

LIBRARY WORKSHOPS ON ACADEMIC WRITING

學術論文の基本的な目的は、結論へと至る論理的ステップを提示することによって、論文の主張する結論を受け入れるよう読者を説得することである。

Developing a Central Idea for your dissertation

WRITING
教養教育院

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Thesis Statement

The

one-sentence statement

that encapsulates

the **central idea**

of your academic paper.

Normally, if an academic writer is very clear about his or her research, he or she should be able to state the central research idea in just one sentence.

Thesis statement is the heart of an academic research paper, without which the paper would be basically pointless.

It is the first sentence to begin,

but also the last sentence to finish.

**Thesis Statement's
Role in an
academic Paper**

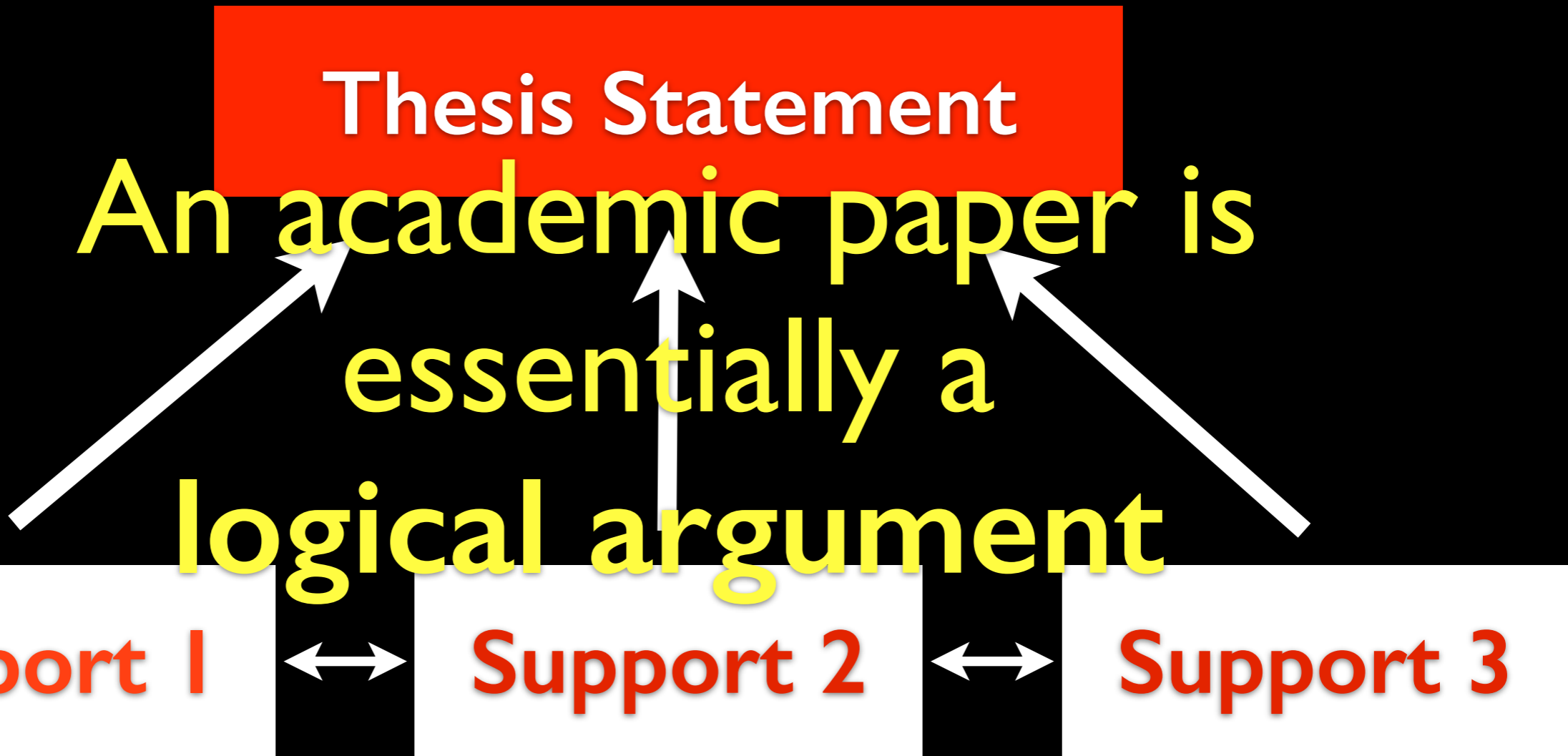
Thesis Statement

**An academic paper is
essentially a
logical argument**

Support 1

Support 2

Support 3



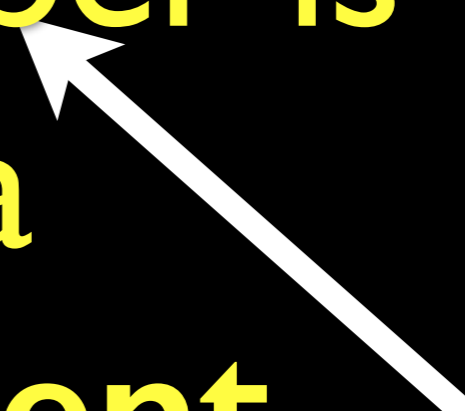
Conclusion

An academic paper is essentially a logical argument

Premise 1

Premise 2

Premise 3



A THESIS STATEMENT IS A SENTENCE WITH A **TRUTH-VALUE**, WHICH CAN BE EITHER TRUE OR FALSE DEPENDING ON THE **PREMISES** THAT PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR THE STATEMENT.

Although a thesis statement is normally written in just one-sentence, it is **different from a normal sentence** in many aspects.

(I) A thesis statement must have a truth-value.

In other words,

a thesis statement should represent some factual event which could take place in the actual world (including present, past, and future events), or the possible world (i.e. conditional events).

Note that **not** every sentence can be used as a thesis statement because not every sentence can be either true or false.

For example, the following cannot be used as a thesis statement:

‘What time is it?’ (Question),
‘Shut the door’ (Command),
‘Oh, God! (Exclamation)

Which one of the following can be a thesis statement?

(1) Is Nagoya in the central part of Japan?

(2) Nagoya is in the central part of Japan.

(3) I wish Nagoya were the capital of Japan!

(4) God bless Nagoya!

(5) I believe that Nagoya is in the central part of Japan.

(2) A thesis statement should be objectively verifiable.

In other words,

The truth value of a thesis statement should be independently verifiable from a third person point of view.

Class Discussion:

Do you know what fundamentally distinguishes between

a subjective expression and
an objective expression?

Answer:

Communicability between writer and reader.

(3) The truthfulness of a thesis statement needs justification through argumentation.

In other words,

a thesis statement is not merely a representation of some factual event.

it is a **belief statement** that *such and such is the case*, whose truthfulness requires justification through collecting evidences and arranging them in a convincing way.

Do you know what distinguishes
between the following:

(1) The earth orbits around the sun.

(2) I believe that the earth orbits around the sun.

Answer:

(1) Fact

(2) Assertion of the fact

(4) A good thesis statement is not trivial.

Consider the following two belief statements:

“The earth orbits around the sun.”

Unlike when it was first claimed by Nicolaus Copernicus in 1543, the thesis statement now is trivial.

“The orbiting speed of the earth is getting slower, and after 10,000 years later one day will last 30 hours.”

This thesis statement is not trivial, and requires justification.

(5) A good thesis statement should be as specific as possible so that its truth values can be verified effectively.

Compare the following two belief statements:

“Japanese university education system is problematic.”

Too broad, what “problematic” means is unspecified.

Trivial too, no education system is unproblematic in practice.

“One fundamental problem in Japanese university education is the lack of logical thinking education.”

A specific problem is mentioned. And the thesis statement requires justification through argumentation, etc.

(5) A good thesis statement should be as specific as possible so that its truth values can be verified effectively.

For the same reason that it should not be a broad statement, a thesis statement should not be a vague statement.

e.g. “Smoking is hazardous to health.”

Too vague, what “hazardous” means is unspecified.

Trivial too, we all know that smoking is hazardous to health.

One possible improvement:

“Smoking is likely to cause heart disease.”

Summary

(1) A thesis statement must have a **truth-value**.

(2) A thesis statement should be **objectively verifiable**.

(3) The truthfulness of a thesis statement needs justification through argumentation.

(4) A good thesis statement is not trivial.

(5) A good thesis statement should be as specific as possible so that its truth values can be verified effectively.

**How to build a
preliminary
thesis statement:**

Practical Steps

Step 1

Find a **noun or noun phrase** that can best describe the main topic of your research paper.

Noun or noun phrase

Step 2

Build a **Sentence** based on the noun or noun phrase by adding a verb or predicate.

Sentence

Step 3

Turn the sentence into a **Question** that is of interest to you.

Research Question

Step 4

Give a **Hypothetical Answer** to the question.

Hypothetical Answer

Step 5

Summarize the answer into just **One Sentence**.

Summary of the answer

Step 6

Modify the sentence until it expresses a clear relation between the sentence's **Subject and Predicate**.

Clear relationship

Step 7

Highlight and eliminate the **Ambiguities** found in the sentence.

Eliminate ambiguities

**Other Approaches
to building a
thesis statement**

Summmarisation

**Hypothetical answer
to your research goal**

**All the approaches
share the following:
step 5, 6, 7, 8**

Classwork

Discuss with your group members,
and build a preliminary thesis statement
based on the following noun phrase:

University Education