIC SENTENCE + EXAMPLE / EVIDENCE + EXPLANATION / COMMENTARY + CONCLUDING SENTENCE =

## **BODY PARAGRAPH**

**TOPIC SENTENCE:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

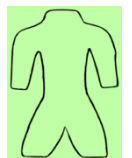
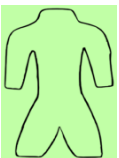
**EXAMPLE / EVIDENCE:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**EXPLANATION / COMMENTARY:**

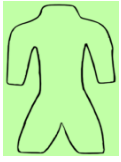
1 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

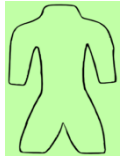
**CONCLUDING SENTENCE:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_







## **SAMPLE BODY PARAGRAPH FRAME A – 5 SENTENCES**



TOPIC SENTENCE + EXAMPLE / EVIDENCE + EXPLANATION / COMMENTARY + CONCLUDING SENTENCE =

### **BODY PARAGRAPH**

#### **TOPIC SENTENCE:**

*My vacation in Jamaica was fantastic.*

#### **EXAMPLE / EVIDENCE:**

*The weather was unbelievable.*

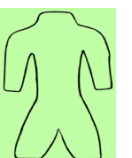
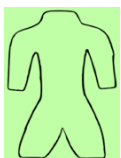
#### **EXPLANATION / COMMENTARY:**

*1: It never rained the whole time I was there, so I did not have to worry about changing plans due to weather.*

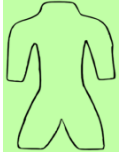
*2: In addition, because the temperature remained warm all day and all night, I had no need of sweaters or jackets day or night.*

#### **CONCLUDING SENTENCE:**

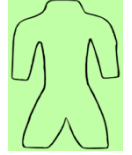
*Therefore, I have decided that Jamaica will be my one and only vacation destination from now on.*







# **BODY PARAGRAPH FRAME B – 8 SENTENCES**



TOPIC SENTENCE + EXAMPLE / EVIDENCE + EXPLANATION / COMMENTARY +

EXAMPLE / EVIDENCE + EXPLANATION / COMMENTARY + CONCLUDING SENTENCE =

## **BODY PARAGRAPH**

**TOPIC SENTENCE:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**EXAMPLE / EVIDENCE:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**EXPLANATION / COMMENTARY:**

1 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

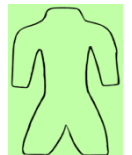
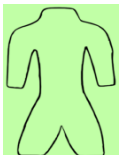
**EXAMPLE / EVIDENCE:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

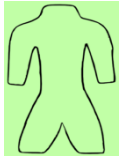
**EXPLANATION / COMMENTARY:**

1 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

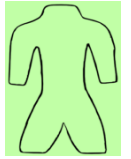
2 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**CONCLUDING SENTENCE:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_





## **SAMPLE BODY PARAGRAPH FRAME B – 8 SENTENCES**



**TOPIC SENTENCE + EXAMPLE / EVIDENCE + EXPLANATION / COMMENTARY +  
EXAMPLE / EVIDENCE + EXPLANATION / COMMENTARY + CONCLUDING SENTENCE =  
BODY PARAGRAPH**

**TOPIC SENTENCE:** Throughout the story, Daisy puts her need for wealth and security above love.

**EXAMPLE / EVIDENCE:** For instance, when Tom, Nick, Jordan, Gatsby, and Daisy are at the hotel in New York, Gatsby says, “[Daisy] only married [Tom] because I was poor and she was tired of waiting for me” (Chapter 7).

**EXPLANATION / COMMENTARY:**

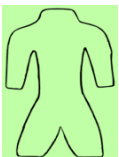
- 1: This example clearly illustrates that though Daisy was in love with Gatsby in the past, she did not want to live in poverty or deprive herself of the luxuries she has grown up with to be with him.
- 2: Moreover, she wants to be taken care of, especially by a man of wealth, so she married the man who offers her both rather than wait for her lover who might not return from fighting in WWI.

**EXAMPLE / EVIDENCE:** Later on, while everyone is still at the hotel, Gatsby, Tom, and Daisy have another tense conversation about the future of their relationship: “‘Daisy’s leaving you.’ ‘Nonsense.’ ‘I am though...’” (Chapter 7).

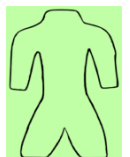
**EXPLANATION / COMMENTARY:**

- 1: Now that Gatsby has money, a mansion, and the continued means to support her, Daisy is willing to be with him despite rejecting him in the past.
- 2: She can leave her husband now because she knows that Gatsby is equal to Tom in wealth and capable of keeping her in the lifestyle she is accustomed to.

**CONCLUDING SENTENCE:** Daisy has been surrounded by wealth all of her life, so it is no surprise that her materialistic nature cannot be changed even by love.



*Quotations cited from:*  
Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby*. New York: Scribner, 2004.



## BODY PARAGRAPH CHECKLIST A



Y N

- ☐ ☐ The **topic sentence** is the **first sentence** and presents the main idea of the paragraph.
- ☐ ☐ **Transitions** throughout the paragraph present the idea/example(s) in a logical manner.
- ☐ ☐ At least **one (1) specific example** or **piece of evidence** in support of the topic sentence.
- ☐ ☐ **Two (2) sentences** of explanation **follow each example**.
- ☐ ☐ The concluding sentence **does NOT repeat** (word for word) the topic sentence.
- ☐ ☐ The paragraph is a minimum of **five (5) sentences** in length?
- ☐ ☐ The paragraph is **free from basic grammar errors** such as spelling, punctuation, etc.

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## BODY PARAGRAPH CHECKLIST A



Y N

- ☐ ☐ The **topic sentence** is the **first sentence** and presents the main idea of the paragraph.
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- ☐ ☐ At least **one (1) specific example** or **piece of evidence** in support of the topic sentence.
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- ☐ ☐ The concluding sentence **does NOT repeat** (word for word) the topic sentence.
- ☐ ☐ The paragraph is a minimum of **five (5) sentences** in length?
- ☐ ☐ The paragraph is **free from basic grammar errors** such as spelling, punctuation, etc.

## BODY PARAGRAPH RUBRIC – A

**Y      N**

- +2 ☐ 0 ☐ The **topic sentence** is the **first sentence** and presents the main idea of the paragraph.
- +1 ☐ 0 ☐ **Transitions** throughout the paragraph present the idea/example(s) in a logical manner.
- +2 ☐ 0 ☐ At least **one (1) specific example** or **piece of evidence** in support of the topic sentence.
- +2 ☐ 0 ☐ **Two (2) sentences** of explanation **follow each example**.
- +1 ☐ 0 ☐ The concluding sentence **does NOT repeat** (word for word) the topic sentence.
- +1 ☐ 0 ☐ The paragraph is a minimum of **five (5) sentences** in length?
- +1 ☐ 0 ☐ The paragraph is **free from basic grammar errors** such as spelling,  
punctuation, etc.

**TOTAL = \_\_\_\_ / 10**



## BODY PARAGRAPH RUBRIC – A

**Y      N**

- +2 ☐ 0 ☐ The **topic sentence** is the **first sentence** and presents the main idea of the paragraph.
- +1 ☐ 0 ☐ **Transitions** throughout the paragraph present the idea/example(s) in a logical manner.
- +2 ☐ 0 ☐ At least **one (1) specific example** or **piece of evidence** in support of the topic sentence.
- +2 ☐ 0 ☐ **Two (2) sentences** of explanation **follow each example**.
- +1 ☐ 0 ☐ The concluding sentence **does NOT repeat** (word for word) the topic sentence.
- +1 ☐ 0 ☐ The paragraph is a minimum of **five (5) sentences** in length?
- +1 ☐ 0 ☐ The paragraph is **free from basic grammar errors** such as spelling,  
punctuation, etc.

**TOTAL = \_\_\_\_ / 10**



## BODY PARAGRAPH CHECKLIST B



Y N

- ☐ ☐ Is there a topic sentence that identifies the **main idea** of the paragraph?
- ☐ ☐ Does the paragraph **follow the body paragraph sequence/format**?
- ☐ ☐ Is the **topic sentence the first sentence** of the paragraph?
- ☐ ☐ Are there **appropriate or effective transitions** in the paragraph?
- ☐ ☐ Are **examples / Is evidence introduced** by relevant description, identification, or context?
- ☐ ☐ Do **two sentences** that **explain/interpret/analyze** the evidence follow the evidence?
- ☐ ☐ Does commentary **connect the evidence/example(s)** evidence/example(s) to the topic?
- ☐ ☐ Does the **concluding sentence avoid repetition** of the topic sentence?
- ☐ ☐ Does the **concluding sentence provide an effective closure** to the paragraph?
- ☐ ☐ Does the author **stay on topic** throughout the paragraph?
- ☐ ☐ Is the paragraph a minimum of **five (5) sentences** in length?
- ☐ ☐ Is the paragraph **free from basic grammar errors** such as spelling, punctuation, etc.

**COMMENTS:**

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***BODY PARAGRAPH RUBRIC - B***

**Y**      **N**

- +1 ☐ 0 ☐ Is there a topic sentence that identifies the **main idea** of the paragraph?
- +1 ☐ 0 ☐ Does the paragraph **follow the body paragraph sequence/format**?
- +2 ☐ 0 ☐ Is the **topic sentence the first sentence** of the paragraph?
- +1 ☐ 0 ☐ Are there **appropriate or effective transitions** in the paragraph?
- +1 ☐ 0 ☐ Are **examples / Is evidence introduced** by relevant description, identification, or context?
- +2 ☐ 0 ☐ Do **two sentences that explain/interpret/analyze** the evidence follow the evidence?
- +1 ☐ 0 ☐ Does commentary **connect the evidence/example(s)** evidence/example(s) to topic?
- +1 ☐ 0 ☐ Does the **concluding sentence avoid repetition** of the topic sentence?
- +2 ☐ 0 ☐ Does the **concluding sentence provide an effective closure** to the paragraph?
- +1 ☐ 0 ☐ Does the author **stay on topic** throughout the paragraph?
- +1 ☐ 0 ☐ Is the paragraph a minimum of **five (5) sentences** in length?
- +1 ☐ 0 ☐ Is the paragraph **free from basic grammar errors** such as spelling, punctuation, etc.
- 

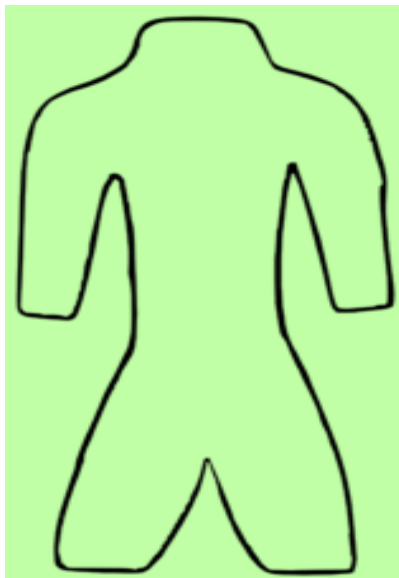


**TOTAL =            / 15      COMMENTS:**

[illegible]

# ***APPENDIX***

## ***Answer Keys***



# WHAT IS A BODY PARAGRAPH? - KEY



A) ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS WITHOUT REFERRING TO YOUR NOTES OR HANDOUT.

B) WHEN YOU FINISH, CHECK YOUR ANSWERS WITH A PARTNER.

C) REFER TO YOUR NOTES/HANDOUT TO CLARIFY ANSWERS AFTER CHECKING WITH A PARTNER.

1. Where does a body paragraph appear in an academic essay?

IN THE MIDDLE / BTWN INTRO & CONCL

2. What are the four (4) components of a body paragraph AND what in what order?

TOPIC SENTENCE / EXAMPLE OR EVIDENCE / COMMENTARY / CONCLUDING SENTENCE

3. Briefly describe each of the four components of a body paragraph:

a) TOPIC SENTENCE - introduces the main idea of the paragraph

b) EVIDENCE/EXAMPLE - a sentence that provides an example or evidence, explanation or commentary about the example

c) COMMENTARY/EXPLANATION - the writer's thoughts about the example/evidence as it relates to or supports the topic of the paragraph

d) CONCLUDING SENTENCE - a final thought on the paragraph, closure to the topic

4. How long must a body paragraph be?

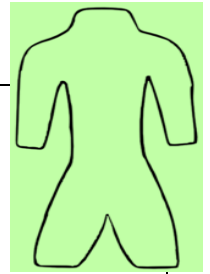
AT LEAST 5 SENTENCES

5. How many topics should a body paragraph address?

ONLY 1



# TERMS FOR THE BODY PARAGRAPH – KEY



<p><b>TOPIC SENTENCE</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the first sentence of the body paragraph</li> <li>the main idea or focus of the paragraph</li> <li>does not explain, give an example, or provide evidence</li> <li>states what the writer will prove, analyze, describe, etc. in paragraph</li> </ul>
<p><b>EXAMPLE(S) / EVIDENCE</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>specific example, event, words, phrases, lines, narration, dialogue, quotation, information, etc. from a literary work or other source(s) that relates to the topic of the paragraph</li> <li>also called support or proof (of the topic sentence)</li> <li>has to relate directly to the topic of the paragraph</li> </ul>
<p><b>EXPLANATION / COMMENTARY</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>analyzes or comments on the example(s)/evidence provided</li> <li>also called interpretation, inference, evaluation, and explication</li> <li>illustrates your thinking process / how you have made connections between the example(s)/evidence and the topic of the paragraph</li> <li>makes clear to the reader how or why the example(s)/evidence support the topic of the paragraph</li> </ul>
<p><b>CONCLUDING SENTENCE</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the last sentence of the body paragraph</li> <li>no examples or evidence in this sentence</li> <li>does not repeat the topic sentence</li> <li>a final comment on the relevance of the paragraph</li> <li>if the paragraph is in an essay, the concluding sentence connects the idea of the body paragraph to thesis of the paper</li> <li>sometimes transitions to the next paragraph (if followed by another paragraph)</li> </ul>

# PARAGRAPH ORGANIZATION - KEY



## A) KEY – Can you find the topic sentence?

1. **(a)** Alex loves the game of poker because it is a game of luck and an opportunity to study how people behave.
  2. **(e)** Sherry spends too much time on the Internet which is affecting her health.
  3. **(d)** Santa Cruz is a great place for a day trip for tourists and residents from the SF Bay Area.
  4. **(b)** In the future, owning a robotic personal assistant, or RPA, will be the norm.
  5. **(a)** Here are just a few reasons in favor of home schooling.
- 

## B) KEY - Which is the concluding sentence?

1. **(e)** His ability to read a player is just as important in poker as knowing how to play the game.
  2. **(d)** She needs to deal with her Internet addiction before it causes irreversible damage.
  3. **(e)** With so much to offer, why not plan a getaway to Santa Cruz today?
  4. **(a)** Hopefully, RPAs will make our lives easier, if we can afford them!
  5. **(c)** Home schooling provides a more meaningful and realistic educational experience for young children.
- 

## C) KEY – What is the correct sequence of sentences?

- |              |          |          |          |          |          |
|--------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 1. Sequence: | <b>a</b> | <b>b</b> | <b>c</b> | <b>d</b> | <b>e</b> |
| 2. Sequence: | <b>e</b> | <b>a</b> | <b>b</b> | <b>c</b> | <b>d</b> |
| 3. Sequence: | <b>d</b> | <b>b</b> | <b>c</b> | <b>a</b> | <b>e</b> |
| 4. Sequence: | <b>b</b> | <b>c</b> | <b>d</b> | <b>e</b> | <b>a</b> |
| 5. Sequence: | <b>a</b> | <b>b</b> | <b>d</b> | <b>e</b> | <b>c</b> |

## **SELECTING EXAMPLES/ EVIDENCE FOR A BODY PARAGRAPH – KEY**



**DIRECTIONS:** Read the topic sentence provided below. Then, look at all the possible examples generated by the topic. Select the examples that best support the topic sentence by putting a checkmark next to them. Explain why you chose those examples and excluded the others.

**TOPIC SENTENCE:** *Sending teens to boarding school helps them become independent.*

### **EXAMPLES/EVIDENCE:**

☐ *students must follow dress and behavior codes*

☒ *parents are not around – young people must learn to speak for themselves / take responsibility for own actions / learn to negotiate / cannot rely on parents to solve problems*

☐ *students are generally not allowed off campus without supervision*

☐ *many teachers live on the premises*

☒ *students usually have to share rooms – learn to compromise / understand how to behave around others / not put oneself first / problem solve without older person*

☐ *playing sports teaches teamwork – students may choose this, but strays off the topic of becoming independent / if changed to playing an individual sport, then may be arguable*

☐ *students rely on each other for help with school – students may choose this because students relying on each other is different than relying on parents or other adults for assistance / if students can explain how or why students helping each other builds independence then acceptable*

☒ *the schools tend to be located far from students' homes – distance from home prevents students from frequent visits home and interacting with family/parents / distance allows for teens to be on own/in 'foreign' environment longer and adjusting to life without parental supervision/interference / fewer distractions allows teens to learn who they really are and what interests them*

☐ *only wealthy families can afford to send their children to boarding schools*

☒ *the schools are usually single gender – single gender schools - for girls especially - are considered by many to be conducive to building confidence and independence through various character-building activities, lessons, attention to gender issues, etc.*

☐ *uniforms are required*

☐ *there are many rules to follow*

☐ *the food and laundry service are provided for all students*

☒ *students can focus on developing their talents – boarding schools offer a variety of courses and activities not available in many public schools due to reduced funding / students can pursue arts, sports, academics, etc. or whatever area interests them*

☐ *senior or upper level students usually report on lower level students' behavior*

## **TRANSITIONS IN A BODY PARAGRAPH - KEY**



**DIRECTIONS:** Use all of transitional words or phrase in the blank spaces below. Add punctuation and capitalize if necessary.

Requiring primary and secondary students to wear uniforms to school saves money. **For example,** uniforms are designed for every day and formal occasions. **Because of** this fact, families need not buy additional clothes for school-related occasions. **In addition,** uniforms do not often change, **so** students can wear them for months or years while at school for class or for ceremonies. **Another** way uniforms are economical is that they can be recycled. Children often attend the same school as their older brothers or sisters; **therefore,** uniforms can be passed down to younger siblings. **Moreover,** the material used for uniforms is durable, and the clothes are well-made, **so** parents do not need to keep buying new uniforms for each child every year. **Thus,** school uniforms offer families significant economic savings in the long run.

## TOPIC SENTENCES – KEY



**DIRECTIONS:** Below are four incomplete paragraphs. They need topic sentences. Write a topic sentence in the boxes below corresponding to the letter of the paragraph. Then, compare with a partner.

*Suggested topic sentences:*

<b>A</b>	<i>My uncle is an extraordinary person.</i>
<b>B</b>	<i>Of all the team sports that exist, baseball involves the most cooperation.</i>
<b>C</b>	<i>Small towns are safer than urban metropolises for raising a family.</i>
<b>D</b>	<i>Dating is more difficult now than it was in the past.</i>

**A**

*For instance, he traveled to all the continents and sailed across all of the oceans before he was thirty. Moreover, he has met at least five living world leaders and been interviewed for international news services.*

**B**

*First, the offense must work together to score even if a player has to make a sacrifice play. In addition, the defense has to work like clockwork to quickly prevent any hits from becoming possible runs.*

**C**

*One reason for this is that everyone knows each other, so people care more about what happens to people they know. Another reason is that there are fewer opportunities to get involved in dangerous activities because not much happens there.*

**D**

*For example, most people are too busy to do anything for fun these days. It is not uncommon for people to work overtime and on weekends. In fact, some people work at more than one job just to pay their bills.*

## EXPLANATION /

## COMMENTARY – KEY



**TOPIC:** *Technology brings people together.*

**EXAMPLE:** *The Internet, for instance, allows people across the globe to communicate easily and quickly with each other.*

- a) *Social media is a great way to keep in touch with relatives in different places. Many people have access to the Internet which allows for almost immediate contact.*

This set of sentences makes assertions but does not explain how or why social media allows family to communicate. Also, having access to the Internet needs to be connected to communication being easy and/or quick.

- b) *Unfortunately, young people have become so used to texting, that they do not know how to behave when in the same room with each other. Moreover, they cannot seem to go beyond a five-minute stretch without looking at their phones for no reason at all!*

This set of sentences contradicts the topic about bringing people together. It also focuses on negative aspects of technology whereas the topic implies a positive effect.

- c) *Older people are uncomfortable using computers, so they will not willingly go onto the Internet to communicate. In addition, they do not usually own computers or smart phones.*

This set of sentences suggests why older people might avoid communicating with the newest technologies. However, it is off topic and also contradicts the topic.

- d) *There are a number of internet dating websites through which people from around the world can meet and get to know each other. However, most of the people on these websites misrepresent themselves by posting old photos and lying about their ages, interests, and professions.*

The first sentence of this commentary is on-topic and relevant for it addresses one way that people can meet using technology. The second sentence presents a counter-argument which is misplaced here.

- e) *Internet service is available in many corners of the world, so more people than ever before have access to apps or social media websites that offer audio and text features. Furthermore, Internet speeds are so fast that communication is practically instantaneous.*

This set of commentary explains what the Internet provides for communication and how and why this technology improves communication and connections. Of the five examples here, this one is on-topic and focuses on the example that is given.

## CONCLUDING SENTENCES – KEY

**DIRECTIONS:** Below are four incomplete paragraphs. They need concluding sentences. Match the letter of the concluding sentence in the boxes below to the paragraph it matches.



<b>A</b>	<i>Thus, every player must do what is best for the team to win.</i>
<b>B</b>	<i>It is no wonder, then, that many families are moving to the country.</i>
<b>C</b>	<i>Therefore, it is no surprise that people have no time to meet anyone.</i>
<b>D</b>	<i>His life should be turned into a movie for all to see.</i>



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