Writing Clinic 1

Exercise A: Who does what to whom
The first few lessons

1. Understanding Style
2. Correctness
3. Actions
4. Characters
The Main Principles

- Make Main Character Subjects
- Make Important Actions Verbs

- The grammar and story should match up:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fixed</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>Character</td>
<td>Action</td>
<td>________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Making things match up
Not just about grammar…

• We don’t write as badly as “the topic was discussed”

• Grammarly can fix it if you provide the subject “we”.

• Grammarly will not complain about this example:

  Here’s the point: In grade school, we learned that subjects are characters (or “doers”) and that verbs are actions. That’s often true:

  subject  verb  object
  We        discussed  the problem.
  doer      action

  But it is not true for this almost synonymous sentence:

  subject  verb  object
  The problem was the topic of our discussion.
  doer      action

  We can move characters and actions around in a sentence, and subjects and verbs don’t have to name any particular kind of thing at all. But when you match characters to subjects and actions to verbs in most of your sentences, readers are likely to think your prose is clear, direct, and readable.
The Process

• Analyze (is the whole subject long and vague).

  The **automation** of manufacturing, assembly, and shipping processes by corporations means the loss of jobs for many blue-collar workers.

• Assess (who is the actual characters & actions).

  The **automation** of manufacturing, assembly, and shipping processes by corporations means the loss of jobs for many blue-collar workers.

• Rewrite…
• Turn nominalized actions into verbs
  • automation → automate
  • loss → lose
• Make the character subjects
  • corporations automate
  • blue-collar workers lose
• Connect these with words (because, when, if …) to show relationship!
  • The automation of manufacturing, assembly, and shipping processes by corporations means the loss of jobs for many blue-collar workers.
  • Many blue-collar workers are losing their jobs because corporations are automating their manufacturing, assembly, and shipping processes.
Cause & Effect

- Our more effective presentation of our study resulted in our success, despite an earlier start by others.

- Although others started earlier, we succeeded because we presented our study more effectively.
Chronology of events!

- Decisions\(^4\) in regard to administration\(^5\) of medication despite inability\(^2\) of irrational patients appearing\(^1\) in a Trauma Center to provide legal consent\(^3\) rest with the attending physician alone.

- When patients appear\(^1\) in a Trauma Center and behave\(^2\) so irrationally that they cannot legally consent\(^3\) to treatment, only the attending physician can decide\(^4\) whether to medicate\(^5\) them.
Abstractions as Characters

• It may not always be easy to find characters in our papers...

  To understand what makes patients vulnerable to psychiatric disorders, strategies that look for more than one variable should be used rather than strategies in which a gene is assumed to cause psychopathology or only one biological variable is studied.

• Inanimate things and abstractions can serve as characters, so long as you make them the subjects of a series of sentences that tell a story.

  To understand what causes psychiatric disorders, studies should look for more than one variable rather than adopt a strategy in which they test only one biological variable or assume that a single gene is responsible for a psychopathology.
Easier said than done…

- Let’s try out the exercise proposed by Norman Ramsey.
- Then, we’ll see what else we need to do this…
- We might have to do it again (this is the first time I try it out in class).
Step 1: Extracting the Story

- Create a table of agents (who), actions (does what) and objects (to whom).
- Important: Use your own words!
Step 2: Mark the Text

• Once upon a time, as a walk through the woods was taking place on the part of Little Red Riding Hood, the Wolf’s jump out from behind a tree occurred, causing her fright.

• Suggestion: use single underline for the simple subject (walk and jump) and double underline for verb.

SUBJECT
a walk through the woods
the Wolf’s jump out from behind a tree

VERB
was taking place
occurred
Step 3: Compare

- How consistent are the important characters and actions with the subjects and verbs in the text?

- If you liked (or disliked) the text, was this because the grammar and story levels lined up (or were unaligned)?

- Did you find lots of light verbs (be, make, do, have, bring, put, take)?
Example

When we get a newly unearthed inscription, we must first identify the letters inscribed on the stone surface. The stone surface is usually contaminated by various kinds of noises such as scratches, cracks, voids, etc. And also, the same letter sometimes takes different shapes depending on the skill of inscriber and the tool of inscribing. Up to recent days, the work of identification of letters has been carried out by human sense. We like to introduce more scientific method for the letter identification. In order to have a scientific method, the first step is to produce alphabet fonts of ancient scripts. The alphabet of early Brahmi script has already been created by archaeologist by studying the common features of letters found in inscriptions[5,8]. Their method is based on human sense and hand writing. Therefore, the shape of the alphabet can be slightly different depending on the creator. The aim of this research is to create more precise alphabet fonts of early Brahmi scripts in Sri Lanka by analyzing a lot of inscriptions by computer without depending too much on human sense.

Table of agents, actions, objects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agent</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Object</th>
<th>From</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>archaeologist?</td>
<td>identifies</td>
<td>letters</td>
<td>C1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>faults in stone</td>
<td>distort/obscure</td>
<td>physical shapes (of letters)</td>
<td>C2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stonecutter</td>
<td>influences</td>
<td>physical shapes (of letters)</td>
<td>C3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tool</td>
<td>influences</td>
<td>physical shapes (of letters)</td>
<td>C3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>researchers</td>
<td>want</td>
<td>science??</td>
<td>C5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>letters</td>
<td>have</td>
<td>ideal shapes</td>
<td>C10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>researchers’ software</td>
<td>infers</td>
<td>ideal shapes</td>
<td>C10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Post-mortem
My overall impressions

• It was at least an interesting session...

• It was useful to have an example provided by Ramsey to use as a warm-up. And useful to compare with his solution.

• Our own example was also somewhat revealing…
“We rely on the local generic fixpoint engine MegaFix, which dynamically tracks dependencies, while exploring the unknowns contributing to answering an initial query. Lazy invalidation is employed for analysis results affected by program change.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agent</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Object</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We</td>
<td>rely on</td>
<td>MegaFix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MegaFix</td>
<td>tracks</td>
<td>dependencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MegaFix</td>
<td>answers</td>
<td>query</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MegaFix</td>
<td>explores</td>
<td>unknowns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknowns</td>
<td>contribute to</td>
<td>query answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program change</td>
<td>affects</td>
<td>(part of) result</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MegaFix</td>
<td>lazily invalidates</td>
<td>(part of) result</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions

• Some of us learned something about how local solvers work. :)

• We write great sentences! With clarity and grace, indeed.

• I found it quite insightful, but we still haven’t revised this sentence. (The real question is why dynamic dependency tracking is injected there without even saying what it’s good for...)