Lecture 37

Language Review: Sentences II

Lecture Outline:
• Lack of Parallelism
• Choppy Sentences
• Interrupted Sentence Structure
• Modifiers of Nouns
• Adverb Modifiers
• Dangling Modifiers
• Double Negatives
• Inappropriate Shifts
• Sequence of tenses
• Pronoun Reference
• Pronoun Case

Lack of Parallelism:
Parallelism refers to the principle that parts of a sentence which are the same in function should be the same in structure. Words or phrases joined by coordinating conjunctions should have the same form. Make sure all headings and subheadings are parallel with the other headings and subheadings of the same level. Make sure all entries of the same level in an outline are parallel.

Choppy Sentences:
Avoid using too many short sentences that will create choppy prose. Vary your sentence types and combine short related sentences by making some elements dependent clauses or phrases. Compare the following choppy sentences and the revised version (as the author actually wrote it).

Misplaced Modifiers:
To ensure clarity, place your modifiers carefully. Make sure that your placement of modifiers does not interrupt the sentence structure or create ambiguity.

Interrupted Sentence Structure:
Placing a modifier between the subject and the verb or between the verb and the direct object can weaken the structure of the sentence and make the sentence difficult to interpret. In general, the longer and more complicated the modifier, the more it weakens the sentence. Although you can often get away with interrupting the structure of the sentence with a short (one-word) modifier, adding a longer modifier significantly worsens the sentence.

Modifiers of Nouns:
Modifiers of nouns should be placed either immediately before or immediately after the noun. If another phrase is allowed to separate the noun and its modifier, the modifier may be misinterpreted as applying to a noun in the separating phrase rather than to the original noun.

Adverb Modifiers:
Adverbs should be placed as close as possible to the words or phrases that they modify. If you allow an adverb to be separated from the word or phrase that it modifies, the interpretation of the adverb may become ambiguous. Always place a quantity adverb immediately before the word it modifies.

Dangling Modifiers:
A modifier whose connection to the sentence is implied or intended but not actually made explicit is said to dangle. Dangling modifiers detract from the clarity of your writing, so you should make sure your modifiers are properly connected to the words they modify.
To repair a dangling modifier, add the noun or phrase that the modifier was intended to modify and rephrase the sentence accordingly.

**Double Negatives:**
Use only one negative word to express a negative idea. In English, using two negative words to express one negative idea creates a positive rather than a negative interpretation.

**Faulty Comparisons:**
Comparing one item with another can be a very powerful way to describe an objector a process (see the discussion of comparison and contrast). To make your comparison effective, however, you must maintain parallelism in your comparison. Include the basis of your comparison, and ensure that your comparison is not ambiguous.

**Nonparallel Comparisons:**
When you construct a comparison, you must make the two items being compared parallel in structure.

**Incomplete Comparisons:**
Incomplete comparisons detract from the clarity of your writing. To be complete, a comparison must include both the item being compared and the item it is being compared with. If you leave out the item being compared with, the reader may not understand your intended meaning.

**Inappropriate Shifts:**
Be consistent in your choice of tense, mood, person, and voice. Shifting any of these categories without good reason will detract from the clarity of your writing.

**Inappropriate Shifts in Tense:**
As a general rule, verb tenses within a sentence or a paragraph should be consistent. A shift in tense without reason distorts the sequence of events being described and will confuse your reader. For example, if you begin a description with a verb in the past tense, do not switch to a verb in the present tense.

**Inappropriate Shifts in Mood:**
Be consistent in your choice of mood. A shift in mood without reason will confuse your reader. For example, do not combine an imperative clause with an indicative clause in the same sentence.

**Sequence of Tenses:**
Choose the tenses of your verbs accurately to express the timing or sequence of events that you are describing. Often, the particular sequence of events that you are describing will require you to use several different verb tenses within a single sentence or paragraph. Although it is appropriate to vary your verb tenses in accordance with the actual timing of the events, you should avoid shifting tenses unnecessarily.

**Sequence of Tenses and Timing of Events:**
To emphasize that an event occurred or was completed before another event, use a form of the perfect auxiliary have.

**Pronoun Reference:**
Pronoun reference refers to the identification of a pronoun with its intended antecedent. Two common problems in pronoun reference are unclear pronoun reference and broad pronoun reference. Make sure all of your pronouns can be easily identified.

**Unclear Pronoun Reference:**
Use a pronoun instead of a noun only if the connection to the intended antecedent of the pronoun is quite strong. Make sure no other nouns with the same gender and number appear between your pronoun and its intended antecedent. Otherwise, your pronoun reference may be unclear.

**Broad Pronoun Reference:**
Use a demonstrative pronoun only if the connection to the intended antecedent of the pronoun is quite strong. Otherwise, your pronoun reference may be too broad, thus unclear.

**Pronoun Case:**
A pronoun can appear in one of three cases:
- subjective, in which the pronoun functions as a subject
- objective, in which the pronoun functions as an object
- and possessive, in which the pronoun functions as a possessor

The following list shows the subjective, objective, and possessive forms of the personal pronouns.
### List

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<th>Possessive</th>
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