

Review of written paragraphs

The UNSG
Karl Marx

The topic sentences were:

- *The general public tends to have unrealistic expectations of what the United Nations Secretary General can achieve.*
- *The title of 'Chief Administrative Officer' used to refer to the UNSG in the UN Charter, reflects only part of what the UNSG actually does in the role.*
- *Karl Marx was mistaken about some aspects of the future of capitalism, but some of his predictions actually came to pass.*
- *Karl Marx was right in some of his predictions, but he also failed to foresee some future developments of capitalism.*

Some general criticisms

- Some students did not follow the instructions, e.g. they did not write a paragraph but e.g. 3 'points', each on a new line, or they did not use any of the set topic sentences to start from, but treated the latter as a title or essay question (or a mere suggestion of subject matter), inserting the topic sentence separately from their text – or not at all – and inventing their own starting point for the paragraph (see slide 9).
- Some students did not seem to have thought about what the topic sentence required them to do in terms of development (see slide 9).

The paragraph on the next slide is well-formed: it develops the main idea and closes on the same theme. However, it has a number of language issues which are highlighted. Can you identify what needs correcting?

The general public tends to have unrealistic expectations of what the United Nations Secretary General can achieve. In fact he has just an administrative and diplomatic role even if nowadays he can use his high profile to draw attention to issues of world concern. Anyway, he can just draw attention; he can not obbligate the world's powerful to do something to resolve or prevent international crisis or issues. That's because he has not a political role and more important he is not a president who makes laws that member states must respect; he makes suggestion, gives advices and then politicians decide how to follow his suggestion. In conclusion the UNSG has an important role in the world but at the same time people need to know that his powers are limited.

The general public tends to have unrealistic expectations of what the United Nations Secretary General can achieve. **In fact** he has **just** an administrative and diplomatic role even if **nowdays** he can use his high profile to draw attention to issues of world concern. **Anyway,** he can **just** draw attention; he **can not obbligate** the world's powerful to do something to resolve or prevent international **crisis** or issues.

Wrong word:

Avoid using 'in fact' to translate Italian 'infatti'. It can sound rather pedantic in English. Often, it is not necessary, but 'in reality' will often render the sense better.

'just' and 'anyway' are colloquial. Use 'only' and 'however'

Spelling:

Obbligate* – oblige; nowdays* - nowadays

Grammar:

Here the plural of 'crisis' is needed: *crises*

That's because **he has not** a political role and more **important** he is not a president who makes laws that member states must respect; he makes **suggestion**, gives **advices** and then politicians decide how to follow his **suggestion**. In conclusion the UNSG has an important role in the world but at the same time people need to know that his powers are limited.

Grammar:

He does not have a political role
or *he has no* political role

more importantly – an adverb is required

suggestions

advice – it is an uncountable (UC) noun and never plural

Corrected

The general public tends to have unrealistic expectations of what the United Nations Secretary General can achieve. In reality, he only has an administrative and diplomatic role, even if nowadays, he can use his high profile to draw attention to issues of world concern. However, he can only *draw attention*: he cannot oblige the world's powerful to do something to resolve or prevent international crises or issues. That's because he does not have a political role, and more importantly, he is not a president who makes laws that member states must respect; he makes suggestions, gives advice and then politicians decide whether or how to follow his suggestions. In conclusion, the UNSG has an important role in the world but at the same time, people need to know that his powers are limited.

Sense and (non)sense: what's wrong here?

The general public tends to have unrealistic expectations of what the United Nations Secretary General can achieve.

The key figure inside the United Nations is arguably the UN Secretary General, a role which represents the most important diplomatic figure in the world.

Although the importance and resonance of that charge, the UNSG has far less power than what anyone could think of.

The author of the text on the previous slide has treated the set topic sentence as a sort of separate 'guide' to content, rather than as the starting point for the paragraph. S/he then initiates the text with a brand new topic sentence which is self-contradictory:

The key figure inside the United Nations is arguably the UN Secretary General, a role which represents the most important diplomatic figure in the world.

There is nothing controversial, or 'arguable', about the claim that the UNSG is the key figure at the UN; on the contrary, it is something we can all take for granted, as the writer him/herself confirms in the immediately following description of the role. These are fine words, in correct English, but they make no sense. Moreover, both of these evaluative statements are far too broad to be an effective topic sentence for a paragraph. How will the text proceed? Will it tell us about all the important things that the UNSG does in the field of world diplomacy? Surely not. The topic sentence should have a narrow enough focus for a coherent paragraph on the theme.

Wrong word

In our class on discourse markers we saw that 'although' is not used with just a noun phrase but with a full clause, so

Although [the importance and resonance of that charge], the UNSG has far less power than what anyone could think of.

is wrong not only in the spelling but in the *use* of 'although'. 'Charge' (for 'incarico') is also wrong, and 'what anyone could think of' is too colloquial:

Despite / In spite of / Notwithstanding the importance of that role / position, the UNSG has far less power than one / world public opinion might think.

Reference

The Prussian economist foretold **the** capitalism would **bust** the economy in its entirety

NB In Italian it is a stylistic convention – particularly in journalistic prose – to vary the terms of reference to the subject, particularly when the subject is a person. So we might read ‘l’ideologo comunista’ ‘il profugo prussiano’ ‘il filosofo prussiano’ etc all in the same text about Marx, as terms used to refer to him. But not so in English. Just use the name, Marx, or the 3rd person pronoun, ‘he’, and never mind about stylistic variation here.

Capitalism does not take the definite article; bust is too informal

Marx foretold that capitalism would lead to complete economic breakdown / breakdown of the economy

Grammar Gr + Punctuation P

The role of the UN Secretary General is really various.

The major part of his work consists in meeting Ambassadors.

His concern is with those countries that are in a major difficulty.

He has to consider the interests of 193 states members and act as impartial mediator.

The role of the UN Secretary General is really **various**.

various roles; a varied role.

The **major part** of his work consists in meeting **A**mbassadors.

Air pollution is a major contributor to lung disease.

Most of his work ambassadors.

His concern is with those countries that are in **a major** difficulty.

His concern in most difficulty.

He has to consider the interests of 193 **states members** and act **as** impartial mediator.

He has to consider of 193 member states and act as an impartial mediator.

Grammar + WW

Capitalists earn astronomical profits and have to pay **worker** as **least** as possible.

Another **Marx's prediction**

The UNSG's power is limited, because he **has not a real decision power**.

Capitalists earn astronomical profits and ~~have to pay~~ worker as least as possible.

pay workers as little as possible / the least amount possible

Another Marx's prediction *Another of Marx's predictions*

The UNSG's power is limited, because he has not a real decision power.

.. because he does not have any / has no real decision-making power

Word order + verb form + wrong word

Nowadays the UNSG has administrative, persuasive, and diplomatic limited roles around the world.

The UNSG has no real power except to draw the attention of the world to specific themes and denouncing to the UNSC the possible starting conflicts and reasons.

Nowadays the UNSG has administrative, persuasive, and diplomatic limited roles around the world.

the UNSG has administrative and limited persuasive and diplomatic roles
(‘limited’ qualifies, so precedes, the adjectives *persuasive* and *diplomatic*)

The UNSG has no real power except to draw the attention of the world to specific themes and denouncing to the UNSC the possible starting conflicts and reasons.

report not denounce to report sth to s.o.:

except to draw the world’s attention to ... and to report potential causes of conflicts to the UNSC

Wrong word

Overproduction drove capitalists to search for new markets across the globe, developing the **fundamentals** of modern globalisation.

Furthermore, Marx **sustained** the inequality of wealth that **has been realized** during these years

Marx was right, because we live in a world where global disparity is **upsetting**.

Overproduction drove capitalists to search for new markets across the globe, developing the **fundamentals** of modern globalisation.

the foundations

Furthermore, Marx **sustained** the inequality of wealth that **has been realized** during these years

Don't use 'to sustain' to translate Italian 'sostenere' in the sense of 'claim, maintain, believe'. It has a different meaning, e.g. 'She sustained serious injuries in the attack'. However, Marx did not 'claim' (= call for, rivendicare) the inequality of wealth; rather, he highlighted it:

Marx highlighted the growing inequality of wealth distribution

Marx was right, because we live in a world where global disparity is **upsetting**.

increasingly unjust / unfair / untenable

(To use emotive language suggesting your feelings in an essay is very unconventional.)

Articles again

Marx predicted that because of the growth of the competition between the capitalists, the ranks of the proletariat would increase.

However, the social development went the opposite way.

The UNSG is the defender of the ideas and values of UN.

Articles again

Marx predicted that because of the growth of **the competition** between **the capitalists**, the ranks of the proletariat would increase.

No definite article before things in general: the growth of competition between capitalists

The UNSG is the defender of the ideas and values of **UN**.

Before abbreviations for IOs used as nouns we DO NEED the definite article: ideas and values of the UN

BUT

better still, here 'defender of UN ideas and values' (IO is used adjectivally as pre-modifier of ideas and values)

Tense

In the end there will be an excess of labour, wages will decrease and workers will become beggars **until they will make** a revolution

Marx predicted many situations that **would have come to reality.**

More sense and (non) sense

The text on the next slide is not cohesive or coherent. Can you say why, and improve it?

Punctuation (P) and reference (Ref)

Karl Marx was critical about capitalism because it was unbalanced and oligarchic, this was characterised by a small group of rich people, called Capitalists, that became richer and richer nevertheless, in order to let this happen a massive group of worker had to be poor. However, he made some mistakes, indeed he thought that capitalism wasn't able to reform itself but nowadays it has been confuted, although some of his predictions came true.

Karl Marx was critical about capitalism because it was unbalanced and oligarchic, this was characterised by a small group of rich people, called Capitalists, that became richer and richer nevertheless, in order to let this happen a massive group of workers had to be poor. However, he made some mistakes, indeed he thought that capitalism wasn't able to reform itself but nowadays it has been confuted, although some of his predictions came true.

There is an incorrect use – or non-use – of punctuation (full stops, commas) to demarcate the boundaries between units of sense in the discourse.

What is the reference of 'this'? Capitalism? Or Marx's critique of capitalism? It's not immediately clear.

Capitalists with small 'c'

Relative pronoun after comma should be 'who' not 'that' (it's a non-defining relative clause)

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Why use 'however' here? For the sentence it introduces about Marx's mistakes to fit here as a contrast, what came before should exemplify explicitly what Marx predicted correctly. But the first sentence only makes a factual statement about what Marx criticized. It does not say he was right until the end

Here, start a new sentence.

What does 'it' refer to? To refer back to a whole proposition ("capitalism .., itself") use 'this'

Amongst other things, Karl Marx predicted rightly that capitalism would lead to an unbalanced and oligarchic system in which a small group of capitalists would become richer and richer, whilst a much larger group of workers remained very poor. However, he also made some mistakes. For example, he failed to predict the ability of capitalism to reform itself by using taxation to pay for welfare programmes to benefit the less well off.