

Sentence-Level Errors: Making Connections

1. Stepping around the broken wine bottles, my attention was drawn to the amount of rubbish on the street.
2. Rico Petrocelli has an inner ear problem in which he may not be able to play baseball anymore.
3. The adolescent is left to pull himself through the emotional breakup caused by his parents' divorce, proving they lack emotional support, which is a problem.
4. In these modern times of today, there is a sense of despair of people who live in anonymous conditions.
5. He has a feeling of fear about his father.

Sources of Difficulty

The writers of the sentences above share a common problem: they have improperly ordered or related words within the sentences. That is, these writers are having difficulty with written syntax. Because the sentences omit crucial language or misconnect ideas, the writers' intended meanings are obscured. Before we consider how to help these writers, we should examine some sources of syntactical problems.

Some arise from the differences between spoken and written English. Speech is extemporaneous; it is delivered spontaneously, whereas writing "withholds utterance to perfect it" (Shaughnessy, 51). Because people formulate ideas as they speak, because their minds are producing new thoughts while their tongues try to catch up, their statements are not as well ordered or articulated as they can be in writing. Speakers punctuate with "uhm's," "ah's," and "well's" to create an opportunity to think what to say next. They tend to string ideas together loosely, repeating ideas and linking them with "and" or "but" rather than with more complex connectives and structures that establish more precise relationships. Inexperienced writers may be unfamiliar with some structures simply because they

seldom hear or use them in conversation. Few people today, for instance, would say, "That he is an accomplished mathematician is evident even when he computes a simple restaurant check," but the construction can be useful in writing.

Speaking and writing are further distinguished by the situations in which they occur. In conversations, speakers can tell from their listeners' verbal and nonverbal responses whether they are making themselves clear, whether they need to amplify or qualify their ideas. They also use gestures, facial expressions, and various tones of voice to show whether they are serious, joking, ironic, exaggerating, and so on. Their comments may not be very explicit because these gestures are at their command, because their audience's reaction indicates whether they have made their points, and because speaker and audience share an immediate context on which an utterance is based.

When writers compose, however, their readers are not present, so writers must anticipate their audiences' needs. This requires careful selection and arrangement of materials, a procedure for which there is less time (and less need) in conversation. Because their audience is not present, writers must, as well, use certain lexical and grammatical conventions "that enable a reader to narrow the meaning possibilities of a text sufficiently to convey the direction and limits of its meaning" (Hirsch, 29). Suppose that someone had an appointment to see a doctor who had a reputation for keeping her patients waiting, and the patient arrived to find an overcrowded reception room. He might turn to one of the other patients and say, "Late again." If, however, he were describing this experience in a letter to a friend, and he transcribed only the words above, his friend would be mystified. The writer would need to compose something like, "Dr. Thornhill kept me waiting again, this time for two-and-a-half hours." Experienced writers, then, use what has been called an "elaborated code," while speakers use a "restricted" one (Bernstein). Inexperienced writers often employ their oral or restricted codes in compositions. Unused to predicting their readers' questions, novices may therefore write elliptically.

The inexperienced writer's oral code, moreover, may include expressions that are considered nonstandard written usage or syntax: "He go to work every day on the bus" is a recognized construction of Black English Vernacular (BEV), but it is not an accepted form of Standard Written English. That is not to say that BEV is an inferior linguistic form, only that its conventions may not be comprehended outside the BEV speech community. For instance, a BEV speaker uses "He be sick" to mean that "he" is often sick, has a sickly nature. The speaker will use "He is sick" only in reference to a particular occasion. Members of other English dialect groups would not recognize this usage distinction. Similarly, "Where I am a woman, I understand Juliet's problem" could be used in some colloquial contexts in which "where" is understood to be "because"; but to many ears and eyes, "where" misconnects the ideas because it indicates a spatial rather than a causal relationship. Other speakers use "where" to mean "whereas" or "while," for example, "Where one historian thinks the war was caused by a weak economy, another says racism was to blame." In this sentence, the "where" is used to establish a contrast, usage that will make sense to some listeners but not to others and is not considered Standard Written English (see Chapter 10 for more on dialects).

Aware that their speech patterns differ from written ones, some beginning writers try to imitate written forms without understanding the relationships established by connectives like "where" or "because." This is the case in our second sentence at the beginning of this chapter, "Rico Petrocelli has an inner ear problem in which he may not be able to play baseball anymore."

Many writing errors occur, then, because writers cannot negotiate the transition from speaking to writing. This is so not only because they are inexperienced in forming complicated, embedded sentences, but also because they are unfamiliar with other necessary writing procedures. The very act of writing, the physical transcription of words, is awkward for those who seldom engage in it. Forming the letters, spacing the words, inserting the punctuation marks are not automatic actions, as they are for more practiced writers, and this sort of inexperience can lead to errors of omission, placement, spelling, and punctuation. Novice writers, as well, do not realize that well-connected sentences are crafted through addition, subtraction, and reordering. They tend "to think that the point in writing is to get everything right the first time and that the need to change things is the mark of an amateur" (Shaughnessy, 79). In other words, they are unfamiliar with the procedures of revision by which the experienced writers produce complexly related ideas. They do not know "how writers behave" (Shaughnessy, 75).

When the inexperienced writer attempts to consolidate her ideas in writing, she may falter because her vocabulary is limited and because she is unpracticed in "shifting word order to meet the demands of syntax" (Shaughnessy, 75). The sentence below illustrates what often happens when beginning writers try to connect ideas in the written code. As you read the sentence, try to enumerate the ideas contained in it:

The adolescent is left to pull himself through the emotional breakup caused by his parents' divorce, proving they lack emotional support, which is a serious problem.

The sentence contains at least four ideas: (1) that adolescents have a problem; (2) that this problem is caused by their parents' divorces; (3) that adolescents must deal with the emotional aftermath of these divorces; and (4) that they must do so without emotional support. Having tried to establish some connections, the writer deserves credit for a valiant first attempt, but he did not manage to link the ideas syntactically. For instance, he has tried to forge a connection between "pull themselves through" and "lack of emotional support" by using "proving," but he is not "proving" or substantiating. If the writer meant that "lack of emotional support" describes how adolescents must "pull themselves through," the sentence could be revised as follows: "The adolescent is left to pull himself through the breakup without emotional support." This revision also eradicates the pronoun problem ("they" becomes "he"). Further, the revision omits a repetition of "emotional," on the assumption that readers will take for granted that "the breakups" are, by their very nature, emotionally taxing; such a judgment requires a writer to evaluate his reader's sophistication, but inexperienced writers often do not think about their readers. Rather (as Chapter 2 explains), they write what Linda Flower calls "writer-based prose," in which the writer is writing to himself rather than to an imagined audience ("reader-based prose").

Finally, inexperienced writers' lack of confidence hinders their writing experi-

in a way that is not really doing so.

ence. Students assigned to basic composition classes often arrive with histories of academic misadventure. They have come to think of themselves as unintelligent, not because they are, but because they have been inadequately trained. Writing is especially painful for them because it ineradicably exposes their technical deficiencies and confirms their low self-esteem. Even many older students, made wise by experience, may not trust what they have learned as workers, spouses, parents, consumers, and voters. They may consider this experience different from and less valuable than what professors know and talk about.

A beginning writer's sense of inadequacy takes various forms in her writing. A person who is unsure of what she thinks, who hesitates to commit herself to an independent judgment, may compose overgeneral, vague, or ambiguous statements. Consciously or unconsciously, she does not wish to be found wrong, so she takes evasive action. In an essay about the advantages and disadvantages of moving into her own apartment, one inexperienced writer says, "My attitude toward these small units holds a sense of confinement." Did she mean that she felt confined by the meager spaces of the apartments she had looked at? If so, perhaps she hesitated to come right out with a negative statement. Many people have been raised to believe that we should not criticize, that we should make only positive statements. If this is not true of the writer, she may rather feel that she lacks the authority to make judgments about the relative desirability of various housing arrangements. Think about the ways in which your own speech or prose is affected when you feel threatened by your audience, and you may understand what was happening to this writer.

Diffidence may lead, as well, to wordy, pompous, garbled phrasing. This kind of writing, sadly enough, represents writers' efforts to write like academics. Conscious that their speech does not resemble the vocabulary and cadence of academic writing, and distrustful of their own voices, novices try to sound sophisticated without knowing how to control syntactical and lexical forms. For example, "In these modern times of today, there is a sense of despair of people in anonymous conditions," may mean that the anomic bred by contemporary living conditions produces despair. But to reach that conclusion, the reader must plough through the repetitious opening and must supply missing connections. Ironically, the sentence defeats the writer's wish to seem sophisticated.

Clearly, we need to encourage writers to value their own insights and to express them naturally, as in conversation, but we must also help them examine and sharpen their thinking through writing. This we can do by helping them learn how to use the syntactical forms of the written code, forms that relate ideas precisely and coherently when used appropriately.

Helping by Asking Commonsense Questions

How can a tutor do this when a writer arrives with an essay in hand, an essay riddled with the sorts of syntactic errors we have described? A conventional procedure would be to offer a grammatical analysis of the paper. By the time you see the composition, an instructor may already have dappled it with such com-

ments as "misplaced modifier" or "awk passive." Unfortunately (as Chapter 7 explains), the writer probably lacks familiarity with grammatical terms and will not understand what the comments mean, let alone how to revise. If you yourself are not well versed in grammar, you might not be able to interpret the comments even if you felt it advisable to do so. However, whether or not the paper comments contain technical language, the writer may be confused and intimidated if you do use grammatical terms to describe what is amiss. Notice what happens in the following dialogue, in which Zack, the tutor, is trying to help Carolyn, the writer, improve the following sentence: "Stepping around the broken wine bottles, my attention was drawn to the amount of rubbish on the street."

CAROLYN: I don't get what's wrong with it. Sounds OK to me.

ZACK: Well, you have a dangling participle there.

CAROLYN: A what? Oh wow.

ZACK: No big deal: It's just a verb part, you know, a participle. The present ones always end in "-ing," and the past ones usually end in "-ed."

CAROLYN: Present what? I'm lost.

ZACK: Well, that's not so important right now. What matters is that a participial phrase always has to be next to the noun it's modifying.

CAROLYN: Uh, I don't get it. I mean, I'm no good at grammar and I don't know what all these things are, like the thing you said, um, I forget.

ZACK: A noun?

CAROLYN: Yeah, well, I don't know what it is and I gotta turn this paper in tomorrow, so can you help me?

Before reading further, write down your observations about this dialogue. What's good in the tutor's approach? How does he get himself into trouble? How might he have avoided it?

Introducing grammar can be risky. You can intimidate a writer who lacks familiarity with the terminology, and once you start using it, you may, like this tutor, have to spend a lot of time defining terms when the writer is eager to revise his essay. This tutor has tried to minimize the grammar discussion, but the writer remains confused and is slightly frustrated by explanations that, even though supportive, do not help her see a way to revise. Instead, you might respond as a reader, as someone who can't understand what was intended or who receives an impression that was probably not intended. Here are some general questions you might raise to help a writer see and correct a miscommunication:

1. What is the action and who (what) is doing it? Or, how does who do what? Or, simply, who does what?
2. How many ideas are in this sentence? How about listing them separately? What is the relationship (connection) between the first idea and the second idea?
3. When is the action taking place? Past? Present? Continuously? Future?
4. Who is speaking to whom? About what?

5. What's another way to say this? What's a single word that expresses this idea?

You will probably want both to tailor one of these by adding language or concepts from the writer's sentence and to provide a context for your question so that the writer knows why you are asking it. Consider the sentence earlier referred to:

Stepping around the broken wine bottles, my attention was drawn to the amount of rubbish on the street.

"Who does what?"

ZACK: I'm having trouble figuring out who is doing what here.

CAROLYN: Me. When I was stepping around the broken wine bottles, I noticed the rubbish.

ZACK: How about writing it that way? It sounded before as if your attention was doing the stepping. Your sentence is clearer now. Look at the sentence you wrote above this one, "On my way to the bus stop, I realized how dirty the neighborhood has become." How does it differ from the original "Stepping" sentence?

CAROLYN: I guess it's clearer that I'm doing it, the realizing I mean.

10 ZACK: Yes, you have "Who does what" in that order, and readers have learned to expect to get information in that order. Now let's look through your paper. What other sentences do you see here that need the "Who does what" sequence?

➤ Before reading any further, analyze this dialogue. What are its pedagogical strengths? What did the session accomplish?

This time, Zack begins the conversation by establishing the context for his subsequent questions. He identifies the source of his difficulty by indicating what he could not comprehend. When Carolyn offers an improved version by using her habitual speech pattern, Zack encourages her to write the revision on the spot. Carolyn might not have remembered later what she had said, and she might also consider the session more productive if she actually wrote something during it. Notice also that Zack does not start by pointing out the specific error. What if he had said, "Well, it sounds as if your attention was doing the stepping, and you didn't mean that, did you?" By focusing on the error, the tutor would have risked humiliating the writer (as Chapter 2 explains), but by starting with "who does what?" Zack gives Carolyn an opportunity to revise without making her feel stupid. Once a writer has amended an original statement, she will probably feel less embarrassed if you then point out the error, as this tutor does. By choosing a good example from the paper (the sentence about the bus stop), Zack helps Carolyn discover the syntactical principle. This practice should help the writer see that she does write some clear sentences, and that she can use them as models when she revises. For further reinforcement, Zack then asks Carolyn to apply the principle elsewhere in the essay. If you encourage writers to apply a method you have used

(in this case, asking "Who does what?") to make a successful revision, you increase the chance that they will use it independently at some future time.

In order to establish "Who does what?" you may at times want to write down the syntactical base and ask writers to fill in information taken from their sentences. In "He has a feeling of fear about his father," for instance, it is not clear whether "He" fears the parent or something that might happen to the parent. Filling in the pattern resolves the ambiguity:

ACTOR	ACTION	WHAT'S ACTED ON OR OUTCOME
He	fears	his father

"How many actions are there?"

If a writer has misconsolidated several ideas, one strategy is to get her to separate them, decide how they are related, and then to reconnect them. We can use the second sentence listed at the beginning of this chapter, "Rico Petrocelli has an inner ear problem in which he may not be able to play baseball anymore," to illustrate this procedure:

ALLIE: I can't quite figure out what's going on here. How many actions are there? Let's make a list.

BETTY: He has the ear problem is one, and he can't play is the other.

ALLIE: Good, write those down. Now, what's the connection?

BETTY: Well, he won't be able to play because of the ear problem.

ALLIE: OK, so one thing causes the other. How about writing it that way?

Allie asks Betty to extract the major actions in the sentence so that she can look at them without the connectives that have caused the problem. The writer then uses her habitual speech pattern to make the correction with "because." You might wonder why the writer didn't get it right the first time, since her speech pattern establishes the intended connection, but in the previous section we have pointed out several potential causes for such misconceptions. Also, the tutor does not ask the writer directly, "Why can't Petrocelli play anymore?" Since "why" automatically cues "because," this question would have been more prescriptive than asking the writer to make the connection. If, however, the writer could not do so, the tutor might have become more directive. The more open-ended approach allows the writer to make her own revisions. If the tutor were next to highlight the procedure just followed, she would provide the writer with a method for making future revisions independently:

ALLIE: OK, let's review what we just did. What questions did we ask in order to make the revision?

BETTY: We figured out how many things were going on.

ALLIE: Right. Then what?

BETTY: Then we put them back together again.

ALLIE: Sure. Now how about reading some of the remaining sentences aloud to see if you can find spots where you need to do the same thing.

Here, the tutor has added oral reading to the procedure to encourage the writer to test her written phrases against her ear. Betty may not be able to identify similar errors immediately, but she may improve with time and practice. The last part of the dialogue, then, indicates what you might do when you think the writer can operate on her own.

Knowing that written codes often observe different conventions from oral codes, you might well ask why we suggest that the writer try to reproduce a speech pattern in writing. Often, however, spoken and written conventions are identical. Both establish causal relationships by words like "because" or "since." Alternatively, a speaker might not use a causal connective but might offer a pregnant pause instead; a writer uses a semicolon to achieve the same effect. If you think a writer might say an idea more directly or clearly than he has written it, "How would you say that?" then, is not a regressive question.

"When is the action taking place?"

This question is appropriate when the writer's verb tenses are inconsistent or illogical. The dialogue below suggests how you might avoid too much technical discussion and obtain a revision by means of asking "when?" The tutor is directing the writer's attention to this passage:

As I started walking, I can feel that it's quite chilly out; it must have been around the fifties. Also, the air was very fresh and clean as though there are no traces of pollution. The roads are quiet now—only an occasional car goes by.

DON: I can't tell exactly when all these things are happening in relation to each other. For instance, when did you feel that it was chilly?

ALEC: When I started walking.

DON: But the "I can feel" sounds as if it's happening now. What can you do to make me see that it happened earlier?

ALEC: Change it to "I felt"?

DON: That does it.

ALEC: But I sort of wanted to give the feelings and sights as they were then.

DON: Do you mean that you wanted to recreate the experience? Did you want to write as if you were recording the experience while it was happening?

ALEC: Yes.

DON: So what in your original phrasing isn't going on in the present, and how should you change it?

ALEC: I don't get what you mean.

DON: Well, when does "the air was fresh and clean" happen, then or now?

ALEC: Oh, I see. In the past.

DON: How can you tell?

ALEC: Because of the "was." So shall I change it to "is"?

DON: Sure. What other changes to you need to make?

ALEC: "Started."

DON: Sure. We said that if you put all of the action in the present tense, the experience seems to be just happening. What happens if you put the action in the past?

ALEC: Well, it's over and I'm looking back on it. So doing it that way gives the impression that I'm thinking about it and not doing it.

DON: Yes, that way you have more distance and are reflecting on the past. The other way makes the action immediate.

ALEC: Yes, the way I want it is that way, not reflective, I mean. It puts you there in the scene and I like that.

Notice how Don tries to discover Alec's intention. Once the tutor establishes it and has helped the writer revise (by asking a more specific question when the general one does not work [lines 12-15]), he tries to make the writer realize that his revisions involve more than mere technical correctness, that a writer has various options and that exercising one or another produces different effects. Once novices begin to grasp this idea, they gain more control as writers. Notice also that when Don rephrases Alec's idea ("you are reflecting on the past"), he provides vocabulary that the writer adopts in his next statement ("not reflective"). The idea is the writer's; the tutor just offers additional language with which the writer can describe what he intended. This expands the writer's vocabulary; it gives him more ways to talk about the composing process.

"Who is speaking to whom about what?"

This variation of "Who does what?" is useful when a writer produces a sentence like the following:

Explaining cell division by means of a comparison to the reader is the idea in this paragraph by Lewis Thomas.

WILL: I can't figure out who does the explaining.

DAVID: Thomas is writing, so he's explaining.

WILL: OK, so how about starting that way, with what Thomas does.

DAVID: Thomas explains cell division by means of a comparison to the reader?

WILL: Who is he explaining this to?

DAVID: Well, the reader, of course. I said that. How come you ask?

WILL: Well, it sounded as if you meant that Thomas drew a comparison between the reader and cell division.

DAVID: No way. I better tell what he compares it to.

WILL: Great. So now where are you going to put in the "reader?"

DAVID: Let's see, where can I . . . Thomas explains cell division to the reader by comparing it to—

WILL: That's a lot clearer.

Here, again, the tutor has avoided discussing grammar in favor of responding as a reader. He has indicated what confused him instead of pointing out syntactical errors. Observe, also, the sequence of questions. Will asks, "Who does the ex-

plaining?" first, to determine who is talking. He then moves to the "To whom?" That discussion alerts David that he needs to complete the comparison, and he instinctively changes the form of the word, "comparison" to "by comparing." The tutor's systematic, patient approach has let the writer revise broadly without too much prodding.

"What's another way of saying this?"

"What single word expresses this idea?"

Consider the lack of economy in these sentences:

Erikson has the idea that there are definite stages in human development. They can be described in terms of a series of conflicts.

While they contain no grammatical errors, the writer could more concisely and precisely convey the ideas by substituting single words for "has the idea" and "in terms of." As readers, we want to discover "who does what" as easily as possible, but the wordy phrases obstruct comprehension. Here is how one tutor, Sandro, addressed the first problem sentence by asking the questions above:

SANDRO: I think I get your point, but I think you can make it more effectively if you take fewer words to do it. Look at the phrase, "has the idea that."
What's another way to say that?

MARNIE: Like what?

5 SANDRO: Like some action. What is Erikson doing?

MARNIE: The idea is that this is what he believes, but you can't say that, can you? I was told to stay away from that because we don't really know what the man believes, only what he says. But "says" sounds so dull.

10 SANDRO: There may be times when a writer does express beliefs, and then I see no reason to avoid "believe"; however, if you don't think this is one of those times and you think "say" is blah, try to think of another action. You might try to imagine a scene with Erikson in it. What is he doing?

MARNIE: Well, you could say he's stating a position to a group of psychologists. That's it! He's stating, or maybe arguing.

15 SANDRO: Either of those will work, but now you need to decide how they differ and which one suits your purpose.

MARNIE: "Argue" sounds angrier, as if the people were disagreeing with him. I didn't mean that. I guess I'll take "states" because that's like a strong "says."

In this exchange, perhaps out of genuine confusion, the writer asks Sandro to make a revision for her ("Like what?"). However, Sandro wisely avoids doing so because he believes that Marnie can and should generate her own response. He also suggests a method to help her do so ("imagine a scene"); Marnie should be able to reuse this method, particularly if Sandro were to review the procedure at the end of the session. Finally, the tutor encourages the writer to consider the connotations of the words she has generated. Marnie should become more conscious, as a result, of the effects of her choices. We have deliberately omitted

from the dialogue any discussion of the second sentence. Exercise 1 under "Suggestions for Further Writing" at the end of the chapter asks you to write a dialogue in which you help a writer work on this one.

Consolidating Ideas: Lexical Forms, Coordination, and Subordination

When a writer learns how to substitute a single word for a phrase, he may also learn ways to alter lexical forms so that he can consolidate ideas. Consider the following sentences:

ORIGINAL: Jane Addams says that the children of immigrants are embarrassed by their parents. Their parents have not become like Americans and don't live like Americans.

POSSIBLE REVISION: Jane Addams says that children of immigrants are embarrassed because their parents have not become Americanized.

In the original, the causal connection between children's embarrassment and parents' behavior is not explicit, so a tutor might ask, "What is the connection?" If necessary, he might subsequently ask, more prescriptively, "Why are the children embarrassed?" But there is more to be done here. Jane Addams describes naturalized parents, people who are, in fact, Americans, but who have not adopted the customs of their new country. Changing "Americans" to "Americanized" makes this point, but the writer may be unused to the "-ize" or "-ise" form and may be unaware of its meaning. In that case, there is little point in asking the student, "How could you change the ending of 'American'?" Instead, you might use a related example like the one below to illustrate the meaning and function of the suffix. Then, you could ask the writer to apply the principle to his essay:

1. The students felt that the conference on the nuclear freeze should appear on television.
2. The students wanted to televise the conference on the nuclear freeze.
3. The students felt that the conference on the nuclear freeze should be televised.

These three sentences make roughly the same point but use different syntactical forms. Ultimately, you and the writer might want to explore the differences in meaning, but the first task is to alert him to the function and meaning of the suffixes. You might ask how "televise" functions in sentence 2 (it is part of the verb, "wanted to televise"). You might then ask the student to define the meaning of "-ise" in the context of the original sentence. If he sees that the whole word means something like "the act or action of putting them on television," he has taken the first step toward discovering the meaning of the suffix. You could then ask him, "What other verbs use the two forms '-ize' and '-ise'?" Once he supplies these, he may see what they have in common and should be able to define the suffix ("to cause or to be formed into").

Sentence 3 can help a writer recognize that there is a related form of "-ize" and "-ise" that functions differently (it turns the base word into a modifier). If

you ask him how "televised" functions in "a televised conference on the nuclear freeze," he will probably say it describes the conference or tells what kind of conference. Next, you could ask how the ending differs from the "-ize" or "-ise" suffix. Then, you could have him list other words that used "-ized" or "-ised" and ask him to explain how adding them to the base word changes its function and meaning (and position) in the sentence.

Illustrative examples help someone discover a principle inductively. This is a good approach because the writer remains actively engaged in learning; he is not a passive listener while you lecture. To borrow John Dewey's tenet, one learns best by doing. In general, we suggest that you avoid asking questions when you think the person with whom you are working lacks the knowledge or skill to provide an answer. Instead of giving it to him, you should, if possible, try to use an example or an analogy from which he can draw an applicative principle. You may not always have time to do this; you may have to give explanations if little time remains or the item at hand is not the focus of the session. Whenever it is feasible, however, we recommend that you help the writer make his own discoveries.

Sentences can also be improved through sentence combining. This technique uses coordinators and subordinators to connect related ideas. Writers unfamiliar with word structures such as roots, prefixes, and suffixes (as in the previous example) are relatively inexperienced in using the syntactical patterns of the written code. They may, as we have said, repeat words unnecessarily or string ideas together without showing their precise relationships. Besides introducing structures such as suffixes, you can help students learn how to improve their writing by using connective language that links or embeds ideas. This can be done in a variety of ways.

If a writer brings an essay to the tutoring session, you can select two conceptually related sentences and ask her to combine the two ideas in a single sentence. She may be able to do so without much coaching because, in preparing the draft, she may have been concentrating on getting the ideas down and may not yet have revised. Writers often have not reworked their sentences because they do not realize that looking back, or "re-vision," in Berthoff's language, constitutes an important part of the writing process. You can encourage students to see revision as an essential activity, as a way of making meaning, not just of editorially dotting *i*'s and crossing *r*'s.

Let's say the writer is trying to introduce the main point of an essay he has read: "The author of 'Confessions of an Erstwhile Child' says that children suffer because they cannot choose their parents. He grew up in an unhappy home himself." An experienced writer, if asked to combine these ideas, might write, "The author of 'Confessions of an Erstwhile Child,' who himself grew up in an unhappy home, says that children suffer because they cannot choose their parents." A less practiced writer might be unused to employing "who," and might revise this way: "The author of 'Confessions of an Erstwhile Child' says that children suffer because they cannot choose their parents. He says this because he himself grew up in an unhappy home." While the writer has not consolidated the ideas in a single sentence, he has added a causal connection. This shows progress. Some-

times a revision takes several steps. You could help this writer take the next one by asking what "this" stands for. Then you might ask him if he can get the cause and effect together with the cause coming first: "Because he himself grew up in an unhappy home, the author . . ."

Sometimes you can encourage a writer to make more than one useful revision ("That's great. What's another way you could get these ideas together?"). You and the writer can explore the different effects achieved by each variation. This deliberation helps the writer to realize that he has options and that each one will produce a different result. For instance, let us look at the two revisions of the ideas on "Confessions of an Erstwhile Child":

Because he himself grew up in an unhappy home, the author of "Confessions of an Erstwhile Child" says that children suffer because they cannot choose their parents.

The author of "Confessions of an Erstwhile Child," who himself grew up in an unhappy home, says that children suffer because they cannot choose their parents.

Using "because" emphasizes why the author of the essays takes the position he adopts; using "who," on the other hand, gives additional information about the author of the essay, information that is interesting in light of the stand that he takes. The "because" makes the connection more explicitly, the "who" implicitly. The writer can decide on the basis of his intention which of the two he likes better.

Another way of teaching students how to combine ideas is to have them assemble a list of coordinators and subordinators from their own papers or from whatever they are reading. If necessary, you can supply missing words. The list might look something like the one below:

CONNECTING WORDS

1. Linking words that connect ideas of *equal* or *coordinate* emphasis (coordinating conjunctions):
and but
for yet
so or
2. Embedding words that introduce *subordinate* ideas that give information about the action (subordinating conjunctions):
after though as if
although unless as long as
as until even though
because when in order that
before whenever so that
since while whereas
3. Embedding words that introduce more information about a subject or object (relative pronouns):
that which
whom whose
who

The list indicates the general functions of the different types of connectives. Writers may revise more easily if they understand how the words they choose function in a sentence; as the writers revise, you can ask them what the changes accomplish. To demonstrate how connectives work, you might ask a writer to extract

some sentences from a draft, check over the list of connectives, and select an appropriate one.

When writers are choosing connectives, you can ask them to construct alternative revisions so that they can see and explain how the meaning changes depending on the connective they use. You or a writer might discuss an example like the following and then move to the writer's essay:

1. He was tired. He went to bed. (original)
2. He was tired, and he went to bed.
3. When he was tired, he went to bed.
4. Because he was tired, he went to bed.

In the first example, the ideas are separate. We cannot assume a clear connection. In the second, "and" asks us to assume that two things occurred in either physical or temporal proximity, although it is not clear which. The third sets up a time sequence by using "when." The fourth establishes a causal relationship between the two ideas. You can set up similar sets of examples to help writers conceptualize the functions of connective words. In the following set,

I like violent films, and he likes romantic ones.
I like violent films, but he likes romantic ones.

The "and" links the two people's movie preferences while the "but" emphasizes the difference in their tastes. If you ask writers to analyze the differences, they will probably begin to make choices more consciously and carefully.

Another way of helping writers gain control over written syntactical forms is to construct blank patterns and have writers fill them in with ideas from an assigned topic. For instance,

After _____
 ACTOR _____ ACTION _____ because _____ ACTION _____

 ACTOR _____ who _____ ACTION _____ ACTION _____

 ACTOR _____ ACTION _____ ACTION _____ ACTION _____

If a writer is taking a composition course, he may be using a text that offers exercises in sentence combining. Typically, these texts pair sentences that are implicitly related in meaning, and the directions ask the student to combine them by using coordinators and subordinators. You can use these exercises to good advantage, as *part* of your entire instructional plan. Correcting someone else's sentences is a different process from generating one's own, and at some point writers need to construct original written statements that use connective language. After the writer has gotten some practice through the text's exercises, you will probably want to ask him to make up his own sentences. Perhaps our best advice is to give writers practice of various kinds in hopes that they will begin to master and to internalize the syntactical forms of written English.

Summary

Inexperienced writers make syntactical errors for a variety of reasons, chiefly because of differences between spoken and written English. Often writers are unfamiliar with complex connectives and structures used to link written ideas. Further, because inexperienced writers are unused to anticipating an absent audience's needs, they tend to write elliptically. Their oral codes, as well, may not conform to the forms of standard written English. Many sentence-level errors occur, then, because writers cannot negotiate the transition between speaking and writing. They are hampered by limited vocabularies and inexperience in transcribing, transforming, and revising words. Writers' awareness of their technical deficiencies can lead to diffidence, which, in turn, produces vague, ambiguous, or garbled phrasing.

Rather than analyze sentence-level errors grammatically, a practice that confuses and intimidates inexperienced writers because they are unfamiliar with grammatical terms, you can respond in everyday language. Basic queries like "Who's doing what?" "How many ideas are in this sentence?" and "Who is speaking to whom?" help writers see and correct miscommunications. To make these questions text-specific, you can tailor them to include details from writers' sentences.

To help writers consolidate stringy, choppy, or misconnected ideas, you can, through illustration, introduce lexical forms like affixes. Examples help writers unfamiliar with these forms infer each one's meaning and semantic effect. You can also suggest various kinds of sentence-combining exercises in which writers use coordinators and subordinators to join and embed ideas. If you ask a writer to construct alternate consolidations of paired sentences, she will begin to see how meaning changes depending on the connectives used. Handbook exercises that invite writers to combine ready-made sentences can be useful, but writers also need to construct original ones that contain connective language. As writers amend syntactical errors in their essays, you can reassure them that consolidating two ideas may require several revisions rather than just one. Only through diversified practice in recognizing, manipulating, and generating the syntactical forms of written English, do writers internalize them.

SUGGESTIONS FOR JOURNAL ENTRIES

1. Ask a friend or classmate to tape unobtrusively conversations in a public place, conversations that you yourself do not observe. Transcribe the conversations. Discuss whatever uncertainties about meaning that you as a listener experience, and analyze the aspects of the speakers' language that account for your perplexity. If the recorder-observer were editing the tape for publication, what kinds of changes would she make to clarify meaning?
2. Write about how your speech changes when you lack confidence or feel anxious. How does your writing change under comparable circumstances?

3. List several expressions that you would use comfortably in speaking but not in writing, and vice versa. What characteristics does each group have in common? How do the two groups differ?
4. At what point in composing do you tend to craft syntax? What sorts of revisions do you typically make and why? How can your observations help writers with whom you work?
5. To what extent has formal instruction in grammar improved the syntactical clarity of your sentences?
6. What seems to be causing the syntactical problems of a writer with whom you are working? What strategies have you adopted and why? How well are they working? What will you try next?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER WRITING

1. Review our dialogue about the sentence: "Erikson has the idea that there are definite stages in human development. They can be described in terms of a series of conflicts" (pp. 168-69). Then write a continuation in which the tutor helps the writer revise the second sentence: "They can be described in terms of a series of conflicts."
2. Without using grammatical terminology, write out questions that would help the writer of the following sentences to recognize problems and to revise for clarity. Where appropriate, use the questions and strategies suggested in this chapter.
 - a. This truck was on Morse Avenue, it was repairing the sidewalks.
 - b. Have you every been brainwashed by evolution?
 - c. The tragedy of today is the injustice and blatant disregard we have for our elderly citizens.
 - d. Perhaps the rise of designer jeans can be compared to "The Emperor's New Clothes" by Hans Christian Anderson.
 - e. There are many holes in the evolution of man.
 - f. When the police took him to the station, they found a man was wanted for murder in another state that fit this man's description.
 - g. Another example of a judge who was incompetent at his job because of outside problems is a suicidal one.
 - h. This problem consists of a street which is located in your jurisdiction and with your support and consideration in the matter I see no reason why the problem cannot be overcome.
 - i. The anonymous writer refers to marriage as a psychological trap that was put there by people's misunderstandings as children that never got straightened out.
 - j. Pilar is considered by Hemingway as a simple peasant. Along with this description, her actions contribute to the enhancement of her personality.
 - k. Heller's reason for brutalization is not attributed to simply a war and a common cause. There is never any mention of a real enemy.
 - l. There is a feeling of distaste for the institution of slavery.
 - m. In the book, *The Politics of Experience*, R. D. Laing, the author, suggests that contemporary society of today is more interested in having normal average people who conform than imaginative unconventional people who want society's institutions.

1. Occasionally things happen that we can't explain with our present knowledge of natural laws. We call such things 'supernatural.' Sometimes we ridicule or deny these occurrences.

3. Read the sample of student writing below. List the kinds and possible sources of error. Given the pattern of errors that you have found, write a dialogue between you and the writer in which you address the problem or problems you would give priority. Explain your choices and the reasons for the strategies you adopt in the dialogue.

HYPERACTIVE CHILDREN

The true cause of hyperactivity is presently unknown. The problem has been studied for the past fifty years, and the number of remedies or solutions to the problem have evolved. There are many arguments about the safety of the treatments given to hyperactive children, and whether there necessary at all. The main concern of parents, since there is no present cure is to try to shape their hyperactive children into a normal state like their peers, so that they may expand and develop their personalities.

A large number of solutions have come about for the treatment of hyperactive children. The most common and widespread is the use of stimulant drugs known as amphetamines. Other solutions are to control the children's diet by restricting the types of food that they eat. The reasons for this was because it was believed that additives such as synthetic colors, flavors, and salicylates affected behavior. The remaining possibilities of hyperactivity are psychological reasons. They relate the fact that if a child was confined to the home and limited in his outdoor activities, then he has narrowed his outlets for energy thus making himself hyperactive.

Each of the above solutions has its own set of problems related to it. The most common solution being the use of amphetamines creates the largest problem. There have been a number of tests done in which both the good and the bad have resulted from the use of drugs.

Judith Rappaport of the National Mental Health Institute states "these drugs dramatically improve hyperactive children's behavior when the children take them for short periods of time. A physician quoted from the NY Times states "We give it (Ritalin) to one terrible little boy, and a few minutes later the child was actually taking out the garbage for his mother. She almost flipped out." These are just a few examples of how the short term use of amphetamines have helped hyperactive children.

There are also some ill side effects to the use of the drugs. Robert Sprague from the University of Illinois through years of research has determined that if children take amphetamines the heart rate and blood pressure become increased, and if this is taken for many years then it may become harmful.

4. Write a dialogue for a second lesson for the writer of the essay above. Decide what sorts of follow-up exercises would help reinforce what you had covered in the first session. Attach this second dialogue to the first one.

SUGGESTIONS FOR CLASS ACTIVITIES

1. Share with classmates your answers to the exercises in "Suggestions for Further Writing."
2. Bring to class copies of mispunctuated paragraphs written by people with whom you work. Lead a class discussion in which classmates analyze the errors and suggest tutoring strategies, or use the paragraphs for role-playing exercises.
3. Bring to class copies of handbooks and discuss the relative merits of the punctuation exercises.
4. As a class, make up some exercises that would address the punctuation problems of writers with whom you work.