Sentence Combining as a Consciousness-Raising Task for Japanese University Writing Classes

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Abstract

There has been much debate in second language research concerning the merits of sentence combining as a form of instruction. Some researchers argue that sentence combining improves both syntactic fluency and enhances the overall quality of essays. Conscious-raising tasks – exercises in which learners analyze and manipulate information – can aid learners to discover new rules and integrate these new rules to expand their writing. It is the purpose of this paper to: 1) review some of the current research in second language writing 2) offer a variety of pedagogical writing activities 3) discuss ways in which sentence combining tasks can be incorporated into the writing curriculum at Japanese universities.

Keywords: conscious-raising, tasks, integrate, syntactic, pedagogical, incorporated
キーワード：文法の意識を高める、課題、一体化、構文、教育学的、合体した

Introduction

Having spent six years in junior and senior high school English classes, Japanese students have not only little experience communicating orally but even less if any experience with written communication. Possessing a broad knowledge of grammar and vocabulary when they enter a first or second years university language class, they usually lack the motivation to learn to write in English, having spent much of their time mechanically performing drills, translating, memorizing vocabulary, and learning words and rules out of context. By the time students arrive in a university writing class for the first time, they have acquired some ineffective language learning habits and usually lack not only the experience and motivation but also the necessary linguistic tools needed to communicate in written discourse. In addition, class size, mixed levels within the same class and a lack of stimulating materials can pose a daunting task to the instructor. It is the purpose of this paper to propose sentence combining as a consciousness-raising task through the use of movies to provide a stimulating context for learners to improve their sentence writing and in the process to assist them to rely less on grammar translation and more on their own experience and knowledge. I will first begin with

a review of some of second language acquisition (SLA) research as it applies to conscious-ness-raising tasks before elaborating on the purposes and ways of teaching sentence combin-ing.

What is consciousness-raising?

Smith (1980) interprets consciousness-raising.

What might be called *language consciousness-raising* in the classroom is sometimes assumed to consist of the pedantic giving and testing of rules and lists of vocabulary items, that is, a complete and unrelenting focus on the formal structure of the target lan-. guage (TL). This impression is probably a result of what people associate with the gram-mar-translation method where learners were required to learn by rote and produce rules and lists of words almost as much for intellectual exercise as for learning to express meaning in the target language. The conveying of a rule or any kind of information about the language can, however, be more or less reduced to the familiar meta-linguistic pre-scriptions of traditional grammars. The relevant information can vary in the degree of elaboration or conciseness with which it is presented as well as the degree of explicitness or intensity in the way attention is drawn to the relevant regularities. It may however be necessary to confine this type of consciousness-raising to relatively simple regularities in the language or to combine it with other techniques (pp. 160-161). Sharwood (1980) also believes that consciousness-raising can be realized by requiring the learner to actually talk about what they have accomplished. Nunan (1991) adds:

Grammatical consciousness-raising ... can be realized in many different ways, and there are numerous creative techniques for sensitizing learners to the grammatical princi-ples within a communicative context. The different examples show quite clearly that there are many ways of teaching grammar, and it is wrong to imply that teachers are confronted with two mutually exclusive choices when it comes to teaching grammar: ei-ther avoiding the teaching of grammar altogether, or returning to a 'traditional' formed-fo-cused approach (p. 151).

Ellis (1998) stated that grammar consciousness-raising tasks aided learners to utilize al-ready learned features more accurately. Ellis, Basturkmen and Loewen (2001) formulate simi-lar distinctions between meaning-focused and form-focused types of communicative instruction with focus on form intending to guide the learner's attention on specific linguistic features. In this case form can refer to phonology, vocabulary, grammar or discourse. Fotos and Ellis (1991) stress that the utilization of consciousness-raising tasks is a successful method given what is known about the way language is learned. They further argue that grammar tasks

may not be appropriate for lower levels students and that some students may not want to discuss grammar.

Bialystok (1981) distinguishes between analyzed and non-analyzed knowledge whereby the latter refers to a clear relationship between structure and meaning of which the learner maintains control while the latter does not possess a clear relationship, although there is a mental representation and structure. How these concepts relate to grammar consciousness-raising tasks needs to be further investigated, more particularly with regard to individual learner differences.

What is the role of grammar?

Ellis (2006) poses several questions about what type of grammar to teach and how it should be taught, believing that the selection of grammatical items should be based on the level of difficulty as well as the errors made by learners. Kobayashi and Rinnert (1991) who studied the English compositions of Japanese university students concluded that syntactic processing of ideas – grammar – is required for the processing of meaning, though grammar knowledge is less of a predictor of the quality of target language writing. Likewise Sasaki and Hirose (1996) who investigated which criteria may effect the expository writing of 70 Japanese university students founds that L2 proficiency of which grammar is one part, was more important than L1 writing ability and meta-knowledge of writing. In addition, Kubota (1998) studied the L1-L2 transfer rhetorical patterns of essays written by Japanese university students and also determined that syntactic and lexical skills in addition to composing experience are essential to the proper ESL texts. He further states that learners need to be urged to elaborate on their productive and syntactic skills.

Prabhu (1987) posits that language awareness occurs when there is a sense of satisfaction at being able to validate a rule based on one's own competence without ever placing emphasis on rule-focused activity leading to internalization of the rule. This is a type of grammar consciousness-raising but it is initiated by the learner and can lead to better internalization.

Ellis (1998) draws the distinction between practical knowledge and technical knowledge questioning how the knowledge generated by research can be of benefit to teaching explaining that SLA research furnishes technical knowledge of how a second language is acquired while practical knowledge occurs through the actual experience of teaching. According to Ellis the essential issue is how these two concepts can reinforce each other. He further concludes that the type of grammar taught and when to teach it has not been thoroughly explored.

What is the structure of a task?

Hyland (2003) differentiates between real world tasks and pedagogic tasks. Real world

tasks focus on communicative goals whereas pedagogic tasks are intended to enhance genre knowledge and composing skills. Although writing tasks can vary tremendously based on the concentration and exigencies they all have several similar features when a writing task is both designed and evaluated. Nunan (1989) proposes five components of a language task: input, goal, setting, roles and activity. Input refers to the materials the students work on, goal refers to the objective of the task, setting refers to the classroom arrangement, roles refers to the parts that both student and teacher execute in the task and activity refers to what the learners do with the input. In the case of sentence combining tasks each of the five components can be defined in the following manner:

Input: The input in this writing task is a short 3-5 minute clip from a movie.

Goal: The goal in this writing task is to require students to produce more effective sentences.

Setting: Setting in this writing task is the classroom that contains the necessary audiovisual equipment.

Roles: The roles in the writing task are the teacher and the students. The teacher first explains and models the activity then gives out the exercises, monitors and assists students.

Activity: The activity of this writing task is to have students produce more effective sentences through the manipulation of punctuation, grammar and vocabulary with or without prompts. The teacher may correct the exercise afterwards or ask students to write their sentences on the board and the class can discuss the mistakes and differences in the construction of the sentences.

When designing the writing tasks it is the judgment of the teacher to decide what is the most effective setting and role in order to accommodate and manage the task. With a larger class for example it might be easier to correct sentences on the board while with more advanced classes discussion can be generated.

The role of errors in second language writing

There is a plethora of research about error analysis but there are two ideas which are most directly related to this author's experiences in teaching writing.

Although it has been suggested that the strategies of learning a first and second language may be the same, it is nevertheless necessary at this point to posit a distinction between the two. Whilst one may suppose that the first language learner has an unlimited number of hypotheses about the nature of the language he is learning which must be tested (although strong reasons have been put forward for doubting this) we may certainly take it that the task of the second language learner is a simpler one: that the only hypotheses he

needs to test are: 'Are the systems of the new language the same or different from those of the language I know?' 'And if different, what is their nature?' Evidence for this is that a large number, but by no means all, of his errors, are related to the systems of his mother tongue, as it is sometimes expressed. In the light of the new hypotheses they are best not regarded as the persistence of old habits, but rather as signs that the learner is investigating the systems of the new language... We may be able to allow the learner's innate strategies to dictate our practice and determine our syllabus; we may learn to adapt ourselves to *his* needs rather than impose upon him *our* preconceptions of *how* he ought to learn, *what* he ought to learn and *when* he ought to learn it (S. P. Corder, 1967, pp. 26-27).

When determining the nature of an error much more data stills needs to be collected and analyzed before creating new hypotheses. Hammerly (1991) refers to distortion errors and fault errors. Errors which are made though students have been be taught a structure are called distortion errors while fault errors are those made when a student goes beyond what he/she was expected to perform by making generalizations about the target language. One solution in dealing with errors is to prompt students by circling or underlining the incorrect portion assisting students to internalizing the target structure. Furthermore, introspection and retrospection techniques can be employed to determine if the error is due to L1 interference, transfer of training or some other factor. Ellis (2005) mentions a number of flaws with error analysis (EA) pointing out that EA only examines the mistakes and does not pay enough attention to what the learner does correctly while completely ignoring certain L2 forms.

Individual learner differences

There are several factors that can influence the learning of a second language. There are for example cognitive factors such as being field dependent or independent, personality, aptitude and a range of other common factors such as motivation, age, personality and attitudes towards the teacher, students in the class as well as towards the target language and target culture. From my experiences motivation poses the biggest stumbling block as most Japanese university students have not only had an unpleasant experiences with English in junior and senior high school but resent have to take more English classes when they get to college.

Individual learner differences are extremely complex and the research on the effects of these differences far from exhaustive. Ellis (1985) points out that the tests utilized to measure a factor may not have been valid. He further states that it is arduous to differentiate due to the interconnectedness of such variables as cognitive style, age, personality and what and how these variables affect SLA; thus, that further qualitative studies need to be conducted before hypotheses can be formulated.

Materials for a learner-centered curriculum

There are a number of options and a variety of materials available either commercially or shared on the Internet materials which can now easily be adapted to suit the interests and level of any student thereby further fulfilling the teacher's role as both a facilitator and a developer. Of course, teachers can also utilize computer technology to supplement commercially structured materials to tailor them to the needs of the learners. Very often within a learner-centered curriculum, teachers will find that supplementing comprehensive, structured course texts is not only more desirable but practical. Nunan (1988) has the following to advocate about the selection and development of materials:

As the focus will be on assisting learners to do in class what they will need to be able to do outside, the materials should reflect the outside world. In other words, they should have a degree of authenticity. This authenticity should relate to the text sources as well as to the student activities and tasks. The material should also foster independent learning by raising the consciousness of the learners and making them more aware of the learning process. This can be done in a variety of ways such as building self-evaluation and assessment exercises into the materials themselves. Recognizing the inevitability of mixed groups of learners (both in terms of proficiency and also in terms of preferred learning styles), materials should be designed so that they are capable of being used in a variety of ways and also at different proficiency levels. As already indicated they should also be suggestive rather than definitive, acting as a model for teachers to develop their own variations (p. 99).

Nunan (1991) further affirms:

Another important type of authenticity (perhaps the most important of all) is what might be called 'learner authenticity'. By this is meant the realization and acceptance by the learner of the authenticity of a given text, tasks, set of materials or learning activity. For learners to authenticate materials, these need, minimally, to fulfill two conditions. In the first place, they need to be recognized by the learners as having a legitimate place in the language classroom. Secondly, they must engage the interests of the learner by relating to his interests, background knowledge and experience, and, through these, stimulate genuine communication (p. 102).

Littlejohn and Windeatt (1989) reinforce what Nunan has stated by investigating whether the materials assist the learner in becoming more aware of their cognitive abilities and how they can improve their own language abilities.

Breen (1991) further comments on learner needs in the development of materials:

In this way, immediate learning needs can be defined by learners and worthwhile objectives for future task selection, and motivated learning work would emerge. Involving learners directly in specifying what they believe they do not know and cannot yet do in relation to the new language, not only requires them to prioritize objectives which they perceive as worthy of effort, but it also enables the sharing and consideration of those things which different learners regard as important aspects in the learning of a language. Therefore an initial investigation of different needs draws upon and reveals the various conceptualizations of language learning that exists within any classroom group (p. 198).

In large writing classes at Japanese universities some of which have up to 40 or 50 students of different proficiencies and experiences it becomes imperative to develop materials that are not only stimulating but which can be adjusted to accommodate the levels and motivations of the class. Using short five-minute segments from Hollywood movies, each containing a variety of actions in a setting containing a character with whom students can easily identify.

The length of the movie scenes should be between 2-5 minutes allowing for the class to both internalize the contents and to accommodate the attention span of the students. From my own experience if the movie scene is too long the students' attention begins to wane. Furthermore a short scene can be played a number of times – as long as it takes the students to remember the people and the actions in order to compose sentences about them. The scenes are also carefully chosen and sentence combining problems are constructed without the need for dialogue; thus, making the contents easier of lower level students but also stimulating for any level. That the students can remember the contents is crucial for the writing component.

As will be discussed later, the complexity of the sentence combining tasks and the difficulty of the words can be adjusted to accommodate the various levels of students in one given writing class. Even within one sentence combining task multiple 'mini tasks' can be performed on the same group of sentences and these can be further adjusted for the level. Students simply execute what they can execute with higher level and more motivated students completing more of the tasks.

Lastly regarding learner-centered materials, advanced classes can be further challenged by being asked to discuss the reasons why they composed their sentences in the ways the did and can even rank sentences from best to worst and discuss the differences in meaning – if any – among the groups of sentences. According to Mojica-Diaz and Sanchez-Lopez (2010):

The use of authentic texts becomes more relevant when the focus is the advanced language level, particularly when the emphasis is on the promoting of the discovery of the L2 grammar, its meaning and its functions by the L2 learners.

Both authors advocate that students should be involved in the realization and analysis of grammar. Language learning and pedagogical research require greater contextualization and greater involvement of the learners thereby leading to a high degree of grammar conscious- ness-raising. The context used can be from any source. Petrovitz (1997) indicates that a dis- advantage of traditional grammar materials is the apparent lack of any context and he be- lieves that contextualization is more useful for certain grammar points such as verb tenses but the challenge of matching materials to a particular structure remains.

An overview of sentence combining tasks

Although several ESL books devote a section to sentence combining in order to teach grammar and many ESL programs contain a component of their writing programs to this skill there is still a lack of research to substantiate the emphasis that could be given to teaching sentence combining. Product oriented research offers limited understanding into the needs of L2 writers (Johnson 1992).

Zamel (1982) remarks that writing is a process of creating meaning. Zamel further ex- pands on this idea:

> Are ESL students experiencing writing as a creative act of discovery, or are they attend- ing so much to the language and correct form that writing is reduced to a mechanical ex- ercise? How do these students generate their ideas? What happens after these ideas are written down? What does a record of their writing, (from the initial notes to the final draft), indicate about their writing experiences?

Furthermore, according to Zamel (1980) research on sentence combining shows that it improves both syntactic fluency and the general quality of essays. While the sentence com- bining can be stimulating, challenging, enjoyable supplement as well a welcome break from the regular routine of a writing class, there are concerns as to where in the curriculum it should belong as most students need to develop their rhetorical skills more. According to Shaughnessy:

> Sentence-combining practice surely has a place in the ESL writing classroom, for it is one of the best ways to help students learn about the grammar of the sentence. The practice of consolidating sentences provides students with choices and alternatives and allows them to view the sentence as a puzzle whose pieces can be moved around to form a new configuration. One should not assume, however, that this practice in and of itself provides all the instruction necessary, for ESL students may not possess the linguistic repertoire that sentence – combining proponents assume students have. Therefore, students in the ESL classroom need to be gradually introduced to key concepts relating to the grammar

of the sentence which they can use as references in building sentences or analyzing the sentences they have built. These grammatical concepts provide students with not only a conceptual frame within which to view the different patterns and forms sentences may take, but also the difficulties they may be experiencing in combining these patterns (p. 137).

Zamel (1980) further posits:

What is important to remember is that sentence-expanding exercises, unlike sentence combining alone, elicit language: they ask students to supply or generate content. This process may not only help build ESL students' linguistic resources, but also simulate more realistically the difficulty of articulating something in writing. Furthermore, giving students the opportunity to expand base sentences with their own details and then evaluate how these additions relate back to and work with the base sentences may provide them with an appreciation and understanding of how longer segments of writing are organized and developed (p. 89).

As for the teaching of cohesive devices Zamel (1983) has this to contribute:

It seems that, despite the critical role that conjuncts play in writing, English language students are not always able to take advantage of them. This may be primarily because they have not been taught to identify them during reading instruction or to use them correctly in their writing. What they *have* been offered, if composition texts are any reflection of our teaching strategies, are lists of cohesive devices categorized according to function (p. 23).

Widdowson (1978) is also critical of the manner in which the cohesive links are taught, as most textbooks do not provide sufficient contexts for learners to understand how the ideas relate clearly and logically.

Further to this discussion Zamel (1983) points out the semantic and syntactic problems with cohesive devices:

Another serious problem is the fact that devices categorized together are not necessarily interchangeable: 'but' and 'however' cannot be substituted for 'on the contrary' or 'on the other hand', although they are often classified together ... for students must not only learn the individual meanings of these links and their semantic restrictions, that is, what relationships they express and which ones are appropriate in which contexts; they must also learn their grammatical restrictions, that is, why linking devices that are *lexically* similar

cannot be used to perform the same *syntactic* functions (p. 24).

By providing careful attention to the syntactic and lexical functions of the cohesive devices through modeling within a clear and meaningful context the function of these devices can be inculcated. Johnson (1992) expands on this form of instruction:

> Once again, teachers may wish to highlight aspects of audience effectiveness, naturalness of expression, and native language acceptability during sentence – combining instruction, but it appears that the tasks themselves may not require extensive amount of evaluation (p. 71).

Johnson (1992) discusses the processes of sentence combining:

> Most supporters of sentence combining admit that sentence combining and real writing require different cognitive and linguistic processes, and one cannot claim to be a substitute for the other. Although sentence combining gives the writer something to say and invites choices about the best way to say it, real writing requires the writer to create an idea and then manipulate sentence structures in order to express that idea appropriately (p. 62).

Johnson (1992) further theorizes:

> Moreover, such product-oriented research provides little insight into the instructional needs of second language writers. Research that explores the cognitive strategies required to complete sentence-combining tasks can provide insight into not only what writers produce but how that product comes about and what prerequisite skills might be needed to produce syntactically mature writing. Ultimately, such process-oriented research should help establish what role, if any, sentence combining should play in second language writing instruction (p. 63).

Johnson (1992) further elaborates:

> Instructionally, open sentence-combining tasks may be particularly well suited for helping second language writers to focus on the arrangement of logically connected information and plan their revisions according to global or abstract features of written text structure (p. 70).

Japanese university students, due to over-utilization of rote memorizing and grammar-translation, are not accustomed to expressing and developing their own thought and

ideas, seeing language structures merely as right or wrong answers and not viewing language as a real and meaningful tool to communicate. To complicate this matter further is the transfer of training: some students may have been taught certain aspects of grammar and vocabulary in the wrong way and through repeated drilling and rote memory instruction have certain aspects of the English drummed into their heads incorrectly.

Moreover, most Japanese universities have no clear writing curriculum which divides students according to their level of proficiency and which provides a precise learner-centered and cohesive framework of what should be taught in a logical and progressive manner. There is also a lack of any interconnectedness of skills; students cannot understand that what is taught in the reading class needs to be related to what is taught in the writing class and vice versa. In particular, writing skills such as sentence combining need to be transferred to real writing, either in composition or content based classes.

A needs analysis should be implemented to identify and prioritize the items that need to be incorporated, to define the roles of the teachers and students and develop writing materials within the context of the university.

A method of teaching sentence combining

I would like to propose some consciousness-tasks for the teaching of sentence combining to Japanese university students in accordance with Krashen's monitor theory. By being provided with stimulating and meaningful contexts to write communicatively and with a purpose can students even begin to internalize the target language.

Krashen (1981) distinguishes between learning and acquisition in the development of the monitor model. The acquired system is similar to the process the children go through when they acquire their first language. It requires meaningful interaction in a communicative way. Learning, on the other hand, requires a conscious focus on language, in this case grammar. The monitor determines the relationship between acquisition and learning with the monitor acting, planning, editing and correcting when the learner has the time, focuses on form and knows the rule. Moreover, Krashen explains that there are three types of monitor users: the over-user, the under-user and the optimal user. A further part of Krashen's theory is the affective filter, which encompasses such affective variables as motivation, confidence, anxiety and self-esteem. When the filter is up language acquisition is hindered and when it is down language acquisition is facilitated. It is the aim of the proposed sentence combining activities to make optimal monitor users of students while at the same time lowering the affective filter. Krashen and Terrell (1983) would consider sentence combining a puzzle type of problem which accords learners the chance to engage in monitoring.

Stempleski and Tomalin (1990) believe that visual aids such as movies can provide more motivation and comprehension than any other textbook materials. I am inclined to agree with their belief. Over the years I have employed a number of movies in my classes for the specif-

ic purpose of teaching writing and one of the most popular is *Back to the Future I*. Although this movie was produced in 1985 the underlying themes – love, romance, time travel, adventure and comedy – are relevant today and the students can easily identify with the characters. I chose the short "skateboard scene" as it contains not only a wide variety of actions but also most of the main themes. In this scene, the protagonist, Marty McFly has gone back to the year 1955 and has interfered with his parents, George and Lorraine's first meeting. Lorraine is instantly smitten with her son Marty; however, in order for Marty to return to 1985 he parents first have to meet, fall in love and get married so he can be born! He tries to encourage his cowardly and nerdy father George to ask his mother Lorraine out for a date. Eventually George musters up enough courage but is interrupted by the nasty bully Biff. Marty come to the rescue by punching Biff and knocking him down. The scene concludes with Biff and his pals attempting to catch Marty who deftly eludes the four boys while riding a skateboard. Rather than catching Marty, the bully and his friends crash into a truck, getting covered with horse manure and Lorraine becoming even more infatuated with her son Marty! This part of the movie is played with the Japanese subtitles and repeated without the subtitles. They scene is reviewed and the main elements – characters, relationships, places, actions – are reviewed through a simple question and answer format and the necessary vocabulary is provided by the instructor. I sometimes turn off the sound to have the class focus more on the actions and nonverbal cues, helping them to pay closer attention to detail. When I feel the class has understood the scene – generally only two or three viewings are needed – I precede to the writing tasks.

Table 1 Sentence Combining Worksheet

1. Use a transition word

   George wants to ask Lorraine out for a date and he wants
   Marty to tell him what to say so they meet at a gas station.

2. Use a semi-colon

   George wants to ask Lorraine out for a date; he wants Marty
   to tell him what to say, so they meet at a gas station.

3. Use a clause

   George, who wants to ask Lorraine out for a date, wants
   Marty to tell him what to say, so they meet at a gas station.

   George tells Lorraine that she is his destiny.

   After George and Marty leave they gas station they go into
   the café.

4. Use a phrase

George saw Lorraine sitting at the table with her friends.

After leaving the gas station, George and Marty go into the café.

Wanting to ask Lorraine out, George meets Marty at a gas station.

George entered the café, tucking in his shirt, fixing his hair.

Tucking in his shirt, fixing his hair, George entered the café.

Table 2   Sentence combining exercises

1. George wants to ask Lorraine out for a date.
   He wants Marty to tell him what to say.
   They meet at a gas station.

2. They walk from the gas station to the café.
   Marty tells George what to say.
   Marty is drinking Coca-Cola.
   Lorraine is sitting with friends in the café.

3. George writes down words on a note pad.
   They walk to the café.
   The café is crowded with high school students.

4. George is very nervous.
   He goes to the counter.
   He orders chocolate milk.
   He takes a drink and walks to Lorraine's table.
   Marty is sitting at the counter.

5. George starts saying nice things to Lorraine.
   Biff the bully enters the café.
   Three other boys are with him.
   He calls out to George.

6. He starts to walk towards George.
   Marty trips Biff.
   Biff falls down.
   Biff gets up and is going to hit Marty.
   Marty tricks Biff and hits him first.

7. Marty runs out of the café.
   He runs to three little boys.
   They are pushing boxes on skates.
   He tears off a box so that he has a skateboard.

8. Biff and his friends run out of the café.
   They begin chasing Marty.
   Marty grabs onto a pick up truck.

9. Biff and his friends get into Biff's convertible.
   They drive through the park.
   They drive up to Marty.
   Marty moves to the side of the truck.
   The door of a parked car opens.
   Marty lets go of the truck to avoid hitting the car.

10. He flies through the air.
    He knocks down two people.
    Marty takes off again.
    Biff bumps Marty with his convertible.
    Marty hangs onto the hood of the convertible.
    He is pushed forward.

11. Biff wants to ram Marty against a truck.
    The truck is parked.
    Marty sees the truck.
    Marty climbs up over the hood of the truck.
    He climbs over the passengers.
    He climbs back down the trunk of the convertible.

12. Biff and his friends cannot avoid hitting the truck.
    The truck is filled with manure.
    The manure is very smelly.
    The manure covers the convertible.
    The manure covers Biff and his three friends.

13. A crowd gathers around outside the café.
    The crowd wants see what has happened.
    He returns it to the little boy.
    The little boy is amazed.
    Marty says thank you to the little boy.

14. Lorraine is excited.
    She is amazed.
    She wants to find out where Marty lives.

Table 3   Sentence completion using transitions

1. Marty is very brave

2. George is very shy around girls

3. Marty was escaping from Biff

4. Biff entered the café

5. Biff is very angry

6. People had never seen a skateboard before

7. Lorraine was listening to George

8. Marty fashioned a skateboard from a boy's toy

9. Biff drove through a park

10. The boys were covered with manure

Table 4　Finishing a sentence with a transition provided

1. Although Marty is smaller
2. Marty is brave; in fact,
3. George is nervous, so
4. The little boy got angry because
5. It is 1955; however,
6. George started talking to Lorraine; unfortunately,
7. Biff wasn't paying attention; consequently,
8. Biff landed on the table then
9. Biff got up from the floor and
10. Marty is cool; on the other hand,

Table 5　Sentence combining using appropriate transitions

1. Marty is handsome. George is not so handsome.
2. Marty is not afraid. He is quite brave.
3. Marty was at the counter. George was talking to Lorraine.
4. Marty tripped Biff. He punched Biff. He fled the café.
5. Marty saw the car door open. He let go of the truck.
6. Biff was not looking. He crashed into the truck.
7. George must ask Lorraine out. Marty will never be born.
8. Marty gave George advice. Lorraine was not impressed.
9. Biff is tall and strong. No one wants to fight him.
10. George has a notepad. He is reading from it.
11. It is 1955. No one has every seen a skateboard before.
12. Biff turned to look out the window. Marty hit him.
13. Biff is much bigger than Marty. Marty is not afraid of him.
14. George did not go to her table first. He got a drink first.

Figure 1　Flow chart for the consciousness-raising tasks with prompts
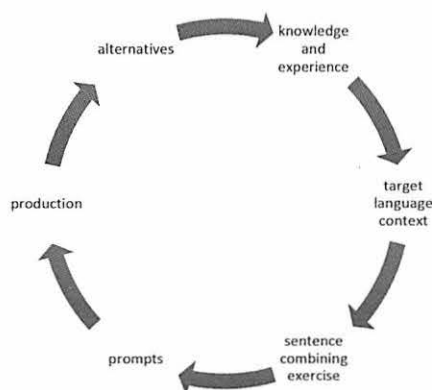
Figure 2   Flow chart for the consciousness-raising tasks without prompts
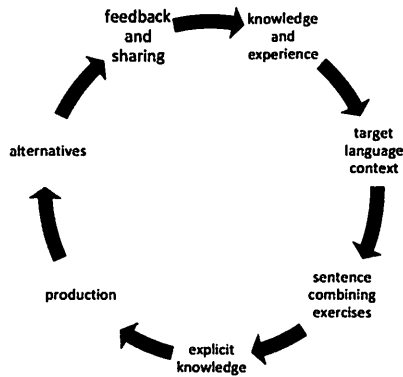

Figure 3   Order of structures according to difficulty

punctuation	cohesive devices	clauses	phrases
•semi-colon •comma	• adding • correlative conjunctions • illustrating • sequence • cause/effect • similarities/differences • qualifying • emphasizing	• adjective • adverb • noun	• adjective • adverb • noun

Diagram 4   Order of cohesive devices

Adding	Also, moreover, in addition, furthermore, and
Correlative Conjunctions	Not only ⋯ but also, both ⋯ and, either ⋯ or, neither ⋯ nor
Illustrating	For example, for instance, in other words
Sequence	Then, next, first, second, finally
Cause/Effect	Therefore, so, as a result, thus, consequently
Similarities/Differences	On the contrary, on the other hand, likewise, in the same way
Qualifying	However, but, nevertheless, unfortunately, although, even though, though,
Emphasizing	In fact, in particular, more importantly

Potential difficulties

There are few parts of these consciousness-raising tasks that might pose difficulties for the students. Firstly, students may have a tendency to overuse the same cohesive devices and should therefore be encouraged to use different ones. Next, students may misplace the adjectival phrases and since this type of structure is difficult to use it should only be taught to an advanced class. One suggestion is to teach dangling modifiers first. As Zamel (1983) has previously pointed out, there can be not only syntactic and lexical confusion of such transition words as *however, but* and *on the contrary* but also confusion with punctuation. The teacher first needs to carefully model these structures. Moreover, there is a tendency for students to be redundant when combining sentences as they often repeat the same subject or verb. Also, some students may fail to grasp the relationship of the ideas, producing sentences which are either illogical or sentences which have an entirely different meaning. Finally, depending on the size of the class, the teacher may choose a variety of ways to correct the sentences, either grading them outside or class or by having students write their answers on the board. In the case of the latter, the teacher can have different students write the same sentence on the board; thus, emphasizing both various ways to compose sentences as well as certain common errors. As Johnson (1992) comments:

> Once again, teachers may wish to highlight aspects of audience effectiveness, naturalness of expression, and native language acceptability during sentence – combining instruction, but it appears that the tasks themselves may not require extensive amounts of evaluation (p. 71).

Conclusion

Sentence combining practice provides an enjoyable context for learners to experiment and create new language and can be tailored to any level. It provides confidence-building as learners can begin to compose longer sentences almost immediately and it can be integrated into any writing or grammar course, recycling the same structures over again and aiding learners to better internalize grammar and vocabulary and improve fluency. Additional research can help provide better insight into the role that sentence combining should play in the second language curriculum.

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