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Distinguishing Facts from Opinions



In this chapter, you will:

1. read articles from academic sources.
2. identify fact and opinion expressions.
3. distinguish facts from opinions.

A) Skim the text.

- i. Read the title, the first, and the last sentence of every paragraph.
- ii. Predict the main idea of the text.

B) Answer these questions before you read.

- i. Why do companies move their factories to other countries? 
- ii. What are the benefits for a country when a multinational company locates its production there? 

C) Read the article below and check your answers.







OVERSEAS PRODUCTION

- 1 The world's consumption of fashion is huge. The European Union imported textiles (clothing and carpets) to the value of RM 83.7 billion in 2010. Prices have fallen too with hand-finished shirts costing less than RM 20. To make clothes at these low prices, companies have to keep costs down. They use overseas production to do this. Large companies make their products in developing countries where workers are paid much less than in developed countries. 5
- 2 Multinational companies are careful of their reputation for fairness. So, they try hard to make sure local pay and conditions are legal. Supporters of overseas production facilities agree that most multinational companies pay the correct minimum wage and sometimes pay more. However, factory workers may actually only earn a few cents to make an item that would sell for hundreds of ringgit. This low pay means low labour costs, and the multinational companies keep most of the profit. 10

Multinational companies argue that they meet local employment laws. They claim that they refuse to work with factories which do not follow their rules. Critics, however, call these kinds of factories ‘sweatshops’. They argue that 15 employees are made to do long hours of work, often in dangerous conditions, and do not get paid overtime.

- 3 Overseas manufacturing plants have been in the media because they sometimes hire children. Supporters argue that school is too expensive for some children. They also claim that children who work in factories are protected from worse jobs on the 20 streets. However, critics of overseas production believe that child labour is wrong. They claim that children should be in full-time education rather than working in a factory. Another point that should be considered is that developing countries encourage developed countries to invest in them to provide jobs.
- 4 Supporters of overseas production point out that increased investment has positive 25 effects in the long term. An economist Paul Krugman states that the growth in manufacturing has an impact on the rest of the economy. This is because it reduces the number of people working in agriculture and increases competition for labour. This leads to higher wages, which lead to other improvements, such as the ability to send children to school. On the other hand, the disadvantage of this foreign 30 investment is it can have a negative impact on the economy of developed countries. This is because people lose their jobs when production is outsourced to other countries.
- 5 It seems that if multinational companies are going to benefit from low production costs by using overseas suppliers, they should do more to improve the social 35 situation, for example, by building schools for the children in those communities. It is also clear that multinational companies should invest in communities in the developed countries where they sell their products. In conclusion, there are clear benefits for the multinational companies in terms of the lower costs of production in developing countries and their workers. However, they should still do more to 40 protect the workers in overseas manufacturing plants.

D) Write *F* if the statement is a *Fact*, or write *O* if the statement is an *Opinion*.

No.	Statement	F / O
1.	The European Union imported textiles (clothing and carpets) to the value of RM 83.7 billion in 2010.	
2.	Supporters of overseas production facilities agree that most multinational companies pay the correct minimum wage and sometimes pay more.	
3.	Multinational companies argue that they meet local employment laws. They claim that they refuse to work with factories which do not follow their rules.	
4.	Critics of overseas production believe that child labour is wrong. They claim that children should be in full-time education rather than working in a factory.	
5.	It seems that if multinational companies are going to benefit from low production costs by using overseas suppliers, they should do more to improve the social situation.	
6.	It is also clear that multinational companies should invest in communities in the developed countries where they sell their products.	

E) Give reasons to your answer in D. Discuss which key words in each statement express fact and opinion.

Distinguishing Facts from Opinions

Facts and opinions are both important in academic texts. Facts are used to support opinions, and sometimes opinions can be used to substantiate facts that are not widely known. Below are the lists of expression used to describe facts and opinions.

Identifying a fact

A fact is an information that is accepted as true and can be supported by scientific evidence or research. Below is the language used to express facts:

Data

- ... can access, assess, collect, evaluate, examine, obtain, store data
- data can demonstrate, indicate, prove, show ...
- data can be (in) accurate, relevant ...

Evidence

- ... can collect, gather, interpret, present, withhold, consider, disregard evidence
- evidence can point to, support, confirm, demonstrate, prove, show ...
- evidence can be abundant, compelling, (in) conclusive, new, reliable, insufficient ...

Fact(s)

- ... can check, distort, establish, examine, explain, present fact(s)
- fact(s) can disprove, prove, show, suggest something or that ...
- reliable, salient, relevant, well-known fact(s) ...

Statistics

- ... can analyse, compile, gather, produce, release statistics
- statistics demonstrate, disprove, prove, show, support the ideas that ...
- statistics can be important, (in) accurate, latest, misleading, out of date, reliable ...

Identifying an opinion

Opinion is a personal statement or belief. Below is the language used to express opinions:






- The **view/ opinion** of (Brown) is that ...
- Robert (2010) **claimed/ believed** that ...
- Jane (2019) **points out/ suggests** that ...
- **According to** Reed (2017), ...
- It is likely/ probable that ...
- It is unlikely/ improbable ...
- It **seems/ appears** that ...
- The evidence **suggests/ indicates** ...
- One of the main **arguments** is ...
- It **can be argued** that ...
- Most people **agree/ disagree** ...
- Most people **feel/ say** ...
- It is believed that...
- This **may/ would/ can** ...
- This **absolutely, obviously, definitely, certainly, often, probably, possibly** ...

Understanding types of opinion

Author normally includes opinions held by others to offer different perspectives to an issue discussed in a text. Hence, there are two types of opinion that can be found in a text which are:

1. author's opinion, and
2. another people's opinion (other than the author).

F) Which of these opinions belongs to the author and other people?

No.	Statement	Author opinion	Other opinion
1.	Supporters of overseas production facilities agree that most multinational companies pay the correct minimum wage and sometimes pay more.		
2.	Multinational companies argue that they meet local employment laws. They claim that they refuse to work with factories which do not follow their rules.		
3.	Critics of overseas production believe that child labour is wrong. They claim that children should be in full-time education rather than working in a factory.		
4.	It seems that if multinational companies are going to benefit from low production costs by using overseas suppliers, they should do more to improve the social situation.		
5.	It is also clear that multinational companies should invest in communities in the developed countries where they sell their products.		

G) Give reasons to your answer in F.

Analysing facts and opinions in a paragraph

The paragraph below is about Energy Use in The Developed World. Study how this paragraph is analysed for its facts and opinions. Take note of the key words that represent facts and pinions in this paragraph.

This is the main idea of the paragraph, author's stance on one way to reduce energy use.

Lower consumption of animal products is one of the most effective solutions to reducing energy use. Data obtained by the United Nations in 2018 indicates that America is the second largest energy consumer in the world. It currently uses one-third of its energy to produce animals for food. The United Nations also reports that 20% of greenhouse emissions come from the meat industry. It also states that 50% of the world's crops are produced to feed animals. It could be argued that changing eating patterns can potentially reduce energy use. However, it might be challenging to implement. In many countries, meat is seen as a luxury product. Changing eating habits is likely to be a slow process.

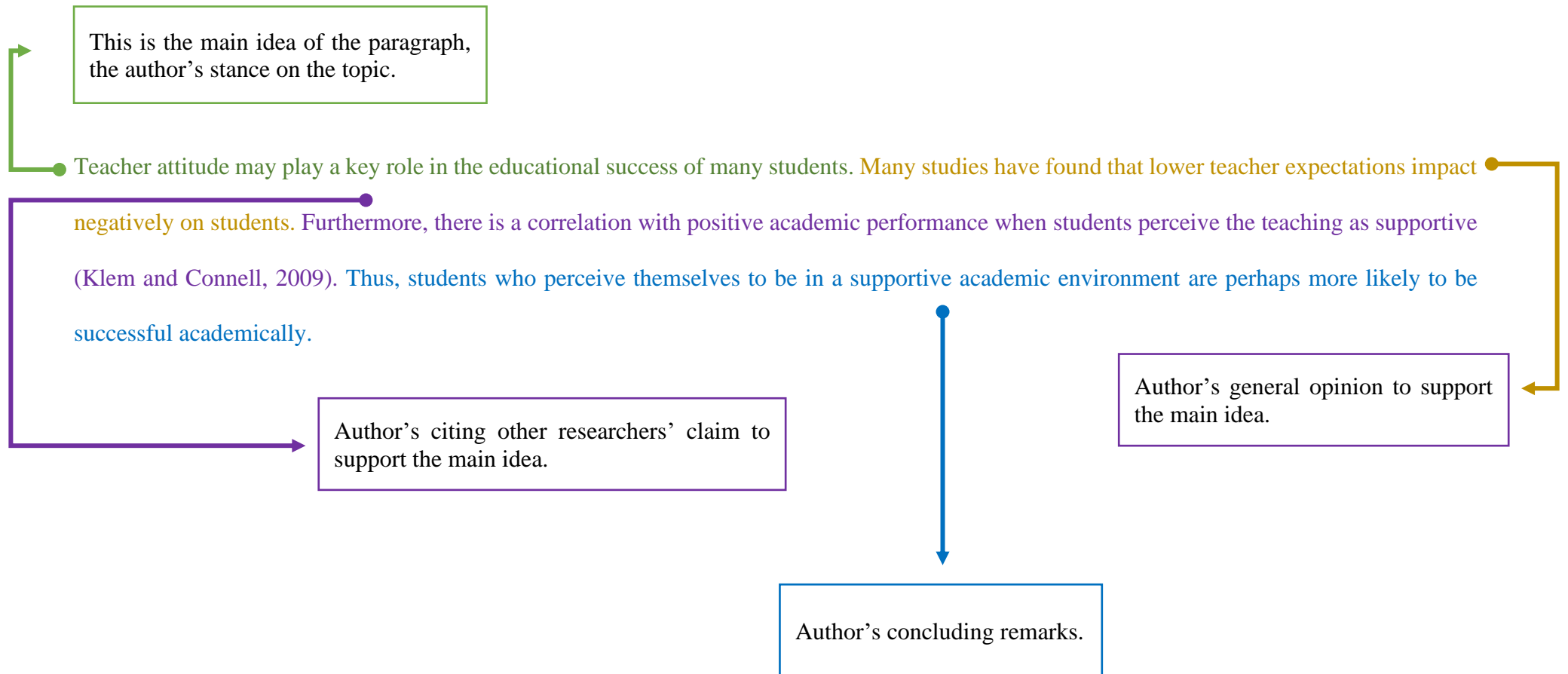
Author's argument based on the facts.

Author's closing argument, stating his personal opinions on the issue presented.

These are supporting details. These supporting details are facts that the author included to support his/ her opinion as to why we should lower our consumption of animal products.

Analysing opinions in a paragraph

The paragraph below is about Causes and Effects of Individual Success in Education. Study how this paragraph is analysed for its opinions. Take note of the key words that represent opinions in this paragraph.



Practice

Read the text about Antibiotics. Highlight the facts and opinions it contains. Decide whether the opinions belong to the author or other people.

- 1 According to a recent study, one of the biggest dangers now is neither war nor food shortages. **It is in fact the growth in bacteria caused by the overuse of antibiotics.** According to many researchers, this could become a global threat in the future. Antibiotics are a medicine that destroys harmful bacteria in the body. Alexander Fleming was the first scientist to conduct research into antibiotics when he 5 discovered penicillin in 1929. Since 1945, antibiotics have been used in the fight against some infections.
- 2 This medicine has helped many people around the world. However, according to many researchers, antibiotics are now being overused. This is because doctors often prescribe them to patients. In addition, another study claims farmers mix antibiotics 10 with animal food because they believe that this keeps their animals healthy. These antibiotics eventually find their way into the human food supply as well. The problem is that every time a patient takes antibiotics, or humans eat meat from animals that have been given food containing them, some bacteria are destroyed, but some also remain. These surviving bacteria can quickly grow. As many types of 15 bacteria are now exposed to antibiotics, they become stronger. In other words, the more we use antibiotics, the more bacteria evolve. The more we use antibiotics, the more they become resistant to modern drugs.
- 3 New forms of tuberculosis and E-coli infections have recently been observed in Malaysia. Doctors claim that these diseases are becoming increasingly common. 20 They also believe that soon these diseases may be much more difficult, or even impossible to treat. Drug-resistant bacteria could become an even bigger problem for mankind than climate change, unless we stop overusing antibiotics.