Vary Sentence Structure by Adding Detail

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:

• Learn how to vary sentence structure by adding detail.
• Practice varying sentence structure by adding detail.
• Discuss how to 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 onto chart paper prior to the mini-lesson. If necessary, write the Idea Bank and the sentence frames from “Strategies to Support ELs” on chart paper.

1. Focus

Explain Varying Sentence Structures

Say: When I write an informational text, I know it’s really important to include lots of detail so readers can easily understand the topic of my report. Adding details to text is also a good way to vary sentence structure. When you vary your sentence structure, your writing will be smoother and more fluid. So, instead of having sentences that all sound the same, your sentences will have a lot of variety. Some sentences will be short and simple, while others will be longer and more complex. Today I’m going to show you how to write more interesting informational text by adding details to sentences to create variety.

Model How Writers Vary Sentence Structure by Adding Detail

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

An animal does not need to be big to migrate in the sea, however. Baby eels no more than a quarter inch long migrate, too. The eels are so small they look like tiny leaves. These eels are born in the Sargasso Sea. The tiny eels float in the water for a year.

Modeling Text

Ask students to listen as you read the passage aloud and to listen for details in the sentences.

Say: In this text, the author tells how baby eels migrate. In the second sentence, she gives us some nice details: “baby eels no more than a quarter inch long migrate.” The descriptive words help us picture the eels, and, by adding details about the size, she makes the sentence more interesting. In the third sentence, she helps us see what the eels look like—“tiny leaves.” Instead of writing, “The baby eels are very small,” the writer adds variety to her sentence with details that compare the eels to tiny leaves. The last sentence, “The tiny eels float in the water for a year,” is a pretty simple sentence, but the details about the eels’ size and how long they float keep it from being dull or uninteresting.
2. Rehearse

Practice Varying Sentence Structures by Adding Detail

Ask pairs of students to work together to write two sentences about an animal they both know well. Explain that they should vary the sentences by adding descriptive details about the animal. Students should write down their sentences and be prepared to read them to the class and explain how they varied the sentence using details.

Share Practice Sentences

Bring students together and invite partners to read their sentences aloud and explain how they used details and varied sentence structure. Ask students to decide which sentences best helped them visualize the animal because of the descriptive details that were included. Record some of the students’ sentences and post these as models for students to use as they revise their own informational reports.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: When you write your informational reports, remember to vary the structure of your sentences. Use details to accurately describe your topic for readers and to add variety to your writing.

Encourage students to think about varying their sentence structure as they draft or revise their informational 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 read aloud examples from their informational report drafts that show a variety of sentence structures.

Strategies to Support ELs

**Beginning**

Work with beginning ELs one on one to write a simple, descriptive sentence using the photo of the gray whale on page 12 of the mentor text as a stimulus. Ask students to describe the whale in any way they can, using words or gestures. Write the descriptive words they use on self-stick notes; for example, **big, large, under water, long tail, big mouth**, etc. Then use the words to write simple sentences on self-stick notes such as: *The whale is large, The whale has a big mouth,* and *The whale has a long tail.* Read the sentences aloud with students as they follow along.

**Intermediate and Advanced**

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers to complete the above activity. Supply the following idea bank and sentence frames to help students write descriptive sentences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Idea Bank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pigeon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hamster</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A ______ lives ______.
A ______ has ______.
A ______ moves ______.

**All Levels**

If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share this English/Spanish cognate: *variety/la variedad.*