# Fetch me a pen

## Moving from Speech to Writing

### Unpicking the issues

# Moving from Speech to Writing – Aims:

- **To understand some of the issues that students encounter as they move from speech to writing**
- **To participate in activities designed to unpick some of these issues and give you strategies to trial with teachers and students**
- **To reflect on your own department or school's approach to teaching writing with a grammar focus in mind.**

# Moving from Speech to Writing

- What issues do your students encounter when moving from speech to writing?
- What do you do to support your students in this respect?

- Why are you at this workshop today?

**Academic Writing – Building stronger paragraphs** (from QMUL Thinking Writing Project)

The effect of this is that the "body is turned into a thing, an object, a package" (Kilbourne). They are separated into individual parts: legs, breasts, thighs, waists. It is separated from the woman. It is acceptable for the woman's body to be scrutinized. They receive large amounts of attention and comment and are a "vehicle for the expression of a wide range of statements" (Orbach 13). Judgements are made and opinions are formed about a woman by her appearance. A woman who is judged as overweight is thought of as a woman with little self-control, and further assumptions are made. This occurs on a daily basis, by both men and women, and it affects the way we behave towards one another.

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**Academic Writing – Building stronger paragraphs** (from QMUL Thinking Writing Project)

The effect of current advertising methods is that the "body is turned into a thing, an object, a package" (Kilbourne). Bodies are separated into individual parts: legs, breasts, thighs, waists; the body is separated from the woman. It is acceptable for the woman's body to be scrutinized. Women's bodies receive large amounts of attention and comment and are a "vehicle for the expression of a wide range of statements" (Orbach 13). Judgements are made and opinions are formed about a woman by her appearance. A woman who is judged as overweight is thought of as a woman with little self-control, and further assumptions are made. This type of generalization occurs on a daily basis, by both men and women, and it affects the way we behave towards one another.

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The effect of **current advertising methods** is that the "body is turned into a thing, an object, a package" (Kilbourne). **Bodies** are separated into individual parts: legs, breasts, thighs, waists; **the body** is separated from the woman. It is acceptable for the woman's body to be scrutinized. **Women's bodies** receive large amounts of attention and comment and are a "vehicle for the expression of a wide range of statements" (Orbach 13). Judgements are made and opinions are formed about a woman by her appearance. A woman who is judged as overweight is thought of as a woman with little self-control, and further assumptions are made. **This type of generalization** occurs on a daily basis, by both men and women, and it affects the way we behave towards one another.

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The effect of **current advertising methods** is that the "body is turned into a thing, an object, a package" (Kilbourne). In ads, **bodies** are separated into individual parts: legs, breasts, thighs, waists; the result is that **the body** is separated from the woman. It then is acceptable for the woman's body to be scrutinized. **Women's bodies** receive large amounts of attention and comment and are a "vehicle for the expression of a wide range of statements" (Orbach 13). Judgements are made and opinions are formed about a woman by her appearance. A woman who is judged as overweight is thought of as a woman with little self-control, and from this premise further assumptions are made. **This type of generalization** occurs on a daily basis, by both men and women, and it affects the way we behave towards one another.

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The effect of **current advertising methods** is that the "body is turned into a thing, an object, a package" (Kilbourne). **In ads, bodies** are separated into individual parts: legs, breasts, thighs, waists; **the result is that the body** is separated from the woman. It **then** is acceptable for the woman's body to be scrutinized. **Women's bodies** receive large amounts of attention and comment and are a "vehicle for the expression of a wide range of statements" (Orbach 13). Judgements are made and opinions are formed about a woman by her appearance. A woman who is judged as overweight is thought of as a woman with little self-control, and **from this premise** further assumptions are made. **This type of generalization** occurs on a daily basis, by both men and women, and it affects the way we behave towards one another.

# Successful paragraphs

JB Priestly also presents Mr Birling as confident he says to Gerald with no hesitation at all 'But what I wanted to say is there's a fair chance that I might find my way into the next Honours List' he shows he's confident in his business and in himself and he's not telling Gerald he's going to have a knighthood he's boasting.

JB Priestly also presents Mr Birling as confident **when** he says to Gerald with no hesitation at all**:** 'But what I wanted to say is there's a fair chance that I might find my way into the next Honours List'**. Here,** he shows he's confident in his business and in himself**. He's** not **just** telling Gerald he's going to have a knighthood**;** he's boasting **about it**.

# Pronouns

**Pronouns are words that take the place of nouns (or noun phrases)**

**To avoid repetition, we use a pronoun for the second mention (sometimes even the first – see below) of the same person, thing etc....**

- **The dog** was barking. **It** was annoying.
- I heard **the fire alarm**. Did you hear **it**?
- I was thinking about **a quick snack**. Were you thinking about **that**, too?
- **She** had been dreading this moment. **Farzana** hated exams.
- **Romeo and Juliet** were selfish and only pleased **themselves**.

**Pronouns are particularly common in speech. Because speakers and listeners usually have an explicit or tacit understanding of the thing or things being spoken about, they don't need to keep referring to them, and so use pronouns in their place.**

**Because of their frequency and usefulness in speech, school students often use pronouns in their writing instead of signalling in a clearer and more detailed way the thing being described...**

# Pronouns

**Table 3. Clausal Subjects**

| Text 1 | Text 2 |
|---|---|
| The formation of sedimentary rocks | you |
| One type | you |
| water | she |
| these sediments | she |
| The second method | you |
| sedimentary rocks | she |
| | you |
| | I |
| | I |

**Schleppegrell, M. J. (2001) Linguistic features of the language of schooling**

**An investigation into kinds of clausal subjects (the 'main' thing named in a sentence).**

## Text 1: Clausal subjects in school-based, academic texts
## Text 2: Clausal subjects in school students' speech

**Table 2.  Lexical Density**

*Text 1*

1. The *formation* of *sedimentary rock* is *closely associated* with *water.*
2. One *type forms*
3. when *water carries soil*, *pebbles*, and other *particles* to the *ocean floor*
4. where these *sediments* become *rock.*
5. The second *method involves chemicals dissolved* in *water.*
6. By *evaporation* and *precipitation* of *substances* like *calcium carbonate, sedimentary rocks* can *form.*

Lexical density: 30/6 = 5.0

*Text 2*

1. And um, like um sometimes if, um, like you *think* that the *teacher?*
2. um, if you *raise* your *hand*
3. and she *says "No"*
4. so she'll *pick on* the *peoples* that don't *know* it?
5. so you *raise* your *hand*
6. she *picks* you
7. and you *go*
8. "Well, I *think,*
9. I didn't, um, well."

. . .

10. That's what I *said*
11. like the *people raise* their *hand?*
12. and—and she—because they *think*
13. they're going to *pick* the *person* who don't *know* it?
14. and when she *picks* on you
15. she *says*, . . . "Oh."

Lexical density: 23/15 = 1.5

**Schleppegrell, M. J. (2001) Linguistic features of the language of schooling**

**Table 1.** Register Features of Spoken Interaction and School-Based Texts

|  | Spoken interaction | School-based texts |
|---|---|---|
| **Lexical features** | | |
| Lexical choices | generic | specific, technical |
| Lexical density | sparse | dense, elaboration of noun phrases through modifiers, relative clauses, and prepositional phrases |
| Subjects | pronominal, present or known participants | lexical, nominalizations, and expanded NPs |
| **Grammatical strategies** | | |
| Segmentation | prosodic segmentation: structure indicated prosodically | sentence structure: structure indicated syntactically |
| Mood | varied, attitude conveyed prosodically | mainly declarative, attitude conveyed lexically |
| Clause linkage and conjunction strategies | clause chaining with conjunctions, information added in finite segments, use of many conjunctions with generalized meanings | clause-combining strategies of embedding, use of verbs, prepositions, and nouns to make logical links, conjunctions have core (narrow) meanings |
| Organizational strategies | emergent structure, clause themes include conjunctive and discourse markers that segment and link part of text | hierarchical structure, using nominalization, logical links indicated through nominal, verbal, and adverbial expressions, and thematic elements that structure discourse |

**Schleppegrell, M. J. (2001) Linguistic features of the language of schooling**

# What's in a name?
# Nouns, pronouns and noun phrases

**Most students, and indeed teachers, would be able to tell you that a noun is a 'naming word' (or words) denoting, for instance, a <span style="color:red">person</span> (*John, Aysha, Jacqueline Wilson, Isaac Newton*) <span style="color:red">place</span> (*Great Britain, London, Tower Hamlets, the car park*) <span style="color:red">thing</span> (*table, building, hospital*), <span style="color:red">animal</span> (*black Labrador, elephant*) or <span style="color:red">idea</span> (*truth, feminism, austerity*).**
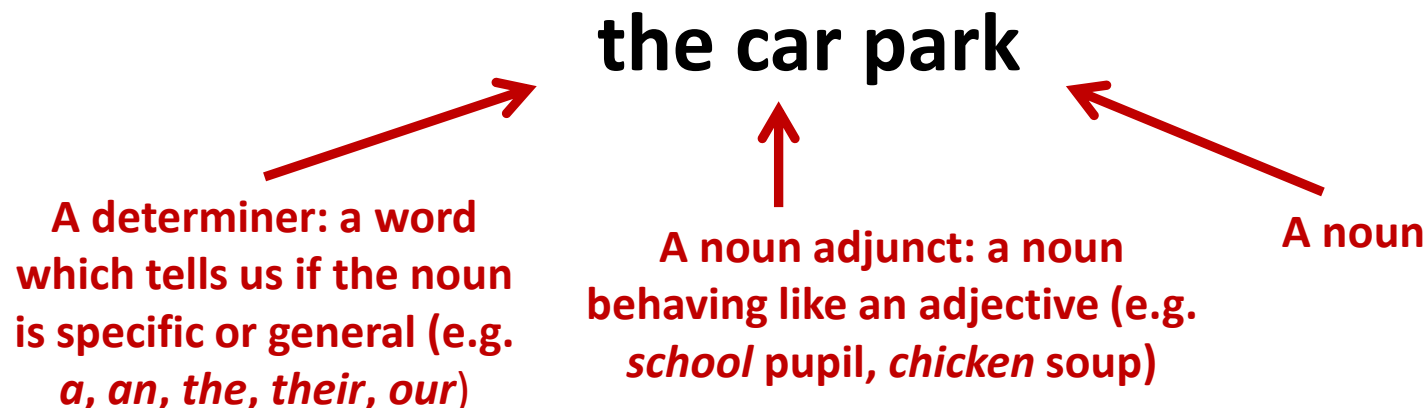
**These examples above do not provide a complete definition of what a noun, or a 'noun phrase' is, as we will see…**

# Noun phrases

A 'noun phrase' is a broad term used to encompass:
- **single word nouns**
- **pronouns** (words that stand in place of nouns, such as *it, this, that, her, him, them*)
- **multi-word nouns** (i.e. phrases)

We've already looked at some examples of nouns that are comprised of more than one word (e.g. *the car park, Tower Hamlets*). Already, we can see that nouns phrases can contain words that are not nouns…

## the car park

**A determiner: a word which tells us if the noun is specific or general (e.g.** *a, an, the, their, our*)

**A noun adjunct: a noun behaving like an adjective (e.g.** *school* **pupil,** *chicken* **soup)**

**A noun**

Noun phrases can be expanded (in theory, infinitely!) to incorporate many kinds of words and linguistic structures. Notice how, in each of these phrases, it is essentially the same thing (the car park) that is being named...

the car park

**the dilapidated car park**
Here, an adjective adds more information to the noun phrase.

**the badly-lit, dilapidated car park**
Here, another adjective (one in fact formed from an adverb and a verb) adds even more information.

**the badly lit, dilapidated car park in the shabby part of town**
In this example, a prepositional phrase, beginning with 'in', is locating the car park in question.

**the badly-lit, dilapidated car park in the shabby part of town, which every responsible parent warns their child against**
A relative clause, beginning with the determiner 'which', now modifies the phrase. The comma helps signal that it is the car park, rather than the part of town,  that responsible parents warn their children against!

# Noun phrases for academic writing

**Why is it important to encourage pupils to build complex noun phrases? Look at the following examples from different subject areas…**

| Noun | Noun Phrase | Expanded Noun Phrase |
|---|---|---|
| rhythm | the poem's rhythm | the poem's upbeat rhythm, created by the writer's use of iambic tetrameter |
| winds | westerly winds | westerly winds, which are strongest in the western hemisphere |
| cities | large cities | large cities that generate economic wealth |

**Each of the expanded noun phrases gives more information (allowing a student to display greater knowledge, understanding, ability to analyse/evaluate etc.) Examples like these enable students to begin to see language as a series of 'building blocks' that, though not especially complicated in themselves, can be developed to create sophisticated sentence structures.**

# Noun phrases for academic writing

| Noun | Noun Phrase | Expanded Noun Phrase |
|---|---|---|
| **rhythm** | **the poem's rhythm** | **the poem's upbeat rhythm, created by the writer's use of iambic tetrameter** |

**(connective)**          **subject**

**Moreover, the poem's upbeat rhythm, created by the writer's use of iambic tetrameter, emphasises the jubilant tone of the speaker.**

**verb**          **object**

*Q: Is the narrator shown to be making careful choices at the beginning of 'The Laboratory'?*

**He** uses various techniques to suggests that **she** is making choices in a rash and sudden manner. Firstly we notice the rhythm and rhyme of the poem. **It** is quite playful and **it** is AABB rhyme scheme which gives **it** a childlike tone. This reflects **her** state of mind; the playful feel suggests she is gaining pleasure from **it**. Alternatively, **this** could suggest she has lost her mind. The stanzas are structured in the same way and it could be argued that **this** shows her to be very careful and calculating, however the strong rhyme gives more of a sense that she is enjoying **this**. **This** does not suggest careful choices.

**Task: Replace 'he', 'she', 'it', 'this' etc. with nouns or noun phrases to make the writing more precise, logical and convincing!**

In this activity, used to prepare KS4 students at Mulberry for GCSE English Literature coursework, students have to replace the imprecise noun phrases (indicated in purple) with words that aid precision, logic and cohesion and, ultimately knowledge and understanding.

As with the previous activity, students may be given a version of this paragraph without the pronouns indicated, and asked which kinds of words make the writing unsatisfactory.

**Q: Is the narrator shown to be making careful choices at the beginning of 'The Laboratory'?**

**He** uses various techniques to suggests that **she** is making choices in a rash and sudden manner. Firstly we notice the rhythm and rhyme of the poem. **It** is quite playful and **it** is AABB rhyme scheme which gives **it** a childlike tone. This reflects **her** state of mind; the playful feel suggests she is gaining pleasure from **it**. Alternatively, **this** could suggest she has lost her mind. The stanzas are structured in the same way and it could be argued that **this** shows her to be very careful and calculating, however the strong rhyme gives more of a sense that she is enjoying **this**. **This** does not suggest careful choices.

this uniform structure, **the protagonist,** the poet, **the narrator,** the plan, **these rhyming couplets,** her plotting, **the poem,** the jaunty effect, **gaining enjoyment from such an evil plan,** the verse form

For particular classes or students, this could be run as a cloze activity; i.e. pupils may be given the appropriate nouns and noun phrases so they can decide exactly where in the paragraph they belong (as above).

*Q: Is the narrator shown to be making careful choices at the beginning of 'The Laboratory'?*

**The poet** uses various techniques to suggests that **the protagonist** is making choices in a rash and sudden manner. Firstly we notice the rhythm and rhyme of the poem. **The verse form** is quite playful and **the rhyming couplets are arranged in an** AABB rhyme scheme which gives **the poem** a childlike tone. This reflects **the narrator's** state of mind; the playful feel suggests she is gaining pleasure from **her plan**. Alternatively, **the jaunty effect** could suggest she has lost her mind. The stanzas are structured in the same way and it could be argued that **this uniform structure** shows her to be very careful and calculating, however the strong rhyme gives more of a sense that she is enjoying **her plotting**. **Gaining enjoyment from such an evil plan** does not suggest careful choices.

**A model of a good paragraph with precise noun phrases included for clarity and cohesion. Another amendment to the paragraph, again aiding clarity, is indicated in blue.**

Although *it* portrays a life away from home comforts, *we* are still reminded of wealth and luxury. *The bottle* is very prominent against the green background, and *the colours* connote wealth, achievement and power. Moreover, *his jewellery*, which is chunky and masculine, reminds us that *he* can afford such luxuries. *** By wearing Davidoff the audience can be any kind of man they want to be; they have the luxury to take their own direction in life and go on their own 'Adventure'. *His pose* strengthens these ideas of determination and independence once again.

Although *the advert* portrays a life away from home comforts, *the audience* is still reminded of wealth and luxury. *The image of the perfume bottle* is very prominent against the green background, and *the silver and gold colour scheme* connotes wealth, achievement and power. Moreover, *Ewan McGregor's jewellery,* which is chunky and masculine, reminds us that *the kind of man who wears Davidoff products* can afford such luxuries. *Again, the message is that* by wearing Davidoff the audience can be any kind of man they want to be; they have the luxury to take their own direction in life and go on their own 'Adventure'. *The pose of the model* strengthens these ideas of determination and independence once again.

Kambili Achike is the 15 year old protagonist of *Purple Hibiscus*. She is **a daughter** eager to impress **her father, Eugene**. Described by her form mistress as "intelligent beyond her years, quiet and responsible", she in fact suffers from **self doubt**. Kambili is painfully shy with strangers, socially awkward with her peers and even at home rarely **speaks**. She seems to have no sense of **her self**. When the editor of her father's paper, Ade Coker, asks her a question, she looks at her father before answering. Eugene is proud of **her**, but Ade Coker rightly asks, "Imagine what the *Standard* would be if we were all quiet." **Kambili's blossoming** is central to *Purple Hibiscus*.

**Expand these words/phrases. Add more detail by inserting words in front of, within and after the text in red.**

Kambili Achike is the 15 year old protagonist of *Purple Hibiscus*. She is **a docile, obedient daughter** eager to impress **her puritanical father, Eugene, a wealthy industrialist in Enugu, Nigeria**. Described by her form mistress as "intelligent beyond her years, quiet and responsible", she in fact suffers from **crippling self doubt and social insecurity**. Kambili is painfully shy with strangers, socially awkward with her peers and even at home rarely **speaks above a whisper for fear of displeasing her tyrannical father**. She seems to have no sense of **her self, her own opinions or feelings**. When the editor of her father's paper, Ade Coker, asks her a question, she looks at her father before answering. Eugene is proud of **her quiet obedience,** but Ade Coker rightly asks, "Imagine what the *Standard* would be if we were all quiet." **Kambili's blossoming from silent and repressed to a young woman with her own voice** is central to *Purple Hibiscus*.

**Speak how you write…**

'Both of the Loman brothers…'

'Happy in particular seems…'

'When Biff complains of…'

'When Happy lists the things he has obtained, such as "…"'

'The frustration evident in statements like "…"'

'They are both…'

'He seems…'

"When it says "…"'

'The quote "…"'

1) Which of these groups of sentence openings do we associate with talk, and which with writing? Why?

2) What's the difference between the two? Use any relevant grammatical terms you know.

3) What does the word '**context**' have to do with the phrases on the right, indicated as 'correct'?

## How to create a noun phrase activity: An example from Geography

**Glaciers** develop over many years in places where snow has fallen but not melted. **Snow** is compacted and turns to ice. **The weight of the ice** means that it starts to slip down mountain sides over time. **A glacier** is a system. There is a zone of accumulation where snow is added. **The part of the glacier which gains snow** is normally at the start of a glacier in a highland area. As **more and more snow** falls, it is compacted so the bottom layers become ice. **The ice that has formed** then moves downhill due to the force of gravity. Near the end, or snout, of the glacier **this ice** may melt. **The part of the glacier where this happens** is called the zone of ablation and **this process** is more likely to occur in warm summer months.

**Step 1**: **Find a text related to the topic you're teaching, or create your own. It should preferably be the kind of writing you want your students to be able to create (i.e. a recount, description, analysis, argument etc.) Highlight nouns and noun phrases that are crucial to the clarity, logic and cohesion of the text.**

## How to create a noun phrase activity: An example from Geography

**They** develop over many years in places where snow has fallen but not melted. **It** is compacted and turns to ice. **This** means that it starts to slip down mountain sides over time. **It** is a system. There is a zone of accumulation where snow is added. **This** is normally at the start of a glacier in a highland area. As **it** falls, it is compacted so the bottom layers become ice. **This** then moves downhill due to the force of gravity. Near the end, or snout, of the glacier **it** may melt. **This** is called the zone of ablation and **it** is more likely to occur in warm summer months.

**Step 2**: **Now, simply replace the nouns and noun phrases with imprecise pronouns. Present students with the new version of the text (this could form a starter activity or an activity in preparation for writing) and ask them what's making the text difficult to understand, having them identify the kind of words (pronouns) that create confusion.**

## How to create a noun phrase activity: An example from Geography

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this part of the glacier, **the weight of the ice,** a glacier, **the part of the glacier which gains snow,** this ice, **glaciers,** more and more snow, **the ice that has formed,** this process

**Step 3**: **Once students have identified the pronouns which make the writing difficult to fully comprehend, have them change the pronouns to precise nouns or noun phrases. Depending on your class or students in it, you might give them the kinds of words and phrases needed (see above), effectively making this a cloze activity.**

## How to create a noun phrase activity: An example from Science

**The reproductive system of a child** is not mature and needs to change as **a boy or girl** develops into an adult, so that the system is fully working. **These changes** begin between the ages of ten and fifteen. **The time when the changes happen** is called puberty. **The transformations** happen because of sex hormones produced by the testes in boys and by the ovaries in girls. **Some of these developments** happen in boys and girls, while others just happen in boys or girls.

**Step 1**: **Find a text related to the topic you're teaching, or create your own. It should preferably be the kind of writing you want your students to be able to create (i.e. a recount, description, analysis, argument etc.) Highlight nouns and noun phrases that are crucial to the clarity, logic and cohesion of the text.**

## How to create a noun phrase activity: An example from Science

**It** is not mature and needs to change as **they** develop into an adult, so that the system is fully working. **It** begin**s** between the ages of ten and fifteen. **This** is called puberty. **It** happen**s** because of sex hormones produced by the testes in boys and by the ovaries in girls. **Some** happen in boys and girls, while others just happen in boys or girls.

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**\*Notice that, when changing plural noun phrases (*'these changes', 'the transformations'*) to singular pronouns like 'it', verbs need to be modified accordingly. *Begin* becomes *begins* and *happen* becomes *happens*.**

## How to create a noun phrase activity: An example from Science

**It** is not mature and needs to change as **they** develop into an adult, so that the system is fully working. **It** begin**s** between the ages of ten and fifteen. **This** is called puberty. **It** happen**s** because of sex hormones produced by the testes in boys and by the ovaries in girls. **Some** happen in boys and girls, while others just happen in boys or girls.

these changes, **some of these developments,** the reproductive system of a child, **the time when the changes happen,** a boy or girl, **the transformations**

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**\*You might leave verb endings highlighted in blue, explaining to students that the singular 'it' needs to be replaced with a plural noun phrase.**

# Everyday vs academic language/writing

## Everyday language

There was no rain for a very long time. The farmers had planted crops like maize and wheat and corn, but because it didn't rain, all the crops died. Because there were no crops there was nothing for people to eat, and they became very hungry. Because they didn't have enough to eat, many of them died, especially the children and old people. (64 words)

## Academic language

The extended drought caused the crops to fail, resulting in a widespread famine and many deaths, especially among children and the elderly. (23 words)