Using Teacher-Made Test Booklet on Sentence Combining Strategy to Improve the Writing Performance in English of the Selected Grade 9 Students

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Abstract

The present study attempted to find out the usefulness and effectiveness of sentence combining strategy as a method for helping students combine clauses into one meaningful sentence and construct more syntactically mature sentences. This is initiated to help the students improve their writing performance in English and make sentence construction in writing more automatic and less labored.

This study utilized a one-group pretest–post-test design. This method permitted the researcher to have a good view of how the writing skills of the selected grade 9 students at Sta. Catalina Integrated National High School can be improved by employing Sentence Combining Strategy and Writing Performance in English. *Using coordinating conjunctions, combining independent clauses into one meaningful sentence*, and *revising and rearranging jumbled clauses into paragraphs* were the Sentence Combining Strategies utilized by the researcher to improve the writing performance of the respondents. More so, *lesson exemplars, pretest, and post-test* were the instruments used in this study. The development, validity, and reliability of these finalized instruments were checked and evaluated by the experts prior to their utilization.

The result of the study determined that there is a significant difference between the pretest and post-test scores of the respondents in their writing performance before and after using the sentence combining strategy. This implies that the sentence-combining strategy has a positive impact on the students' writing performance.

Therefore, this study assumed that Sentence Combining Strategy is a great tool to improve the literacy skills and writing performance of the selected grade 9 students in Sta. Catalina Integrated National High School.

Keywords: Sentence combining strategy; Teacher-made Test Booklet; Most Essential Learning Competencies

1. Context and Rationale

Writing is the process of creating written works or composing a text. It's also known as the medium of human communication that involves the written representation of a language. It is a group of words that communicates meaning or sense and are organized according to grammatical logic.

In the same line of thought, sentence construction is considered as one of the most challenging activities for most students all over the world. Edward P. J. Corbett (2012) pointed out that even the native speakers of the language find it difficult to write meaningful sentences that are grammatically correct.

Additionally, Shirley Rose (2014) stated the possible reasons why individuals have trouble in writing sentences. She reiterated that it can be anchored to the following: poor vocabulary, problem with sentence structure and word order, difficulty with word sounds, spelling, and meaning, inappropriate use of colloquial language and being not acquainted with the parts of speech that causes having a poor foundation in grammar lessons.

According to Gonzales (2013), English must be taught in English in conformity with Philippine national policy. However, many Filipino students from low-income households have limited English skills, hence it is recommended that training should begin "with a zero-knowledge assumption".

In line with this, Bautista (2016) added that most Filipino students consider English as one the most

challenging and uninteresting subjects. Without considering the fact, that this is the only subject that offers an opportunity for them to be globally competent and excel in both written and oral English.

He also added that Sentence Combining Strategy could be a great help to improve someone's writing skills. Thus, Sentence combining strategy is an effective method for helping students create fluency and diversity in their personal writing style. With this strategy, the selected grade 9 students of Sta. Catalina Integrated National High School will be able to blend two or more short, rough sentences into a single powerful sentence.

With the abovementioned theories and investigations, the researcher motivates himself to pursue this study which aims to help the selected grade 9 students in Sta. Catalina Integrated National High School improve and develop their writing skills and writing performance in English through sentence combining strategy.

Thus, the researcher's ultimate goal with this study is to make sentence construction in writing more automatic and less labored through Sentence Combining Strategy which will be presented in a teacher-made booklet form.

1.1 Action Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of using a sentence combining strategy in the writing performance in English of grade 9 students.

Specifically, this research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the mean score of the respondents in their writing assessment before being exposed to sentence combining strategy?
2. What is the mean score of the respondents in their writing assessment after being exposed to sentence combining strategy?
3. What is the mean difference in the respondents' writing assessment before and after being exposed to the sentence combining approach in their scores?

2. Innovation, Intervention, and Strategy

The teacher-made booklet is a small book consisting of a few sheets typically with paper covers. It is a very thin book with a small number of pages and a paper cover, that gives specific information about the subject matter.

Hisrich & Blanchard (2019), reiterated that booklets play a quintessential role in every student's life. He added that it somehow improves their reading, writing, and speaking skills as well as boosting memory and intelligence.

With the studies mentioned, the researcher would like to adopt the use of a teacher-made booklet as an aide to enhance students' literacy skills.

The researcher will design a teacher-made booklet that contains topics about writing an effective explanatory essay, proper usage of conjunctions, application of the appropriate punctuation marks, as well as some assessment writing activities.

Prior to the distribution of the teacher-made booklet, a pre-writing assessment activity will be administered to measure the degree of the respondents' writing performance. On the other hand, after the students' writing performance has been measured, the teacher-made booklet will be handed over and distributed to the respondents every Friday for six consecutive meetings in the third grading period as supplemental material to fill in the gap in literacy skills while addressing the MELC set by the Department of Education. Moreover, after the sixth week has been completed, a post-assessment writing activity will be given to assess the effectiveness and usefulness of the use of the intervention tool.

3. Action Research Methods

a. *Participants and/or other Sources of Data and Information*

The participants of this research were the selected grade 9 students from Sta. Catalina Integrated National High School. They were selected purposively based on the aspects and objectives needed as the sample of the study.

In this study, only one section was chosen as the respondents. The 45 selected respondents from this section are those who were having difficulty constructing meaningful sentences that are grammatically correct.

The devices used to gather data, were lesson exemplars, pre-tests, and post-tests which are referred to as data collection instruments. They were developed and formulated by the researcher and framed into a teacher-made test booklet based on the statement of the problem by identifying the data needed to gather the desired research output.

b. *Data Gathering Methods*

This research utilized a one-group pretest-posttest design. It's a form of research design used by behavioral researchers to see how a therapy or intervention affects a specific group of people. Using this strategy, the researcher was able to get a fair idea of how the writing skill and writing performance of the selected grade 9 students from Sta. Catalina Integrated National High School improved using a sentence-combining strategy.

According to Luck et al., (2009) the choice of a research design is an important part of the research process. It has been compared to a building's structural plan drawn up by an architect. In this sense, the researcher must choose the research design with great care. Research design, according to Luck et al., (2009), is the determination and statement of the general research approach or strategy used/or the project. It is at the center of the planning process. As a result, if the design complies to the study purpose, the client's requirements will be met.

Specifically, the information used in the study came from the scores of the research participants through a researcher-made prewriting and post-writing activity.

4. Discussion of Results and Reflection

Table 1. Pretest result on Students' Writing Performance in Terms of Grammar

Score	Frequency	Percentage
12 – 15	4	13.4
8 – 11	15	50.0
4 – 7	11	26.6
0 – 3	0	0.0
TOTAL	**30**	**100.0**

Legend: 11.25 – 15.00 Advanced, 7.50 – 11.24 Proficient. 3.75 – 7.49 Developing, and 0.00 – 3.74 Beginning

Table 1 shows that 50 percent of respondents are proficient in terms of grammar in their writing, 26.6 percent are developing, and 13.4 percent are advanced. No students are characterized as beginning in their grammatical skills in relation to their writing performance based on the pretest results. This means that the writing performance of the respondents can be easily improved using a sentence-combining strategy.

Thus, students who learned sentence combining skills demonstrated improved writing on their writing task and improved their ability to revise their own work effortlessly. This implies that the result of the pretest in terms of grammar is significant because it gained an excellent remark which is 50% of the respondents are proficient.

Table 2. Pretest results on Students' Writing Performance in Terms of Vocabulary

Score	Frequency	Percentage
12 – 15	1	3.3
8 – 11	13	43.2
4 – 7	14	46.7
0 – 3	2	6.7
TOTAL	30	100.0

Legend: 11.25 – 15.00 Advanced, 7.50 – 11.24 Proficient. 3.75 – 7.49 Developing, and 0.00 –

3.74 Beginning

Table 2 shows the result of the pretest on sentence combining strategy in terms of vocabulary. As shown in the table, the highest percentage obtained belongs to the developing stage, having a mean score of 46.7%. It is followed by the respondents who earned a mean score of 43.2% interpreted as proficient. The third is the respondents who gained 6.7%. Lastly, is noticeable that only 3.3% of the respondents obtained a score under the advanced level.

Additionally, it is very evident that most of the respondents are aiming to improve their writing performance despite the current situation of education due to pandemics. They are willing to carry out and accept additional activities for sentence combining strategy for them to improve their writing performance.

The result of the pretest is significant because it gained an excellent remark which is 46.7% of the respondents fell under developing while 43.2 of the respondents fell under the proficient category. This denotes that most of the respondents fell under the developing level because their skills can still be improved and developed through a sentence combining strategy.

Table 3. Mean Pretest Performance in terms of Grammar and Vocabulary

Pretest Performance in Writing	Grammar		Vocabulary	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
	8.53	2.46	7.30	2.35

Legend: 0.00 – 3.74 Beginning, 3.75 – 7.49, Developing, 7.50 – 11.24, Proficient 11.25, and 15.00 Advanced

The table above shows the mean performance of the respondents during their pretest in writing in terms of grammar and vocabulary. Grammar performance with an average score of 8.53 and a standard deviation of 2.46 is considered proficient. This indicates that the students who responded are proficient in grammar as a measure of writing ability. On the other hand, this implies that the kids were grammatically adept before the sentence-combining approach was implemented. They are able to recognize and correct small grammatical faults, as well as express themselves with grammatical accuracy.

It indicates that being knowledgeable enough and acquainted with grammar and vocabulary instruction plays a significant role on the part of the students in order to improve their writing performance. Larsen added that a sentence combining strategy is an effective vehicle to make it possible.

Table 4. Posttest results on Students' Writing Performance in Terms of Grammar

Score	Frequency	Percentage
12 – 15	26	86.7
8 – 11	4	13.3
4 – 7	0	0.0
0 – 3	0	0.0
TOTAL	30	100.0

Legend:11.25 – 15.00 Advanced, 7.50 – 11.24 Proficient, 3.75 – 7.49 Developing, and 0.00 – 3.74 Beginning

The posttest performance of students in writing in terms of grammar is shown in Table 6. 86.7 percent of those who responded received an advanced level score. 13.3 percent are proficient, whereas 0 percent are in the developing or beginning stages.

The data shown in this table reveals that the weaker writers in the sentence-combining method showed a rise in results from pretest to posttest, indicating that the sentence-combining approach is a

useful tool to assist learners improve their writing performance.

Furthermore, it was confirmed that sentence-combining teaching has a positive impact on students' writing performance. Respondents in the experimental condition are more likely to rewrite clauses by integrating them into a single comprehensible statement if they follow the instructions.

Additionally, after receiving the three courses on the distinct forms of conjunctions, Coordinating Conjunction, Correlative Conjunction, and Subordinating Conjunction, additional proof that these less-skilled authors improved their writing talents is verified. The first subtest assesses a student's ability to construct grammatically correct sentences and use the appropriate type of conjunction to complete the thought of the sentences, while the second assesses a student's ability to combine two independent clauses into one meaningful sentence, and the third assesses a student's ability to revise and rearrange jumbled clauses into the paragraph.

The composite score for these three tests, calculated by averaging the standard results, revealed that the less skilled authors received higher posttest scores than the pretest scores. Between the pretest and post-test scores, there was a statistically significant difference in the respondents' writing performance before and after using thesentence-combiningg strategy in terms of grammar.

Table 5. Posttest results on Students' Writing Performance in Terms of Vocabulary

Score	Frequency	Percentage
12 – 15	26	86.7
8 – 11	3	10.0
4 – 7	1	3.3
0 – 3	0	0.0
TOTAL	30	100.0

Legend:11.25 – 15.00   Advanced, 7.50 – 11.24 Proficient, 3.75 – 7.49 Developing, and 0.00 – 3.74 Beginning

In terms of the student's vocabulary, the table revealed that 86.7% of the respondents are in the advanced level, 10% are proficient, 3.3% are developing and 0% are classified as beginning in their writing skills performance after being exposed with Sentence combining strategy.

Similarly, in terms of writing quality, the respondents showed an advantage over their pretest scores when compared to their posttest scores. The general quality of the writing improved when students in the sentence-combining condition reviewed their posttest papers. This did not happen with them because they had not yet been taught grammar and vocabulary.

As a result, sentence-combining teaching has a positive impact on the quality of their writing output when using various sentence-combining tactics. Although it's tempting to credit gains in writing quality from the first to the third draft, the sentence combining revisions are completed successfully. As a result, other components of the sentence-combining treatment have also helped to improve this.

Table 6. Mean Posttest Performance in Terms of Grammar and Vocabulary

Posttest Performance in Writing	Grammar		Vocabulary	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
	13.67	1.35	13.37	2.16

Legend: 0.00 – 3.74 Beginning. 3.75 – 7.49 Developing, 7.50 – 11.24 Proficient, and 11.25 – 15.00 Advanced

The table shows the mean performance in writing during the posttest of the respondents in terms of grammar and vocabulary. As depicted in the table, the mean performance score of the respondents is 13.67 with a standard deviation of 1.35. The performance of the students after being exposed to the

sentence combining strategy is classified to be advanced.

The students' grammar-related writing performance was found to be advanced or excellent, according to the mean. They will be able to classify grammatical faults and express themselves with grammatical accuracy as a result of this. They can distinguish well grammatical errors and compose sentences with accuracy.

Moreover, in terms of vocabulary-related writing skills, the respondents gained a mean of 13.37 and have a standard deviation of 2.16. their mean performance is also classified as advanced.

It is also noticeable that the standard deviation of their performance in grammar is lesser than the standard deviation of their performance in vocabulary. This means that the scores on the grammar-related writing performance are close to each other as compared with their scores on their vocabulary-related writing performance.

It is very apparent that the impact of sentence combining on student writing performance has been widely disseminated at all levels of education, from second grade to adult education, in both first and second languages.

Although there are some differences among the scores of the respondents in the three subtests administered after instructions. On any of the metrics used to assess the effects of the sentence-combining method, the experimental students increased their writing performance.

Tables 3 and 6 provide the means and standard deviations for the sentence-combining progress-monitoring measure, which show that students who received sentence-combining teaching are better at applying the skills they learned than students who did not get grammar and vocabulary instruction.

On these unit tests, students in the sentence combining condition are more likely to write a correct written sentence (one that is grammatically correct and contains all key elements) (see Table 5 and 8). This shows that sentence-combining education can assist pupils enhance their ability to combine sentences.

Furthermore, the effects of sentence-combining training may be demonstrated using a norm-referenced sentence-combining test that assesses a broader set of abilities than the researcher-designed progress-monitoring measures that only assess the skills that are taught. As a result, there is a substantial difference in the respondents' writing performance before and after employing the sentence-combining approach in their pretest and post-test scores.

Table 7. Pretest-Posttest Performance of the Respondents

Writing performance	Pretest		Posttest		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Verbal Interpretation
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD				
Grammar	8.53	2.46	13.67	1.35	-11.631	29	.000	Significant
Vocabulary	7.30	2.35	13.37	2.16	-10.198	29	.000	Significant
Total	15.83	3.99	27.03	2.93	-12.408	29	.000	Significant

Legend: A p-value (Sig.) less than 0.05 is statistically significant. A p-value greater than 0.05 is not statistically significant.

As shown in the table, in terms of grammar, having a computed t-value of 11.631 and a p-value of 0.000 shows a significant difference in the pretest and posttest performance of the respondents. This means that the writing performance of the students increases after they were exposed to the sentence combining strategy. This may be because after being exposed to the sentence combining strategy, the student's grammar skills improved.

Moreover, in terms of vocabulary, their writing performance during the pretest and posttest are significantly different. This was attested by the computed t-value of 10.198 and a p-value of 0.000. The result

revealed that the students' vocabulary was improved as they are exposed to the sentence combining strategy.

As a whole, as shown on the table, the pretest and posttest performance in writing of the students have significant differences. It is testified by the computed t-value of 12.408 at a degree of freedom of 29 and a p-value of 0.000. This means that the sentence-combining strategy has a positive effect on the students writing performance.

Furthermore, it has been established that sentence-combining training has a good impact on students' writing performance. Students in the experimental condition appear to be more likely to rewrite their papers by combining sentences after being exposed to a sentence-combining approach and receiving grammar and vocabulary instructions related to different types and uses of conjunctions if they follow the instructions.

In general, the pretest and post-test scores of respondents in their writing performance before and after adopting the phrase combining approach fluctuate significantly.

5. Reflection

The results connote that the integration and implementation of the Teacher-Made Test Book on Sentence Combining in teaching English among the selected grade 9 students in Sta. Catalina Integrated National High School is Effective.

Therefore, it could be assumed that Sentence Combining Strategy is a great tool to improve the writing performance of the selected grade 9 students in Sta. Catalina Integrated National High School.

Furthermore, its positive impact on the writing performance of the respondents affirmed that there is a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of the respondents in their writing performance before and after using sentence combining strategy.

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