
This Kibbitzer is based on a sentence from a chapter by a Japanese research student of Applied Linguistics writing on the phenomenon of "foreign accentedness":

Original	Revision
Other relevant causes are disfluency, developmental factors, learning environments, language universals and language-specific features, and overgeneralisation and transfer of training	Other relevant causes are social factors such as the learning environment; psychological factors such as disfluency, language development, overgeneralisation, and transfer of training; and linguistic factors such as language-specific and language-universal features of the first and second languages.

When we looked at the original sentence the student agreed that the list was something of a muddle, and could well delay and confuse the reader. After some discussion we agreed that there seemed to be three types of factor involved: **social**, **psychological**, and **linguistic**. Once the main headings were identified, and it was decided to use them explicitly in structuring the list, it proved a relatively simple matter to recast the sentence in the form shown in the revision with, we thought, a considerable increase in clarity.

In conclusion, it is I think important to emphasise that the suggested revision is certainly not the only or best solution to the problem posed by the original sentence. For example, should 'disfluency' (we decided to let this ugly word stand as standard jargon) be classified as a 'personal factor' (our original choice) or, possibly, as a 'performance factor'? Should the 'Psychological factors' be named as 'Psycholinguistic' factors? Given the central importance of lists in academic writing, time spent discussing questions such as these is time well spent in the 'academic revision game', even if the perfect solution for which we constantly strive is forever unattainable.