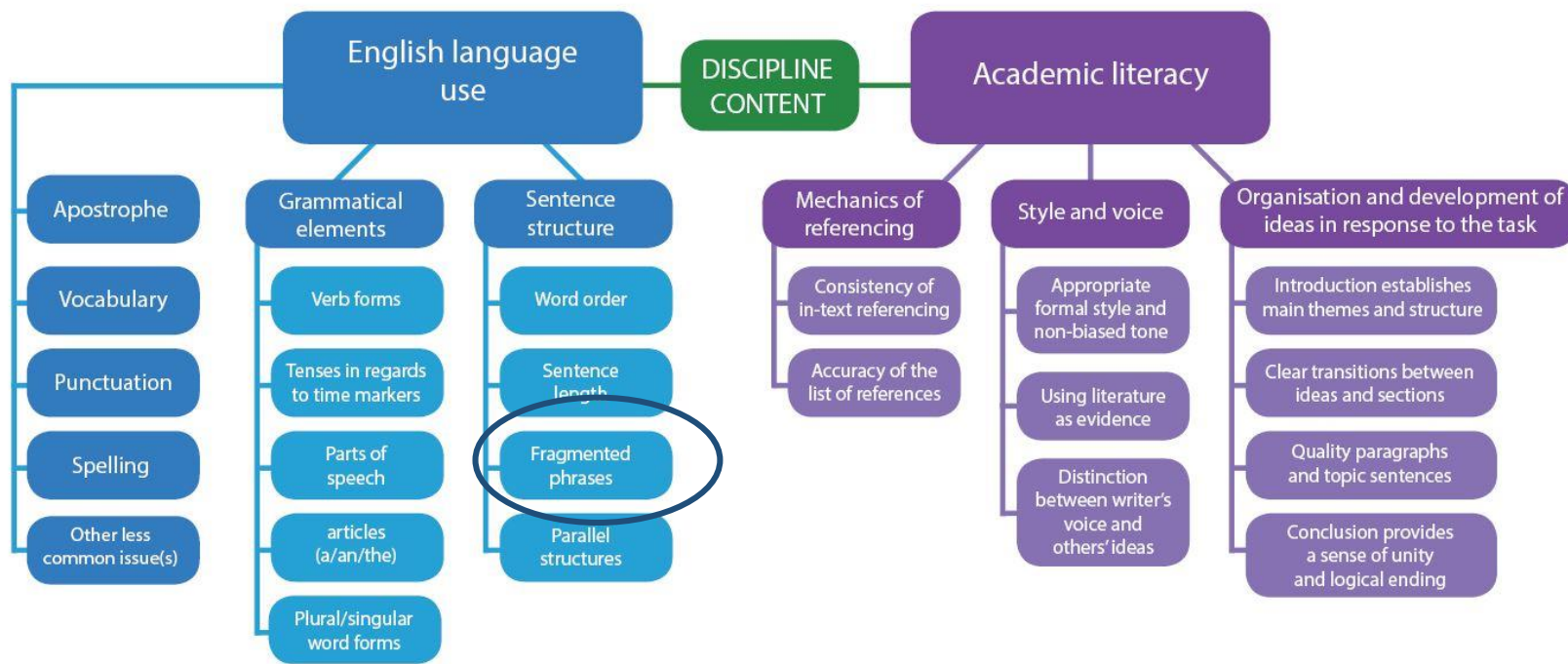


Fragmented phrases

Dr Anna Podorova,
Ms Julia Ghazarian,
Dr Amber McLeod
Faculty of Education,
Updated 21 June 2017

ACADEMIC LANGUAGE FEEDBACK GUIDE



What are fragmented phrases?

Fragmented phrases are any incomplete pieces of writing which have the appearance of a sentence, but they are incomplete.

All sentences contain sentence fragments, but the problem occurs when an incomplete sentence or sentence fragment (clause or phrase) is used in place of a complete sentence.

Example: *The student with the red hair who has a brother in Grade 6.*

In order to avoid fragmented phrases in your academic writing, it is important to understand how to use complete sentences and correct punctuation.

Complete sentences: basic sentence structure

A complete sentence contains two parts: a subject and a predicate.

Subject



The subject indicates what (or whom) the sentence is about.

Predicate (the rest of the sentence)



The predicate = verb + complements
Complements = everything that tells you more about a person or thing /what is being done / how/where it is being done.

The girl with yellow hair.



kicked the soccer ball.



Sentence: *The girl with yellow hair kicked the soccer ball.*

Sentence parts: clauses, phrases and words

Components of a sentence

While a sentence contains a **subject** and a **predicate**, the sentence can be broken into smaller units of meaning.

Subject

Predicate – verb, object, etc.

clauses

phrases

words

Parts of speech

‘Parts of speech’ are the words that make up a complete sentence. Nouns and verbs are examples of parts of speech.

Subject	Verb	Object
<i>(eg. who)</i>	<i>(does)</i>	<i>(what)</i>
The girl	kicked	the red ball.

Noun

Verb

Adjective

Noun

What's a clause?

A clause is a group of words, or unit of information within a sentence, that contains a subject and a verb.

Main (independent) clause



A main clause makes complete sense on its own.

Example: *We value assignment writing.*

Dependent clause



A dependent clause depends on the main clause in order to make complete sense.

Example: *Because we want to improve our critical thinking.* (doesn't make sense on its own)

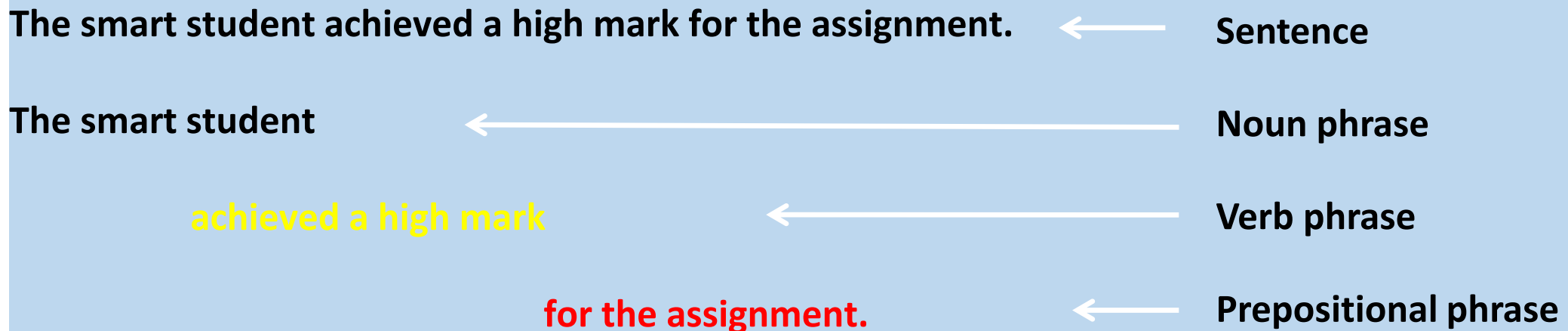
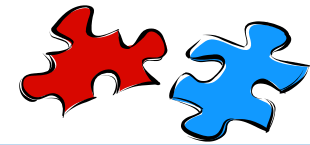
Example of a complete complex sentence:

We value assignment writing because we want to improve our critical thinking.

What is a phrase?

A phrase is a group of two or more words which make some sense but do not make complete sense on their own. For example:

- Won the prize
- Located in the area
- Excellent writer



Ask yourself - does your sentence make sense on its own?

Example:

Being devastating for his future, the student refused.

- What was devastating?
- What did the student refuse to do?

Now the sentence makes sense on its own:

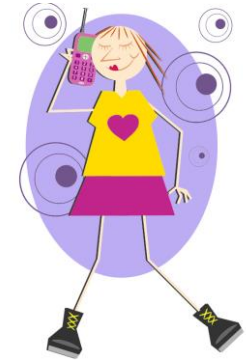
Even though it would be devastating for his future, the student refused to sit for his final examination.

Ambiguous phrases and dangling modifiers

Clauses can be changed into modifying phrases only when the subjects of both clauses are the same.

Example of a dangling (disconnected) modifying phrase:

While walking to the tutorial room, Anna's phone rang.



These clauses cannot be combined like this because they have different subjects:

Clause 1: *Anna was walking to the tutorial room.* (subject - *Anna*)

Clause 2: *Anna's phone rang.* (subject - *phone*)

Now the sentence makes sense:

While Anna was walking to the tutorial room, her phone rang.

Run-on sentences

- Run-on sentences are sentences that run on without the control of joining words or punctuation to separate the different ideas and clarify the meaning of the sentence.
- Run-on sentences that join two separate ideas with a comma are sometimes called comma splices.

Remedies:

- You can usually correct run-on sentences by:
 - using a joining word or conjunction (e.g., for, and, not, but, or, yet, so) to connect the two clauses or ideas
 - using correct punctuation (not a comma because commas separate items or ideas)
 - creating two separate sentences (e.g., in the case of very long, run-on sentences)

Correcting a run-on sentence

Example

I was unsure which essay topic to choose, I was too tired to decide.

1. Correction by use of a joining word:

*I was unsure which essay topic to choose **because** I was too tired to decide.*

2. Correction by using appropriate punctuation:

I was unsure which essay topic to choose: I was too tired to decide.

3. Correction by making two separate sentences:

I was unsure which essay topic to choose. I was too tired to decide.

Annotated example

Annotated example

Nontariff barriers (NTB) are aimed at reducing imports. As a result, benefit domestic producers. Some NTBs such as import quotas, voluntary export restraints, subsidies and domestic content requirements have a significant impact on the trade structure. Voluntary export restraints (export quotas) are used to limit the intensity of international competition. While import quotas help small domestic producers to compete with foreign producers who can sell better products at a lower price. To help improve producers' market positions, governments can provide subsidies. Allowing producers to sell their products at a lower price than the price of production.

Comments

This sentence is incomplete because it is missing the subject – what will benefit producers?

Nontariff barriers (NTB) are aimed at reducing imports. As a result, benefit domestic producers. Some NTBs such as import quotas, voluntary export restraints, subsidies and domestic content requirements have a significant impact on the trade structure. Voluntary export restraints (export quotas) are used to limit the intensity of international competition. While export quotas help small domestic producers to compete with foreign producers who can sell better products at a lower price. To help improve producers' market positions, governments can provide subsidies. Assisting producers to sell their products at a lower price than the price of production.

This sentence is incomplete because it is a phrase (missing predicate).

This is a dependent clause used on its own – does not make complete sense without the main clause.

Revised version

Nontariff barriers (NTB) are aimed at reducing imports and, as a result, benefit domestic producers. Some NTBs such as import quotas, voluntary export restraints, subsidies and domestic content requirements have a significant impact on the trade structure. Voluntary export restraints (export quotas) are used to limit the intensity of international competition, while import quotas help small domestic producers to compete with foreign producers who can sell better products at a lower price. To help improve producers' market positions, governments can provide subsidies, allowing producers to sell their products at a lower price than the price of production.

Have a go

Apply what you have learnt in this module and choose the correct option(s) below:

In developed countries the population is decreasing. While in undeveloped countries it continues to increase.

In developed countries the population is decreasing, while in undeveloped countries it continues to increase.

While in undeveloped countries the population continues to increase, in developed countries the population.



The second sentence is an incomplete thought, or a fragmented phrase. A dependent clause cannot be used as a separate sentence because it doesn't make sense on its own.



The second part of this sentence is a fragmented phrase. It is lacking important information because the verb phrase (e.g., "is decreasing") is missing.

Quick tips

Quick tips

Sentences should make sense on their own and contain a subject and a predicate.

Phrases and clauses are smaller components of a sentence and cannot be used on their own in academic paragraphs.

Sentences need to be joined by appropriate punctuation or conjunctions.

Learn more

Useful links on sentence structure and fragmented phrases

[Writing Centre at UNC: Fragments and Run-ons](#)

[RMIT Learning Lab: Writing sentences](#)

[OWL Purdue: Sentence fragments](#)

[English 101: Sentence fragments and run-on sentences \(video\)](#)

[ESL English Academy: Identifying sentence fragments \(video\)](#)

[Module 8: Complex Sentences, ASCENT, Monash University](#)

Face-to-face support Who can help with English at Monash?

[English Connect](#) –
conversational circles,
peer feedback on your
writing and grammar
workshops



Grammar books

- Azar, B. S. & Hagen, S.A. (2009). *Understanding and using English grammar (4th ed.)*. USA: Pearson Longman.
- Borjars, K. & Burridge, K. *Introducing English grammar (2nd ed.)*. London: Hodder Education.
- Foley, M. & Hall, D. (2012). *MyGrammarLab (Advanced)*. England: Pearson.
- Hewings, M. (2012). *Advanced grammar in use: a reference and practice book for advanced students of English (2nd ed.)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Murphy, R. (2011). *English Grammar in Use (Intermediate) (3 ed.)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Copyright © Monash University (2017). All rights reserved. Except as provided in the Copyright Act 1968, this work may not be reproduced in any form without the written permission of English Connect web administrator. Material created by Dr Anna Podorova, Ms Julia Ghazarian and Dr Amber McLeod.