A comparison of two methods for teaching sentence-combining to junior-high students

Mark William Henderson

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A comparison of two methods for teaching sentence-combining to junior-high students

by

Mark William Henderson

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Major: English

Signatures have been redacted for privacy

Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa

1979
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CHAPTER I.

THE NEED FOR SENTENCE-COMBINING

Teachers of English face the problem of how to teach effectively the skills of composition. In fact, students' writing seems to be getting worse--the public clamors for a return to the "golden-age" of basic education, and the teacher searches in vain for something that works. Whether or not there is a "crisis" in the teaching of writing is a much debated issue. Dean Memering has remarked, "Currently the National Assessment of Educational Progress is collecting data which suggest a general decline in nearly everything the English teacher is responsible for."

Yet there are others within the profession who disagree. "Many would say that such statements are grossly exaggerated, and that clearly there are reasons for the appearance of such a 'decline,'" remarks one writer.

Regardless of the validity of a decline, the public has made up its mind. Many people are convinced that writing and other basic skills are declining and that the blame rests with the teacher. Newsweek articulated and gave credence to this opinion when in 1975 it stated:

If your children are attending college, the chances are that when they graduate they will be unable to write ordinary, expository English with any real degree of structure and lucidity. If they are in high school and planning to attend college, the chances are less than even that they will be able to write English at the minimal college level when they get there. . . . Willy-nilly, the U.S. educational system is spawning a generation of semiliterates.
For many, the teaching of "basic" composition means the teaching of traditional grammar. However, research has long shown that such study has no effect on writing. Numerous studies dating from the early 1900's failed to find any relationship between the teaching of grammar and accurate expression in writing. The results of many of these studies, however, can be called into question. In 1978, Fraser and Hodson commented of studies such as Hoyt, Briggs, Boras, Asker, and Butterfield, which were carried out from 1906 to 1945, "The most frequently quoted research is outdated, naively designed, and invalid in important statistical and linguistic respects." Two more recent studies, however, while not without flaws, provide more solid evidence on the utility of teaching grammar as an aid to composition. These studies were conducted by Harris in 1962 in London and by Elley, Barham, Lamb, and Wyllie in 1976 in New Zealand. In a 1978 review of grammar research, Newkirk said of these works, "The Harris and the New Zealand studies may well be the best studies of grammar instruction that will ever be done." The Harris study concluded that "English grammatical terminology had a negligible or even a relatively harmful effect upon the correctness of children's writing." The Elley study, which eliminated many of the research problems of the Harris study such as teacher variables, likewise concluded that "English grammar . . . has virtually no influence on the language growth of typical secondary students." The results of these two studies led Petrosky to conclude that "the study of grammar . . . exists at the expense of proficiency in reading and writing." Newkirk noted, however, "The two studies do not provide a basis for this statement." Newkirk further pointed out some flaws in the Harris and Elley studies. Harris
failed to control teacher variables and did not define his concept of "error." Newkirk felt that the New Zealand study overstated its conclusions. Despite the flaws in the research of the teaching of grammar, it may be noted that no positive relationship between grammar and writing has ever been proved.

Yet, despite the lack of positive evidence, many in the profession have returned to the teaching of grammar. Edgar Schuster, in addressing the Pennsylvania Council of Teachers of English, confronted the profession:

We have . . . under the 'back-to-basics' banner, returned to a conservative, anachronistic, and pedagogically ineffective schoolroom tradition. Yet most of what was taught in the grammar aspect of that tradition was not basic, and the instruction model used in that tradition—which is rule or definition, examples, exercises—was a poor model for teaching most children. If I am right that the real issues are what the basics are and how we best teach them, then the real issues are being ducked by the slogan-followers.11

But if the public concept of "the basics" is in fact useless, what can the teacher teach? Memering has remarked that "In both the high schools and the colleges, teaching writing turns out to be anyone's guess about what to teach or how or why."12 His statement is not completely accurate. As interest in the problem of teaching writing has increased, a number of possibilities—alternatives to the traditional basics—have been explored. Teachers are looking for answers:

English teachers at all levels seem to have a new sense of interest and excitement about improving their effectiveness in the teaching of written composition. In fact, it seems that written composition is the one area of the curriculum in which almost all English teachers are asking for help.13
Direct methods of teaching composition, such as having students write more and correcting student work, have been explored as alternatives to traditional grammar study. Such questions as the value of frequent writing and of intensive evaluation have been researched. However, direct methods have proved little more successful than the study of grammar in improving students' composing skills. Regarding the value of frequency of writing, McColly and Remsted in 1963, Heys in 1962, and Arnold in 1964 reported that more frequent writing did not improve quality. Further, Arnold found that "intensive evaluation was no more effective than moderate evaluation."14 His finding was confirmed by Adams in 1971.

Transformational grammar has been presented as a possible alternative to traditional grammar study. However, research has not proved the value of studying the new grammar. The previously mentioned study by Elley et al. included transformational grammar but found it no more valuable than traditional grammar, except that the transformational group showed a slight superiority in their ability to manipulate sentences. Both groups developed a negative attitude toward their English class while the students without grammar instruction developed a positive attitude. The Bateman and Zidonis study in 1966 was designed to test the value of generative grammar. Their evidence suggested that such grammar study resulted in students writing more well-formed sentences. But the study left open the question of what aspects of grammar study resulted in better sentences. In a study that questioned the methods and conclusions of the Bateman and Zidonis study, John Mellon, in 1969, researched the value of sentence-combining in transformational grammar. He found a significant increase in the syntactic fluency of his experimental group.
The refining of Mellon's study by Frank O'Hare helped to establish the sentence-combining component of a transformational grammar program as an effective alternative to traditional grammar. The methods that O'Hare established hold promise as a "basic" worth going back to. O'Hare believed that it was the sentence-combining exercises that helped Mellon's experimental group and not the study of transformational grammar. In a 1973 study, O'Hare proved this hypothesis, and, in fact, his experimental group without grammar made more growth in syntactic fluency than did Mellon's experimental group which had studied both sentence-combining and transformational grammar. Subsequent research has confirmed the value of sentence-combining in increasing syntactic fluency. For example, Combs, in a 1975 study, duplicated the O'Hare study and showed results similar to Mellon's.\textsuperscript{15} There are those who suggest its value may reach into other areas of the language arts curriculum. Stotsky, in a review of the subject, stated:

> Inasmuch as reading, speaking, listening, and writing are all language-based activities, one can assume an inter-relationship among all the language arts; it is theoretically plausible to maintain that growth in one area should be reflected to some extent in other areas.\textsuperscript{16}

O'Hare found that sentence-combining practice not only promoted syntactic growth but also resulted in an improvement in overall writing quality. As C. R. Cooper remarked:

> No other single teaching approach has ever consistently been shown to have a beneficial effect on syntactic maturity and writing quality. This conclusion about the importance of sentence-combining practice is a relatively sudden and dramatic development in English teaching.\textsuperscript{17}
Sentence-combining practice, then, is a hopeful step toward better writing. Its beneficial effects have been proved. Yet, it remains to be discovered how best to implement it in the classroom. As Stotsky remarked, "The experimental evidence is still limited, but the possibilities seem rich."18
CHAPTER I

NOTES

1 Dean Memering, "Forward to the Basics," College English, 39 (1978), 553.


5 Ian S. Fraser and Lynda M. Hodson, "Twenty-one Kicks at the Grammar Horse," English Journal, 67 (1978), 49.


10 Newkirk, p. 48.


12 Memering, p. 554.

13 Haynes, p. 82.


18 Stotsky, p. 66.
The use of sentence-combining in the classroom to promote better writing has grown out of and owes a debt to research in language and language development. This research has contributed a reliable measure of syntactic maturity, established norms for syntactic development, and demonstrated the regularity of syntactic growth. Sentence-combining also depended on a more satisfactory model of the language than was provided by traditional grammar. Research in language development and transformational grammar was brought together to produce the concept of sentence-combining.

The descriptive grammar known as generative-transformational, developed by Chomsky and others, provided the necessary linguistic model for sentence-combining. This model proposed a view of the sentence as a base or kernel to which other language units (such as phrases or clauses) were attached or embedded to create more complex language units. Initially it was thought that a knowledge of this grammar itself would promote syntactic maturity. However, early studies by Bateman and Zidonis and by Mellon failed to show a direct relationship between the new grammar and syntactic maturity because they confounded grammar study and language practice. Their research did result in sentence-combining exercises that were based on a transformational concept of the language. In these early studies Bateman and Zidonis and Mellon relied on earlier studies in the development of children's language.
Early Studies of Language Development

A number of researchers have documented the ways in which children's language develops. One of these was Walter Loban who, in 1963, concluded a longitudinal study of the language development of more than 300 students. He reported on language development during the first seven years of school. He found that as a child developed, the number of words he/she used increased and the number of communication units increased and grew longer. He found little difference in the sentence patterns used; however,

Very important differences do show up in the dexterity with which subjects use elements within these structures. . . . Not pattern but what is done to achieve flexibility within the pattern proves to be a measure of effectiveness and control of language at this level of language development.1

Kellogg Hunt elaborated Loban's findings. Hunt studied students' writing in the fourth, eighth, and twelfth grades and also adult writing collected from magazine stories. Like Loban, he found that sentence length increases with age. However, because of the tendency of children to string sentences together with conjunctions and to use punctuation incorrectly, he noted, "Though average sentence length does increase with successively older grades, it is far from a satisfactory index of individual maturity."2 Instead, Hunt proposed the T-unit (minimal terminable unit) which was a main clause and those subordinate clauses or nonclausal structures that were attached to it or embedded in it.3 He found several factors to be statistically valid in measuring syntactic maturity. In descending order of validity, they were T-unit length, mean
clause length, ratio of subordination, and sentence length. Hunt found that all kinds of clauses were used even by fourth graders, and it was actually frequency of use of certain syntactic structures that distinguished mature writing. Hunt also studied in detail the kinds of clauses used, pointing out, for example, that nominals are the chief construction that reveals maturity. Interestingly, Hunt observed as much difference in the syntactic maturity between twelfth graders and adults as between fourth graders and twelfth graders, suggesting that syntactic growth may continue well beyond childhood. Other researchers have continued and applied Hunt's work. Roy O'Donnell, in 1968, tested Hunt's indices with several age levels. He found that T-unit length was the most useful index over a wide age range. Hunt further suggested that his research be applied to the study of oral language.

Later Studies of Language Development

A study of written and oral language was reported by O'Donnell, Griffin, and Norris in 1967. Working with 180 children in kindergarten to third grade, fifth, and seventh grades, they analyzed both written and oral language and confirmed many of Hunt's findings. They found that by fifth grade, subjects had greater syntactic control in writing than in speech. They supported the idea that the T-unit length was a valid measure of syntactic maturity. In addition, this study found that between kindergarten and first grade and between fifth and seventh grade were the periods of greatest syntactic growth. The authors said,

The data collected and analyzed in this study indicate that there may, instead, be particular periods when
children's expansion of their use of syntactic resources proceeds at a relatively rapid pace.\textsuperscript{5}

The O'Donnell, Griffin, and Norris study established the fact that people mature syntactically and provided methods for measuring this maturity. The question then was what to do with this knowledge. As James Moffett stated,

\textit{All we are asking is what Piaget calls "the American question": how can we speed it up? But, more fairly stated, we are asking how we can help students to go farther in syntactic growth than they would have otherwise.}\textsuperscript{6}

The Bateman and Zidonis Study

The developmental-descriptive studies documented the fact that children do develop syntactic skills in regular, age-related patterns. But could generative-transformational grammar make an impact on that development? The Bateman and Zidonis study in 1966 attempted to show that generative-transformational grammar could improve students' writing. Fifty students were studied for two years during the study. One group was exposed to forty-six transformational rules. Twelve pieces of writing from each student were analyzed. The researchers discovered that students could learn transformational grammar and that they used more well-formed sentences at the end of the study. The study concluded that, "Statistical analysis suggests, but does not prove, that there is a relationship between a knowledge of generative grammar and an ability to produce well-formed sentences of greater structural complexity."\textsuperscript{7}

There were, however, a number of weaknesses in the study that called into question its validity. The teacher variable was not controlled, for
example. Even the theoretical foundation of the study was highly questionable. The researchers noted, "Generative grammar . . . is in essence a representation of the psychological process of producing sentences." This was a claim with which few grammarians would agree. So the question of how to help the students was not answered by this study. Moffett noted, "The most serious problem with this research is the methodology, which has been considered very poor." However, the study was not without value because it pointed the way for the studies which were to follow it. As O'Hare stated,

Although the hypothesis of the Bateman and Zidonis study was based on a questionable assumption and had certain methodological problems, it is nevertheless a significant study. . . . The significance of this study lies in the discovery that students who study transformational grammar end up writing sentences that have fewer errors and are more complex syntactically than students who do not.¹⁰

The Mellon Study

John C. Mellon attempted to discover why students in the Bateman and Zidonis study wrote more syntactically complex sentences. He believed that it was syntactic manipulation rather than grammar study that improved the students' writing. He was critical of the Bateman and Zidonis study because he felt that it was the sentence-combining practice rather than the study of grammar rules that had improved student writing. Mellon, therefore, devised what he called a transformational sentence-combining method. Despite his criticism of Bateman and Zidonis, he included grammar study. As Stotsky noted, "His own program, however, was a curiously ambivalent implementation of his criticism in view of the grammatical terminology his students were expected to understand."¹¹
Two hundred forty-seven seventh graders took part in Mellon's study. The experimental groups spent five months studying sentence-combining after several months of study of transformational grammar terminology. The control group studied traditional grammar, and a placebo group studied no grammar. Several problems existed in Mellon's research design. Classes were not randomly assigned because only one school would permit grammar-free instruction. Teachers varied widely in experience and education. Other factors such as curriculum and amount of time spent were not carefully controlled.

To measure syntactic growth, ninety T-units were analyzed from each student. Of the twelve syntactic factors that Mellon analyzed (among them T-unit length and subordination ratio), the experimental groups showed significant growth in all. In fact, using Hunt's norms, the experimental group had made two to three years growth. No growth was discernible in the other groups. Mellon also had independent raters evaluate a subsample of writing for overall quality. The control group was found to be superior. The rating, however, was based on a small sample of the total group. Mellon could not claim that sentence-combining, despite improvements in syntactic fluency, influenced overall quality. He had documented syntactic growth, but it was still not clear why such growth resulted. As O'Hare noted, "The design of the Mellon experiment makes it impossible to ascertain whether the study of transformational grammar had a positive or negative or no effect on the students' syntactic development."
The O'Hare Study

Frank O'Hare, in a 1973 study of sentence-combining, asked of Mellon's study, "Was it the study of . . . grammar that led to the syntactic gains . . . ? Or was it the combining practice only . . . ?" To answer this question, O'Hare devised a method of teaching sentence-combining using clue words to indicate the type of combination that was to be made. This "signalled" method eliminated the need to teach grammar. O'Hare also corrected some of the flaws found in Mellon's research. Forty-one seventh grade students practiced these exercises, about one-third of the time orally, over a period of one year. The students were from the same school, and two teachers, each with a control and an experimental group, taught the material. The experimental group, evaluated on a fifty T-unit sample, was superior to the control group on all twelve factors analyzed. They were as syntactically mature as Hunt's twelfth graders. In addition, papers from thirty pairs of students were rated for overall quality, and the compositions for the experimental group were judged to be significantly better. O'Hare had shown that sentence-combining without grammar was a valuable tool for the classroom.

Later Sentence-Combining Studies

O'Hare's study has been replicated, usually with the same conclusions but less dramatic results, and extended to other areas and age levels. Several questions were left unanswered by the O'Hare study. One such question was whether syntactic gains would be retained. Warren Combs, in a 1976 study, found that they were. His study closely followed the O'Hare
model with the addition of a post-test eight weeks after the completion of sentence-combining activities. He found that gains had eroded by half, but that there was still a significant difference between experimental and control groups. However, Combs' scores were closer to those observed by Mellon than those found by O'Hare. The length of time needed for sentence-combining to produce results had also been explored. Vitale, King, Shontz, and Huntley, in a 1971 study designed to measure differing methods of exposure to material and how the material was learned, found that as little as twelve school days exposure to sentence-combining produced measurable results. Ney, however, did not find this the case in a 1974 study of freshman English classes at Arizona State. Using ten minutes per class period three times per week for eleven weeks, Ney found no significant differences between control and experimental groups.

Ney's study raised the important question of attitude in influencing the results of sentence-combining. He reported a negative student attitude among college freshmen using the sentence-combining activities. Ney warned, "The exercises are of such a nature that they may have no inherent interest for the students who thus are bored and derive little or no benefit from them." However, later studies by Stewart, by Maimon and Nodine, and by Morenberg, Daiker, and Kerek, all studies of college freshmen in 1978, reported successful use of the exercises and no negative student attitude.

Daiker, Kerek, and Morenberg also questioned Ney's results. They pointed out that Ney's experimental group spent little time on sentence-combining compared, for example, to O'Hare's twenty-four hour total. Using college freshmen, Daiker, Karek, and Morenberg carried out a
fifteen week study of sentence-combining using the open method (which does not use O'Hare's clues but rather calls on the student to use his own knowledge of the language). They reported results similar to O'Hare's. Also, three-fourths of the students responded favorably to the exercises. The Daiker, Kerek, and Morenberg study raised the question of whether the type of sentence-combining exercise used influenced its value. The study noted, "Perhaps the kind of exercises Ney chose—signal led exercises for which there is but one wholly correct response—dampened student creativity."

Despite disagreement over which type of exercise is best, the exercise has been successfully used with a wide variety of people. Mulder, Braun, and Holliday, in 1977, reported a significant increase in writing ability among adult students using sentence-combining. They further reported that this increase was very rapid. This supported James Ney's proposition that, "In those instances where students are developmentally ready . . . practice facilitates the use of these structures." Edgar Schuster, also in 1977, reported that he successfully used O'Hare's text Sentencecraft with inner-city students. He reported a good student attitude toward sentence-combining. The Vitale, King, Shontz, and Huntley study successfully used sentence-combining with minority students.

Forms and Types of Sentence-Combining

Sentence-combining can be used orally or in written form. An early study by Miller and Ney, in 1968, attempted to improve syntactic structure by using the audio-lingual technique that was used in foreign language teaching. Two fourth-grade classes were used for the study. In the
experimental group the teacher would write two sentences on the board, and the teacher and the class would read them aloud. Then the teacher combined sentences in a more complex syntactic structure, and the teacher and the class would read them again. Written exercises were also used. The experimental group showed significant gains in the structures that were studied.

In addition to the oral and written presentation of sentence-combining, there are two types of exercises. O'Hare used the signalled approach. The student was told by a clue word or words how to join the sentences, and there was, therefore, a "right" answer as in the following:

The contestants know only SOMETHING.  
They will be asked SOMETHING.  (THAT)  
They are someone.  (WHO)  
They live somewhere.  (WHERE)  
They were born sometime. (WHEN)  
They've entered for some reason.  (AND WHY)

William Strong developed another method of using sentence-combining, in his text Sentence-Combining, that eliminated O'Hare's clue words and allowed the student more freedom to combine. In his "open" method there was no one right answer to a combining problem, but rather the student was called on to use his own knowledge of the language as in this example:

The room was almost empty.  
The room had a mattress.  
The mattress had no bedstead.  
The mattress had no blankets.  
The room had a basin.  
The basin was for washing.  
The basin was white.

No comparison of the two methods has been made. Strong, in fact, did not claim that his method was superior to O'Hare's.
Critics of Sentence-Combining

Despite successful use of both types of exercises, sentence-combining has critics. Marzano, for example, has stated, "If one examines the research carefully, enthusiasm for sentence-combining should fade."\(^{24}\) He did not dispute the fact that sentence-combining increased syntactic maturity, but he questioned its relationship to overall quality. He was especially critical of O'Hare's method of judging overall quality on a forced-choice, either/or basis. Christensen was also critical of sentence-combining. He stated that such practice would result in complex sentences that were the opposite of what mature writing should be.\(^ {25}\) Strong countered this argument by noting that knowing how to write a complex sentence does not mean that over-elaboration will result.\(^ {26}\)

Others have attempted to place sentence-combining in a larger context. Charles Cooper, for example, has devised an outline for presenting sentence-combining problems.\(^ {27}\) Jack Perron created a sentence-combining program using a variety of formats and games.\(^ {28}\) It should also be noted that both Strong's text *Sentence-Combining* and O'Hare's text *Sentencercraft* present sentence-combining in the context of writing. Through these efforts many of the criticisms of sentence-combining have been answered.

Although sentence-combining has been proved to be effective in teaching writing, it remains to be discovered what is the best and most effective way to teach it. As Combs noted, "There is need yet for considerable research to determine the precise nature of exercises appropriate to various grade levels [and] students..."\(^ {29}\)
CHAPTER II

NOTES


12. O'Hare, p. 15.

13. O'Hare, p. 12.


Donald A. Daiker, Andrew Kerek, and Max Morenberg, "Sentence-Combining and Syntactic Maturity in Freshman English," College Composition and Communication, 29 (1978), 41.


Edgar H. Schuster, "Using Sentence-Combining to Teach Writing to Inner-City Students," (ERIC ED 150 774).


Frank O'Hare, Sentencecraft (Lexington, Mass.: Ginn, 1975), p. 44.


Moffett, p. 163.


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CHAPTER III.
DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

The main purpose of this study was to determine whether there would be significant differences in growth of syntactic maturity between students who participated in signalled sentence-combining exercises and students who participated in open sentence-combining exercises. The subjects, seventh and eighth graders, were assigned to three treatment groups: signalled, open, and control. Samples of pre- and post-treatment compositions, written six months apart, were used to measure syntactic maturity. In addition, for each subject two pre- and two post-treatment compositions were rated by two experienced English teachers to determine if either treatment influenced the overall writing quality. Also, an attitude survey was taken at the end of the treatment to determine the subjects' attitude toward sentence-combining exercises.

Questions

This study was developed to answer three questions about the effectiveness of and attitudes toward sentence-combining.

1. Would students who studied a sentence-combining program show greater growth in writing than students who studied a regular program in English, as measured by (a) syntactic maturity and (b) overall writing quality?

2. Would students in one of the sentence-combining groups (signalled or open) perform appreciably better than students in the
other group, as measured by (a) syntactic maturity and (b) overall writing quality?

3. Would students in either of the two sentence-combining groups have a higher percentage of positive attitudes toward the activity?

Research Design

**Design of Study.** The experiment was designed to include two "signalled" experimental classes (one at the seventh grade level and one at the eighth), two "open" experimental classes (one at the seventh grade level and one at the eighth), and three control classes (one at the seventh grade level and two at the eighth). The school administration assigned the students to classes.

**Subjects.** The eighty-one students taking part in this study attended South Hamilton Junior-Senior High School. The school's *Self-Study 1977: North Central Evaluation* describes the district.

The South Hamilton School District is composed of four towns--Randall, Stanhope, Ellsworth, and Jewel--and the surrounding farmland for a total of more than 200 square miles. . . . The population of the district is drawn from an economically improved area where most adults are involved in agri-business or public service occupations. . . . Over half of the community is Norwegian Lutheran and less than 1% of the school population is from other racial or ethnic background. Approximately 39% of the adults in Hamilton County have not finished high school. Population of the South Hamilton District is 4,500. . . . Student ability at South Hamilton, when compared to the National Percentiles, shows that 50% are in the 31-69 percentile; 27% from the 70-94 percentile, 3% above the 94%; while only 19% fall below the 30th percentile. Stability is an important factor in our school population with 89% of the senior class in 1977 being in our system for seven or more years.¹
All students in the study were in the normal seventh-eighth grade age range of twelve to fourteen. Cognitive Abilities Test scores ranged from 74 to 136 (see Appendix C). The subjects were all white, predominantly middle class. There were forty-eight eighth graders and thirty-three seventh graders. Thirty-five of the subjects were male, and forty-six subjects were female.

Procedures

Selection of Students in Study. Seventh and eighth grade students were chosen for the experiment because Mellon and O'Hare had studied this age group. Junior high was also an age at which syntactic gains might be expected as the result of sentence-combining activity. Subjects for the study were chosen from a potential population of 124 students. To help insure that all groups were of equal ability, eighteen of these 124 students were removed from the experiment. Another twenty-five were removed because parental permission was not obtained. The following table illustrates how the eighty-one subjects were selected.

TABLE 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SELECTION OF POPULATION</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Potential subjects</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-native English speakers</td>
<td>-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High ability</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning disabled</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No CAT score available</td>
<td>-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental permission not given</td>
<td>-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total subjects in study</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The five Spanish speaking students were removed from the experiment because of their varying and undetermined ability to speak English. One student who was advanced a grade because of high ability and three students who were determined to be learning disabled according to Area Education Agency 5 guidelines were removed to insure the equality of the groups. When no CAT (Cognitive Abilities Test) scores were available, the student was not included. This helped insure a stable population since the CAT was given in sixth grade and thus insured that the student was, at the least, in his/her second year in the school system. None of the students in the study left during the study.

The Treatments. The students in the study were assigned to seven sections. The following chart summarizes these assignments.

**TABLE 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>No. of Subjects</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8:30-9:12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>signal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>9:15-9:57</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>10:00-10:42</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>signal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>10:45-11:27</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>12:38-1:20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2:08-2:50</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2:53-3:35</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>control</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researcher had no control over students' assignments to sections. Scheduling was made by computer, and the classes, including the students not in the study, ranged in size from sixteen to twenty students. As the chart shows, two groups studied open sentence-combining, and two groups
studied signalled sentence-combining. There were three control groups. All seven groups were taught by the researcher. The researcher had taught English for five years and had a BA degree and graduate work in English.

With the exception of the time spent on sentence-combining or the writing activities used for the control group, the curriculum for all students in the study was the same at each grade level. Reading instruction was a major part of the junior high language program. Before entering seventh grade, the students had used the Houghton-Mifflin Readers series. In the seventh and eighth grades, students spent about two-fifths of their class time using the basal reader and skills booklets from this series. The seventh grade read a series of short stories. Eighth grade students had units on science fiction, biography, and a thematic unit of short stories about teenage problems. Skill building exercises were in the areas of decoding, comprehension, and reference and study skills. Free reading was also encouraged. One morning a week the entire school had a forty-minute free reading period. In addition to this period, all language classes had free reading time during class once a week. The eighth grade students chose one book each nine weeks to write a book report on. The language text series American English Today, English 2600, and English 2200 were used for language study. Prior to junior high, students used a language program that emphasized traditional grammar study. During this research, grammar was not taught. Language texts were used for the study of mechanics. During half of the experiment, students also used an individualized spelling program, Continuous Progress Spelling (see Appendix A).
The signalled and open groups studied sentence-combining for a total of twenty-four hours from September to February. The normal procedure was to have three twenty-minute lessons per week. This procedure was not always followed as sometimes four lessons were presented in a week and sometimes two. Students did not work on sentence-combining exercises outside of class. Several different techniques were used including individual work, small group, and large group. About one-fourth of the time was spent on oral exercises and the remainder on written. Students used Frank O'Hare's *Sentencecraft* exercises (a signalled program) and William Strong's *Sentence-Combining* exercises (an open program). This researcher wrote other exercises, both open and signalled (see Appendices E, F, G). In all cases reference was made to Cooper's outline for suggestions of order of presentation. Throughout the study students in both combining groups studied the same examples on the same days. If oral exercises were used in one class, they were used in the others. The only difference was that one group was always supplied clues for their combinations. These existed in the O'Hare examples and were supplied, closely modeled on O'Hare's, for the Strong exercises and the teacher written exercises. On the other hand, exercises for the open group were supplied no clues for the Strong exercises and the teacher written exercises and clues were removed from O'Hare's exercises.

For example, the following sentences are from O'Hare's *Sentencecraft*.

Everyone wondered SOMETHING.
The heroine's wig kept falling off for some reason. (WHY)
The counter-espionage agents were worried about SOMETHING.
The odd message might mean something. (WHAT)
Such exercises, with clues given, were used by experimental groups studying signalled sentence-combining. For the experimental groups using open sentence-combining activities, the above sentences appeared as follows.

Everyone wondered something.
The heroine's wig kept falling off for some reason.
The counter-espionage agents were worried about something.
The odd message might mean something.

In the case of Strong's Sentence-Combining, examples were "open" as in this example from the book.

Most of us remember Groper.
We remember from our high school days.
He was angular.
He was muscled.
He had huge hands.

For the signalled groups the Strong sentences were supplied with clues.

Most of us remember Groper.
We remember from our high school days.
He was angular.
He was muscled. (AND)
He had huge hands. (AND)

Researcher prepared materials were written in both open and signalled form. The following exercises illustrate the two forms that an example took.

Roger Murphy tells me something.
You are going out for football next year.
Albert Phillips still believes something.
He saw Bigfoot in his back yard.

Roger Murphy tells me SOMETHING.
You are going out for football next year. (THAT)
Albert Phillips still believes SOMETHING.
He saw Bigfoot in his back yard. (THAT)
Students in control groups used the time that the experimental groups spent on sentence-combining studying a writing program, Concept/ Process Composition Program, prepared by Area Education Agency 5's consultants and area teachers. During the course of study, they worked on twenty writing projects. A writing project was built around a concept, and prewriting activities and discussion prepared the student for the assignment. Class time was used for the written assignment, and rewriting was encouraged. Students normally completed one project each week.

Measurement

**Ability.** The students' intellectual ability was measured by the Cognitive Abilities Test.

**Syntactic Maturity.** Syntactic maturity was measured by words per T-unit in the pre- and post-treatment compositions. In order to obtain the necessary writing sample nine compositions were written, one practice and four pre-treatment and post-treatment. The constraints of time prevented a larger sample being taken.

The practice composition was not used but was given to familiarize students with the testing process. The writing topics were read to the students on one day and writing was done on the next. Students were therefore given a chance to think about the topic a day in advance, but all writing was done in class on paper supplied to the students. Students received a copy of the topic prior to writing. A forty minute class period was allotted for each paper. No more than two compositions per week were written.
It was necessary to elicit a variety of modes of discourse and to insure that the same modes of discourse were elicited for both pre- and post-treatment compositions because T-unit length varies with mode. Therefore, Mellon's topics were used for pre- and post-treatment compositions with the exception of the final composition. It was prepared by the researcher, closely modeled on a Mellon topic. This insured that the same modes were elicited in both pre- and post-treatment work (see Appendix B).

Students were urged to do their best work. Sentence length was not mentioned. Because of the need to obtain parental permission, students were aware that they were in a study and that the study would involve writing instruction and sentence-combining.

Words per T-unit count was made on the total sample of each student, regardless of its length. Rules for word count and T-unit segmentation followed O'Hare.3

Writing Quality. The overall quality of the students' compositions was measured by a general impression rating system as suggested by Cooper.4 Two experienced English teachers agreed to rate the papers. Their qualifications are summarized below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RATER</th>
<th>DEGREE</th>
<th>GRADES TAUGHT</th>
<th>YEARS OF TEACHING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>10,11,12</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>BS</td>
<td>10,11,12</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To improve rater reliability, the raters met in three half-hour sessions to discuss compositions written by students in the same classes as
the experimental and control subjects but not included in the research study.

Because the entire output of the subjects' writing was too large to be rated, two compositions pre- and two post-treatment were selected. In each case, these compositions were the first two topics written on. The modes of discourse elicited by the assignments were the same for pre- and post-treatment compositions. All compositions were typed, corrected for spelling and punctuation errors, and identified only by a code number. All compositions, pre- and post-treatment from all treatment groups, were scrambled and rated together.

Raters were then asked to read the compositions and, on the basis of their general impression, to give the paper a rating from one to nine. Raters were told how many papers to place in each of the nine categories so that the scores fell on a stanine curve. Raters were unaware of the nature of the study.

Attitude. Immediately after the completion of the last sentence-combining lesson students were given an attitude survey (see Appendix H). The survey had ten questions, five of which concerned sentence-combining and five which covered other material in the English curriculum. Only the five questions that concerned sentence-combining were used. Students were asked to indicate agreement, disagreement, or unsureness on a one to three scale. The numbers, adjusted for the positive or negative cast of the question, were totaled. A score in the upper third of the total possible was considered positive and in the lower third negative.
CHAPTER III

NOTES


CHAPTER IV.
RESULTS

Assessment of Syntactic Maturity

Before analyzing the students' growth in syntactic maturity, the pre-treatment syntactic maturity scores for the three groups were examined to determine if the groups were initially equal. If all groups were roughly equal at the beginning of the study it would be easy to interpret any differences at the end of the treatment period.

A pair of one-way ANOVA's was used to test for the effect of group assignment on pre-test words per T-unit. For seventh grade subjects, the ANOVA was not significant, $F(2,32) = 1.264$, $p > .25$. Thus the seventh grade groups were considered roughly equal in pre-test performance. For the eighth grade subjects, however, the test was significant, $F(2,45) = 4.85$, $p < .05$. Post hoc analyses using Scheffe contrasts (.05 alpha level) revealed that the mean for the "signalled" group was significantly lower than the means for both "open" and control groups (which did not differ significantly from each other). Since one group at the eighth grade level was lower than the others, it was not possible to consider the groups equal in syntactic maturity before the start of the experiment.

One-way ANOVA's were used to test for the effect of treatment group on post-treatment syntactic maturity scores. The test was nonsignificant both for grade seven, $F(2,32) = 0.07$, $p > .90$, and for grade eight, $F(2,45) = 2.09$, $p > .10$. Therefore, there were no significant differences between
any of the treatment groups at either grade level on post-treatment words per T-unit scores.

However, since all groups were not equal in syntactic maturity at the beginning of the study, it was not possible to examine simply post-test scores to determine growth. Therefore, growth was analyzed separately for each group at both grade levels, by comparing the pre- and post-treatment mean words per T-unit score with a t-test for dependent samples. The results of this comparison are presented in Table 4.

TABLE 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MEAN WORDS/T-UNIT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th Grade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signal</td>
<td>9.219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open</td>
<td>9.490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>10.373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th Grade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signal</td>
<td>9.558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open</td>
<td>11.247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>10.910</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p < .05$, within grade comparison.
** $10 > p > .05$, within grade comparison.
^ Not significant, $p > .10$.

Assessment of Writing Quality

It was next necessary to examine the effectiveness of the program on the basis of writing quality. As has been noted, the compositions were
rated by two readers using a general impression system with a scale of one to nine. Nine was the best, and one the worst score. There were, therefore, two scores for each composition and four compositions for each subject. Two of these compositions were pre- and two post-treatment. For each subject, pre-treatment ratings were averaged and post-treatment ratings were averaged.

Once again pre-test scores were examined to determine whether groups were equal in writing quality prior to the study. At the seventh grade level, the mean pre-test scores for the three groups did not differ significantly (one-way ANOVA, $F(2,32) = 0.638$, $p > .50$). Thus the groups could be considered equal in writing quality at the outset of the study. However, at the eighth grade level, the pre-test scores for the three groups do differ significantly (one-way ANOVA, $F(2,45) = 11.44$, $p < .01$). The post hoc test (Scheffe, .05 alpha level) shows that the significant differences are between scores for the "open" and control groups; other groups did not differ significantly.

At grade seven, post-treatment quality ratings for the three groups did not differ significantly (one-way ANOVA, $F(2,32) = 0.25$, $p > .75$). At grade eight, there is a significant difference among the groups on post-treatment quality ratings (one-way ANOVA, $F(2,45) = 13.47$, $p < .01$). The post hoc test (Scheffe, .05 alpha level) revealed that the control group was significantly lower in writing quality than either of the treatment groups.

An examination of changes between pre- and post-treatment ratings for the seventh grade ($t$-test for dependent measures) revealed that both experimental groups had improved significantly: "signalled," $t(11) =$
2.38, p<.05; "open," t(11) = 2.49, p<.05. The control group did not show
significant change, t(8) = 0.29, p> .75. An examination of change between
pre- and post-treatment scores for grade eight (t-test for dependent
measures) revealed no significant changes for any group: "signalled,"
t(8) = -0.37, p>.70; "open," t(13) = -1.93, p>.07; control, t(24) = -1.45,
p>.10. Table 5 summarizes these results.

TABLE 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Signal</th>
<th>Open</th>
<th>Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th</td>
<td>4.792</td>
<td>5.479*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.396</td>
<td>5.271*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.000</td>
<td>5.167a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>5.500</td>
<td>5.333a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.571</td>
<td>5.929a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.310</td>
<td>3.960a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05, within grade comparison.

Table 6 summarizes the percentages of responses on an attitude survey
given to both experimental groups after the treatment. The eighth graders
had a greater percentage of positive attitudes than the seventh graders
toward sentence-combining in both signalled and open form. In both seventh
and eighth grade, open sentence-combining elicited more positive responses.
In both grades, both types of sentence-combining received high percentages of positive responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>+ Open</th>
<th>-</th>
<th>+ Signal</th>
<th>-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>7th Grade</strong></td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8th Grade</strong></td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (7th and 8th grades)</strong></td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

+ Positive attitude; - negative attitude.

% does not equal 100 because answers of "unsure" are not given.

Discussion

The results of the study permit answers to some of the questions raised at the beginning of the experiment.

**Question 1**: Would students who studied a sentence-combining program show greater growth in writing than students who studied a regular program in English as measured by:

a) syntactic maturity?

The gains in syntactic maturity made by all groups in both grades were very small indeed, far less than those reported in much of the literature on the effectiveness of sentence-combining as a curricular activity. Only the seventh grade students who studied the signalled program made statistically significant growth, but those students were also the lowest of any group in syntactic maturity before the study began. None of the seventh
or eighth grade groups differed in syntactic maturity at the end of the study. The results of this study do not support the general conclusion that sentence-combining activities enhance syntactic development more than a regular program in English.

b) overall writing quality?

At the seventh grade level, students in both sentence-combining groups showed significant growth in overall writing quality, while students in the regular program failed to improve significantly. Thus, for this grade level, sentence-combining activities seemed to help students write more effective post-treatment essays. At the eighth grade level, however, none of the groups made significant gains; in fact, all groups actually declined slightly in scores on post-test essays (though the change was not statistically significant). At the time of the post-test, however, the two experimental groups were significantly higher in overall quality of writing than the control group.

**Question 2**: Would students in one of the sentence-combining groups (signalled and open) perform appreciably better than students in the other group, as measured by:

a) syntactic maturity?

Although the evidence is weak, at both seventh and eighth grade levels the signalled groups showed greater pre- to post-treatment gains in words per T-unit than the open groups. In both cases, however, the signalled groups were lowest in syntactic maturity before the experiment (although only the eighth grade group was significantly lower). These results only suggest that the signalled groups may have grown more in syntactic maturity than the open group; problems in the study (to be
discussed later) make it impossible to prove the case for the superiority of one sentence-combining group.

b) overall writing quality?

Neither of the sentence-combining groups did appreciably better than the other at either grade level in overall writing quality.

Question 3: Would students in either of the two sentence-combining groups have a higher percentage of positive attitudes toward the activity?

Students studying open sentence-combining had a higher percentage of positive attitudes. However, the scores are too close to make any claims for open sentence-combining's superiority. It can be claimed that both types of sentence-combining were viewed with a positive attitude by students.

In examining the data of this study, it may be useful to make certain comparisons with O'Hare's data. In comparing pre- and post-treatment words per T-unit change, O'Hare found no significant change in his control group and significant change (at or beyond .001) in his experimental group. Further, he records a mean change of 6.12 words per T-unit from pre- to post-treatment in his experimental group. O'Hare also found his experimental group superior in overall quality. However, comparisons of overall quality ratings between O'Hare and this study are difficult to make because of the very different methods of measuring overall quality.

In view of the amazing growth recorded in the O'Hare study, the results of this experiment were disappointing, and it is difficult to reach reliable conclusions from the study's data. There were design problems in this study. The experiment ran into problems from the outset because the researcher had no control over subject assignment. Assignment
was controlled by the school administration. Data for both pre-T-unit and pre-quality ratings showed significant differences at the eighth grade level. Thus it is difficult to interpret any differences present in post-treatment scores or in change scores. For example, a group that was initially lower and that showed growth may have been experiencing only a "growth spurt" as it came closer to equality with the other groups. The normal growth for a year is in the range of .25 to .50.

Another design problem, related to the problem discussed above, was that of low numbers. Because the initial syntactic maturity scores for seventh and eighth grades were significantly different, the two grades were examined separately. The result was that some groups were as small as nine students.

In addition to design problems, there may have been an instructional problem that depressed students' gains. During this experiment, students spent the same total hours studying sentence-combining as subjects in the O'Hare experiment; however, the duration of the research differed. O'Hare extended the experiment over the entire school year while this experiment was compressed to a six month period. Clearly, growth in writing is a slow process, and the shorter duration of this experiment may have been a factor in the growth shown by the subjects.

Nevertheless, there are some interesting and suggestive findings which merit further exploration. For example, in both grades seven and eight, the "signalled" group made larger gains than the "open" group. This suggests that signalled sentence-combining may have some advantage in promoting syntactic growth. This suggestion raises the question of why signalled sentence-combining may be more useful. Do students
need a more structured exercise? Only another study could answer this question.

In terms of writing quality, the seventh graders in both experimental groups showed small but nevertheless significant increases while the control did not. This finding provides limited support for the belief that sentence-combining is effective in promoting writing quality. Unfortunately, there was no confirmation of improved writing quality at the eighth grade level.

It would appear that sentence-combining was enjoyable to students. Both types of exercises at both grade levels received very favorable ratings from the students. However, neither was clearly superior. The fact that students show a favorable attitude toward the activity may well make it worthwhile as a classroom activity and certainly make it worthy of further study.
CHAPTER IV

NOTES

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APPENDIX A.

TEXTBOOKS REFERRED TO IN TEXT


APPENDIX B.

PRE-POST COMPOSITION TOPICS

From John C. Mellon, "Transformational Sentence-Combining: A Method for Enhancing the Development of Syntactic Fluency in English Composition."

Practice Topic:
A biography, as you know, is the story of a person's entire life, usually written by some other person. An autobiography is a biography of a person's life written by that person himself. Your assignment in this composition is to write your own autobiography in a single paragraph. Here are some ideas that may help you decide what things to tell about:
- When you were born, and where
- Where you've lived, places you've been
- Important things you've done, memorable experiences you've had
- Your likes and dislikes: Hobbies, sports, entertainment, people
- Your goals, plans, and hopes for the future
- Anything else of interest

Instructions:
Plan your autobiography carefully before you write. Use the back of this topic sheet to list your ideas and to try out some of your sentences. But write your final copy on the special lined paper. Check your work for spelling and punctuation. Try to write as clearly and interestingly as you can.

Length:
Depending upon the ideas you choose to express, your composition will be anywhere from six to eight to twelve or fifteen sentences in length.

Time:
You may write until the end of the class period. Your teacher will tell you when the period is about to end so that you can finish your work before the class bell.
Pre-Composition Topics

Topic Number=10-A Narrative

Biographies tell where a person was born, where he grew up, what he did in life, and when he died. But the little things that happen to you sometimes make more interesting stories. This is especially true when you tell about things that were the "most" something or the "first time" for something. Choose one of the following "mosts" or "first times" and write a true story about it. Be sure to say when and where it happened, what you were doing at the time, what actually took place, and how you felt about it afterward.

Your most unlucky day
Your most frightening moment
Your proudest moment
Your hardest job accomplished
Your first time working at a real job
Your first time being away overnight
Your first time flying in a plane

Topic Number=1-B

Your luckiest day
Your narrowest escape
Your greatest thrill
Your most embarrassing moment
Your first time being on a date
Your first time winning a contest or a prize
Your first time in the principal's office
Your first time being lost

Topic Number=20-A Descriptive

Did you know that words can be used to paint pictures? They can be, and they can also be made to convey sounds, smells, tastes, and things that you feel. When you describe a scene, you try to make words tell what the things you see are doing and what they look like. You also try to say what they sound like, and how they smell or taste, and how they feel. Now here are some scenes. Select one of them, and imagine that you can see it in your mind's eye. Think about it very carefully! Then write a description of it so that your reader can see what you see, and perhaps also hear, taste, smell, and feel what you do.

Waiting in the kitchen while Mother fixes a hot breakfast
Lying on the seashore on the hottest day in August
Walking the downtown streets the day before Christmas
Attending a birthday party
Standing near a school playground at recess time

Topic Number=30-B Expository

A man like Benjamin Franklin was an expert on gadgets and appliances for the home in his day. He even invented a few new appliances himself, such as the famous Franklin stove. Pretend that a time machine is bringing Benjamin Franklin back to visit the modern age. Your task is to bring him up to date on developments in the home since his time. Write a report
that you could give him, telling about several home appliances and gadgets
that have been invented between his day and our own. Tell him how they
work and what they can do—and everything else about them that you think
he might want to know about.

Topic Number=90-A Expository

Have you ever thought about how often we find ourselves trying to
convince other people that they should do or believe a certain thing? We
usually try to present all the good reasons for them doing it that we can.
And we try to show that the reasons against doing it are not good. Now
select one of the following situations, and write an essay in which you
try to convince the person named that he should do what you want him to
do. Think of all the reasons that you can, and be as persuasive as
possible in convincing him that they are good reasons.

Convince your parents that you can select your own clothes styles.

Convince your parents to raise your allowance by a certain amount.

Convince a friend to invite a certain other person to a party.

Convince a teacher that you weren't able to start a home lesson.

Convince a friend to enter a certain extra-curricular activity
with you in school.
Post-Composition Topics

Topic Number=40-A Narrative

Sometimes fiction, or "make-believe," stories are more interesting than true ones. This is especially so when you can make up a story that keeps your reader guessing until the end, that is unusual, but that is perfectly believable. Now here are several titles. Pick the one that interests you most, and then set your mind and imagination to work. Your job is to make up a story to go with the title! You'll have to plan it through carefully. Use your ingenuity, and be sure to tell the full story that you make up. Make it unusual and strange, but also make it believable.

What A Ridiculous Place to be Lost!
There It Was--Standing Right in the Front Yard.
A Vacation That Was Supposed to be Dull.
Never Start a Private Club!

Topic Number=4-B

Babysitting Easy? Not Much...
Not Even Science Can Explain It.
First There Was This Green Mist.
It Looked Like Such a Tame Creature.

Topic Number=50-A Expository

One of the reasons that man has risen so far above the animals is that he has learned how to tell his fellow men about skills and abilities he has acquired. It is very important to be able to tell someone else how to do something—even ordinary things. From the following list, select one skill that you know something about. Then write an essay in which you tell someone how to do it. Tell what he needs to know, what materials he needs to have, and the steps he follows.

How to play winning tennis
How to make a dress
How to repair a bicycle tire
How to do ballet or modern dance
How to build up a good model airplane collection
How to amuse younger brothers and sisters

Topic Number=5-B

How to win in sailboat racing
How to prepare your favorite food
How to cook out-of-doors
How to hold a slumber party
How to judge the best automobile
How to entertain Grandmother or Grandfather

Topic Number=60-A Descriptive

Perhaps you know someone your own age who lives in a foreign country, or maybe you have a friend who knows such a person. Even if you don't, you can imagine that most young people in other countries who have never visited the United States are extremely interested in our ordinary, everyday way of life.
In this composition, you are to pretend that you know a person in a European country and are writing him (or her) a letter. Your composition is to be one paragraph from that letter, in which you tell your make-believe friend everything that happens during a normal day in your school. Describe whatever you feel might interest him about a day in school—what classes you have, how they are taught, what the other activities are, the rules and privileges, and so on. Try to mention things that you think are "special" about American schools—things that might seem strange to a foreigner.
Pre-Post Composition Topics

Have you ever thought about how often we find ourselves trying to convince other people that they should do or believe a certain thing? We usually try to present all the good reasons for their doing it that we can, and we try to show that the reasons against doing it are not good. Now select one of the following situations, and write an essay in which you try to convince the person named that he should do what you want him to do. Think of all the reasons that you can, and be as persuasive as possible in convincing him that they are good reasons.

Convince the school board that we should not make up snow vacation on Saturdays.
Convince your parents to let you go someplace you want to go.
Convince the student council to sponsor a dance that you could go to.
Convince a teacher that you should not have homework on Friday.

Instructions:
Plan your composition carefully before you write. Use the back of this topic sheet to list your ideas and to try out some of your sentences but write your final copy on the special lined writing paper. Check your work for spelling and punctuation. Try to write as clearly and interestingly as you can.

Length:
Depending upon the ideas you choose to express, your composition will be anywhere from six to eight to twelve or fifteen sentences in length.

Time:
You may write until the end of the class period. Your teacher will tell you when the period is about to end so that you can finish your work before the class bell.
APPENDIX C.
POST-STUDY

Cognitive Abilities Test Quantitative Standard Score 11/77 Grade 6

Seventh Grade Section #1

98
101
98
99
105
125
102
105
126
96
131
131

Total-12
M-2 F-10
Average--109.75
High--131
Low--96
Range--35

Seventh Grade Section #2

105
116
107
112
102
116
100
103
93
123
121
102

Total--12
M--5 F--7
Average--108.33
High--123
Low--93
Range--30
Seventh Grade Section #8

100
108
131
110
108
97
102
112
136

Total-9
M-3  F-6

Average-111.5
High-136
Low-97
Range-39

Eighth Grade Section #3

86
100
122
107
110
114
78
105
114

Total-9
M-5  F-4

Average-104
High-122
Low-78
Range-44

Eighth Grade Section #4

126
101
92
126
94
109
128
115
104
108
107
105

Total-12
M-10  F-2

Average-109.5
High-128
Low-92
Range-36
### Eighth Grade Section #5

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**Average:** 106.14  
**High:** 128  
**Low:** 94  
**Range:** 34

### Eighth Grade Section #7

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<td>108</td>
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**Average:** 98  
**High:** 111  
**Low:** 84  
**Range:** 27

### Total in Study

- **81** Students in Total
- **12** 7th Grade Students
- **9** 8th Grade Students
- **21** Total Students

---

**Signalled-S-C:**

- Total: 14
  - M: 3
  - F: 11
APPENDIX D.

CONCEPT/PROCESS COMPOSITION PROGRAM

Sample Lesson
Grade 7: Activity 2, page 40

CONCEPT
Nothing is too insignificant to write about.

PURPOSE
1. To teach students that topics for written discourse are limited only by the writer's experiences, ideas, feelings, and observations. Nothing is too insignificant, but even the insignificant can be made significant by a writer.
2. To teach students that a writer can never say all there is to say about a topic; he/she has to be selective.

PRE-WRITING/MOTIVATING TASK
Teacher-led discussion:
1. What are "insignificant" things?
2. Are the same things insignificant to all people? Why or why not?
3. Make a list of the things you consider to be insignificant in this room. (The teacher is not to be included on your list.)
4. Now, let's see if you can identify what you considered as you went about making your list.
5. Did you hesitate or change your mind on any item?

TASK DEFINED
Between now and classtime tomorrow I want you to observe very carefully something you see, but don't really see it.

Then I want you to make a list of all the features you observe or can think of that might make that thing significant. You will write a paper in class that will let your classmates know in what ways your insignificant thing is really significant. Some things to consider might be:

- a shoelace
- a stopper in the sink
- a fork
- a doorknob
- an ant
- the tread on a tire
- the keys on a piano
- a blade of grass
- a garbage can
- the comics
APPENDIX E.
EXAMPLE--O'HARE'S SIGNALLED SENTENCE-COMBINING

Sentence-Combining Practice 19A

1. Despite all the reports he's heard The Strangler believes SOMETHING. He can defeat The Human Gorilla. (THAT)

2. SOMETHING makes me question his alibi. There was red clay on Hurley's shoes. (THE FACT THAT)

3. Claire thought SOMETHING. She would never see Frank Robillard again. (THAT)

4. SOMETHING doesn't necessarily mean SOMETHING. I haven't called you. (THE FACT THAT) I've been too busy. (THAT)

5. In his last message, the trawler's captain said SOMETHING. He didn't think SOMETHING. (THAT) There were icebergs in his area. (JOIN)

6. When did you discover SOMETHING? Everyone had left. (THAT)

7. SOMETHING made me fear SOMETHING. The birds suddenly stopped singing. (THE FACT THAT) The storm was about to strike. (THAT)

8. The sweltering tourists couldn't believe SOMETHING. Their guide had forgotten the way to the Parthenon. (THAT)

From Frank O'Hare's Sentencecraft, pages 22-24.
Example--O'Hare's Sentence-Combining as Examples
Appear with Clues Removed

Sentence-Combining Practice 19B

1. Despite all the reports he's heard, the Strangler believes something.
   He can defeat the Human Gorilla.

2. Something makes me question his alibi.
   There was red clay on Hurley's shoes.

3. Claire thought something.
   She would never see Frank Robillard again.

4. Something doesn't necessarily mean something.
   I haven't called you.
   I've been too busy.

5. In his last message, the trawler's captain said something.
   He didn't think of something.
   There were icebergs in his area.

6. When did you discover something?
   Everyone had left.

7. Something made me fear something.
   The birds suddenly stopped singing.
   The storm was about to strike.

8. The sweltering tourists couldn't believe something.
   Their guide had forgotten the way to the Parthenon.
Example--Clues Supplied to Strong's Sentence Combining

Sentence Combining Practice 12A

The Potter
1. The potter works with clay.
2. He is skilled.
3. He sits at his wheel.
4. His brow is wrinkled.
5. The wrinkles show concentration.
6. His hands are slender.
7. His hands are aged.
8. The clay is damp.
9. The clay is earthen.

Base-10. The clay is a mass.
11. The mass is sodden.
12. It resists form.
13. He centers the clay.
14. The clay revolves on the wheel.
15. It is writhing against his hands.
16. He makes an opening.
17. He pierces the mass.
18. The mass is clay.
19. He uses his fingers.
20. He uses his thumbs.
21. His hands lift the clay.
22. The clay becomes a shape.
23. The shape is cylindrical.
24. One hand enters the cylinder.
25. The cylinder is revolving.
26. The other hand pushes against the sides.
27. It works the shape.
28. The sides begin to expand.
29. The expansion creates a bowl.
30. It is ringed with lines.
31. The potter's face is contented.
32. The face is smiling.
33. The smile is tranquil.
34. He has conquered the clay.
35. The wrinkles have vanished. (ing)
36. The wrinkles were on his forehead.
37. The vanishing is for the time being.

From William Strong's *Sentence Combining*, p. 23
Clues supplied by researcher.
APPENDIX F.
EXAMPLE--STRONG'S OPEN SENTENCE-COMBINING

Sentence-Combining Practice 12B

The Potter.
1. The potter works with clay.
2. He is skilled.
3. He sits at his wheel.
4. His brow is wrinkled.
5. The wrinkles show concentration.
6. His hands are slender.
7. His hands are aged.
8. The clay is damp.
9. The clay is earthen.
10. The clay is a mass.
11. The mass is sodden.
12. It resists form.
13. He centers the clay.
14. The clay revolves on the wheel.
15. It is writhing against his hands.
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32. The face is smiling.
33. The smile is tranquil.
34. He has conquered the clay.
35. The wrinkles have vanished.
36. The wrinkles were on his forehead.
37. The vanishing is for the time being.

From William Strong's *Sentence Combining*, p. 23
Sentence-Combining Practice 22A

1. He walked down the dark hall.
   He was looking to the left.
   He was looking to the right. (,)
   He was being very quiet. (, AND)

2. Margaret put her clarinet together.
   She adjusted the reed. (,)
   She played a scale. (, AND)

3. The alarm clock rang.
   Zino turned it off. (, BUT)
   He rolled over. (,)
   He went to sleep. (, AND)

4. You can do your homework in school.
   You can do your homework at home. (, OR)
   You must have it done. (, BUT)
   You must hand the work in on time. (AND)

5. The tornado roared out of the dark night.
   The tornado crushed cars like bugs. (,)
   The tornado smashed houses into splinters. (,)
   The tornado destroyed everything in its path. (, AND)

6. The car swung out of control.
   The car scatters people. (ing)
   The car smashes guard rails. (ing) (AND)

7. She shaped her fingernails.
   She gave them a coat of polish. (,)
   She let them dry. (, AND)
Sentence-Combining Practice 22B

1. He walked down the dark hall.
   He was looking to the left.
   He was looking to the right.
   He was being very quiet.

2. Margaret put her clarinet together.
   She adjusted the reed.
   She played a scale.

3. The alarm clock rang.
   Zino turned it off.
   He rolled over.
   He went to sleep.

4. You can do your homework in school.
   You can do your homework at home.
   You must have it done.
   You must hand the work in on time.

5. The tornado roared out of the dark night.
   The tornado crushed cars like bugs.
   The tornado smashed houses into splinters.
   The tornado destroyed everything in its path.

6. The car swung out of control.
   The car scatters people.
   The car smashes guard rails.

7. She shaped her fingernails.
   She gave them a coat of polish.
   She let them dry.
APPENDIX H.
ATTITUDE SURVEY

Please read each statement below and circle the number that tells how you feel.

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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The short stories I read this year have been easy.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Sentence-combining helped me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Reading stories for class helps me to be a better reader.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Sentence-combining exercises are difficult.</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Reading stories for class helps me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Reading stories for class is a waste of time.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Sentence-combining helped me to be a better writer.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. The short stories I read this year have been difficult.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Sentence-combining is a waste of time.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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