ENGL 157 COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Lecture 6:**The paragraph and its development**

Aims

The aims of this lecture are:

- to introduce students to the various types of paragraphs

- to give students the opportunity to develop paragraphs

- to enable students to develop practical skills in achieving unity, coherence and adequacy in their paragraph writing.

The paragraph

- A paragraph is described as a district section or sub-division of a chapter, letter, etc. usually dealing with a particular point. It is always begun on a new line and is often indented.

- "…*paragraphing* involves creating a unit of discourse. This unit and others should fit within the framework of a larger unit, and can together constitute a single unit of communication which could be a letter, article, chapter, etc. Paragraphing, thus, refers also to dividing up a larger form (chapter, letter, etc.) into smaller units of discourse."

- "*Paragraphing is a practice by which a long discourse – speech or writing especially – is divided up according to the various points or issues that it is made up of.*"

- **Two important things:**

    -a paragraph as a unit in itself

    -the paragraph as a unit of a larger text – chapter or letter.

(Sekyi-Baidoo 2003)

The importance of paragraphs

Paragraphing involves the division of a passage, letter, etc. into a unified whole.

- It helps the writer to organise his/her passage or letter by critically looking into the message and be able to divide it up into its various issues and points.

- It encourages the writer to give adequate focus to the various aspects of his/his message.

- It saves the writer from putting ideas together haphazardly.

- It helps the reader to identify one point or one part of an issue from the other easily.

- Paragraphs – especially those with transitional markers and topic sentences – help the reader to skim long passages.

Types of paragraph

➢Distinguished according to **unity** and **coherence**:

-*inorganic paragraphs*: the paragraphs that do not exhibit the qualities of unity and coherence (ideal not to refer to them as paragraphs).

-*organic paragraphs*: those that exhibit unity and coherence, and express a single point or idea.

➢Distinguishes according to their **position** and **function** in the discourse.

-**structural paragraphs**: This refers to the introductory and concluding paragraphs as well as the transitional paragraph, which links different parts of an essay or letter. They are referred to as such because they do not actually discuss any particular point or issue, but rather their function is to bring out the structure or form of the essay.

-**mainstream paragraphs**: They contain topics or issues which are part of the concerns of the topic as a whole; and serve to provide information that is germane/appropriate to the discussion of the topic or focus of the essay. The mainstream paragraph usually have the topic sentence.

The structural paragraph   1/1

- THE GENERAL INTRODUCTION

    -**The general introduction**: introduces the focus and arrests the interest of the readers.

    -**The focus**: states the intentions or subject of the essay.

    -**The plan**: outlines the various points to be discussed in the paragraphs.

- THE CONCLUDING PARAGRAPHS

    -Summarise main ideas; refer to cause or effect of issues; suggest solutions; project into the future; make deductions; take a stand/reiterate your stand; state other areas of research.

- THE TRANSITIONAL PARAGRAPH

    -Using a paragraph to achieve coherence.

THE GENERAL INTRODUCTION

• The general introduction can be written in various ways

  -With a interesting story/event

  -With historical account

  -From general to particular (specifics)

  -With definitions of important concepts

  -With quotations

  -With rhetorical questions

  -With an opposite view

THE GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Example: A historical account

"The role of the Christian missionaries in the development of formal education in Ghana cannot be overemphasised. The Wesleyan and Basal missions are credited with the founding of secondary, teacher and technical or vocational education in Ghana. Even before this, the role of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel – featuring such astute educationists as Revd's Thompson and Philip Quaquo in primary education – is of notable mention. In the past two generations, one can also recount the efforts of these orthodox churches in the establishment of second-cycle institutions and also the inculcation of moral and religious discipline in our children. While making such commendations, it is important also to assess the role of the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in the education in this country for the past two decades."

(Sekyi-Badoo 2003:166)

THE GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Example: A historical account

"The role of the Christian missionaries in the development of formal education in Ghana cannot be overemphasised. [**the introductory line; general introduction; topic sentence**]

The Wesleyan and Basal missions are credited with the founding of secondary, teacher and technical or vocational education in Ghana. Even before this, the role of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel – featuring such astute educationists as Revd's Thompson and Philip Quaquo in primary education – is of notable mention. In the past two generations, one can also recount the efforts of these orthodox churches in the establishment of second-cycle institutions and also the inculcation of moral and religious discipline in our children. [**the focus**]

While making such commendations, it is important also to assess the role of the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in the education in this country for the past two decades." [**the plan**]

THE GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Example: From general to particular/specifics

"The phenomenon of codeswitching in the classroom in post-colonial settings, for example in Africa, has been the subject of scholarly attention for many years. For example, Clegg and Afitska (2011) present an overview of studies that assess the pedagogic relevance of teaching and learning in two languages in African classrooms. They show that language practices such as codeswitching in the classroom in sub-Saharan Africa is a controversial issue as authorities often condemn its use and teachers do not accept its use in the classroom. Despite these negative attitudes, however, Clegg and Afitska (2011:71) show that codeswitching plays important pedagogic roles in the classroom. Codeswitching is useful for explaining and elaborating on concepts, increasing classroom participation, establishing good classroom relationships, ensuring the smooth running of the lesson, and making connections with the local culture of learners. The authors therefore recommend teacher-education systems that would factor in the importance of bilingual pedagogy and various language practices that teachers could adopt to facilitate pupils' understanding and participation in the classroom."

(Yevudey 2013:6)

THE CONCLUDING PARAGRAPHS

-Summarise main ideas

-refer to cause or effect of issues

-suggest solutions

-project into the future

-make deductions

-take a stand/reiterate your stand

-state other areas of research.

THE CONCLUDING PARAGRAPH

-suggest solutions

"By far, the AIDS/HIV epidemic could be described as one of the most corrosive of this century. As of now, no authentic cure has been found for this; and it is envisaged that at such cure would be very expensive and out of the research of many who would need it. What is left for us then is how to save ourselves from the infection in the first place, and in this endeavour our watchword is CARE. We need to be insistent on the safest ways of health delivery, which would prevent any such blood contact. In our sexual lives too, infidelity and over-security (not using condoms) opens one bare to the deadly HIV/AIDS."

(Sekyi-Baidoo 2003:171)

THE TRANSITIONAL PARAGRAPH

-Using a paragraph to achieve coherence.

"Clegg and Afitska (2011:71) show that codeswitching plays important pedagogic roles in the classroom. Codeswitching is useful for explaining and elaborating on concepts, increasing classroom participation, establishing good classroom relationships, ensuring the smooth running of the lesson, and making connections with the local culture of learners. The authors therefore recommend teacher-education systems that would factor in the importance of bilingual pedagogy and various language practices that teachers could adopt to facilitate pupils' understanding and participation in the classroom.

Similarly, based on ethnographic study, Arthur (1996) investigates the interactions between teachers and pupils in standard (grade) six classes in two primary schools in northeastern Botswana. The policy under which the schools operate prescribes the use of Setswana, which is the national language, from lower school to standard 3 with a transition to English medium of instruction from standard 4. Arthur (1996) indicates that teachers use codeswitching to encourage participation by pupils."

(Yevudey 2013:3)

THE TRANSITIONAL PARAGRAPH: *Some transitional markers*

To compare	similarly, likewise, like, also, in the same way, equally, in like manner, in similar vein, etc.
To contrast	counter to, although, though, even though, at any rate, yet, nevertheless, however, in spite of, despite, anyway, all the same, still, anyhow, etc.
To explain or give reasons	since, because (of), for, owing to, due to, to clarify, to explain, etc.
For results or consequent action	as a result, consequently, in response, so, therefore, etc.
For emphasis	indeed, in fact, to emphasise, certainly, etc.

THE TRANSITIONAL PARAGRAPH: *Some transitional markers*

To sum up or conclude	finally, to conclude, in conclusion, in sum, in summary, to sum up, all in all, thus, in short, in brief, therefore, altogether, etc.
To add information	again, also, in addition, additionally, further, furthermore, further to, besides, moreover, first/second(ly), next lastly, likewise, above all, (far) more importantly, etc.
To show illustration	to illustrate, in illustration, for example, for instance, to cite an instance, to exemplify, to clarify, etc.
To clarify, or state a point differently	put differently, stated differently, put another way, this/that is to say, that is, thus, to clarify, in effect, in other words, etc.
To show time and sequence	now, then, earlier, later on, soon, afterwards, already, later, immediately, before, during, at the same time, meanwhile, today, yesterday, the next day, prior to, in the end, finally, until, till, eventually, lately, previously, etc.

Mainstream paragraphs: They contain topics or issues which are part of the concerns of the topic as a whole; and serve to provide information that is germane/appropriate to the discussion of the topic or focus of the essay. The mainstream paragraph usually have the topic sentence.

Manifestations of the mainstream paragraphs

- The expository

- The argumentative or persuasive

- The narrative

- The descriptive

The mainstream paragraphs 2/2

• THE EXPOSITORY MAINSTREAM PARAGRAPHS: They explain, discuss or expose an idea, fact or point. They generally define; show the cause or effect of a fact or reality; or compare two entities or more.

These types of paragraphs can manifest in many ways:

❖**Definition**

❖**Form**

❖**Operation and Process**

❖**Function**

❖**Reason** or **Cause**

❖**Effect**

❖**Comparison**

The mainstream paragraphs 2/3

Different kinds of the expository mainstream paragraphs:

❖**Definition**: This involves using authoritative statement in describing a process or a thing as a generic and not an individual entity.

❖**Form**: This involves describing the form or nature of an idea. This type of paragraph often answers questions such as "*How is it made up of?"*

❖**Operation and Process**: This involves showing how a phenomenon functions or how a goal or end is achieved. This type of paragraph answers questions such as "*How does it work*?", or "*What do the different parts do*?", or "*What happens at different times*?". These questions address the goals or functions of the phenomenon. (e.g. Laboratory tests – the Nitrogen Cycle).

❖**Function**: This address what a person, thing or organisation does in the real world.

❖**Reason** or **Cause**: This involves discussing a phenomenon from the point of view of the factors, conditions or circumstances that made it occur; or those which are responsible for its present state.

❖**Effect**: This involves presenting the implications of an activity, function, or programme on the society or the individual.

❖**Comparison**: This involves putting two or more items side-by-side, assessing them comparatively (similarity & difference).

THE EXPOSITORY MAINSTREAM PARAGRAPHS

Example:

Definition: This involves using authoritative statement in describing a process or a thing as a generic and not an individual entity.

"When we say 'education', we do not refer just to the system of receiving instruction in the classroom from a teacher. That is just formal education. We mean rather all experiences that help an individual positively such that he can be of greater asset to himself and to his community. It comprises therefore instructions or advice received at home, from our friends or at the place of work; and those which we learn ourselves in our day-to-day interaction with people and happenings. These are in addition to what we identify as formal education."

(Sekyi-Baidoo 2003:144)

THE EXPOSITORY MAINSTREAM PARAGRAPHS

Example:

Form: This involves describing the form or nature of an idea. This type of paragraph often answers questions such as "How is it made up of?"

"There are two main kinds of education. These are the formal and the informal. Formal education occurs in restricted conditions in which the roles of the educator and the educant are so clearly defined. In addition, there is a particular place chosen for such education. Further, the time and duration of formal education is explicitly stated. Finally, what should be taught or learnt is also explicit and restricted. Informal education occurs in day-to-day human experiences. It takes place in our homes, schools and in social gatherings. There are no such restrictions in place, time and subject; but it accounts for the best part of our knowledge which governs our day-to-day life. It may also be taught or acquired."

(Sekyi-Baidoo 2003:144-145)

• THE ARGUMENTATIVE OR PERSUASIVE MAINSTREAM PARAGRAPHS:

The aim of such paragraphs is to move the reader to make a particular choice or to take a particular course of action. In these paragraphs, the author/speaker often state a stand or advocate their point of view and suggests – either explicitly or implicitly – that a certain line of action or thought is not acceptable.

• THE ARGUMENTATIVE OR PERSUASIVE MAINSTREAM PARAGRAPHS:

Example:

"Sowah had grown very wealthy by thirty-six and was very popular. He was invited to every important function, but he still always remembered his mother's advise that good name is better than riches. Everybody still remembered the mysterious death of his wife and how his wealth had followed, as though the woman was its impediment. He knew also that inspite of all his generosity, the people feared him and even detested him. No one in his right frame of mind was prepared to travel alone with him – if even for free. He had lately understood why his bid to be assemblyman was so humiliatingly rejected; while that poor, old teacher's house got filled with people and gifts everyday, and how this same impoverished man defied his stumbling poverty to win such massively – even as an independent candidate – in the last parliamentary elections."

(Sekyi-Baidoo 2003:149)

- THE NARRATIVE MAINSTREAM PARAGRAPHS: These paragraphs present a point or discuss an issue through story telling or recounting of an event. Their main features are *chronology* – thus sequence of events – and *corresponding sequence of tense.*

- "A narrative involves a series of events told in chronological order. It usually ends by discussing the revelation, insight, lesson, or understanding that resulted from the experience."

(Ploeger 2001:139)

Elements of a narrative

-Title   *-Point of view*

-Tense   *-Characters*

-Action or *conflict*   *-Dialogue*

-Details

• THE NARRATIVE MAINSTREAM PARAGRAPHS: **Elements of a narrative:**

❖*Title:* You need a title for your story.

❖*Point of view*: Decide the right point of view to use, which can be **first person** (I) or **third person** (he/she/they/one/it).

❖*Tense:* Narratives can be written in one or two tenses: **past tense**, which is the most common, or **present tense**.

❖*Characters*: All stories have characters. Narratives use real people in real conflicts, with real feelings, goals, and fears.

❖*Action* or *conflict*: Each narrative has one major action or event.

❖*Dialogue*: This involves dialogue between characters or having characters talk to themselves in order to bring the story alive for the reader.

❖*Details:* The details of a narrative will make or break the narrative. Narratives should be as descriptive as possible using all **five senses** to make the writing come alive.

(Ploeger 2001)

- THE DESCRIPTIVE MAINSTREAM PARAGRAPHS:

> These paragraphs usually provide a vivid picture of the people, place, time, environment, and objects involved in the story, exposition, or argument.

• The main qualities of a good mainstream paragraph: UNITY, COHERENCE & ADEQUACY OF DEVELOPMENT

❖**Unity**: This is associated with the purpose, that is the single message the writer or speaker intends to present to the readers or listeners. Thus, *"that a paragraph has **unity** means that all the sentences, ideas and images are controlled by a single purpose or focus."*

❖**Coherence**: *"Coherence refers to the orderly or logical arrangement of sentences and ideas in a paragraph.* A paragraph may have a single focus and thus exhibit unity, but it is still not considered a good paragraph if these ideas are haphazardly arranged."

❖**Adequacy of development**: This simply means that a paragraph should not be too short that it cannot sufficiently prosecute the idea for which it was written, or should not be too long far more than is necessary.

These qualities can be achieved through the **topic sentence** with its **support sentences**. The topic sentence is a sentence usually at the beginning of a paragraph and states the focus of the paragraph. The supporting sentences are used to expand or develop the focus.

References

- Lunenburg, F. C. (2010). Communication: The Process, Barriers, And Improving Effectiveness. Schooling Vol.1(1), pp.1-11.

(url:http://www.nationalforum.com/Electronic%20Journal%20Volumes/Lunenburg,%20Fred%20C,%20Communication%20Schooling%20V1%20N1%202010.pdf)

- Pleoger, M. K. (2001). Simplified essay skills. Illinois: National Textbook Company.

- Sekyi-Baidoo, Y. (2003). *Learning and communicating* (2nd Ed.). Accra: Infinity Graphics Ltd.

- Yevudey, E. (2013). The pedagogic relevance of codeswitching in the classroom: Insights from Ewe-English codeswitching in Ghana. Ghana Journal of Linguistics, Vol. 2(2), pp. 1-22. https://www.ajol.info/index.php/gjl/article/view/103237.