Use Sentences of Different Lengths

1. Focus

Explain Using Sentences of Different Lengths

Say: When you write an informational text, you want to engage the reader in the topic. One way to do that is by varying the length of your sentences. If you write sentences that are all about the same length, the text becomes monotonous and not very interesting to read. Instead, you want to create variety by writing some sentences that are shorter and some that are longer. Today I'm going to show you how to use different sentence lengths to help maintain the reader's interest in your research report.

Model Using Sentences of Different Lengths

Display the modeling text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Ask students to listen for sentences of different lengths as you read aloud from “History's Amazing Cloth.”

Scientists have been inspired by traditional silk making. They are now finding other ways to produce silk. The Canadian researchers who combined spider and goat genes have produced a thread that is incredibly thin and strong.

Modeling Text

Say: The author uses a variety of sentence lengths in this passage to make the text flow smoothly. The sentences build one upon the next. The first sentence is fairly short. It introduces the topic of the paragraph. The next sentence is about the same length, and it builds on the first. Another short sentence might have sounded choppy. But the third sentence is longer. It adds variety to the sentence pattern and gives the author room to explain at greater length what the researchers are doing. By composing sentences thoughtfully, the writer keeps us engaged in the topic.

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:

- Learn how to vary sentence patterns by using sentences of different lengths.
- Practice varying sentence patterns by using sentences of different lengths.
- Discuss how they can apply this strategy to their independent writing.

Preparation

Materials Needed

- Chart paper and markers
- Interactive whiteboard resources

Advanced Preparation

If you will not be using the interactive whiteboard resources, copy the modeling text and practice text onto chart paper prior to the mini-lesson. If necessary, copy the sentence frames from “Strategies to Support ELs” onto chart paper.
2. Rehearse

Practice Writing Sentences of Different Lengths

Display the practice text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources.

Such silk can be used to sew stitches during brain surgeries. It can be used for eye surgeries. It can be mixed with paint to coat boats. The paint can also coat space stations. It can be woven into cables that hold up bridges!

Practice Text

Ask students to work with partners to revise the passage to include sentences of different lengths. Pairs should write down their sentences and be prepared to read them to the class and explain how they varied the sentence lengths to make the text read smoothly and keep the reader’s interest.

Share Practice Sentences

Bring students together and invite partners to read aloud their revised sentences and explain their changes. Record students’ sentences and post these as models for students to use as they draft or revise their research reports.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We just learned that using sentences of different lengths helps keep readers’ interest, and helps make our writing read smoothly. As you revise your research report, remember to look for opportunities to vary your sentences by writing some that are short and some that are longer.

Encourage students to use sentences of different lengths as they draft their research reports during independent writing time. During student conferences, reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.

4. Share

Bring students together. Invite volunteers to share examples of both longer and shorter sentences from their research reports.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

While other students work with partners, or during independent writing time, work with students to orally generate simple sentences about themselves. Model the activity by saying a sentence or two about yourself. Say: My name is ______. I am a teacher. Ask the students to share information about themselves. Provide the following sentence frames:

My name is ______.
I am (girl/boy) ______.
I am ______ years old.

Intermediate and Advanced

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner activity.

All Levels

If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates: different/diferente; informational/informativo(a); vary/viar.