

Run-on and Stringy Sentences in Writing

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the issues of run-on and stringy sentences. They are thought to be significant ill formed structures formed by writers of English language. Initially, they are defined with examples. Later, various correct forms are presented. In order to see the ways of correcting run-on and stringy sentences in actual class environment, a micro-teaching lesson is given. In this micro-teaching lesson, there are different parts like warm-up and motivation, review of the previous material, present the new items and give examples, give the rule, do exercises, make a summery and give an assignment. The paper ends with conclusion including a final wrap-up. This way, both writers of English language are aimed to be informed on run-on and stringy sentences and these structures are tried to be prevented in writing, and teachers are expected to help their learners on this matter.

Key Words: Run-on, stringy, writing, teaching writing

Özet

Bu makale bağısız ve dizili cümleler üzerinde durmaktadır. Bu cümleler İngilizce yazmada yapılan dikkate değer hatlar olarak düşünülmektedir. İlk olarak, bu cümleleri tanımlamayı amaçlayan örnekler verilmektedir. Daha sonra bu cümlelerin çeşitli yollarla düzeltilmiş halleri okuyuculara sunulmuştur. Bağısız ve dizili cümlelerin gerçek sınıf ortamında nasıl düzeltilebileceğini ve önleneceğini göstermek amacıyla bir mini ders planına yer verilmiştir. Bu ders planı, öğrencileri derse motive etme ve ısındırma, daha önce öğrenilen konunun tekrarı, yeni konunun sunumu ve örneklendirilmesi, kuralın verilmesi, alıştırma yapılması, özet verilmesi ve ödev bölümlerini içermektedir. Makale, genel bir toparlamanın yapıldığı sonuç bölümü ile noktalanmaktadır. Böylelikle hem İngilizce yazma ile ilgilenenlerin bağısız ve dizili cümleler üzerine bilgilendirilmesi ve hatalarını düzeltmeleri amaçlanmakta hem de

İngilizce öğretmenlerin öğrencilerine bu konuda daha faydalı olabilmeleri umulmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Bağısız, dizili, yazma, yazma öğretimi

1.0 INTRODUCTION

It is an undeniable fact that writing skill has a very significant place in the field of foreign language learning and teaching. That is why, it must be handled with care. In order to realise this, one has to be careful about some concerns like semantics, pragmatics, syntax and alike. Learners should not commit mistakes on such problematic points.

One of these problematic points is syntax which simply focuses on word order in sentences. In this syntax matter, run-on sentences, sometimes called fused sentences, and stringy sentences are some problematic points that come out as mistakes of learners. But, what are they?

A run-on sentence is defined as “a sentence which joins two independent clauses or sentences with no punctuation or conjunction between them” (Heffernan and Lincoln, 1986:279). Sometimes they occur from misuse of punctuation marks as well. Examples to this are given as follows with different correct forms:

Example (a)

- RUN-ON : I like spinach I like lettuce.
CORRECT 1 : I like spinach. I like lettuce.
CORRECT 2 : I like spinach, and I like lettuce.
CORRECT 3 : I like spinach and lettuce.
CORRECT 4 : I like spinach, I like lettuce.

Example (b)

- RUN-ON: The nuclear plant malfunctioned radiation levels were high.
CORRECT 1: The nuclear plant malfunctioned. Radiation levels were high.
CORRECT 2: The nuclear plant malfunctioned; radiation levels were high.
CORRECT 3: The nuclear plant malfunctioned, and radiation levels were high.

“In a stringy sentence many independent clauses are joined together with coordinating conjunctions (often and, but for, or, so) (Demirezen, 1993:158). They are longer than they should be. Examples of stringy sentences are as below:

Example (c)

STRINGY: She goes to the library early in the morning on Saturdays, and she stays there till 5 p.m., but she never gets bored there, so she must like libraries.

CORRECT: She goes to the library early in the morning on Saturdays, and she stays there till 5 p.m. But she never gets bored there. So she must like libraries.

Example (d)

STRINGY: I never go out when it rains, so I stay at home and watch television, and sometimes when there is nothing good on television, I listen to good music, or I play the piano, but I never chat with my friends.

CORRECT: I never go out when it rains, so I stay at home and watch television. Sometimes when there is nothing good on television, I listen to good music, or I play the piano. But I never chat with my friends.

As is seen below, run-on and stringy sentences can be corrected by the help of punctuation marks or conjunction. They are the results of either over existence or deficiency of them. So, if punctuation marks and conjunctions are used correctly they can be eliminated very easily.

After this bit of explanation on run-on and stringy sentences, now it is time to see a micro lesson on these syntactic structures. In this way, a more comprehensive knowledge on their correction in class atmosphere can be gained. Thus, a micro teaching session will be of utmost importance.

2.0 MICRO TEACHING FOR RUN-ON AND STRINGY SENTENCES

I Warm Up And Motivation

Teacher: Good afternoon class. How are you today?

Class:

T: What did you do yesterday?

C:

II Review of the Previous Material

T: Now class let's remember punctuation marks and conjunctions.

C:

T: What are the functions of a comma and a full stop?

C:

T: Can you name me some coordinating conjunctions?

C:

III Present the New Items and Give Examples

T: Today, we will work on stringy and run on sentences. They are mistaken sentences, and they should be corrected when they occur. We should also try to not to form run-on and stringy sentences. Look at the examples now:

Examples to Run-on sentences:

1. Prejudice is just like the bottom of a Coke it shows you the world in a distorted light.
2. John is short and silent his roommate is tall and talkative.
3. On other long walks I had sometimes lost my way without feeling worried this time I panicked.

Correct forms:

1. Prejudice is just like the bottom of a Coke; It shows you the world in a distorted light. (correcting by semicolon)
2. John is short and silent. His roommate is tall and talkative. (correcting by forming two independent sentences)

3. On other long walks I had sometimes lost my way without feeling worried, and this time I panicked. (correcting by coordinating conjunction)

Examples to Stringy sentences:

1. They came here very quickly, and they did not notice me, but I ran after them, so they saw me, and I got a sign from them.
2. She is a very pretty girl, and she always comes to the class on time, but yesterday she was late, and everybody seemed worried, I was worried too, but then we heard a knock on the door, and she came in.
3. I never drive fast, but two days ago I was driving on the road, and a lorry tried to overtake me, and I panicked, and tried to accelerate, but there was problem in my car, and suddenly it stopped there.

Correct forms

1. They came here very quickly, and they did not notice me. But I ran after them. So they saw me, and I got a sign from them.
2. She is a very pretty girl, and she always comes to the class on time. But yesterday she was late, and everybody seemed worried. I was worried too. But then we heard a knock on the door, and she came in.
3. I never drive fast. But two days ago I was driving on the road, and a lorry tried to overtake me. I panicked, and tried to accelerate. But there was problem in my car, and suddenly it stopped there.

IV Give the Rule

T: A run-on sentence is a sentence which joins two independent clauses or sentences with no punctuation or conjunction between them. Sometimes they occur from misuse of punctuation marks as well. As you see in the examples when we have a run-on sentence, we can correct it by using a semicolon as it is seen in the first example or we can correct it by using a fullstop and forming two independent sentences as it is seen in the second example or we can correct it by using a conjunction as it is seen in the third example. In this way, we can correct ill formed run-on sentences.

In a stringy sentence many independent clauses are joined together with coordinating conjunctions (often and, but for, or, so). They are longer than they should be. When we see a stringy sentence, we can break it into meaningful chunks as is seen

in the examples. We, we can eliminate unnecessary conjunctions as well. So, we can eliminate stringy sentences.

V Do Exercises

T: Now, let's make some exercises, okay? Look at these run-on sentences, and try to correct them.

1. In Ivanhoe Scott's hero must choose between two women one is the fair Rowena and the other is the "dark lady", Rebecca.
2. Agent Orange was used as a defoliant in Vietnam, however it was later found to have been contaminated with dioxins during its manufacture.
3. Rembrandt's The Night Watch is on display in Amsterdam, therefore most Americans have never seen it.
4. Katherina Hepburn has won four Academy Awards this makes her one of Hollywood's most honoured actresses.
5. Prenatal tests can now detect the presence of neutral tube defects in the fetus however many other abnormalities cannot be predicted.
6. The Best Years of Our Lives and Twelve O'clock High are movies about World War II Apocalypse Now and Platoon are concerned with the war in Vietnam.
7. Omni and Discover are relatively new science-oriented magazines others like Scientific American have been around for decades.
8. Mass unemployment gripped the country this situation led to the drastic measures taken by Roosevelt during the first hundred days of his administration.
9. It is true that over 1500 people were killed when the Titanic went down, on the other hand some 700 survived.
10. Reckless drivers should be severely penalised in fact they should lose their driver's permits for at least six months.

T: Now, look at these stringy sentences and correct them.

1. The brakes failed, so the car skidded out of control, and a brick wall looped up suddenly before us, and we crashed.
2. There may be more oil on Rocky Mountains, but the government does not make any search, so we import petrol, and lose much money, and we become poorer.

3. The safety of nuclear plants can never be guaranteed, so we should not support them, and we should support other sources of energy, so we can save our future generations.
4. I did my homework, and I fed the dog, but I forgot buying some bread from the baker, so I went there, but this time I forgot my wallet, and I turned back to fetch it.
5. The emerald necklace belongs to her, but she never put it on, and she never uses the other ones, so everybody calls her a miser.
6. She was daydreaming during the lesson, and suddenly she heard a noise, and she woke up, but it was not real, it was a dream, so everybody laughed at her.
7. The listened to the whole story, but it was not easy to decide on the matter, so he wanted some time, and he went to his room.
8. It is not easy to tell the complete story, but I have to tell you all about it, and I will tell the details, so you can know how the murder happened, but do not tell this to the police.
9. Be careful when he comes in, and stand up when you see him, and be nice, but never smile or laugh, because he is a very strict person.
10. The story starts in Germany, but it ends in France, and it takes a long time, so telling it will take a long time too, and you will be bored.

T: Now, look at this text, and find and correct run-on and stringy sentences in it.

THINGS WE BUY

People who use the usually yellow but possibly any-other-colour self-sticking notes can't imagine what they did before without them, and these ubiquitous slips of paper are found in offices on letters and file folders, by telephones and computer screens, in homes on the refrigerator and the TV screen, or possibly by the back door, but these notes which were invented at 3M and named Post-it have since been imitated and sold by everyone else. In 1974 Art Fry was employed by the 3M company in product development. On Sundays he sang in the church choir. He marked his choir book with scraps of paper, to facilitate finding the proper music quickly at the proper time in the second service, sometimes the scraps fell out without warning, causing Fry to scramble through the pages. 'I don't know if it was a dull sermon or divine inspiration,' says Fry, 'but my mind began to wonder and suddenly I thought of an adhesive that had been discovered several years earlier by another 3M scientist, Dr

Spencer Silver.’ *Spencer had discarded the adhesive, Fry remembered, because it was not strong enough to be permanently useful. Fry’s inspiration was that this adhesive might serve to keep his place temporarily in the choir book without the marker becoming permanently attached – a ‘temporarily adhesive’, as Fry put it, and the rest is history, and in 1980 Post-its were widely used throughout the United States, and by early 1981 sales in Europe paralleled those in the United States.*

IV Make a Summary

T: Now, class today we have worked on run-on and stringy sentences. As we learned a run-on sentence is a sentence which joins two independent clauses or sentences with no punctuation or conjunction between them. Sometimes they occur from misuse of punctuation marks as well. When we have a run-on sentence, we can correct it by using a semicolon or we can correct it by using a full stop and forming two independent sentences or we can correct it by using a conjunction. In this way, we can correct ill formed run-on sentences.

In a stringy sentence many independent clauses are joined together with coordinating conjunctions (often and, but for, or, so). They are longer than they should be. When we see a stringy sentence, we can break it into meaningful chunks as is seen in the examples. We, we can eliminate unnecessary conjunctions as well. So, we can eliminate stringy sentences.

VII Give an Assignment

T: Now class, I want you to have a look at the verses of this song. You will combine necessary parts and break some sentences into pieces. This is your homework. This way you will eliminate run-on and stringy sentences. See you next week.

Wonderful Tonight

It is late in the evening	You look wonderful tonight’
She is wondering what clothes to wear	We go to a party
She puts on her make up	And everyone turns to see
Then she brushes her long blond hair	This beautiful lady
And then she asks me	That’s walking around with me
‘Do I look all right?’	And then she asks me
And I say ‘Yes	‘Do you feel all right?’

And I say 'Yes
I feel wonderful tonight'
I feel wonderful
Because I see
The love light in your eyes
And the wonder of it all
Is that you just don't realise
How much I love you

It's time to go home now
And I've got an aching head
So I give her the car keys
She helps me to bed
And then I tell her
As I turn off the lights
A say 'My darling
You were wonderful tonight'

3.0 CONCLUSION

To sum up, writing skill is an indispensable skill in the teaching of a foreign language. Run-on and stringy sentences form a very crucial part in writing and in syntax. So, learners should be careful about these ill formed structures, and they should try to avoid them as much as possible. In order not to form such ill formed structures, they should consider some facts.

First of all, learners should learn punctuation marks very well. The reason is that, if punctuation marks are not used correctly, they can cause run-on sentences. Secondly, learners should have enough information on conjunctions, especially coordinating conjunctions. If such conjunctions are not used when necessary, they can cause run-on sentences. If they are overused, then they can cause stringy sentences. Third, learners should try to get as much input as possible in order to develop their mastery in the target language. By this way, they familiarize themselves with the current usages and structures in target language. Cable televisions, satellite connections and native speakers may be of great use in this concern. If this is carried out regularly, not only correct sentence structure formation but also native like speaking ability can be gained without going abroad. So, this facility must not be neglected. Lastly, the learners should have a good sense of forming sentences which can be the result of exercise and working hard.

In brief, run-on and stringy sentences are structures that we want to correct. However, the best way is to avoid them before their occurrence. In order to realise this, the above points should be concerned carefully. If this is done so, no doubt well formed pieces of writing which do not have run-on or stringy sentences can be formed and learners of English language can communicate well as far as writing skill is concerned.

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