Teaching Writing Lesson Plan — “A Sentence Combining Practice Mini-Lesson”

Teacher Name: Ryan Arciero

Date: 1 December 2012

Course: English/Language Arts (Literature & Composition)

Grade Level: 9th Grade Freshman (age 15)

Ability Level: Average/General Ranges

1. Materials/Technology Needed:
   1. Writing Utensils/Paper
   2. Dry Erase Board/Markers
   3. English journals/notebooks
   4. Strips of Paper (Sample Questions)
2. Common Core Standards (English/Language Arts):
   1. CC.5.L.3.a Knowledge of Language: Expand, combine, and reduce sentences for meaning, reader/listener interest, and style.
   2. CC.9-10.W.HST.1.c Text Types and Purposes: Use words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between sentence parts.
   3. CC.9-10.W.HST.2.c Text Types and Purposes: Use varied transitions and sentence structures to link the parts of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
3. Learning Objectives:
   1. The students will be able to define the meaning of “sentence combining” and identify which types of sentences may be combined with others for effective writing
   2. The students will be able to distinguish between the different ways of combining sentences and then construct/craft their own sentences from a real-life example in groups
4. Introductory Activity (4-5 minutes)
   1. Writing Prompt: I will begin this lesson by posing a creative writing prompt for students to write down in their English notebooks to help get them in the right mindset for class. The creative prompt would ask students to first copy down these sentences, then reflect and write on what is good and bad about them:
      1. Mr. Arciero teaches English at school.
      2. Mr. Arciero has green eyes and brown hair.
      3. He enjoys reading, writing, and helping his students learn.
   2. After several minutes have passed, I will then ask the students what they found to be “good” (grammar, description) and “bad” (repetitiveness) about the listed sentences. This will serve as a solid transition to the main subject matter of the mini-lesson: combining sentences. After our brief analysis of the sentences is over, I will also go over the learning objectives and daily agenda on the board.
5. Instructional Procedures (18-20 minutes)
   1. Sentence Combining Handout (7-8 minutes): To help provide students some guidelines and help introduce them to the concept of sentence combining, I will distribute a self-made sentence combining handout (attached). This handout highlights the importance of sentence combining and then how to carry it out in actual writing. To help make the content more engaging and applicable to the students, I made the handouts with their names included as examples. I intend to ask students to read certain questions to help them follow along and ask questions throughout to check for comprehension.
   2. Paper slips and Individual Sentence Combining (7-8 minutes): Next, I will hand out slips of paper that has three sentences on it to each student. Each student will then be given 2-3 minutes to individually work to combine those three sentences into two (or even one) coherent sentence using the strategies from the handout. Students will be reminded to keep in mind the style and craft of their work: even if correct, how does each sentence “feel” and when might it be used over another combining of the sentences? Once everyone has come up with their sentences, I will ask two students to go up to the board and first recite their three separate sentences, then write their newly combined sentence(s). As a class, we will not only go over if these are correct, but also discuss the style/craft of these newly combined examples. Why might we use them in a given context over another possible combination? What are their effects in writing?
   3. Partner Practice—Sentence Combining (4-5 minutes): Finally, I will split the students into two groups (one group of two and one group of three). I will tell them that I am interested in writing a personal biography, and would like their help to condense a few sentences I have in mind. I will then have them take out their three written sentences about Mr. Arciero from the initial writing prompt. Next, the students will work together in their respective groups to combine the sentences appropriately and creatively. They will need to create at least two different ways of combining the sentences using coordinating conjunctions, colons, or semicolons.
6. Closure Activity (5 minutes)
   1. Compare/Contrast of Student Sentence Combining: Once both groups are finished, each group will finally go up to the board to write their sentences together (one on each side of the board). Students need only write one of their combinations they came up with together. Then, to close the lesson, the opposite group will need to say whether the other group combination makes sense, and more importantly, how does it “sound?” How does it vary from the other sentence, even if both are correct? I will then finish the lesson by saying that this day’s lesson was solid practice to help them prepare for an upcoming narrative essay so that students will know helpful strategies for sentence combining and effective writing in the future.
7. Assessment(s):
   1. There are a few key methods of formative assessment used throughout this mini-lesson. My first form of assessment is the brief discussion response following my writing prompt. Depending on the students’ answers (to what is perceived as “good” and “bad” with the aforementioned sentences), I will be able to gauge their current aptitude levels for sentence combining and the mechanics handout. My writing prompt thus serves as a solid way of checking for that essential background knowledge before beginning the next mode of assessment, the handout itself. During this time, I will perform an informal evaluation by asking students periodic questions during my overview of the handout, as well as asking if students have any questions throughout. Afterwards, I can check for student understanding through the main procedural activity, the sentence combining via the slips of paper, as well as the partnered closure activity. Depending on student responses—whether they are correctly applying the handout strategies and able to effectively combine their sentences—I can ascertain whether they have accomplished my lesson objectives.
8. Accommodations/Adaptations:
   1. There are also several accommodations I might make to ensure student learning and support differentiated instruction in this mini-lesson as well. First, the time allotments of my activities could be slightly changed if needed. I will of course help my students any way I reasonable can should they require assistance, from answering questions during group work to adding supplementary comments, suggestions, or gentle warnings to keep students on task. During the group/paired activity, for example, should I have any ELLs in my class, I might pair them together to work at a similar pace/level and not feel overpowered or intimated by their peers’ work or responses. As for further differentiation, I also could possibly create a supplementary sheet with examples of sentence combining to help any students who struggle or might require extra examples for additional review at home. During my actual questions and overview with the handout, I could also create a system with a struggling student in which I tap on their desk a few seconds before I call on them to remind them to focus and be prepared to answer one of my questions. Lastly, during an eventual narrative essay or future assignment, I might conduct one last review session or point to this mini-lesson (even staying after school with some students if necessary for extra help) before reminding students I will be looking for effective sentence combining especially in their writing.

**SENTENCE COMBINING**

Combining sentences allows writers to avoid unnecessary repetition, provide emphasis, and improve sentence variety. It is a useful skill for all writers!

Emily has two books. Emily has three pets. Emily has four sisters. Emily better have a big house.

There are 3 main ways to combine your sentences: a comma and coordinating conjunction, and a semicolon.

**Using Commas and Coordinating Conjunctions**

Using commas and coordinating conjunctions (and, or, nor, for, but, so, yet) can help shorten, strengthen, and diversify your sentences. Let’s use the previous example.

Emily has two books, but she has three pets.

Emily has two books and four sisters. \*\*

Emily has two books and three pets, yet she has four sisters.

Emily has two books, three pets, and four sisters, so she better have a big house.

\*\* NOTE: Only use a comma before a coordinating conjunction if your next clause can stand alone as its own sentence.

**Using Colons and Semicolons**

**Colons:**

1.  To bring attention to the information that follows the colon, such as a quotation or a list

* A QUOTATION: After Peter handed in his essay, he declared: “I am done with writing for the day.”
* A LIST: Emily's typical morning consists of these steps: getting out of bed, getting dressed, brushing her teeth, having breakfast, and wishing she could go back to bed.

2.  To join two clauses if the second clause summarizes the first clause

* Michelle is a good student and athlete: she has all A’s and won a game last week.

3. To set off a salutation or a heading that introduces information.

* Dear Dr. Kennedy:
* 7:30 P.M.

**Semicolons:**

There are three main uses of the semicolon:

1.  To separate two related independent clauses (complete sentences) that are not joined by a coordinating conjunction (and, or, nor, for, but, so, yet)

* Peter turned in his assignment just in time; he received full credit for the assignment.

2.  To separate independent clauses linked with a transition:

* Mr. Arciero likes to eat pizza; however, he has eaten it every day this week and is tired of it.

3.  To separate the items in a list or series when there are other punctuation marks within the items themselves

* Anne’s refrigerator contained apples, which were red; mustard, which was spicy; and mayonnaise, which had never been opened before.

Peter is very smart.

Peter does well in all of his classes.

He arrives on time every day for school.

Anne likes to spend time with her son, Anthony.

Anne’s son loves hockey.

Hockey is a challenging but fun sport.

Michelle loves to play softball.

Michelle loves to hang out with her friends.

Many of Michelle’s friends know how to play softball.

Saule wants to be a teacher.

Saule wants to teach English because it is her favorite subject.

Teachers need to be nice to their students.

Emily loves to write.

Emily is very good at writing because she writes every day.

She hopes to be a professional writer someday.