

Generating topic sentences to boost English writing skills

В статье раскрывается понятие и сущность тезиса. Показан алгоритм формулирования тезисов для создания эффективных письменных работ и совершенствования навыков письменной речи.

Ключевые слова: тезис, навыки письменной речи, английский язык, студенты

The paper provides a definition of a topic sentence and examines its nature. The steps taken in order to generate an effective topic sentence and improve learners' English writing skills are revealed.

Key words: topic sentence, writing skills, English, students

Writing is an academic task no two students do the same way. However, there are some logical steps that every writer should follow in the creation of a paper [3-5]:

- ✓ Choosing a topic;
- ✓ Exploring data;
- ✓ Gathering data;
- ✓ Formulating a topic;
- ✓ Organizing data and ideas;
- ✓ Drafting the paper;
- ✓ Reviewing and revising the paper;
- ✓ Finalizing the paper.

The mentioned steps are not exclusive of each other. At times they are rather liquid. Learners will notice that, in the process of writing, work done in one area may necessitate returning to a step that you have already 'completed.' The process described here outlines the first basic step given above.

Choosing a topic can be very difficult [1]; [8]; [9]. It involves identifying a general subject area, defining the topic and narrowing it, and stating the topic as a question or hypothesis. A teacher usually specifies a broad area of study. He or she may assign a particular topic, provide a list of possible topics, or give a free

choice of topics within a broad range. Students should begin to consider possible topics for their paper as soon as the assignment is announced.

As learners make decisions leading to a topic, they should consider the topic's importance and interest, its manageability, and its availability of resources.

A topic sentence is like the foundation of a house. It keeps and supports everything above it. The walls and rooms above the foundation develop and maintain it in the same way sentences about facts, reasons, details, and examples fortify a topic sentence. The concluding sentence is like the roof which covers, tops it all.

A topic sentence is essential because it tells the reader what the writer will discuss in the paper or in a certain paragraph. A good topic sentence has two parts:

- 1) The **topic**, which is the general subject of the paragraph.
- 2) The **controlling idea**, which limits the topic so that the paper or the paragraph covers only a specific part or aspect of it.

Once you have a topic, you need to make it manageable for you. The topic you choose should neither be too broad nor too narrow [2]; [6]. A topic that is too broad will yield inadequate information and limit your ability to reach a valid conclusion. A topic that is too narrow, too specialized, or too technical may demand knowledge you cannot acquire in the time allotted for your project.

There are a few strategies to narrow a too broad topic. Periodical indexes can be especially helpful because the sub-categories provide useful suggestions for narrowing the topic. Another method for narrowing a topic is to purposefully pick a broad subject, then to choose a second, narrower topic within this broad topic. Students can repeat this process by choosing a third, still narrower topic within the second. For example:

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| Broad topic: | PA's job. |
| Revised topic: | It is very hard to be a personal assistant. |
| Further revised topic: | It is very hard to be a personal assistant of a pop star. |

A too narrow or too technical topic is often trivial and uninteresting. Learners should avoid a topic upon which there is only a single or very few references derived from a single source. The subject may not be treated dispassionately in all its aspects or not analyzed sufficiently using different ideas. Here is an example of the progression from the specific to the general topic, which demands students to include more data:

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| Too narrow topic: | Mark Twain's animals. |
| Revised topic: | Mark Twain's description of animals. |
| Further revised topic: | Symbolic animals in Mark Twain's fictions. |

Working on the style of the paper involves, first of all, enrichment of vocabulary since words are a vital basis for understanding written speech [7]. The cor-

rect choice of the word in an attempt to generate the most accurate expression reflects not only the dignity of style but is also a necessary condition for the informative value of any paper and the effectiveness of its content. General words make a written message unclear, inaccurate, and mediocre. In contrast, specific words are an integral part of bright, imaginative, and emotional descriptions. Thus, the adjective “rosy” and the noun “slippers” are specific words because they provide clear and precise information to the readers. However, “beautiful” and “white shoes” are general words because they create vague, fuzzy images and feelings that can be interpreted differently by the readers. In order for your potential readers to see what you see, hear what you hear, and feel what you feel, it is necessary to avoid general words and select more accurate expressions [10]. Compare:

General	Specific
a good man	kind, honest, just, generous, sympathetic, warm-hearted, selfless, brave, honorable, responsible, reliable, open-minded, hearty
good food	tasty, delicious, nourishing, rich, fresh, appetizing, abundant
clothing	dress, skirt, jacket, coat, pants
shoes	slippers, sneakers, sandals
office equipment	fax, video, camera, cabinet, portable computer

Examples

A) General:

The secretary was unable to complete the task that had been assigned.

Specific:

The secretary was unable to type the document.

B) General:

She is a great communicator.

Specific:

She speaks persuasively.

C) General:

My car has a great deal of power, and it is very quick.

Specific:

My 220-horsepower Sportfire can go from zero to fifty in six seconds.

Thus, when learners write a topic sentence, they need to be careful not to make the controlling idea too general or too specific. If the controlling idea is too

broad, there will be too much to say in one paragraph or paper. If the idea is too narrow, there will not be enough to say.

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