Writing a Thesis: The Subordinating Style vs. the Additive Style

Consider the following sentence: <u>"I read *Hamlet*</u>, and the entire semester was a drag and I learned how to fly."

1. What do you notice about how the conjunctions (=connector words or joining words) in this sentence impact its meaning?

2. Rewrite the sentence so that it makes logical sense to you.

3. What conjunctions or transition language did you need in order to make the sentence more logically coherent? Explain how the shift in diction impacted the sentence's meaning.

"The subordinating style orders its components in relationships of **causality** (one event or state is caused by another), **temporality** (events and states are prior or subsequent to one another), and **precedence** (events and states are arranged in hierarchies of importance). <u>"It was the books I read in high school rather than those I was assigned in college that influenced the choices I find myself making today"</u>two actions, one of which is prior to the other and has more significant effects that continue into the present. Contrast that sentence with this one: <u>"I read *Hamlet*</u>, and the entire semester was a drag and I learned how to fly." There might be some relationship between reading *Hamlet*, having a bad semester, and learning how to fly, but the sentence

doesn't specify it; rather, it just reports these events in a loose sequence, like beads on a string, without pressuring the reader to order or arrange them. That is the additive style." —Stanley Fish, *How to Write a Sentence, and How to Read One* (2011)

Here is a sample thesis that employs the **subordinating style**. (It's multiple sentences long and uses "I"—that's okay!) **Circle** the phrases and <u>underline</u> all the verbs that develop causality, temporality, and/or precedence:

In Chenxi Jian's article, "The Political Power of Translation," she explicitly ties together the practice of translation and political action and activism, both through the lens of her own experiences and through the lens of the author whose book she has translated. Although Jian suggests that "even if *Tears of Salt* doesn't directly move its readers to action, Bartolo's voice can now be heard in its English translation, and that's something" (5), suggesting that the political power of translation is ephemeral, the parallels she draws to her own life experiences implicitly lay out a possible mode of political action, rooted in the practice of translation.

Other words or phrases that could help generate a subordinating structure:

Now, **try editing or rewriting** the following additive-style sentences into ones that exemplify the subordinating style. Feel free to change as much as you feel is necessary; some elements of the sentence might need to be left out or added, or a unifying idea might need to be introduced:

1. This essay will explore how in Elsa Morante's "The Mirrors," imagery and diction are used to explore a mother-son relationship and force readers to think about motherhood.

2. Gabriela Mistral's "The Fervent One" is a poem about women and bodies. Additionally, the speaker uses imagery of nature to make comparisons to women's bodies. The language of the poem, moreover, draws connections to religion as well.

Finally, try writing some sentences about Jenny Zhang's "Our Mothers Before Them" in the shared Google doc linked to the website using the subordinating style phrases from the previous page. You don't have to arrive at a full-fledged thesis just yet (although you're welcome to try that out), but instead, work on coming up with a few sentences that set out "relationships of **causality** (one event or state is caused by another), **temporality** (events and states are prior or subsequent to one another), and **precedence** (events and states are arranged in hierarchies of importance)." These phrases can be related or unrelated, and they should consider both the **form and content** of the text.