

## 2. Exercises for linking and unlinking of sentences

3<sup>rd</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grade

30 minutes



Materials:  
Prepared handouts with short sentences (see right).

Exercises of linking and taking sentences apart further the students' linguistic competence in terms of syntax, stylistics and language repertoire. These exercises should be conducted repeatedly to further understanding and consolidation. The terms "conjunction/combining words" or "subordinate clauses" need not be introduced at this time, as only the practical application is important.

Variants:

The instructor distributes a piece of paper with several pairs of shorter sentences. Example: "I am hungry. I would like to eat something."; "I am tired. I have not slept in a long time."; "He promised me. He goes to the movies with me."; "I am intrigued. Did you really understand it?"; "You have to be fast. You win the race."; "It was late. We arrived in our home country." After an initial discussion, the class collects possible conjunctions that can be used to link the sentences together, such as: and, then, also, because, so, that, before, during, since, in case, in spite of, although, etc. The students then join the sentence pairs together with an appropriate conjunction and write them down. Extension: the students write their own sentences with the conjunctions (underlined in red color) from the list they created in class. Alternatively: individual students write pairs of sentences for each other, which then must be linked and joined together.

Taking sentences apart: in this exercise, the students receive longer sentences which they have to separate into two individual sentences. Example: "I was unable to swallow a bite, because I can't stand spinach" → "I was unable to swallow a bite. I can't stand spinach".

## 3. Integrated stylistic exercises with paper strips

3<sup>rd</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> grade

30 minutes



Materials:  
3–4 paper strips per student.

The following training exercises combine different aspects of style with action-oriented intensive learning.

Procedure:

- The instructor displays a picture. Each student receives 3–4 paper strips (A3 paper cut horizontally into 4–5 strips) and writes a sentence onto each strip about an aspect of the picture.
- The strips of paper are then collected and thoroughly shuffled. The students separate into groups of three. Each group receives 9–12 strips. With these strips, they have to create a text about the picture. In doing so, they must work intensively on their writing style: cut out or replace repeated sentences and sentence beginnings and vocabulary. Text development will have to be considered very carefully. If needed, the group can obtain more blank strips of paper and add sentences so that their text turns out well.
- After the strips are pasted together in their final order, the groups then present their texts to the class. They discuss all texts produced by the rest of the class.

## 4. Experimenting with formal styles and text types

5<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grade

30 minutes



Materials:  
Depending on variant (see right).

Attractive and witty stylistic exercises involving whole texts are possible in various forms. However, these types of experiments require a certain level of feeling for the first language and its stylistic facets. Where this feeling is lacking, the necessary information and guidance is required. The same holds true for knowledge about different text types (poems, factual texts, fairy tales, sms, comics, etc.).

**Style and tone**, Variants:

- Variation of a suitable short text in various levels of formality and tone. Possible tasks: "You received a book as a new year's present from a friend/your grand parents/the embassy in your country of origin. Write a thank you note to them with the appropriate level of formality." (The

tone will vary accordingly from informal language to very formal, possibly involving dialect, to very formal standard language).

- Choose five traffic signs (e. g. Stop, One-way, No U-turn, etc.) Express in writing what the signs are actually communicating (e. g. “you must stop here”, “Here, you are only allowed to drive in one direction” etc.). Now formulate these statements in different degrees of formality/politeness. You may use dialect and slang in this case. (Stop sign: Would you be as kind as to stop here? thank you! as opposed to the highly informal: “step on your brakes, dude!”). Design a funny poster to go with it! (size A3 or A2)
- Take a short newspaper article, a poem or some other kind of short text. In groups of three or four, decide who will rewrite the text and in which style (e. g. dialect, slang, comic language, elegant language, “crazy” language). Write your versions and then read them to each other!

#### **Text types, Variants:**

- Take a short text, e. g. a newspaper article. As a class or same-level group, think about different types of texts that it could be changed into, such as a poem, a factual text, a fairy tale, a telegram, an sms, a comic, an audio recording or a sensational report, etc. Decide who will create which text type (alone or in pairs). Finally, discuss and compare the various text versions.
- Try the same thing with topics connected to your country of origin. For example, convert scenes from the life story of a famous person into a radio play or write a poem about a landscape, or invent a telegram or newspaper articles about historical events.
- Collect examples of different texts written in your heritage language and create an exhibition. Each student should bring a writing sample to class (ranging from a poem, to a comic, a non-fiction text, an sms or e-mail) and explain what is special about this language sample.

#### **Other effective ways of teaching writing style:**

- The suggestions described in #4 skeleton stories, story scaffolding, etc., lend themselves naturally also for teaching writing style.
- The suggestions in 15.2 for practicing with alternative word exercises provide good examples for teaching style at the lexical level.
- The work with parallel texts described in 16.3 (generative writing) is also very valuable in terms of stylistics. Using scaffolding and a template for orientation, and then selecting sentence elements from it, is less demanding for the students and provides a valuable writing style practice.
- Another popular and useful activity for teaching writing style are the so-called “oral writing hours “: the students do not actually write a text themselves; rather they talk about in detail how a text about a certain topic could be created and structured. Variant: students talk about a text which has already been written (perhaps some time ago, or by a student from another class).