

Chapter Eleven

Sounding educated

Grammar focus. Relative and subordinate clauses

Introduction.

We think that interaction only happens in conversation. However, writers also interact with their readers. They use their feel for the English language so that they can interact with and even manipulate the mind of their readers. This is especially true in advertising. Let's see how this works in Awareness Activity 11.1.

Awareness Activity 11.1. Syntactic maturity

How do advertisers use grammar to play games with the mind so they can sell their products? Read the following two passages from a full-page advertisement in a news magazine for a web service provider. In the foreground we can see the dotted trail marking the route of a large bumblebee that is flying around a garden. In the background is a mature woman working in her flower garden. As you read the two passages, note what the creators of the ad have done to create the image of the bee as being humble and without much intelligence while the gardener, who of course subscribes to the web service, is quite smart. The first passage describes the bumblebee, the second the gardener.

- A bumblebee takes flight. It scans the terrain looking for a suitable flower to pollinate. But there's nothing. No open fields of poppies. No blackberry bushes. Not even a single daisy.

- As a self-proclaimed web newbie, she learned that starting an online business was tough. Initially, she was only getting about 25 visitors a month, which in the gardening world is about as beautiful as a pot full of snails.

Did you notice that the passage describing the bumblebee uses short sentences and sentence fragments? The other passage uses long sentences. The creators of the ad feel that these sentences lengths help to create the feeling of humble nothingness for the one and a feeling of intelligence for the other. In 1962 Kellogg Hunt at Florida State University checked how this correlation of sentence length and academic maturity works. He looked at the writing of fourth, eighth and twelfth graders and educated adults to see if there was some easy measure that might be of use to teachers.

He found that there were various ways that mature writers lengthened their sentences, so the way they lengthened sentences was not as important as the fact that they were lengthened. The important thing was that they didn't simply put the conjunction *and* between sentences without making any other changes (*He went outside and he played with his dog.*). Since this is the approach that less mature writers used, simply finding the average number of words in a sentence was not accurate enough. Instead he found that the passage first had to be divided into **minimum terminable units**, or **T-units**, the smallest part of a sentence that can stand on its own without leaving any sentence fragments. It is the length of the T-unit not the length of the sentence that matters. In other words, look at the sentence and look for the coordinating conjunctions *and*, *but*,

or, and sometimes *so*. Then look to see if there are two complete sentences on both sides of the conjunction or if there is a complete sentence on one side but only a fragment on the other. Notice that the previous sentence is only one T-unit because *if there is a complete sentence on one side but only a fragment on the other* is not a complete sentence. However, the sentence before that (*In other words, look at the sentence and look for the coordinating conjunctions and, but, or, and sometimes so*).has two T-units because there are complete sentences on both sides of *and* (both are commands starting with the verb *look*.)

Let's count up how many words are in our two samples, divide them into T-units using # to mark the divisions, and then count the number of T-units and divide that number into the number of words to find out the average length of the T-units.

- A bumble bee takes flight.# It scans the terrain looking for a suitable flower to pollinate. #But there's nothing.# No open fields of poppies. #No blackberry bushes. #Not even a single daisy.#

There are 6 T-units and 32 words for 5.30 words per T-unit. Notice that the last three are fragments. In more mature writing they would be joined with the sentence "But there's nothing" and separated only by commas to make one longer sentence—but the creators of the ad want to remind you that bumblebees aren't educated.

Contrast this with the other passage.

- As a self-proclaimed web newbie, she learned that starting an online business was tough. #Initially, she was only getting about 25 visitors a

month, which in the gardening world is about as beautiful as a pot full of snails.#

This time there are 2 T-units and 39 words for 19.5 words per T-unit.

How does this fit in with what Kellogg Hunt found when he looked at his writing samples? His results were as follows.

- 4th graders averaged 8.60 words per T-unit
- 8th graders averaged 11.50 words per T-unit
- 12th graders averaged 14.40 words per T-unit
- Educated adults averaged 20.20 words per T-unit

As you can see, the bumblebee is being described in writing below the level of a 4th grader. The intelligent gardener is at the educated adult level. Thus the creators of this advertisement are using grammar as part of their sales pitch to attract the intelligent consumer.

Rules of thumb. Estimating the syntactic maturity of a writing sample				
1. Count the words in the passage				
2. Divide the passage into T-units				
3. Divide the number of T-units into the number of words in the passage				
4. Compare the results with the table to estimate the maturity				
Grade level	4 th	8 th	12 th	Educated Adult
Words per T-unit	8.80	11.50	14.40	20.20

Awareness Activity 11.2. Checking the maturity

Now try your hand at determining the syntactic maturity of the following three passages. Remember the stages. Count the words (I've done that for you.) Divide the text into T-units. Divide the number of T-units into the number of words. Then check for an estimate of the measure of maturity.

Passage 1. (Technical writing)

Another set of concerns comes into play once you begin structuring your argument. Let's say that you are a technical writer for a manufacturer of water-filtration systems and have been asked to prepare a report recommending an effective strategy for marketing water filters for home use. What would be your strategy, and how would you convince your readers (the advertising director, the vice president for consumer products, and marketing representatives) that your strategy would indeed be effective? (*Communicating Technology*—78 words)

Passage 2. (Journalism)

Putting finances aside, the angst of remodeling typically is rooted in not knowing what to expect next. As some builders readily admit, contractors are not by nature a communicative bunch. They're trained to work with their hands, not hold hands. That helps explain why many fail to brace their clients for the ride ahead, Lupberger said.

That ride goes something like this: Homeowner decides to build. Excitement soars. Budget and wish list don't mesh. Excitement wanes. Construction begins; frame takes shape. Excitement hits high. (*Gainesville Sun*, May 31, 2007—84 words)

Passage 3. (Fiction Writing)

Even more important than Jepson's cooperation would be Windy's and Martha gave a good deal of thought to the manner of approaching him. She decided that the best thing to do would be to tell her plan frankly. As she began he listened very politely.

'One of our hired hands is a very fine-looking young man. I wonder if you've noticed him?'

"I don't recall," answered Windy. "There are a good many young men around." (*The Catch Colt*—76 words)

Are you ready to check your work?

Passage 1. (Technical Writing)

Another set of concerns comes into play once you begin structuring your argument. #Let's say that you are a technical writer for a manufacturer of water-filtration systems and have been asked to prepare a report recommending an effective strategy for marketing water filters for home use. #What would be your strategy,# and how would you convince your readers (the advertising director, the vice president for consumer

products, and marketing representatives) that your strategy would indeed be effective? #(*Communicating Technology*—78 words)

There are 78 words and 4 T-units. Therefore the words per T-unit are 19.5. In other words the passage targets educated adults. This is a college textbook so the level seems about right. Notice what they did to lengthen their sentences. In the first T-unit, two sentences have been put together (*[Another set of concerns comes into play] once [you begin structuring your argument]*) The second one is introduced by the word *once*, a function word called a **subordinating conjunction**. When a subordinating conjunction is added to the beginning of a sentence, it tells the reader or the listener that the following words are indicating *when*, *why*, or *how* the other sentence happened. In other words it changes one of the sentences into a **subordinate clause** functioning as an adverbial, in this case an adverbial of time telling *when another set of concerns comes into play*.

The next two sentences were made longer by connecting two sentences with *and*, a coordinating rather than a subordinating conjunction. A subordinating conjunction changes the following sentence into an adverbial answering such questions as when or why. A **coordinating conjunction** simply puts two sentences together. Notice that in the first use of *and* (*[Let's say that you are a technical writer for a manufacturer of water-filtration systems] and [have been asked to prepare a report recommending an effective strategy for marketing water filters for home use.]*) the subject of the second verb [*have been asked*] has been deleted to avoid redundancy since it is the same as the subject of the

first sentence [*you*]. As a result the whole sentence is one T-unit since the second half cannot stand alone because it doesn't have a subject. Children tend to repeat the subject when combining sentences in this way. Thus the deletion yields a more mature sentence pattern.

Notice that with the next use of the coordinating conjunction, (*What would be your strategy,*) and (*how would you convince your readers (the advertising director, the vice president for consumer products, and marketing representatives) that your strategy would indeed be effective?*) there are complete sentences on both sides of the *and* so this time the sentence is two T-units. Remember, when looking for T-units, whenever you come to a coordinating conjunction (*and, or, but,* and sometimes *so*) you need to look on both sides to see if you have complete sentences that can stand on their own since these must be minimum terminable units.

Now let's take a look at the journalism passage

Passage 2. (Journalism)

Putting finances aside, the angst of remodeling typically is rooted in not knowing what to expect next. #As some builders readily admit, contractors are not by nature a communicative bunch.# They're trained to work with their hands, not hold hands. #That helps explain why many fail to brace their clients for the ride ahead, Lupberger said.#

That ride goes something like this:# Homeowner decides to build. #Excitement soars.# Budget and wish list don't mesh. #Excitement

wanes.# Construction begins;# frame takes shape. #Excitement hits high.# (*Gainesville Sun*, May 31, 2007—84 words)

This passage has 84 words and 11 T-units or 7.63 words per T-unit. In other words it looks at first glance to be aimed at readers at an elementary school level. However, the author is playing games with grammar as the advertisers did with their bumblebee and gardener. Notice that the sentences in the first paragraph are longer, in the second shorter. There are 56 words in the first paragraph and 4 T-units for 14 words per T-unit. In other words it is aimed at the level of the high school senior. Community newspapers aim at the high school reading level, so this seems right on target. The second paragraph has 28 words and 8 T-units for 5.25 words per T-unit, at the level of the bumblebee in the ad. You'll notice that this paragraph compares remodeling a house to a ride at an amusement park with its unexpected ups and downs. Can you see how the author used grammar for this amusement park ride effect?

Return to the first paragraph. To make the first two sentences longer without using conjoining, the author introduced each sentence with a phrase or a clause based on a verb [*Putting finances aside*] and [*As some builders readily admit*]. Both are adverbials. Both tell us *under what conditions*. In the next sentence. He made sentences longer by using verbs and partial sentences where we might expect nouns. For example in [*the angst of remodeling typically is rooted in not knowing what to expect next.*] rather than a noun after the preposition *in* we have the gerund *not knowing* followed by another verb in the

form of an infinitive in *what to expect next*. Similar things were done with the next two sentences so that more verbs with their associated nouns and adverbs can be added to the sentence without using conjoining.

A closing remark in the article states

Do sign a contract that is as specific as possible about the work to be done and the price, including financing terms and hourly rates for added work. (28 words)

These 28 words are all one T-unit, the level of a thoughtful educated adult. The author used the coordinating conjunction *and* to join *the work* and *the price* without using complete sentences. But she also used another device to make the sentence longer. Notice that the sentence begins with *Do sign a contract that is as specific....* The word *that* introduces a sentence that tells us *what kind of a contract to sign*. In other words, it is a sentence functioning as an adjective. When a sentence is acting as an adjective, it is called a **relative clause**. The word *that*, which introduces the relative clause, is called a **relative pronoun**. This longer sentence shows us how skillful the author is in using grammar to influence our minds. She has told us about remodeling our home, taken us on a thrill ride that will result if we are not prepared, then tells us to be intelligent in our actions, all reinforced through grammar.

Let's take a look at the fiction writing.

Passage 3. (Fiction Writing)

Even more important than Jepson's cooperation would be Windy's #and Martha gave a good deal of thought to the manner of approaching

him.# She decided that the best thing to do would be to tell her plan frankly. #As she began he listened very politely.#

‘One of our hired hands is a very fine-looking young man. #I wonder if you’ve noticed him?’#

“I don’t recall,” answered Windy.# “There are a good many young men around.”# (The Catch Colt—76 words)

This passage of 76 words with 8 T-units or 9.5 words per T-unit is written at about the 5th or 6th grade level. The book is marketed to readers aged 10 and up so the writing seems about right as 5th graders are usually 10 years old. Notice that since this aims at younger readers the T-units are not as long. Most are made longer with conjoining without deletions. Notice that even this passage written at a lower level uses a subordinate clause of time answering the question when? introduced by the subordinator *as*. [*As she began he listened very politely.*]

Thus we can see that Kellogg Hunt’s T-unit analysis is useful in checking the syntactic maturity of reading passages. We have also been introduced to the grammatical devices we can show our students for making their own writing more mature: coordination, subordination, and relativization. Let’s take a closer look at each.

Grammar.

As we look at ways that writers combine shorter sentences to make their writing more mature, let’s use the following sets of sentences as our base.

- The students passed the examination. The students entered the school.
- I gave my seat to the man. The man got off the train.
- The girl was going shopping. I spoke to the girl.

Coordination. Coordination is the easiest way to combine two sentences.

Simply add *and*, *or*, *but*, *yet*, or *so* (when meaning “therefore”) before the second sentence. Notice that repeated nouns may be changed to appropriate pronouns.

- The students passed the examination so they entered the school.
- I gave my seat to the man but/yet he got off the train.
- The girl was going shopping so I spoke to her.

As we saw in the awareness activities, this doesn’t increase the syntactic maturity since both sentences remain T-units. However, if we delete repeated information so that one sentence becomes a fragment, the maturity increases.

- The students passed the examination and entered the school.

There are other ways the repeated information can be deleted. Suppose we wanted to add the following information to the first part of the sentence.

- I passed the examination.

We could say

- The students and I passed the examination.

Or

- The students passed the examination and I passed too.

Or

- The students passed the examination and I did too.

Or

- The students passed the examination and so did I.

Notice that when identical information after the verb was deleted, it was replaced by *too*. When everything after the subject was deleted, it was replaced by *do* in the appropriate tense followed by *too*. Rather than use a *too*, the writer could use a *so* with operator subject inversion. Notice how these options work if there are auxiliary verbs in the original sentences.

- The students can pass the examination. I can pass the examination.
- The students can pass the examination and I can too.
- The students can pass the examination and so can I.

Subordination. The most common way to make one sentence into an adverbial is to add to the beginning of one of the sentences a subordinating conjunction that tells the reader or listener that the following words give the time, the reason or the condition for the other sentence. For example, to indicate that the following words indicate a time, add *after*, *before*, *while*, or *whenever*. To indicate that it is a reason or a condition, add *because*, *if*, *though*, *since*, or *lest*. Note the possibilities with the sentence pairs above. Notice too that repeated nouns are replaced by appropriate pronouns.

- After the students passed the examination, they entered the school.
(time.)
- Because the students passed the examination, they entered the school.
(reason)

- The students passed the examination before they entered the school.
(time)
- I gave my seat to the man before he got off the train. (time)
- I spoke to the girl because she was going shopping (reason)
- I spoke to the girl as she was going shopping (time.)

Relativization. Making one of the sentences into an adjectival is quite common in academic writing but a bit more complex than creating an adverbial. The resulting adjectival is known as a **relative clause**. This is the process.

1. Find nouns or pronouns in the two sentences that refer to the same thing.
 - The students passed the examination. They (the students) entered the school.
 - I gave my seat to the man. He (the man) got off the train.
 - I spoke to the girl. The girl was going shopping.
2. Change one of the nouns into a relative pronoun (*who* for people, *which* for things, or *that* for either one.)
 - The students passed the examination. Who entered this school
 - I gave my seat to who. The man got off the train.
 - I spoke to the girl. Who was going shopping.
3. Move the relative pronoun to the beginning of its sentence if it is not already there.
 - Who I gave my seat to. The man got off the train.
4. Insert the sentence that begins with the relative pronoun immediately after the noun it refers to.

- The students #who entered this school # passed the examination.
 - The man #who I gave my seat to# got off the train.
 - I spoke to the girl #who was going shopping.#
5. Optionally delete the relative pronoun if it is not followed by a verb.

Remember a sentence marked * is considered ungrammatical.

- *The students #entered this school# passed the examination.
 - The man #I gave my seat to# got off the train.
 - *I spoke to the girl #was going shopping.#
6. If the relative pronoun is followed by some form of the verb be, optionally delete the relative pronoun and be.
- I spoke to the girl #going shopping#.

Pragmatics and Discourse

Pragmatic and discourse problems occur mainly with coordination and relativization. The coordinating conjunctions are fairly common in conversational English. In fact they are so common that they have assumed other functions that usually are not seen in academic writing. Let's look at one special use of *and* that can cause problems in student writing. In academic writing *and* is located within a sentence. However, in spoken English it frequently can be found at the beginning. In this case it is serving as a discourse marker, much like *well* and *oh*. Speakers use it to encourage one another to give more information.

- Speaker A: They passed the exam and entered the school.
- Speaker B: And?

Some use it to indicate that what they want to say is related to what the others have been saying.

- Speaker A: They passed the exam and entered the school.
- Speaker B: And weren't we all surprised?

Relative clauses and subordinate clauses are much more common in academic reading than in conversation. Therefore before we introduce these points of grammar, we need to be sure the language learners have been doing lots of reading. We saw in the awareness activities that they are found in even reading for lower level students. Language acquisition studies show that these more complex forms are best learned this way. What we do as teachers is merely make them aware of the patterns so they can use them to edit their writing. There is, however, one caveat when teaching relative clauses. They are not all equal in frequency or in ease to master.

Relative clauses are often classified according to

1. where in the sentence the relative clause is inserted (at the beginning after the subject (S) or after the verb on a noun in the object position (O) in an SVO sentence.
2. the role that the relative pronoun plays in the inserted sentence (Is it the subject S or the object O?)

Note the following relative clause types according to various combinations according to conditions 1 and 2

- OS: I saw the boy (O)#who (S) ate the hamburger.#
(based on: I saw the boy. The boy ate the hamburger.)
- OO: I saw the boy (O)#that (O) you hit last night. #
OR I saw the boy (O)#(O) you hit last night.# (relative pronoun deleted)
(based on :I saw the boy. You hit the boy last night.)
- SS: The boy (S) #who (S) ate with me # is my friend.
(based on: The boy is my friend. The boy ate with me.)
- SO: The boy (S) #that (O) you saw me with # is my friend.
OR the boy (S)#(O) you saw me with #is my friend. (relative pronoun deleted)
(based on The boy is my friend. You saw me with the boy.)

Descriptive studies have shown that the following is the order of frequency for their use in a running text:

1. OS (more than half) I saw the boy who ate the hamburger.
2. OO(about one quarter) I saw the boy that you hit last night.
3. SS (about 10 percent) The boy who ate with me is my friend.
4. SO (about 5 percent.) The boy that you saw me with is my friend.

Children and other language learners have little trouble with OS relative clauses since they resemble conjoining and are very common:

- I saw the boy and he ate the hamburger.
- I saw the boy who ate the hamburger.

The most difficult and the least common are the SO relative clauses, especially with the relative pronoun deleted.

- The boy the girl saw ate a hamburger.

Children up to the age of 12 have trouble figuring out whether the boy is seeing or eating and what the girl is doing. Teachers should focus first on relative clauses at the ends of sentences.

Notice how the relative clauses and reduced relative clauses in the following sentences from an encyclopedia entry about *Greco* are at the ends of the sentences, i.e. they are OS relative clauses

- These characteristics may be associated with international mannerisms, *which are still evident in the art of El Greco.* (OS)
- In Rome he met several Spaniards *associated with the church in Toledo* (reduced OS), *who may have persuaded him to come to Spain* (OS)
- The work caused the first of several lawsuits *brought by the artist against his patrons* (reduced OS), *who objected to its price.* (OS)

Sometimes relative clauses are hard to identify because of the deletions. When the relative pronoun comes from the object position of the relative clause, it is almost always deleted. (*The boy (that) I saw you with is my friend. I ate the hamburger (that) you left on your plate.*) The same is the case with subject relative pronouns followed by some form of the verb be. (*The boy (who is) eating a hamburger is my friend. Look at those hamburger (that are) cooking on the grill. In Rome he met several Spaniards (who were) associated with the church in*

Toledo The work caused the first of several lawsuits (which were) brought by the artist against his patrons.)

Another deletion is also common. If the verb of the relative clause is the transitive *have*, (*who has a hamburger*) the subject relative pronoun and the verb *have* can be deleted and be replaced by *with*. (*The boy who has a hamburger is my friend. The boy with a hamburger is my friend.*)

The last thing to mention is the use of relative pronouns. *Who* is used for people, *which* for things, and *that* can be used for either people or things. In conversation *that* is the preferred relative pronoun for both people and things. *That* is normally deleted when it refers to the object noun. However, in academic writing, *who* is usually used for people and *that* for things. The only time *that* can not be used is after a fronted preposition (*I know the girl to whom you are referring. I know the table to which you are referring.*) This is considered very formal English and is normally avoided by leaving the preposition at the end and deleting the relative pronoun (*I know the girl you are referring to. I know the table you are referring to.*).

The only time that *who* and *which* regularly appear in place of *that* is when the relative clause is giving extra information that is not needed to establish the identity of the noun it is modifying. These are called **nonrestrictive** relative clauses. Relative clauses that help to establish the reference chain for a noun are called **restrictive** relative clauses. The nonrestrictive are set off by commas.

- My sister, who usually cooks dinner, was late last night (We know who the sister is so this information does not help to identify who she is.)

- We live in Gainesville, which is a small town in north Florida. (Gainesville is a proper name, so its identity has been established. The relative clause is simple additional information.)

Reflections.

Some concepts.

- Sentences in academic English are longer than sentences in conversational English. Longer sentences denote a more mature style.
- We make sentences longer by combining shorter sentences in various ways, notably, coordination, subordination, and relativization.
- Skilled authors use sentence length as a device to reinforce the message they are trying to promote.
- The first step toward promoting a more mature writing style is to promote reading.

Some key terminology.

- **coordinating conjunctions**—words used to join two sets of words at the same grammatical level (*and, or, but, so*) *I have a car and a dog* (*and* joins two noun phrases) *I have a car and I drive it.* (*and* joins two sentences)
- **nonrestrictive relative clauses**—a relative clause which does not place a noun into a reference chain. It simply gives more information in the form of an adjectival clause. It is usually set off by commas. *Mr. Smith, whom you all know so well, came to visit yesterday.*

- **reduced relative clause**—relative clause where the relative pronoun or the relative pronoun plus the following verb *be* have been deleted. *I saw the man who is sitting outside* becomes *I saw the man sitting outside*. *The hamburger that I ate was good* becomes *The hamburger I ate was good*. If the relative pronoun plus *have* are deleted, they are replaced by *with*. *I ate a hamburger that has hot sauce* becomes *I ate a hamburger with hot sauce*.
- **relative pronouns**—pronouns (*which, that, who*) which substitute for the nouns in one sentence so that sentence can act as an **adjective** describing the noun in another sentence by creating a **relative clause**. *I saw the girl. She lives next door.* becomes *I saw the girl who lives next door*.
- **restrictive relative clauses**—a relative clause that helps to identify a noun in the reference chain and thus are acting as adjectivals. *She loved the man who brought her flowers.* (*who brought her flowers* identifies *which man* it was.).
- **SS, SO, OO. OS relative clauses**—The first letter indicates where the relative clause is found attached to a noun, i.e. in the S position of an SVO sentence or in the O position. The second letter tell where the relative pronoun came from in the relative clause, from the subject position S, or from somewhere after the verb O. *The man that I saw was the killer.* SO relative clause--*man* (S) *that* (O) .

The killer was the man that I saw. OO relative clause--*killer* (O)
that (O).

I saw the man who was the killer OS relative clause—man (O) who
(S)

- **subordinating conjunctions**—words attached to the beginning of a sentence to change it so it acts as an **adverbial** of time, manner, or reason in another sentence by creating a **subordinate clause** (e.g. *after, when, because, since*) *Since we had no time, we didn't join them.*
- **T-units**—short for **minimum terminable units**. The smallest unit of a sentence that can stand by itself without leaving fragments. In some writing, the sentences are fragments for special effect. They count as separate T-units. Words per T-unit is a useful device so looking at syntactic maturity or the approximate age and educational level of an author or for determining if the language is appropriate for the target audience. *#Henry ran down the stairs before he put on his shoes.#* 1 T-unit *#Henry ran down the stairs# and he put on his shoes#*. 2 T-units

Some reflective activities.

The following chart should prove useful as you do your T-unit analyses in these exercises.

Grade level	4 th	8 th	12 th	Educated Adult
Words per T-unit	8.80	11.50	14.40	20.20

1. What went wrong? Name the rule of thumb that was broken in the following sentences.
 - *The horse is tired and Marty is.
 - *After Mary went home.
 - *We took an extra class started last night.
 - *Nurse Morgenschein, that was having financial difficulties, decided not to work here anymore.
 - *We don't like the car that you bought it.
 - *The book what you bought me was rather boring.
2. Syntactic maturity. The following was written by a first year college student. What is the syntactic maturity of the student? Rewrite the passage by combining sentences in appropriate ways to make the writing more mature. Measure the maturity again to see how successful you were.

My grandmother was a special person to me. Our relationship was never deep. She had thirteen children and an uncountable amount of grandchildren. She had a hard time remembering who was whose grandchild. To me she was always old and wrinkled. There was something special about her hair. It was long and black. It only had a little grey in it. She wore her hair in a bun. Sometimes she unrolled it to comb it. Her hair came down to her waist.

3. Self analysis. Take a recent essay that you have written for one of your academic classes. Do a T-unit analysis. Is your academic writing at the level of an educated adult? If not, what might you do to change it?
Remember that when the words per T-unit are too high, you might sound verbose and stuffy, too low, immature.
4. Quick check on maturity. Many word processors not only count the words in an essay or a highlighted portion, but also the number of words per sentence. How might that be useful as you prepare your academic writing assignments or target other reading audiences?
5. Sounding mature. In a cartoon a teenage boy and his mother are discussing a topic of interest to all teens, driving and driver's licenses. Read the discussion and identify what the teenager has done to make his opinion seem more weighty.
Mom: Tsk! The United States now has more cars than licensed drivers.
Teen: Really?
Mom: The average household has 1.75 drivers and 1.95 vehicles.
Teen: An outrageous condition which could be corrected by licensing fifteen-year olds to drive.
One panel blank as they stare at each other.
Mom: The phrases "outrageous condition" and "licensing fifteen-year olds to drive" are synonymous.
Teen: Sez you.

6. Finding relative clauses. Identify the relative or adjectival clauses in the following sentences taken from the *Chronicles of Narnia*. Take note of whether they are OO, OS, SS, or SO.
- I never knew a giant that was clever.
 - Those who are good with their noses must come in front of us lions.
 - The most pleased of the lot was the other lion, who kept running about everywhere.
 - It was a big sheep dog who actually helped Aslan most.
 - Lucy heard another noise which gave her a queer feeling.
 - Peter's army, which had their backs to her, looked terribly few.
7. Finding subordinate clauses. Identify the subordinate or adverbial clauses in the following and indicate if they are telling when, why, how, or under which conditions the main action happened.
- Unless you want to be a stickler, we can't do much about it.
 - As you have noticed, we have explained that twice.
 - If you have checked things out, you should be able to make a choice.
 - Before we do that again, let's make sure everything is ready.

Grammar Detective 11. Learning grammar through reading.

Let's check on the grammar used in books directed towards children.

Instructions:

- Find a book that might be assigned to an elementary school child for free reading. This can be fiction or nonfiction. Choose whatever you think might be attractive reading.

- Select a 100 word passage. Make a copy to hand in with your analysis. Mark your beginning point for counting the words. When you get close to 100 words, stop at the end of the appropriate sentence (i.e. you may have slightly more or less than 100 words). Record at the end of the passage how many words are included.
- Clearly mark the T-units in the passage and calculate the words per T-unit and determine the syntactic maturity. Is it at a level appropriate for the targeted age group? Remember, language acquisition works best if the language level of the reading is slightly above the age of the reader. Remember too that a story that is meant to be read to a young child might be at a higher level than one that the child is expected to read.
- Examine closely the T-units and note when coordination, subordination, and relativization were used to make the T-units longer. Does the author use the grammar in interesting way, playing grammatical games with the reader to make the story more interesting in subtle ways?
- In a one to two page report present your analysis. What grammatical patterns predominated for increasing the length of the T-units? Were there any surprises as to the grammar that was or was not used? Any insights on the role that reading plays in teaching young children complex language skills as they develop more mature language? Be sure to include your marked up passage as an appendix for your report.

Teaching Ideas.

1. **There was an old man.** This is a popular folk song that you can sing with the class that practices relative clauses at the end of sentences. *There was an old man who swallowed a fly. I think he'll die.* He then swallows different animals to solve the problems caused by the last animal he swallowed. (*There was an old man who swallowed a frog to catch the fly. I think he'll die.*) He swallows a rat to catch the frog that caught the fly (*There was an old man who swallowed a rat to catch the frog that caught the fly. I think he'll die*), a cat to catch the rat, a dog to catch the cat, a cow to catch the dog, and a horse to catch the cow, each time adding another relative clause. When all the animals are in the man's belly, (*There was an old man who swallowed a horse to catch the cow that caught the dog that caught the cat that caught the rat that caught the frog that caught the fly.*) the song ends with *Of course, he died.*
2. **Finding relative clauses.** Take a descriptive paragraph from the extensive reading you have assigned your students for an intensive reading activity that focuses on relative clauses. Have the students read the passage and circle the relative clauses both full (with the relative pronouns) and reduced. Have them tell you how they knew they were relative clauses.
3. **Promoting Written English.** Take a story that you have read to the students and rewrite one of the scenes using short simple sentences based on the relative and subordinate clauses. (e.g. *Once upon a time*

there was a little girl who lived in a large dark forest. One morning when the sun was just coming up, her mother called her into the kitchen.

becomes *Once upon a time there was a little girl. She lived in a large, dark forest. One morning the sun was just coming up. Her mother called her*

into the kitchen.) Don't make it too long. Read the rewritten story to the students and tell them you are going to rewrite the scene together to make it sound more like a written story. Have the students tell you different ways the sentences might be combined. Once they have seen the possibilities, have them rewrite the short passage. Then read to them or give them a copy of the original so they can see what the author did. Compare what the students did with what the author did.

4. **T-units and character study.** Find a story or article written in a narrative format where the main character is providing the narration. Do a T-unit analysis. Discuss why the author decided to write at that particular level given the age and the personality of that character.