

# **ACADEMIC WRITING: IMPROVING THE SENTENCE STRUCTURE**

**EKATERINA REDKINA**

**SENIOR TEACHER, LOMONOSOV MOSCOW STATE  
UNIVERSITY**



for the love  
OF WRITING

Ideas

Structure

Language

Words

WRITING PROBLEMS  
WHEN YOU FINALLY ACCEPT  
THAT DUCT TAPE AND GLITTER  
WON'T FIX THE PLOT HOLES

Text

WRITERS WRITE

Sentences

# LINGUISTIC INTERFERENCE



# **AIMS OF THIS WORKSHOP**

1. To recognize sentence types
2. To recognize and practice avoiding sentence-level errors
3. To look at ways to engage the reader in academic writing at the sentence level

# COUNT THE NUMBER OF SENTENCES IN THE TEXT?

5

Advertising and propaganda are used very systematically for political matters today. Such as advertising on TV to gain votes. Because of its very strong influence on people. Therefore, politicians sometimes hire an advertising specialist. However, the advertising strategy is not just a way to attract people's attention in modern times. Also, used in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. We can find many historical examples. One example is the advertising strategy of the famous French king, Louis 14<sup>th</sup>. Called the Sun King by his people.

# SENTENCE FRAGMENT IS NOT A SENTENCE YET

A sentence is a group of words that makes a complete idea. Every sentence needs a subject and a verb.

Although people want to believe that all men are created equal.



A complete sentence must contain at least one main or independent clause.

# FRAGMENTS OR NOT?

1. Second, a fact that men are physically stronger than women.
2. Many of my friends who did not have the opportunity to go to college.
3. The total energy of the tsunami waves was about five megatons of TNT. More than twice the total explosive energy used during all of World War II, including two atomic bombs, according to one expert.
4. Working during the morning and attending classes during the afternoon. Because I do not feel that grades in college have any value.



# FRAGMENTS: TO AVOID OR NOT TO AVOID?

“The gray of outside is inside. Inside the living room. Inside the chest. Inside me.” (*Mockingbird by Kathryn Erskine*)

- “You think you’re one slippery customer, don’t you?” he [Grandpa] asked. “Lots of tricks.”
- “Not tricks,” I said.
- “Oh, no? What would you call stealing my slippers then?”
- “Gorilla warfare.” (*The War with Grandpa by Robert Kimmel Smith*)

# WHAT DO THESE SENTENCES HAVE IN COMMON?

1. Freshwater boils at 100 degrees Celsius at sea level.
2. Freshwater boils at 100 degrees and freezes at 0 degrees Celsius.
3. Freshwater and salt water do not boil and do not freeze at the same temperatures.

**S + V**

**SIMPLE  
SENTENCE**

# COMBINING TWO SIMPLE SENTENCES

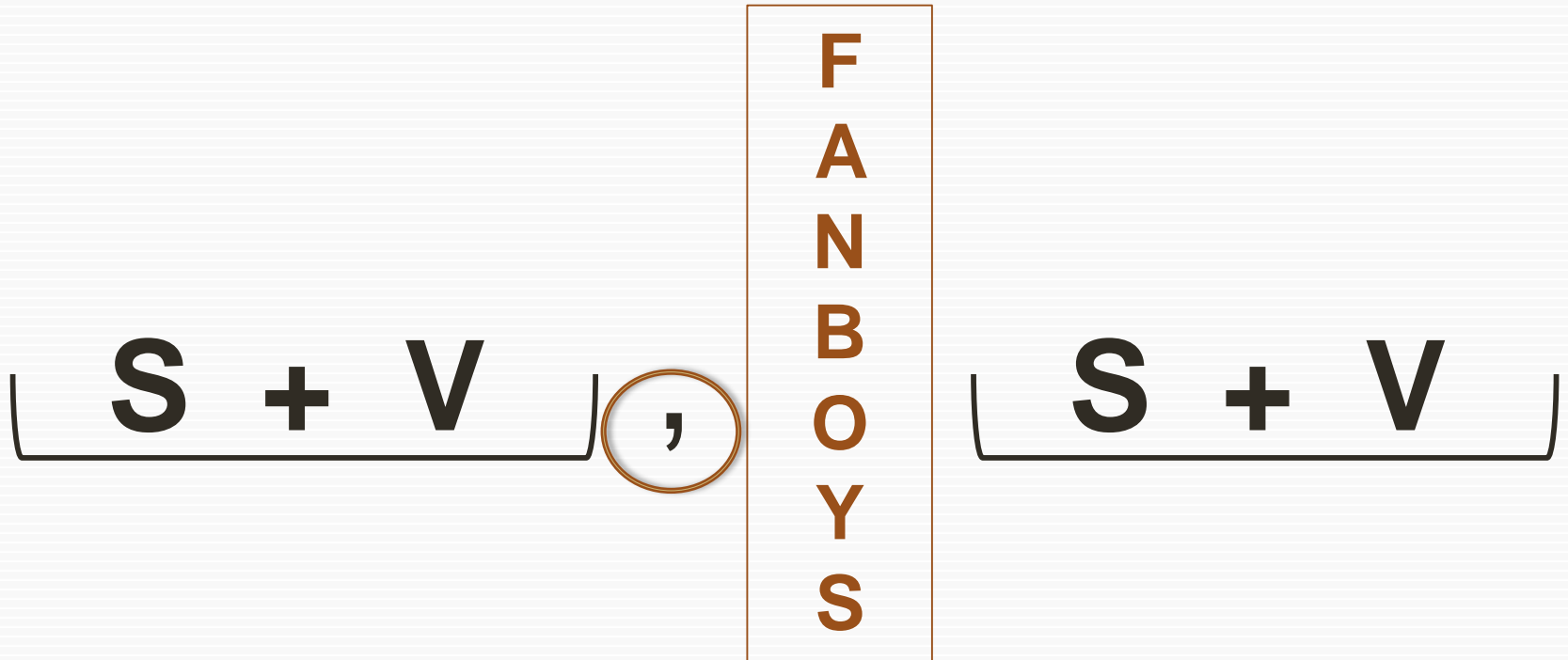
- a. Salt water boils at a higher temperature than freshwater.
- b. Food cooks faster in salt water.



**COMPOUND SENTENCE**

1. Salt water boils at a higher temperature than freshwater, **so** food cooks faster in salt water.
2. Salt water boils at a higher temperature than freshwater; food cooks faster in salt water.
3. Salt water boils at a higher temperature than freshwater; **therefore**, food cooks faster in salt water.
4. ~~Salt water boils at a higher temperature than freshwater food cooks faster in salt water~~
5. ~~Salt water boils at a higher temperature than freshwater, food cooks faster in salt water.~~

# COMPOUND SENTENCE WITH COORDINATION (1)



Salt water boils at a higher temperature than freshwater, **so** food cooks faster in salt water.

# YET VS. BUT

I want to study art, but my parents want me to study engineering.

I am very bad at math, yet my parents want me to study engineering.

But is preferred when the two clauses are direct opposites. When the second clause is an unexpected or surprising continuation because of information given in the first clause, yet is preferred. (but is acceptable for both meanings; yet for only one meaning.)

# COMPOUND SENTENCE WITH CONJUNCTIVE ADVERBS (2)

[ S + V ] ; conjunctive  
adverb , [ S + V ]

Salt water boils at a higher temperature than freshwater; **therefore**, food cooks faster in salt water.

# CONJUNCTIVE ADVERBS

1. We wanted to leave the office; \_\_\_\_\_, the team leader called, and we stayed much longer.
2. She is a very smart girl; \_\_\_\_\_, it's not at all surprising that she gets such good grades.
3. Jared is a millionaire; \_\_\_\_\_, his brother Jeremy is always flat broke.
4. He felt he couldn't tell the truth about what happened; \_\_\_\_\_, he lied.
5. You need to put more effort into your work; \_\_\_\_\_, you won't get a passing grade.
6. The car payments are high these days; \_\_\_\_\_, I really enjoy driving.



1. ;however,
2. ;therefore,
3. ;in contrast,
4. ;instead,
5. ;otherwise,
6. ;on the other hand,

# COMPOUND SENTENCE WITH SEMICOLONS (3)



Salt water boils at a higher temperature than freshwater; food cooks faster in salt water.

# WHAT IS WRONG?

Salt water boils at a higher temperature than freshwater, food cooks faster in salt water.

a comma splice

Salt water boils at a higher temperature than freshwater food cooks faster in salt water.

run-on sentences

# CORRECTING RUN-ONS AND COMMA SPLICES

My family went to Australia then they emigrated to Canada.

My family went to Australia, then they emigrated to Canada.

---

1 Two separate ideas

Add a period

2 Two separate ideas that are connected

Add a semicolon

3 Two ideas are connected  
(similarity/opposition/equality, etc.)

Add a coordinator (FAN BOYS)

4 One idea depends on the other one

Add a subordinator

# COMPLEX SENTENCES

1. When students from other countries come to the United States, they often suffer from culture shock.
2. Many students have to work part-time because financial aid is difficult to obtain.
3. Engineers, who have an aptitude for drafting and mechanics, must also be artistic and imaginative.

**S + V**

**S + V**



# IDENTIFY THE SENTENCE (S, CO, CX)

1. The shoplifter had stolen clothes, so he ran once he saw the police. **CO**
2. Opinionated women are given disadvantages in societies that privilege male accomplishments. **CX**
3. They spoke to him in Spanish, but he responded in English. **CO**
4. Professor Maple's intelligent students completed and turned in their homework. **S**
5. The woman who taught Art History 210 was fired for stealing school supplies. **CX**
6. The man believed in the system, and he knew that justice would prevail after the murderer was sent to jail. **CO-CX**

## Rosa Parks

1 Rosa Parks is a famous African-American woman, **and** she is often called “the mother of the civil rights movement.” She was born into a poor but hardworking African-American family in Alabama, **and** no one suspected that she would become the spark that ignited the civil rights movement in the United States. This movement changed U.S. society forever, **and** it helped African-Americans attain equal rights under the law.

2 Parks became famous quite by accident. One day in 1955, she was on her way home from her job in a Montgomery, Alabama, department store. She boarded a city bus with three other African-Americans. They sat in the fifth row. The fifth row was the first row African-Americans were allowed to sit in. A few stops later, the front four rows filled up. A white man was left standing.

3 According to the laws of that time, African-Americans had to give up their seats to whites, so the bus driver asked Parks and the three other African-Americans to get up and move. Although the others complied, Parks refused. She later said she was not tired from work, but tired of being treated like a second-class citizen. The bus driver called the police, who arrested Parks and took her away in handcuffs.

4 Over the weekend, a protest was organized, **and** on the following Monday, African-American people in Montgomery began a boycott of the public buses, **and** the boycott was tremendously successful, **and** it lasted more than a year. The Supreme Court of the United States finally ruled that segregation on public transportation was unconstitutional. African-Americans had won a huge victory, **and** they realized their power to change the system.

# TEXT: SENTENCE LEVEL ANALYSIS

1. **Paragraphs 1 and 4** have too many compound sentences. This style is boring because so many sentences use *and* as the connector.
2. **Paragraph 2** has too many simple sentences. This style sounds choppy.
3. **Paragraph 3** uses a good mixture of sentence types.



# HOW GOOD IS THIS TEXT?

I visited Boston last summer. A very beautiful and comfortable city. People there sit on chairs or lie on the lawn, when they are watching performances in the street. People read their books, and don't do anything. Everyone looks like they are taking a vacation. People walk slowly and wear casual clothes. I asked them some questions and they always helped me.

**Sentence types/ Rhythm/  
Punctuation/ Fragments/ Run-Ons**

# LOOK BACK AT EXERCISE 1

$S + V$

$S + V$ , and  $S + V$

$S + V$

$S + V$



# JOINING SENTENCES TOGETHER:

1. The student was reading a research.
2. The research was published in the recent issue of a journal.
3. The Journal was called *Questions of Psychology*.
4. The research was dedicated to the the development of food behavior in children and adults.

# HOW GOOD ARE THESE SENTENCES?

1. My English conversation class is made up of Chinese, Spaniards, and some are from Bosnia.
2. The teacher wanted to know which country we came from and our future goals.
3. The language skills of the students in the evening classes are the same as the day classes.

Lack of parallelism

# QUIZ

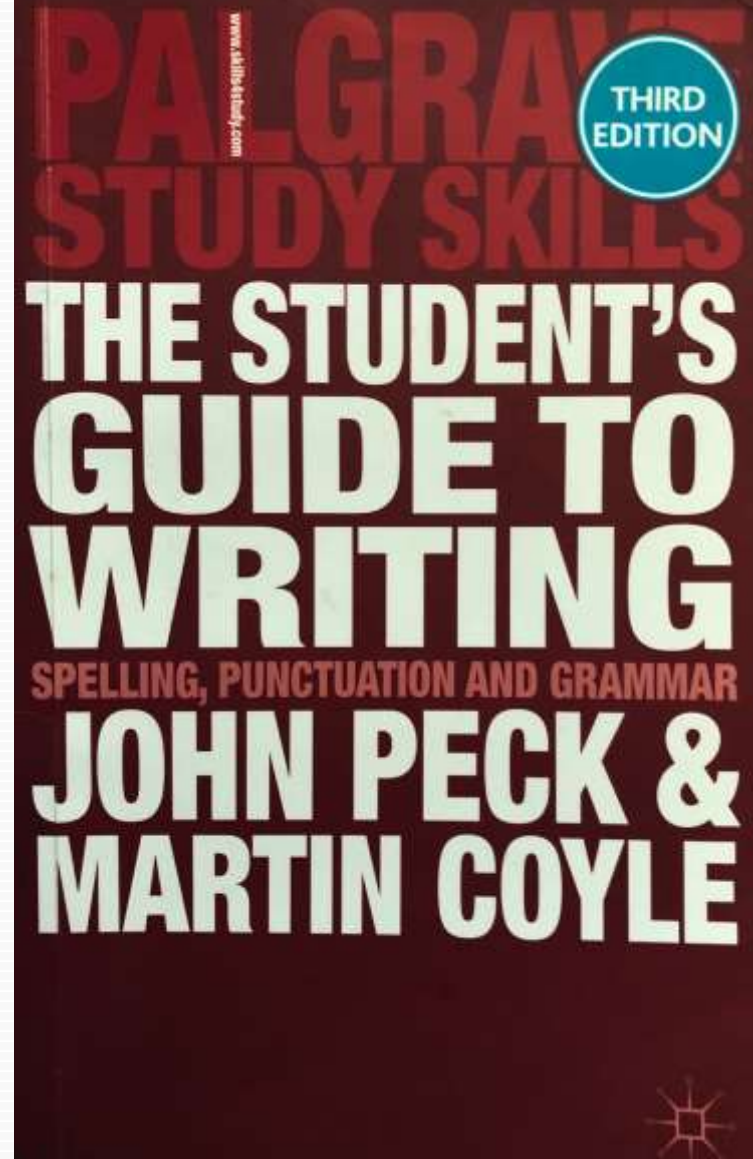
1. What is the difference between a fragment and a sentence?
2. What types of sentences can you name?
3. A simple sentence should have one subject and one verb. T/F?
4. A sentence with two independent clauses is called a complex sentence. T/F?
5. You can put a comma between two independent clauses. T/F?
6. How do you punctuate a compound sentence?
7. When do you put a comma in a complex sentence?
8. Why should we avoid parallelism errors?
9. How to decide on the length and the sentence types ?
10. How to make the reader engaged?

CAMBRIDGE

# Skills for Effective Writing

## Highlights:

- Subject-Verb Agreement
- Consistent Pronoun Use
- Avoiding Run-Ons and Comma Splices
- Avoiding Sentence Fragments
- Sentence Combining for Variety
- Giving Specific Examples
- Transition Words
- Verb Tense Consistency
- Outlines
- Facts vs. Opinions
- Using Vivid Language
- Irrelevant Information vs. Relevant Information
- ... and more



The Longman Academic Writing Series

Level  
4

# Writing Academic English

FOURTH EDITION



Alice Oshima  
Ann Hogue



# The ESL Writer's Handbook

JANINE CARLOCK

MAEVE EBERHARDT

JAIME HORST

LIONEL MENASCHE



Pitt Series in English as a Second Language

# REFERENCES:

1. <https://www.lib.uoguelph.ca/get-assistance/writing/grammar-style/improving-your-sentence-structure>
2. <https://www.rong-chang.com/writing/>
3. <http://www.sinclair.edu/services/academic/tlc/resources/writing-handouts-and-worksheets/>
4. <https://canvas.hull.ac.uk/courses/213/pages/sentence-structure>
5. <https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/writingcenter/grammar/sentencestructure>



**THANK YOU!**  
**ANY**  
**QUESTIONS?**

**Ekaterina Redkina**

**[kate.redkina@gmail.com](mailto:kate.redkina@gmail.com)**

**@redkina\_elt\_psy**

**[www.redkinaelt.ru](http://www.redkinaelt.ru)**