

Analysis Style Paragraph: Showing Structure & Building

Coherence

According to S. I. Hayakawa in *Language in Thought and Action*, there are four steps in writing a dictionary: 1) collecting words, 2) alphabetizing and sorting the collection, 3) studying each word in context, and 4) writing definitions of each word based on its contexts. The first step is collecting words. Editors do this by reading all the important literature that might include words they want to define. As they read, they write down each of these words on a separate card. Below the word, they write the sentences in which it appears, since they must collect words in context. Once they have gathered all their words--on perhaps millions of cards--the editors are ready for the second step: sorting and alphabetizing the cards. They arrange the cards so that each word will be represented by a whole group of cards giving many examples of its uses. Next, the editors study each word in context. As they discover the possible meanings of a word, they group the cards around those meanings. Only then can they take the final step: writing definitions. In writing definitions, the editors can use only what the cards tell them about the meanings of each word; that is, they must define their words in context. You can see, then, that defining words plays only a small part in the production of a modern dictionary; before that, vast amounts of money, time, and energy go into collecting, sorting, and studying words.

Dale.Sullivan 1/29/08 1:41 PM

Comment: This is a preview statement: it reveals the subject and structure of the coming material.

Dale.Sullivan 1/29/08 1:31 PM

Comment: This word is a marker indicating that the writer is taking each step one at a time. Notice the repetition of key words: step, collecting.

Dale.Sullivan 1/29/08 1:42 PM

Comment: The writer introduces an agent for the action. Notice that "editors," or pronouns referring to them, continue as subjects through the whole paragraph. The word "this" in this sentence links back to "collecting words," building a link with the previous sentence.

Dale.Sullivan 1/29/08 1:43 PM

Comment: This subordinate clause summarizes the previous sentence and repeats "they" to link to editors. The main clause introduces new information.

Dale.Sullivan 1/29/08 1:36 PM

Comment: This prepositional phrase links back to a key word in the previous sentence and then sets up the new information in the main clause.

Dale.Sullivan 1/29/08 1:37 PM

Comment: This sentence is a full transition: it summarizes the old, introduces the new, and shows the relationship between the new and the old.

Dale.Sullivan 1/29/08 1:43 PM

Comment: The use of this pronoun keeps the paragraph together topically, focusing attention on editors.

Dale.Sullivan 1/29/08 1:38 PM

Comment: This is a marker word that indicates a shift to the next step. Notice the repetition of a key words from the preview: study, context.

Dale.Sullivan 1/29/08 1:39 PM

Comment: Here is another marker indicating the end of the list. Note the repetition of key words again.

Dale.Sullivan 1/29/08 1:39 PM

Comment: This sentence develops the fourth step more deeply. Note the verb cluster's function in linking back to the previous sentence.

Dale.Sullivan 1/29/08 1:40 PM

Comment: This is a summary sentence. It touches all the steps again, but does so in a novel way.