Computers and composition: Using a word processor to teach sentence combining with learning handicapped elementary students

Judith J. McConahay

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California State College
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COMPUTERS AND COMPOSITION:
USING A WORD PROCESSOR TO TEACH SENTENCE COMBINING
WITH LEARNING HANDICAPPED ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

A Project Submitted to
The Faculty of the School of Education
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of
Master of Arts
in
Education: Special Education

By
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE OF CONTENTS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REVIEW OF LITERATURE</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROJECT DESIGN AND OBJECTIVES</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CURRICULUM UNIT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPUTER LESSONS</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MASTERY QUIZZES</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEACHER'S GUIDE</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIMITATIONS</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUMMARY</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As a Resource Specialist in Elementary Special Education, this writer has had the opportunity to use a microcomputer in Computer Assisted Instruction. Several software selections have proven quite useful for the instruction of Mathematics, but Language Arts selections (including the areas of spelling, reading, and writing) have been disappointing in several ways. In the first place, few of the selections meet the specific needs of the elementary Learning Handicapped students. In the second place, it seems that few of the selections fully utilize the capabilities of the medium, the computer. Finally, most of the selections allow for little independent thought on the part of the user. What is needed is a curriculum unit that will partially fill this gap in Language Arts software.

Learning Handicapped students referred to in this project are those who have been defined by the U.S. Office of Education as "students who have a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The term does not include children who have learning problems which are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor handicaps, of mental retardation, or emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage."¹ The students to whom this project refers include

Learning Handicapped elementary school youngsters who have been placed in a Resource Specialist Program. They are in the regular classroom setting for the majority of the day and they obtain assistance from a Resource Specialist on a regular basis, which usually indicates thirty to ninety minutes of service each day.

Because many of these students have difficulty in the areas of spelling, reading, and written communication, there is a great need for curriculum which will assist in helping students with specific learning handicaps. Many skills required for spelling, reading, and writing are difficult for students who have learning problems. One or more deficiencies in the areas of visual and auditory memory, discrimination, perception, and sequencing can all contribute to further problems in the Language Arts subjects. Often the curriculum which is found in our elementary schools does not contain the variety of materials needed for youngsters who have specific needs.

Language Arts software selections especially adapted for use with Learning Handicapped elementary students are needed to supplement the curriculum already existing in classrooms. The selections should be written in a sequential manner that are appropriate for students who are already having difficulty with necessary elementary Language Arts skills. This project will propose to fill the gap in already existing spelling, reading, and writing selections.

Preliminary research in the fields of Language Arts and Computer Assisted Instruction, indicates that one could develop a two week classroom unit that would meet the following overall goals:

1. Improve student composition skills in sentence construction and development.
2. Improve student composition skills in editing of existing work.
3. Improve student computer awareness.
4. Improve student self concept through a series of successful
experiences in composition and the use of computers.

The basis for the work in composition will be the techniques of sentence combining. These techniques have been used for some time by Language Arts teachers to improve student composition skills. The theory is that the student combines two or more short sentences into one larger sentence. For example:

I have a dog.
My dog is big.
My dog is friendly.

Becomes:

I have a big, friendly dog.

This requires that the student recognizes and understands the content of the sentences, correctly parses the sentence parts, and transforms the parts of two or more sentences into a new whole. The result for the student is not only an exercise in higher level thinking, but also improved written work as longer and more sophisticated sentences replace short and choppy ones. One by-product of these sentence combining exercises is improved editing skills (as the student corrects his own work).

The vehicle for this unit will be a microcomputer and the software text files developed for a word processing program.

This project will unite these two areas — Sentence Combining and Computerized Word Processing — in a series of lessons and exercises both on and off the computer. The work will produce a teacher's guide, a student guide, paper exercises, and software for computer exercises. The unit will require one half hour a day for two weeks to complete.
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

To study the research related to this topic, it was necessary to review two major fields. The first was the teaching of Language Arts, and in particular the techniques of Sentence Combining and the teaching of Language Arts as it relates to Special Education Elementary students. The other major field to be reviewed was Computer Assisted Instruction and in particular how computers and especially word processors were used to teach Language Arts, how they were used with Special Education Elementary students, and how effective Computer Assisted Instruction was overall.

A variety of resources were researched. After defining the fields of research the first step was to order a computer search of the Educational Resource Information Center data bank for items relating to the keywords Learning Handicaps, Language Handicaps, Word Processors, Microcomputers, Writing Skills, Sentence Combining, Generative Grammar, Language Arts, and similar areas. Secondly, it was necessary to consult the Education Index for journal and magazine articles relating to the appropriate subjects. At the same time, books and instructional materials relating to Computer Assisted Instruction and instruction in Language Arts were consulted for relevant items—particularly items on sentence combining. Finally this was combined with personal experience gained from visits to the Region XIII (Riverside–San Bernardino County Schools) Computer Demonstration Lab, various computer stores, and other
experiences with computers.

In this research, certain questions became important.

1. Is Sentence Combining a valuable exercise for teaching Language Arts?
   How effective is Sentence Combining?
   What is the most effective type of Sentence Combining exercise?
   What does the research show about Sentence Combining with Learning Handicapped students?

2. Does using a microcomputer, and particularly word processing software, improve student performance in writing skills?
   Is Computer Assisted Instruction effective?
   How are computers with word processing software used to teach Language Arts?
   What is the best software to use for this curriculum unit?

If one is to judge by the composition books published over the last century, students have for some time been asked to combine short, choppy sentences into more fluent statements. One researcher claims "Sentence Combining exercises could probably be traced back to Quintilian," although she confines herself to a history that reaches back only a hundred or so years. Sentence Combining has been related to "transformational grammar," and "generative rhetoric," as well as the obvious "just getting the student to write more." Rose summarizes the justifications that teachers have used for these exercises. Her analysis shows that sentence combining has been used as a basis for fluency, an illustration of the theoretical underpinnings of transformational grammar, a good discipline for the logical faculties, the vehicle to teach editing skills, an expander of the imagination, practice in manipulating the sentence pattern under the rules of the structural grammar paradigm.... Composition books give several even more difficult

to understand justifications. Overall, however, many English teachers have for many years seen the value of Sentence Combining.

Research indicates that sentence combining is effective, although there does not seem to be much agreement on why. One study, done with college freshmen illustrates the effectiveness. The study describes its careful controlled experiment with eight groups of randomly selected subjects and concludes that "The post-test differences between the experimental and control groups in clause length, T-unit length, and words in final free modifiers, are all statistically significant at the .001 level of confidence." Furthermore, the author points out, when post-test essays were holistically scored for overall quality of writing, the groups who had practiced sentence combining scored better (significant at .01 level)\(^3\). Studies such as this, done with students at other levels, have been reported and summarized in various places. The value of Sentence Combining as one tool for the composition teacher is apparently not disputed. Even those who warn of its misuse and shortcomings concede that "research has consistently shown students writing improves after they do sentence combining exercises."\(^4\)

There is some question as to the depth of learning that takes place, the amount of retention of the changes wrought by sentence combining exercises. Mellon has noted that two year follow-up studies show no significant differences between sentence combiners and control

\(^3\)Lester Faigley, "Generative Rhetoric and Syntactic Fluency," College Composition and Communication, May 1979, p. 178

groups. Crowhurst counters that those who have been taught Sentence Combining techniques use them more to please the teacher doing the study than because the longer, more fluent sentences are part of their repertoire. Others have noted that one result of Sentence Combining instruction may be an overemphasis on length as a measure of quality in a sentence. Put in perspective, these complaints about Sentence Combining have diminished little of its popularity among Language Arts teachers.

Despite this apparently widespread use of the technique, the research has failed to show any studies of how Sentence Combining has been tested for effectiveness with Learning Handicapped students, and especially elementary aged Learning Handicapped students. It would therefore be an extrapolation from current research on regular students or simply a fallacious assumption if one claimed that Sentence Combining techniques should work with the elementary aged Learning Handicapped student.

The "most effective" type of Sentence Combining exercise has changed slightly over the last century, depending on the rationale used for assigning the exercise. A step-by-step guide for why and how to use Sentence Combining is presented by Broadhead and Belin. In their twelve step analysis, they not only explain the theoretical underpinnings of Sentence Combining, but give the curriculum designer specific guidelines. The current theory is that Sentence Combining works because it draws on skills children knew even before anyone told them of

the rules of grammar. The analysis of Smith concludes that Sentence Combining will be useful as a diagnostic tool for writing problems, but is most useful when used in a context of discussion with the learner about how it works. From his remarks one can conclude that this curriculum project must provide not just the practice exercises in Sentence Combining for the student, but also guides that show the teacher how to relate the exercises to their theoretical bases. Furthermore, it seems from Smith's remarks that the most effective Sentence Combining exercises will be those that encourage students not merely to replace or relocate words, but also to relate and transform ideas.

Research in the field of Computer Assisted Instruction suffers from enthusiasm. Perhaps all educational research has similar defects, but it seems that when a teacher gets near a microcomputer all thoughts of control groups, pre- and post testing, and statistical significance disappear. Educators are so emotionally involved with the new technology—either afraid or overly enthusiastic— that they don't take time to find out how effective it really is. Of course this shortcoming may be explained by the desire most teachers have to do things students seem to like. And students do seem to like working with computers. A result of this phenomenon is that much of the "research" about Computer Assisted Instruction says 'We tried it and we really liked it.'

One research project, headed by James Kulik, illustrates the overall value of Computer Assisted Instruction, and in so doing makes a.

telling comment on the state of the research. Kulik and his colleagues surveyed some 250 "studies" relating to the use of computers of all sorts in education. The first task was to reject any of the 250 studies that did not meet the requirements of proper educational research. When they finished this task they were left with only 51 solid pieces of research. All of the rejected works were flawed in some way, and many of these were simply anecdotal reports that said so and so had tried such and such with a computer and found that the students liked it, worked harder because of it, and wanted to do it some more. But what did the good research show? The next task was to develop "Standard Scores" from the many disparate results from so many studies. Through statistical analysis Kulik found that students who used Computers in instruction would score at the sixty-third percentile in subjects learned with computer assistance (while students who did not use Computers would score at the fiftieth).7 This conclusion supports the anecdotal reports found elsewhere that seems so enthusiastic about the effectiveness of Computer Assisted Instruction.

Research into Computer Assisted Instruction, and a personal search for good software, indicated that much of the studies, and much of the software, were centered on Mathematics and not Language Arts. Although the inner workings of the machine are mysterious, it appears that math software is easier to write, easier to use, and easier to include in studies on the effectiveness of computers in education. Perhaps this stems from the computer's roots in the world of mathematics, perhaps it stems from some bias on the part of computer

7Gerald Bracey, "What the Research Shows," Electronic Learning, November, 1982, p.81
programmers in favor of numbers over words, perhaps it is based in the very difference in the natures of Math and Language. Nevertheless, while students have been provided with a number of good Mathematics drill and practice programs, good Language Arts software is hard to find. And more importantly to this paper, there is relatively little research about the use of computers in the Language Arts.

What research there is on the use of computers in Language Arts instruction is not experimental research. True, some studies have been conducted on Spelling, and there are references to studies on grammar, and descriptions of how computers are, or could be, used to diagnose or place students, or drill on vocabulary or some small aspect of reading comprehension. So, the research indicates that the use of computers in instruction opens these very exciting possibilities. But there was no properly conducted scientific experiment to show that overall student writing skills can be improved with the help of a computer. An example of the anecdotal nature of the research is found in an article by Piper. The article asserts that there are many uses for a word processor in education. It lists some of the features of word processors that make them better than pencils and paper. It explains how she wrote and had her students do sentence combining exercises. It summarizes how the students "eagerly" attacked the work and printed the testimonials of four fifth graders who really liked the computer. It lists seven pieces of advice for a teacher who would like to use a word processor in the classroom. And it summarizes: "From the student comments and the overall results of the study, we concluded that the microcomputer can be used as an effective tool for structured writing instruction."8 Nowhere in the article does Piper refer to the

The experimental method which allowed her to make this statement.

The answer to the second major research question—the effectiveness of Computer Assisted Instruction to teach Language Arts—is that nobody really knows. There is no body of scientifically researched data that would show that computers and word processors significantly affect writing skills.

Under the question of the effectiveness of computers in teaching Language Arts there are two other questions. One regards why one would use a word processor, and the other is which word processor to use.

Word Processors have been used in business for some time. Dedicated word processors are specialized computers that are designed to use software that makes manipulation of words relatively simple. After the microcomputer was developed in 1977, it took quite a long time before software was designed to enable the micro to act like a dedicated word processor. With the advent in 1980 of special software packages, the micro at last added word processing to its capabilities. Word processing enables a typist to enter words on the keyboard. The monitor screen takes the place of a piece of paper. The magic of word processing happens when something needs changing. A word processor can delete and insert text, can find particular words, and can replace certain expressions (names, addresses, or any other words) with a few key strokes. It can format and justify text automatically. These abilities enable the author to write the text, change it, review and otherwise edit it, and then print it out. Few people who have had access to a good word processor go back to the old-fashioned typewriter.

Published articles over the last two years have recognized the impact of word processing software on education. It must be noted
here, as Schwartz points out, that the Writing Process is a discovery process. This contrasts with the notion current twenty years ago that one wrote from an outline. Current opinion holds that the first draft of a composition should allow the author to let his ideas flow. If this is true, a tool that allows easy changes in what is written will help. Authors are encouraged to put things up on the screen, and see how they look. Schwartz summarizes "The new tool can 1) reduce initial fears of making mistakes, and 2) encourage a great willingness to fully explore meanings." On a more practical level, word processors enable students who do not have good handwriting to compose legible work. This legibility pays off. When a student can read his work, he can more easily correct it. Because of the communal nature of the composition (the computer is usually in a conspicuous part of the classroom, and often draws a crowd), and because mistakes are so easily fixed, authors learn to take comments and criticisms, and edit their work. In short, there are a number of articles that extoll the superiority of word processors as writing tools.

A year ago it would have been difficult to find a good word processor to use in this project. At that time software was expensive and powerful. Packages like Wordstar, Applewriter, Word Pro, and others offered capabilities that were required in a business setting. And the prices ranged upwards from $200. At about that time, however, the Bank Street College of Education in New York was trying to choose a word processing package to conduct an experiment using computers in the language arts. They were not looking for one with a lot of power, but


12
one that could be easily learned by children. They were disappointed in their search, and therefore set out to write their own word processing software. For example, in one article as late as October 1982, Bradley specified that mnemonic commands (like Control-D for Delete) should be replaced by commands that make sense to children (Like Control-E for Erase). The Bank Street College, however, had more exacting standards— the commands should not have to be memorized at all. The result is the Bank Street Writer. This program has set a standard that other software companies are imitating (and surpassing). The software is extremely easy to learn, and inexpensive. It is considered so important to educators that in an article recommending ideal software libraries for budgets ranging from "under $350," all the way up to "over $2200," the Bank Street Writer was the first acquisition recommended by the various experts.  

Summary of Literature:

This review has demonstrated that this project will be combining two aspects of Language Arts Instruction that are very different. The techniques of sentence combining are very old. They have been used for quite some time with positive results. They help students increase fluency in composition. The techniques of word processing, however, are very new. Word processors have been around for only a short

10Virginia Bradley, "Improving Students' Writing with Microcomputers," Language Arts, October, 1982, p. 740.
time, and the benefits to student writing are, as far as one can tell from the research, only promises. The promises are, however, widely believed among Language Arts instructors.
With this project, the teacher of an elementary Learning Handicapped student is be able to conduct a series of ten half hour instructional sessions. This project produces a teacher's guide, paper and pencil student lessons in sentence combining, and diskette textfiles for computer word processing student lessons.

To implement this learning program the teacher needs access to an Apple II computer with monitor and one or more disk drives. These computers are rather common in schools, and through Apple Computer Company's Kids Can't Wait Program, every public school in California was given one such system. An Apple IIe system is preferable to a plain II or a II+ because of the improved keyboard, but the use of the older computers does not create any real problems in implementing this program. The teacher also needs a copy of The Bank Street Writer. The Bank Street Writer is packaged in two versions. One version, by Broderbund Software, retails for $69, but can be purchased through mail order and in some discount houses for as little as $44 at the time of this writing. The other version, by Scholastic Magazine, is the same software, but is packaged with a teacher's guide containing helpful hints and classroom exercises. The Scholastic version costs $99 with no discounting available. Both versions contain more than adequate documentation on the use of the software (of course, the software is so
easy to use the documentation is redundant). On the back side of each program diskette (in both versions) is a special tutorial program to show how to operate the program itself. Both versions come with backups; two backups are packaged with the Scholastic version.

It should be noted that to use the results of this project, the Bank Street Writer and an Apple computer are required. However, with a little effort, the materials developed in this project could be adapted for use with other word processors and other computers.

The teacher's guide that is provided in this project includes the statement of objectives and description of the overall program, and copies of the student work and a hard copy of the diskette text files for student lessons. Both sets of student work contain annotations for the teacher that describe how and why the work is to be done, warn of problems, provide for extension of the basic work, provide possible answers, and in other ways make the teacher more effective. The teacher's guide does not cover instructions in how to use the computer or word processing software because such introduction is redundant considering the inherent ease of use and the documentation provided with the software.

The ten student lessons follow an established format. Each lesson focuses on combining sentences. They begin with the simplest type of sentence combining—that of combining two sentences with a simple modifier into one sentence containing that modifier, and become progressively more difficult until the student can combine subjects or predicates or both. These ten lessons are expected to take one half hour per day for a period of two weeks. They can be used by single students or in groups of up to three students at a time.

As students use the learning materials that are designed as a
result of this project, students will become more fluent in writing, will become more willing and able to correct their written work, and will learn to work with a microcomputer. Stated more formally, the student objectives include the following:

1. Given a set of two or more short sentences on a common theme, the student will combine the shorter sentences into one longer sentence, retaining the content and meaning of the set of shorter sentences.

2. Given a set of two or more sentences on a common theme, and a complete sentence with some of the elements of the shorter sentences, the student will demonstrate editing skills by using the word processing facilities of the computer software to add the missing elements from the shorter sentences to the longer one, making a grammatically correct sentence containing all the content and meaning of the shorter sentences.

3. After an initial instructional period, the student will demonstrate competency in the use of a computer by demonstrating to the teacher the following skills without further teacher assistance: starting the computer and software; loading text files for processing in the computer; saving text files; turning the computer off and replacing software and data disks to their safe storage.

This project will leave to later researchers the validation of the belief that the success of the student in the lessons and methods designed as a result of this project will actually improve student writing skills or computer awareness.
Lesson One

Dear Student,

Welcome to a new way to learn. Together with your teacher and this computer, you will soon be learning how to put together short, choppy sentences into longer, more grown-up sentences. Here is an example:

I have a dog.
My dog is black.

These sentences are both good sentences, but if you wrote all your work with such short sentences, your writing would be hard to read. Look at this sentence:

I have a black dog.

Do you see how both of the short sentences can be put together into one longer sentence?

Here are two sentences. One word from the second sentence could be put into the first sentence. That special word is written in all CAPITAL letters.

My father bought a car.
The car is NEW.

When you move the special word from the second sentence into the first, you get:

My father bought a NEW car.

Now, you try it. Here are two sentences. The second sentence has a word (in CAPITALS) that can be put into the first sentence. Type the new sentence below the sentences.

I have a bike.
My bike is RED.

YOUR SENTENCE:

***

Your sentence should say "I have a red bike." That one sentence sounds better than the two sentences you started with. The word you moved from the second sentence to the first was a word that described what you were talking about in the first sentence. Let's make sure you can find words that describe. In
these sentences, find which words describe:

We live in a house.
Our house is white.
Type the word that describes: ***

I have a grandmother.
She is nice.
Type the word that describes: ***

My sister has a dress.
Her dress is red.
Type the word that describes. ***

Now you are ready to change the sentences around all by yourself. After each pair of sentences, move the word from the second sentence into the first. To do this, erase the stars (*** ) and type in the word from the second sentence.

I love my *** doll.
My doll is old.

Mommy likes my *** brother.
My brother is noisy.

Joe drew a *** line.
It was straight.

Let's make it just a bit harder. In the next three sentences, there are no stars to show where to put the special describing word. You have to figure it out all by yourself. Change the first sentence so that the describing word from the second sentence is in the right place. Good luck.

I can use a computer.
The computer is smart.

I ate a banana.
The banana was yellow.

Dad has a jacket.
His jacket is yellow.

Jan fixed her bicycle.
The bicycle was broken.

He drove down the street.
The street was busy.
LESSON ONE

The dog buried his bone.
The bone was white.

Sam eats his dinner.
His dinner is tasty.

I painted a picture.
My picture was pretty.

Jack plays the piano.
The piano is old.

Sue cut her hair.
Her hair was long.

Mary lost her wallet.
Her wallet was new.

Jim took a vacation.
His vacation was fun.

Mother hemmed her dress.
Her dress was formal.

The rabbit hops through the meadow.
The meadow is green.
Dear Student,

Welcome to Lesson Two. In this lesson we will learn more about how to make two short sentences into one larger sentence. When you get good at making longer more grown-up sentences your writing will be better. Look at these two sentences.

Mike hit the ball.
Steve hit the ball.

Do you see that in both sentences somebody hit the ball? Can you figure out a way to say how both people hit the ball in one sentence?

Mike and Steve hit the ball.

RIGHT!!!

If two people are doing the same thing, then we can use the word AND to put them together in the same sentence, and our writing will sound better and more grown up. Look at a few more samples:

Bob took a walk.
Mary took a walk.

Mom went to the store.
Dad went to the store.

The teacher went to the office.
The student went to the office.

Can you put these pairs together so they sound more grown-up?

Bob AND MARY took a walk.
Mom AND DAD went to the store.
The teacher AND THE STUDENT went to the office.

Get the idea? First you find out who is doing what in the sentences. Then you put them together with an AND. Simple isn't it?

Let's make sure you can find out who is doing something in these sentences. Where you see the stars, type out who is doing
something in the sentences:

Tom saw the zoo.
Who did something? ***

Mom cooked dinner.
Who did something? ***

The spider spun his web.
Who did something? ***

Your answers should be:
Tom
Mom
spider (or The spider)

If you did well on finding out who is doing something in those sentences, you are ready to make short sentences into longer sentences by using the word AND. From each pair of sentences below, make one sentence:

John did a dance.
Sherry did a dance.
The teacher used a computer.
I used a computer.
Jason wrote a letter.
Mark wrote a letter.
My mother ate lunch.
I ate lunch.
Gary played tennis.
Mark played tennis.
Marge learned how to play chess.
I learned how to play chess.
Tigers are animals.
Elephants are animals.
Larry went to the mall.
I went to the mall.
Reading can be fun.
Talking can be fun.
Dad planted seeds.
I planted seeds.

Terry washed clothes.
Wendy washed clothes.

He saw the airplane.
I saw the airplane.

Lou swam in the pool.
I swam in the pool.

Grandma talked on the phone.
I talked on the phone.
LESSON THREE

Dear Student,

Welcome to Lesson Three. In this lesson we will learn more about how to make two short sentences into one larger sentence. Look at these two sentences:

The sun is shining.
It is warm outside.

Do you see that these two sentences are related? That means that they are connected, and are talking about two things that "go together". Can you figure out a way to put these two short sentences together by using the word AND?

The sun is shining, AND it is warm outside.

RIGHT!!!
He told us a joke.
He made us laugh.

Can you put those pairs of sentences together so they sound more grown-up?

The dog is big, AND he does tricks.
Dad took us to the park, AND we stayed a long time.

He told us a joke, AND he made us laugh.

Those sentences do sound better, don't they? When you have two short sentences that are related, they can be put together with the word AND between them.

Look at the sentences below. Where you see the stars, type out the word YES if they are related.

I took a walk.
It started to rain.***

My book is about horses.
It is fun to read.***

The bus driver is nice.
He takes us to school.***

Your answers should all be YES!

If you understand what we have done so far, you are ready to put more sentences together by using a comma, the word "and" and a lower case letter. Make one sentence from each of the pairs of sentences below:

Tom plays soccer.
He likes it very much.

We got tickets for the game.
We can't wait to go.

We walked to John's house.
He had lunch for us.

The clouds were pretty.
They were moving slowly.

I cleaned up my room.
My mother was happy.

The baby was smiling.
She was ready to go for a ride.

I found my keys.
I put them back on the desk.

It snowed last night.
We played outside today.

Sue got on the airplane.
Off she went to Dallas.

We drank our milk.
We liked it.

It is warm outside.
We want to play in the pool.

Tim broke his leg.
He will miss playing baseball.
Dear Student,

Welcome to Lesson Four. In this lesson we will again learn more about how to make two short, choppy sentences into one longer sentence. Look at these two sentences:

Mary's bike rattles.
Mary's bike squeaks.

Do you see that in both sentences, Mary's bike is doing something? Can you figure out a way to say what Mary's bike is doing in just one sentence?

Mary's bike rattles and squeaks.

RIGHT!!!

If someone or something is doing two things, then we can use the word AND to put them together in the same sentence. Our writing will then sound better and more grown-up. Look at these samples:

Mother bakes pies.
Mother bakes cookies.

Sam's shoes are new.
Sam's shoes are clean.

I like reading.
I like science.

Can you put these pairs of sentences together so they aren't so choppy?

Mother bakes pies AND COOKIES.
Sam's shoes are new AND CLEAN.
I like reading AND SCIENCE.

Do those make sense? First find out who is doing what in the sentences. Then you put them together with an "and".
LESSON FOUR

Let’s make sure you understand. Where you see the stars, type out what is being done in each sentence.

Dad plays golf.
   What is being done?***

The lion roars.
   What does the lion do?***

The fireman puts out fires.
   What does the fireman do?***

Your answers should be:

   golf
   roar (roars)
   puts out fires

If you did well at figuring out the samples above, you are ready to make short sentences into larger ones by using the word "and". From each pair of sentences below, make one sentence.

The cow eats corn.
The cow eats grass.

Janie mends shirts.
Janie mends pants.

The principal helps teachers.
The principal helps students.

Bob's boat sails.
Bob's boat races.

The beach is crowded.
The beach is hot.

The water was nice.
The water was cold.

Camping is fun.
Camping is different.
Newspapers give news.
Newspapers give weather.

California is big.
California is pretty.

The bear danced.
The bear waved.

Babies are soft.
Babies are cuddly.

The ice cream cone dripped.
The ice cream cone melted.
Dear Student,

Welcome to Lesson Five. In this lesson we will learn how to make one large sentence from two sentences that end in the same way. This lesson is a little like Lesson Two, but there is a slight difference. Look at these two sentences:

Don runs fast.
Brian runs fast.

Do you see that in both sentences, someone runs fast? Can you figure out a way to say how both boys run fast in one sentence?

Don and Brian run fast.

RIGHT!!!

If two people or things are doing the same thing, then we can use the word "and" to put them together in the same sentence. Our writing won't sound so choppy then.

Look at a few more samples:

The teacher reads with us.
The aide reads with us.

Dave chops wood.
Stan chops wood.

The lion is tame.
The tiger is tame.

Can you put those pairs of sentences together so they sound more grown-up?

The teacher AND THE AIDE READ with us.
Dave AND STAN CHOP wood.
The lion AND THE TIGER ARE tame.
First you figure out who is doing what in the sentences. Then you put them together with the word "and". One thing you have to remember is that the action word "reads" or the state of being word "is", which are called verbs, have to be changed a little bit.

Notice how the word "reads" becomes "read" when you put the sentences together. The "s" is dropped. The same thing happens to the word "chops". The "s" is dropped and becomes "chop". In the last sample, "is" is the word that is changed when you put the two short sentences together. "Is" becomes "are" in order for the sentence to be correct and for it to SOUND right.

In the following sentences, where you see the stars, type out the action or state of being word:

Corn grows tall.***
He swims in a pool.***
Snow is cold.***
The rug is clean.***

Your answers should be:

grows
swims
is
is

If you didn't have any trouble with putting in those correct answers, you should be ready to make two short sentences into one longer sentence. Remember to use "and" and to change the action or state of being word. From each pair of sentences below, make one sentence:

Andrew opens the door.
Patrick opens the door.

A pencil is straight.
A ruler is straight.

Carrie sings loudly.
Martha sings loudly.

The desk is made of wood.
The table is made of wood.
Football is fun to watch.  
Soccer is fun to watch.

Betty takes dance lessons.  
Hank takes dance lessons.

Tommy writes neatly.  
Jeff writes neatly.

Tony sits near the blackboard.  
Mike sits near the blackboard.

The apple is red.  
The tomato is red.

Nancy looks tired.  
Stacy looks tired.

The bird is flying.  
The airplane is flying.

The monkey is laughing.  
The clown is laughing.
LESSON SIX

Dear Student,

Welcome to Lesson Six. In this lesson, we will learn even more about how to make two short sentences into one larger sentence by using the word "but".

Look at these two sentences:

I wanted the coat.
It cost too much.

Do you see that the sentences are related? Can you figure out a way to make them into one longer sentence?

I wanted the coat, but it cost too much.

RIGHT!!!

When two short sentences are related, we can write them as one long sentence by:

1. changing the period to a comma
2. adding the word "but"
3. then beginning the second sentence with a lower case letter

Sometimes sentences are put together by using "and" and sometimes by using "but".

Look at a few more samples:

We wanted to play outside.
It was raining.

She wanted to live in the mountains.
She didn't like snow.

I went to the store.
I found it was closed.

Can you put these pairs together?
LESSON SIX

We wanted to play outside, but it was raining.

She wanted to live in the mountains, but she didn't like snow.

I went to the store, but I found it was closed.

Get the idea?

First you look at the two sentences and figure out how they are related. If using "but" sounds better than "and", then put the two sentences together that way.

Look at the pairs of sentences below. If they are related and could be put together by using "but", then type out YES where the stars are:

The policeman saw the robber.
The robber ran away.***

I want to bake cookies.
I'm all out of flour.***

I almost caught the fish.
He got away.***

Your answers should all be YES!

If what we have done so far makes sense to you, you are ready to put more sentences together by using:

1. a comma
2. the word "but"
3. a lower case letter

From each pair of sentences below, make one sentence.

I like playing tennis.
The courts are always crowded.

I tried calling home.
I got a "busy" signal.

Jan needed a new car.
She couldn't afford it.
LESSON SIX

It was cold outside.
The flowers were still alive.

It's fun to visit Hawaii.
It's so far away.

I went to visit Ed.
He was at work.

My paper was ripped.
I could still read it.

I went to Disneyland.
I didn't see Donald Duck.

My teacher is nice.
He gives too much homework!

I waited for the elevator.
Someone said it was broken.

We stopped for a picnic lunch.
There were too many ants.

My mother called me.
I couldn't hear her.
LESSON SEVEN

Dear Student,

Welcome to Lesson Seven. In this lesson, we will learn how to pull out several words from one sentence and combine them into another sentence.

Look at these two sentences:
That girl goes to my school.
She is at the store.

Do you see that the two sentences are related? Do you see that we can combine the sentences to make one longer sentence? Can you figure out how to put these sentences together?

That girl at the store goes to my school.
RIGHT!!!

Let's look at the next few pairs of sentences:
That kitten lives next door.
It's in our yard.

The key fits my front door.
The key is on the table.

The shoes need polishing.
The shoes are in the closet.

They should look like this:
That kitten in our yard lives next door.
The key on the table fits my front door.
The shoes in the closet need polishing.

Did you see how we put a group of words from the second sentence into the first sentence? Did you notice that there are NOT any commas in the sentences?

Let's make sure you understand. Where you see stars, type out the words that will be pulled from sentence two and placed
LESSON SEVEN

in sentence one:

The bakery has good cakes.
The bakery is down the hill.***

The bird is singing sweetly.
The bird is in the nest.***

The nurse takes good care of me.
The nurse is from Canada.***

Your answers should be:

down the hill
in the nest
from Canada

If you had no trouble with those samples, you should be able to continue with the following. Type in the longer sentence that can be made from the two shorter pairs of sentences below:

The bears enjoy seeing people.
The bears are at the zoo.

The sailboat has large sails.
The sailboat is on the lake.

The boy visited the country.
The boy is from the city.

The mice are noisy.
The mice are under the porch.

The girl lives nearby.
The girl is with her mother.

The toys should be put away.
The toys are on the bed.

The dishes need washing.
The dishes are in the sink.

The lady came to visit Calif.  
The lady is from New York.

The horse wants to run.    
The horse is in the stable.  

The mailman has a package for us.    
The mailman is at the door.

The wedding ceremony was beautiful.    
The wedding ceremony was in the park.

That magazine has good stories.    
The magazine is over on the chair.
LESSON EIGHT

Dear Student,

Welcome to Lesson Eight. In this lesson, we will learn another way to combine two short related ideas into one sentence.

Look at these two sentences:

Shadow is our pet cat.
Shadow is Siamese.

Do you see that these two sentences are related? Can you figure out a way to put them together to make one sentence?

Shadow, our pet cat, is Siamese.

RIGHT!!!

Did you see how we put part of the first sentence (our pet cat) into the middle of the second sentence? Did you notice that there are commas before and after "our pet cat"? That helps to describe Shadow and could be taken out of the sentence. It would still make sense, wouldn't it?

Shadow is Siamese.

Let's look at several samples. The words in all capitals can be put into the second sentence.

Miss Jones is A SCHOOL TEACHER.
Miss Jones lives next door.

The volkswagen is OUR NEW CAR.
The volkswagen is red.

Janet is A GOOD SINGER.
Janet sings in the choir.

Can you write the new sentence from each pair so they sound more grown-up?
They should look like these:
Miss Jones, a school teacher, lives next door.
The volkswagen, our new car, is red.
Janet, a good singer, sings in the choir.

Put the describing part of the first sentence into the middle of the second sentence.
Let's make sure you understand. Where you see the stars, type out the words that will have a comma before and after them:

Linda is a good actress.
Linda works in Hollywood.***

Tom is our neighbor.
Tom is very helpful.***

Christmas is my favorite holiday.
Christmas comes in December.***

Your answers should be:

a good actress
our neighbor
my favorite holiday

If you did well at figuring out the describing words from the first sentence of each pair, you are ready to try these:

Chris is a new student.
Chris sits next to me.

Red is my favorite color.
Red is the color of my new bike.

My house is on the ocean.
My house is very pretty.
LESSON EIGHT

July is my vacation month.
July is coming up soon.

Mr. Miller is a dairy farmer.
Mr. Miller lives in Wisconsin.

Security-Pacific is my neighborhood bank.
Security-Pacific takes good care of my money.

Roses are pretty red flowers.
Roses smell very sweet.

Dinner is my favorite meal.
Dinner is eaten at 6:00 p.m.

The beach is a fun place to meet people.
The beach is nearby.

Turtles are slow-walking animals.
Turtles are nice to have as pets.

P.E. is my favorite part of the school day.
P.E. is fun to have outdoors.

McDonalds is a popular restaurant.
McDonalds likes kids!
LESSON NINE

Dear Student,

Welcome to Lesson Nine. In this lesson, you will learn how to put three short sentences together to make one longer sentence.

Look at these three sentences:

The dancer was graceful.
The dancer was young.
The dancer was a ballerina.

Do you see that the three sentences are related? Type out below the words in the first two sentences that describe the dancer.

You should have typed:

graceful
young

Type out below what happened to the dancer:

Your answer should be:

was a ballerina

Using what you have learned so far, can you figure out a way to put them together to make one longer sentence? Type your answer in below:

The graceful, young dancer was a ballerina.

RIGHT!!!
LESSON NINE

Did you notice that there should be a comma between the two describing words (graceful and young)?

To make sure you understand, try the same thing in the sentences below. Type in the two describing words and then what happened to the person, animal, or thing:

The banana was yellow.
The banana was ripe.
The banana was eaten by Ricky.***

The baby was cute.
The baby was happy.
The baby was holding a rattle.***

Your answers should be:

yellow
ripe
eaten by Ricky

cute
happy
holding a rattle

Because there are three sentences to put together in this lesson, the following may be a bit more difficult. Just look at the samples above if you forget how to combine them.

The puppy is small.
The puppy is playful.
The puppy is in the front yard.

The plant is green.
The plant is healthy.
The plant is in the window.

The doctor was kind.
The doctor was helpful.
The doctor fixed my broken arm.
LESSON NINE

The moon was pretty.  
The moon was full.  
The moon helped to see.

The pond was small.  
The pond was clear.  
The pond was filled with frogs.

The rocking chair is comfortable.  
The rocking chair is brown.  
The rocking chair needs repair.

The girl is tall.  
The girl is friendly.  
The girl rides on my bus.

The movie was short.  
The movie was funny.  
The movie was about hiking.

The baseball player is young.  
The baseball player is slender.  
The baseball player runs fast.

The rabbit is furry.  
The rabbit is little.  
The rabbit hops in the field.

The orange was juicy.  
The orange was sweet.  
The orange was in my lunch box.
Dear Student,

Welcome to Lesson Ten, your last lesson. This will be a review of the last nine lessons. You have learned different ways of putting two or three short, choppy sentences together to make one longer, grown-up sentence.

You learned how to find a describing word from one sentence and put it into the other sentence:

I have a dog.
The dog is black.

Do you remember how we put these together? Type in your answer below:

That's right!!
I have a black dog.

You learned how to put two sentences together where two different people, animals, or things were doing the same thing:

Mike hit the ball.
Steve hit the ball.

Do you remember how we put these two sentences together? Type in the new sentence below:

That's right!!
Mike and Steve hit the ball.

You learned how to put two sentences together by using a comma and the word "and":

That's right!!
Mike and Steve hit the ball.
The sun is shining.
It is warm outside.

Can you type in the new combined sentence below?

That's correct!!
The sun is shining, and it is warm outside.

You also learned how to put two sentences together when one person or thing was doing the same thing:

Mary's bike rattles.
Mary's bike squeaks.

Type in below the new combined sentence:

Yes, that's it!!
Mary's bike rattles and squeaks.

You then learned something a bit more difficult. You put two sentences together which had two different people or things doing the same thing, but the action or state of being word had to change:

Don runs fast.
Bill runs fast.

How did we write that new combined sentence?
LESSON TEN

That's right!!  
Don and Bill run fast.

By Lesson Six, you were practicing how to combine two related sentences by using a comma and the word "but":

I wanted the coat.  
It cost too much.  

Remember how we put these together?

You did remember!!  
I wanted the coat, but it cost too much.

You then learned how to choose several words from one sentence and put it in another short sentence without using any commas:

That girl goes to my school.  
She is at the store.  

Do you remember how to put these two sentences together?

Yes, that's right!!  
That girl at the store goes to my school.
You then learned how to combine two sentences by choosing out several words from one sentence and putting them into the other sentence by using commas:

Shadow is our pet cat.
Shadow is Siamese.

Can you type in the new longer sentence?

Yes, you did understand that one!
Shadow, our pet cat, is Siamese.

Finally, you learned how to put three related sentences together by figuring out the describing words from the first two sentences, and putting them into the third sentence:

The dancer was graceful.
The dancer was young.
The dancer was a ballerina.

Remember how you made these into one longer sentence?

Yes, that's correct!!
The graceful, young dancer was a ballerina.

You are finished with all the sentence combining lessons. We hope that you had fun while you were learning. There is one
LESSON TEN

more Mastery Quiz which reviews all the different ways that you can put sentences together. Congratulations on all the hard work you put into this unit!
Lesson One
Mastery Quiz

Directions: Write one long sentence from each of the pairs of sentences below.

1. Mark took a ride.
   The ride was long.

2. I skated on the ice.
   The ice was cold.

3. Dad ate an apple.
   The apple was red.

4. Jerry made a go-cart.
   The go-cart was wooden.

5. I stayed at a hospital.
   The hospital was large.

6. Tom drank tea.
   The tea was hot.

7. Jenny cut some flowers.
   The flowers were pretty.

8. Bill sailed on the water.
   The water was smooth.

9. I fell on the sidewalk.
   The sidewalk was hard.

10. Judy ripped her dress.
    The dress was expensive.
Lesson Two

Mastery Quiz

Directions: Write one long sentence from each of the pairs of sentences below.

1. Scott walked to school.
   I walked to school.

2. Jim drank milk.
   John drank milk.

3. Dad flew a plane.
   I flew a plane.

4. Circles are shapes.
   Squares are shapes.

5. Carl watched a movie.
   I watched a movie.

6. Mr. Jones heard the dog.
   I heard the dog.

7. Vicki typed letters.
   Connie typed letters.

8. He painted the house.
   I painted the house.

9. Dave delivered newspapers.
   Don delivered newspapers.

10. Sue went to the circus.
    I went to the circus.
Lesson Three
Mastery Quiz

Directions: Write one long sentence from each of the pairs of sentences below.

1. My mom bought us a radio. We listened to our favorite songs.

2. I had a birthday party. We had lots of fun.

3. Joan played with the cat. Jill played with the dog.

4. My glasses helped me see. They fit just right.

5. I took a train to Oregon. It was a nice trip.

6. My favorite fruit is the banana. I eat one every day.

7. I like math in school. I get good grades in it.

8. Phil had blond hair. Curt had brown hair.

9. Grandpa lives close to us. He likes us to visit.

10. The basement is big. We store boxes there.
Lesson Four
Mastery Quiz

Directions: Write one long sentence from each of the pairs of sentences below.

1. I can ride horses.
   I can ride scooters.

2. Ned's dinner is good.
   Ned's dinner is hot.

3. My toy is fun.
   My toy is new.

4. I send letters.
   I send packages.

5. The backpack is roomy.
   The backpack is brown.

6. Matches can help us.
   Matches can harm us.

7. The light is big.
   The light is bright.

8. The porch needs painting.
   The porch needs fixing.

9. I like to eat pizza.
   I like to eat hamburgers.

10. The music is soft.
    The music is slow.
Lesson Five

Mastery Quiz

Directions: Write one long sentence from each of the pairs of sentences below.

1. Mom waters the flowers.
   Linda waters the flowers.

2. The man stands on the bus.
   The lady stands on the bus.

3. Jerry is working quietly.
   Victor is working quietly.

4. A grape is purple.
   A violet is purple.

5. Grandma walks to town.
   Grandpa walks to town.

6. A clown is silly.
   A monkey is silly.

7. Dad closes the window.
   Jamie closes the window.

8. Mrs. Smith is talking.
   Mrs. Davis is talking.

9. Steve catches the ball.
   Lou catches the ball.

10. The boy is eating.
    The girl is eating.
Lesson Six
Mastery Quiz

Directions: Write one long sentence from each of the pairs of sentences below.

1. I hoped to sell 12 candy bars.  
   I only sold 9 of them.

2. Billy wanted to go with us.  
   He had to study.

3. My bike's tire needs air.  
   I can still ride it.

4. It is a clear day.  
   It is too windy.

5. Tomorrow is the party.  
   I'm not quite ready for it.

6. The dishes are clean.  
   They need to be put away.

7. I like visiting my cousin.  
   He lives three hours away.

8. Tacos are fun to eat.  
   They can be messy!

9. I like going to school.  
   It's hard waking up each morning.

10. I tried to turn on the lights.  
    I couldn't find the light switch.
Lesson Seven

Mastery Quiz

Directions: Write one long sentence from each of the pairs of sentences below.

1. The toy should be moved.
The toy is on the stairs.

2. The clothes can go to Goodwill.
The clothes are in the attic.

3. The girl likes to jump rope.
The girl is with Sally.

4. The chickens lay eggs.
The chickens are on the farm.

5. The crayon can go into the box.
The crayon is under the sofa.

6. The jacket is yellow and red.
The jacket is in the car.

7. The book belongs to Tammy.
The book is on the desk.

8. The flowers can be picked.
The flowers are around the tree.

9. Rosie has a brand new wagon.
Rosie is from two blocks away.

10. The elephants perform for us.
The elephants are at the circus.
Directions: Write one long sentence from each of the pairs of sentences below.

1. David is ten years old.
   David goes to Thomas School.

2. Our T.V. is a Zenith.
   Our T.V. is in the living room.

3. Checkers is a fun board game.
   Checkers uses red and black pieces.

4. Tom is a highway patrolman.
   Tom has four children.

5. The giraffe is my favorite animal.
   The giraffe has a long neck.

6. Alex is a smart boy.
   Alex can help others learn.

7. A carrot is a good vegetable.
   A carrot is eaten by rabbits.

8. Maria is a good storyteller.
   Maria reads to us at the library.

9. Bowling is a fun sport.
   Bowling is good exercise!

10. Chad is a young doctor.
    Chad works in the hospital.
Lesson Nine
Mastery Quiz

Directions: Write one long sentence from each of the three sentences below.

1. The car is new.
The car is black.
The car is in our garage.

2. The apartment is bright.
The apartment is new.
The apartment is full of plants.

3. The cookies are moist.
The cookies are chewy.
The cookies were taken to school.

4. The kite is colorful.
The kite is box-like.
The kite is flown in the park.

5. The story is long.
The story is interesting.
The story is about the Pilgrims.

6. The cowboy is tall.
The cowboy is handsome.
The cowboy performed in the rodeo.

7. The socks are thick.
The socks are brown.
The socks are in Mike's drawer.

8. The tree is tall.
The tree is green.
The tree has flower blossoms.

9. The city is big.
The city is noisy.
The city has many people.
10. The milk is cold.
   The milk is chocolate.
   The milk tastes good.
Lesson Ten

Mastery Quiz

Directions: Write each set of 2 or 3 sentences into one longer sentence below.

1. The door is open.
   The breeze is coming through.

2. Melissa listens to the radio.
   Cathy listens to the radio.

3. The boy is blond-haired.
   The boy is blue-eyed.
   The boy sat in the front row.

4. I made a cake.
   The cake was chocolate.

5. Todd is a fifth grader.
   Todd delivers newspapers.

6. Doug saw the squirrel.
   I saw the squirrel.

7. The floor was slippery.
   The floor was wet.
   The floor was just mopped.

8. The sand is white.
   The sand is at the beach.

9. The puppy fetches balls.
   The puppy fetches newspapers.

10. I caught the ball.
    I couldn't hold on to it.
DESCRIPTION OF OVERALL PROGRAM

This computer assisted program has been developed for use by elementary Learning Handicapped students who are in a Resource Specialist Program. The ten student lessons focus on sentence combining, and begin with combining two sentences containing a simple modifier into one sentence containing that modifier, and become progressively more difficult until the student can combine subjects and/or predicates. Each lesson should first be completed on the computer, then followed up with a paper and pencil mastery quiz.

STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

After completing this entire unit, the student will have a better understanding of the following:

1. The student will better understand parts of sentences: subjects, predicates, modifiers, and conjunctions.

2. The student will become more fluent in writing and will know how to combine more easily two or more related sentences into one longer sentence.

3. The student will become more self-confident and willing and able to correct his/her own written work.

4. The student will become familiar with a microcomputer and will demonstrate skills such as turning the computer on and off, loading and saving text files, and handling diskettes correctly.

USING THE LESSONS

Assuming the student already knows how to start the computer and locate the correct file, he/she should begin with Lesson One. To do so, use the RETRIEVE option from the TRANSFER MENU. Type in the Lesson Name of LESSON1. Following up with paper and pencil exercises allows the teacher to keep student's mastery of each lesson on file and to detect problem areas. Each student should master each lesson with ninety percent accuracy before going on to the next lesson. Subsequent lessons may be used by retrieving the files named LESSON2, LESSON3, and so forth.
LIMITATIONS

This project will require that the writer learn not only about Sentence Combining and Word Processing, but be able to package that learning so that other teachers will be able to use it. This is a formidable task. Validating the usefulness of this learning with proper scientific research will have to be left to others.

This project relies on the research of others that Sentence Combining is worthwhile, and the impression left in the literature that word processing and Computer Assisted Instruction is an improvement over pencil and paper. When the project is finished, it may be found that these two elements are no more powerful in combination than the elements taken separately.

This curriculum unit can be used by other students with special needs. Special Education students who have been mainstreamed to varying degrees into the regular classroom setting could benefit from these lessons. The unit can easily be a supplement to what the regular classroom teacher has included in his/her Language Arts curriculum. These lessons would also help students who attend other Resource Programs such as those who qualify for Title I aid. Secondary students who have not already learned necessary writing skills would benefit from the review that this sequence of lessons has to offer. Not only secondary students, but adults who have had a difficult time with written communication or who are of another nationality, would profit from using this curriculum project. This project, therefore, has remedial uses for persons other than the Resource Specialist Learning Handicapped elementary students.
SUMMARY

This sentence combining curriculum unit to be used with a word processor was developed because there was a special need. The lessons included have helped to fill the gap that exists in well-written Language Arts software selections. The unit described can easily be utilized with elementary aged Learning Handicapped Students because the difficulty of the lessons increases in small increments and mastery of each is necessary before continuing to the next lesson. Objectives of the unit include helping the student become more familiar with a microcomputer, to become more fluent in writing, and to become more self-confident.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


