

Developing language – coherence and cohesion

(Example from A-level Sociology)

- a. What do you think of this paragraph?
- b. What do you like about it? What problems does it have?

Note: this is the second paragraph of an essay that answers the question: What explanations have sociologists offered for the variations in health and illness between different sections of the population?

Version 1

An important factor concerning this is class. As in Black's materialist explanation, it leads to ill health. They are the ones who are likely to be ill and suffer more health problems rather than the majority of the middle and upper classes. These are due to inequalities, the social class of a person. While everyone presumes that it is increasing it does not for the working class. According to Townsend it has deteriorated compared to the general improvements for the rest of the population.

Please adapt these materials to your own context

- c. Underline the words/phrases that have now been added; what do these words/phrases do?
- d. How does this change the paragraph?

Version 2

An important factor concerning health is class. As in Black's materialist explanation, poverty leads to ill health. Poor people are the ones who are likely to be ill and suffer more health problems rather than the majority of the middle and upper classes. The variations in health are due to inequalities, the social class of a person. While everyone presumes that health care is increasing it does not for the working class. According to Townsend health care provision for working class people has deteriorated compared to the general improvements for the rest of the population.

Over to you!

Please adapt these materials to your own context

(b. Extension activity to focus on use of phrases that can add cohesion to a paragraph; if using as an extension move up to page above; if using alone copy previous paragraph here)

- e. Underline the words/phrases that have now been added.
- f. How does this change the paragraph even further?

Version 3

An important factor concerning health is class. In very simple terms, as in Black's materialist explanation, poverty leads to ill health. Poor people are the ones who are likely to be ill and suffer more health problems rather than the majority of the middle and upper classes. The variations in health are due to inequalities, in this case the social class of a person. While everyone presumes that health care is increasing it does not for the working class. According to Townsend health care provision for working class people has in fact deteriorated compared to the general improvements for the rest of the population.

Over to you!

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Focus on Writing – building stronger paragraphs (answer key)

- a. What do you think of this paragraph?
- b. What do you like about it? What problems does it have?

Note: this is the second paragraph of an essay that answers the question: What explanations have sociologists offered for the variations in health and illness between different sections of the population?

Version 1

An important factor concerning this is class. As in Black's materialist explanation, it leads to ill health. They are the ones who are likely to be ill and suffer more health problems rather than the majority of the middle and upper classes. These are due to inequalities, the social class of a person. While everyone presumes that it is increasing it does not for the working class. According to Townsend it has deteriorated compared to the general improvements for the rest of the population.

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- c. Underline the words/phrases that have now been added; what do these words/phrases do?
- d. How does this change the paragraph?

Version 2

An important factor concerning health is class. As in Black's materialist explanation, poverty leads to ill health. Poor people are the ones who are likely to be ill and suffer more health problems rather than the majority of the middle and upper classes. The variations in health are due to inequalities, the social class of a person. While everyone presumes that health care is increasing it does not for the working class. According to Townsend health care provision for working class people has deteriorated compared to the general improvements for the rest of the population.

Over to you!

- e. Underline the words/phrases that have now been added.
- f. How does this change the paragraph even further?

Version 3

An important factor concerning health is class. In very simple terms, as in Black's materialist explanation, poverty leads to ill health. Poor people are the ones who are likely to be ill and suffer more health problems rather than the majority of the middle and upper classes. The variations in health are due to inequalities, in this case the social class of a person. While everyone presumes that health care is increasing it does not for the working class. According to Townsend health care provision for working class people has in fact deteriorated compared to the general improvements for the rest of the population.

Over to you!

Guidelines for use and adaptation - building stronger paragraphs (Variations in health and illness)

(Please contact Thinking Writing thinkingwriting@qmul.ac.uk with any feedback/comments if you do use or adapt these materials)

Outline and aims

The goal of this activity is to encourage students to recognise (a) vagueness or lack of clarity in a text and (b) absence of clear relationships between the points, and to offer strategies to address both of these issues

It has been designed by taking an original text in a genre with which the students are familiar (in this case a paragraph in an essay), deleting necessary information, and replacing it with empty indicators like 'this' and 'it'. Students work through each version of the paragraph using the questions as a guide.

How to run this activity in class:

Follow the questions on the worksheet, and in addition get students to do the following:

- In version 1, underline all uses of *this, it, they*; Discuss – what is the effect of all of the uses of *this, it, they*?; What, if anything, would you substitute for each *this, it, or they*?
- In version 2, underline the words/phrases that have now been added; what do these words/phrases do? How does this change the paragraph?

How to reproduce this activity in your subject:

1. Choose a good example of a text type that you want students to focus on (a sentence, a paragraph, a description, a conclusion, a point in an argument, etc).
2. a. Go through the text and replace many of the significant nouns/noun phrases with 'this', 'these', 'it', 'they' etc, so that the text is unclear.
b. Delete all the connectives and/or phrases that show relationship.
3. Give students the edited text, ask for general impressions, and then use the questions in the original activity to guide the activity

Alternatively, choose an genuine example that is already vague, unclear, or repetitive in its use of connectors, and ask students to edit it for greater clarity; then compare and discuss resulting versions.

Important to note

It is often necessary to point out that some uses of this/it/etc are perfectly acceptable and that students need to use their judgement rather than applying a blanket elimination of these types of words. The extension activity can be used on its own and is also useful to help student who tend to overuse the same connectives, as it shows that there are other ways to indicate the relationships between ideas/sentences.

Over to you activities

Encourage students to go through a section of their own writing to identify use of 'this', 'these', 'it', 'they' etc, and/or to identify how and where they show the relationship between sentences/ideas (possibly by using connectives, possibly in other ways). This can act as the starting point for a discussion of their writing and editing or rewriting.

Please adapt these materials to your own context