

Teaching the Who-Which Clause

In his classes, Andrew Pudewa often introduces the who-which clause by showing students how they can combine sentences with a *which*. To reinforce this concept, first write some simple sentences on the board. Be sure both sentences repeat the same subject:

- The cat caught a mouse. The cat burped.
- Sally screamed. Sally is afraid of spiders.
- The car zoomed down the road. The car has a huge engine.

The who/which clause can be used to combine both thoughts while eliminating the repetition (the cat, Sally, etc.).

One teacher, Nick, recommended

When introducing this skill to my 5th graders, I choose a sentence from the paragraph and say that I want to join two sentences about the cat, for example. Then I do a think-aloud and actually do the first one for the class myself. After that, we practice together with other sentences from a worksheet. (One of the best things about IEW is that the writing lessons in structure and style have already been planned for you, so that gives you time to create additional practice sheets.)

Once the worksheet is finished, I ask for student volunteers to go back to the paragraph and suggest other possible combinations, which I write on the board. This may be done over two days. I save adding in additional information (in a who/which clause) not in the paragraph for a later lesson. Some students will need help with who/ which clauses until they master this skill.

Notice that Nick did not hand them the worksheet to do independently. Instead, the worksheet was used as a class exercise. Since IEW provides specific lesson plans, it frees a teacher to create additional reinforcement worksheets.

By writing all the modeling right on the white board (in complete sentences) even the weakest student can include a correct who/which in his paragraph every time.

This was not an isolated exercise. Nick added:

I would put two sentences on the board each day for the students to combine. Many of these sentences were about them, so they found them very interesting to combine. Some sentences were taken from the history that we were working on. The idea was that students were supposed to combine the sentences using a who /which clause.

The first three students who were done were allowed to go to the blackboard and write their versions of the new sentence on the board. I made sure to stress when "who" was used and when it was necessary to use "which" or "that." I also stressed when to use or omit the comma. Most of the students' versions, of course, were the same.

Andrew would call this Robin Hood teaching: you take from the linguistically rich students and give to the poor.

On the next page are a bunch of sentences which could be used as a practice worksheet.

Sentences for Combining with a Who or a Which

The cat caught a mouse. The cat burped.

Sally screamed. Sally is afraid of spiders.

The car zoomed down the road. The car has a huge engine.

Sarah loves dogs. Sarah hopes to be a veterinarian some day.

Mark plays soccer. Mark is an excellent goalie.

Spot is a pure-breed Dalmatian. Spot can do incredible tricks.

Bob grabbed his foot. Bob stepped on the Legos scattered all over the floor.
