The contiguity of

Notes

Example: adjective clause non-contiguity

Fluid was displaced into the joint cavity, which increased regional synovial fluid pressure.

Revision 1

Fluid was displaced into the joint cavity, a displacement that increased regional synovial fluid pressure.

Revision 2

Fluid was displaced into the joint cavity, increasing regional synovial fluid pressure.

Revision 3

Fluid was displaced into the joint cavity, and regional synovial fluid pressure was increased.

Revision 4

The displacement of fluid into the joint cavity increased regional synovial fluid pressure.

Notes

In the Example, the vague which seems to modify the entire preceding independent clause rather than one specific noun. The adjective clause could modify fluid, but only the fluid that was displaced into the joint cavity, not just fluid.

In Revision 1, the longest of the three revisions, the intended modifiee is emphasised by the usage of a noun derivative (displacement) of the verb displaced. Although displacement is an explicit modifiee of the adjective clause, the revision seems overly obvious (a hyper-correction), redundant, and usually not preferred to the Example.

In Revision 2, the participle increasing modifies the whole sentence as does the adjective clause in the Example, but without the backtracking of the relative pronoun which. One distraction of increasing is a misagreement in tense to a past observation, but its succinctness and fluidity outweigh its disadvantages and is consistently preferred to all the other revision options.

In Revision 3, the compound sentence befits the two observations but lacks the fluidity of Revision 2.

In Revision 4, the thematically focused after-

the-fact subject displacement depends on a prior mention in the text and therefore more appropriate for the Discussion section; however, it does contain the appropriate past tense.

Contextual sections

Part 1 – Introduction section: Research problem – pertinent background

Example: adjective clause non-contiguity

There are several methods to estimate the CIR that are more efficient than those previously used.

Revision 1

To estimate the CIR, there are several methods that are more efficient than those previously used.

Revision 2

There are several CIR-estimating methods that are more efficient than those previously used.

Notes

It is not clear whether the adjective clause that are more efficient than those previously used modifies CIR or methods. Although the plurality of that relates to the adjective clause to the modifiee method and not to CIR, a reader may be uncertain whether the author committed a grammatical mistake of subject-verb disagreement in number.

Revision 1 involves transposing the displacing unit (indefinitive phrase: to estimate the CIR) to the sentence-orientating position enabling the adjective clause to be contiguous to its modifiee methods.

Revision 2 involves syntactically reducing the intervening infinitive phrase into a compound-noun pre-modifier CIR-estimating, enabling contiguity of the adjective clause to its modifiee.

The usage of this revision may depend on the prior mention of CIR-estimating methods because
it is an attenuated form of methods to estimate CIR. Overall, the infinitive phrase displacement distraction (and its revisions) – similar to that for the prepositional phrase-caused displacement in Example 1 – is an example of an adjective clause modifying a specific modifiee.

Part 2 – Introduction section: Research problem – pertinent background

Example: adjective clause modifying a sentence
Some Alcyonarian soft corals release toxins into seawater, which affect community composition and function.

Revision 1
Some Alcyonarian soft corals release into seawater toxins, which affect community composition and function.

Revision 2
Some Alcyonarian soft corals release toxins into seawater, affecting community composition and function.

Revision 3
Some Alcyonarian soft corals release toxins into seawater and thereby affect community composition and function.

Revision 4
The release of toxins into sea water by some Alcyonarian soft corals affects community composition and function.

Notes
What is the modifiee of the which clause? As indicated by the plural verb effect, the modifiee can be the noun phrase toxins or toxins into seawater or the whole independent clause. This usage of the adjective clause is similar to that in Example 1 but toxins is a likely modifiee for the adjective clause, so the somewhat awkward transposition of into seawater enables contiguity of the adjective clause (Revision 1).

In Revision 2, syntactic reduction of the adjective clause to the participial phrase affecting may be a preferred option, because of its smooth flow, appropriate present tense for known information, and succinctness. Similar to the adjective clause, the participial phrase is probably modifying the displaced noun toxins.

In Revision 3, coordinating of independent clauses, the longest revision, explicitly coheres the two relations. In Revision 4, release as the subject of the sentence is stated after the fact, that is, occurring in a section of a journal article (the Discussion) after Some Alcyonarian soft corals release toxins into seawater was stated in a prior section (the Results).

Summary
The four examples are equally distributed between Experimental (Results) and Contextual sections (Introduction) of a journal article, indicating a lack of section specificity.

A modifier displaced from its modifiee is distracting by impeding immediate comprehension. In contrast, a modifier of a whole sentence because of its conventionality is just a dissonance. For an adjective clause modifying a specific modifiee, revision involves eliminating the distance between modifier and modifiee by transposing the intervening syntactic unit to the sentence-initial position or transposing a pre-modifier form of the modifier so that modifier and modifiee are contiguous.

For an adjective clause modifying an entire sentence (the vague which), the adjective clause can be reduced into a participial phrase or expanded into a coordinate independent clause. Each of the revisions expresses a different nuance.

Michael Lewis Schneir, PhD
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Schematised distractions and preferred revisions

Transposition of a disruptive prepositional phrase
The appliance resulted in the characteristic tooth movement for control groups, which consisted of three phases.

→ For control groups, the appliance resulted in the characteristic tooth movement, which consisted of three phases.

Transposition of a pre-modifier form of an adjective clause
There are several methods to estimate the CIR that are more efficient than those previously used.

→ There are several CIR-estimating methods that are more efficient than those previously used.

Syntactic reduction to a participial phrase
Fluid was displaced into the joint cavity, increasing regional synovial fluid pressure.

→ Fluid was displaced into the joint cavity, increasing regional synovial fluid pressure.

Some Alcyonarian soft corals release toxins into seawater, which affect community composition and function.

→ Some Alcyonarian soft corals release toxins into seawater, affecting community composition and function.