

Compound Sentence Demo Reflection

By Danielle Alexander

Many people argue that it is more difficult teaching teachers than it is students. Although I can see how this could be the case, especially during professional development or a school improvement meeting, my cohort seemed very receptive to my ideas during the Compound Sentence Demonstration I provided them on July 2 at the Red Cedar Writing Project Summer Institute. After reading their feedback, I have gained even more information on how to better teach grammar in the future.

Affect and Motivation

When planning my demonstration, I pictured my own students and implemented routines and activities that they have enjoyed and showed evidence of learning in past years. This included models, images, videos, and both small and large group work. My cohort seemed to really appreciate the concept of a “table checking”, which I have yet to actually try in the classroom.

Promising Practices

Assessment has been a huge focus of mine this past school year, so I really wanted to experiment with new forms of it during my demonstration. My future plans include making every assessment open-note, book, technology, etc. since to me this is much more meaningful and realistic than sheer memorization of fact-based answers. The cohort really enjoyed the use of open-ended assessment, as well as self-assessment, and I am looking forward to trying these with actual students in the fall.

CCSS/Policy/PR

Throughout the school year, I always make note of which standards I am hitting and in what unit. Compound sentences and the use of semicolons are both required standards for the 9 and 10 Language strand. In addition to the CCSS, my cohort felt as though I included numerous “habits of mind” from *Writing Next*, as well as “Framework for Success in Post-Secondary Writing”, which I was pleased to hear since I did not intentionally plan the lesson with those in mind. I loved hearing from my cohort that my lesson was one that “legislators wish we were doing more of”.

Extensions and Adaptations

Since my district asks teachers to use the MAISA Units, I have always completed the Media and Marketing Unit by having students write the required compare and contrast essay where they must “vary sentence types” by including compound sentences. Although this has worked out well in the past, I loved some of the ideas my cohort offered: having students write about their compound sentence preference, research admired authors and see which one(s) they tend to prefer, and gluing the Bellwork Chart inside their Writer’s Notebooks for future-use.

Questions Arisen

The question that the first cohort group posed that really resonated with me was, “Do grammar practices vary based on modality?”. This concept is not something I

have ever considered, but I think it is very powerful and definitely a question to consider in the future. To answer the question, I do think that grammar practices vary based on modality; therefore, this is something I should stress with students. I will, however, need to spend some time researching how to best do this. The second cohort group asked about the advantages of making students do one of each compound sentence type since that could encourage “bad writing”. This question, too, really made me think, and I will have to consider whether or not to keep doing this “drill-like” practice or allow them to choose which compound sentence works best for the idea they are trying to express. I guess as long as they know the rules and are using them, I do not really care which type they choose.