Preface

The Teaching Competence in Written Language program is intended for use by three different groups of professionals:

- Teachers and clinicians who work with children, adolescents, and adults with special needs in learning how to write competently. This would include, for example, children and teens with language disorders, learning disabilities, or any difficulty that makes written language expression a challenge. It also would include aphasic adults who have difficulty with written language.

- Regular education teachers who need a programmed approach to teaching composition and to addressing common errors in written expression; for example, comma splices, sentence fragments, or theme writing.

- English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers or any person teaching a second language to a child, teen, or adult. The sentence order taught by this program is an effective way of teaching oral word ordering in English as well as teaching composition skills.

For many people, writing is not an automatic process; rather, it requires a more specialized and systematic teaching or remedial plan. Because this program is systematic, individualized, and highly structured, the student moves effectively from idea, to sentence, to paragraphs, and then to themes in a step-by-step fashion. This program is appropriate for use with individuals or groups. Writing practice is combined with strategic practice in the different uses and kinds of writing to develop competence in written language expression. This program is outlined clearly and provides the professional with all necessary steps, techniques, and materials to implement a sound teaching or remedial system.

This is the second edition of the Teaching Competence in Written Language program. Many of the lessons have been changed, and new lessons have been added. These additions mark a significant improvement in the program. Lessons addressing common errors and more difficult writing skills have been added or expanded. More work with proofreading, error correction, and modeling has been included. Altogether, the program is more comprehensive and provides more practice of different types.
Introduction

Writing is an integral part of modern life. Whether it is writing a personal letter, filling out a job application, or writing a formal paper on a personal computer, being able to compose and write a message is a necessity. Even the act of dictating a letter requires an understanding of formal writing style, since the way a letter is dictated differs markedly from how that same message would be delivered face to face. And although computers have streamlined modern life, they will not compose a letter, a paper for a class, or a memo.

Different types, or styles, of writing are required for different contexts and tasks. A book report in an English class is quite different from a letter of complaint to a manufacturer. Competence in writing requires understanding, practice, and an appreciation for the shifting needs of the projected audience.

Professionals are now directing greater attention toward the teaching of writing and the problem writer. According to Hayes and Flower (1986):

When we learned to write in school, we were given good models to imitate, the opportunity to practice, and red-penciled corrections from the teacher. This kind of instruction is described as product oriented because it focuses on the written product the students produce rather than on the processes by which they produce them. One of the radical departures of current instruction is to reverse this orientation and to focus instead on writing processes. In process-oriented instruction, the teacher attempts to intervene in the writing process itself—to teach students what to do when they write. Support for this "process" movement in composition has come in part from research in the cognitive processes that underlie writing and from a new awareness of the connections between writing, thinking, and learning.

(p. 1106)

As advances are made in the understanding of communication in general, new approaches are devised for writing instruction or remediation. An understanding of writing and its relation to the rest of the communicative process is essential to having an appropriate remedial rationale and to using a program effectively. For this reason, the theoretical roots, rationale, and an overview of the Teaching Competence in Written Language program are described in the following pages.

WRITING AS PART OF THE LANGUAGE SYSTEM

The term language refers to the process of communication. People are social beings, constantly communicating with those around them. Language is the symbolic vehicle used to communicate. The four basic ways of communicating are:

1. Listening—the auditory reception of information, often referred to as auditory receptive language
2. Reading—the reception of information from the written page, often referred to as written receptive language
3. Speaking—the oral production of a message, often referred to as oral expressive language

4. Writing—the written production of a message, often referred to as written expressive language

In other words, messages are either received (incoming) or delivered (outgoing). Language, then, can be considered a system of incoming and outgoing communication (see Figure 1.1). Incoming messages are messages that are heard or read from an outside source. These must be comprehended, mentally stored, and responded to by the recipient. Both listening and reading involve incoming communication. When someone asks a question, the listener must comprehend, consider, and then answer the question. When a passage in a textbook is read, the information must be comprehended, considered, and retained for future use. The flow of communication is from the source (e.g., the speaker or the book) to the listener or reader.

Speaking and writing involve the composition of outgoing messages; that is, messages that are sent to an outside source. These messages must be composed in such a way that they will be easily comprehended by the listener or reader. Thus, outgoing communication must be tailored to a specific audience. For example, a message directed to a child must be simpler than one intended for an adult. Similarly, a business letter is different in style from a letter to a family member. The flow of communication is from the writer or speaker to the receiver, making the writer or speaker the source.

Listening and speaking comprise what is known as the primary language system, while reading and writing are termed the secondary language system (Myklebust, 1973). The primary language system develops first, and the secondary language system is built upon it (Myklebust, 1973). At the core of both systems is the inner language system, the individualized meaning and experiential base from which primary and then secondary language systems will derive. The developmental progression of language is illustrated in Figure 1.2.

When children begin school, they have a relatively well developed primary language system, although some refinements continue to be made (Bloom & Lahey, 1978; Chomsky, 1969). Children first entering school have been listening to and using oral language for approximately five years. The secondary language system, reading and writing, will be built upon this primary language base. Most children receive reading instruction in kindergarten, though many may begin sooner, in preschool. Instruction in written composition begins later, usually in the second half of first grade or at the beginning of second grade.

![Figure 1.1](https://example.com/image1.png)  
*Figure 1.1. An illustration of language as a system of incoming or outgoing communication.*
Writing is a dynamic process that, at its optimum, derives from competence in all three language systems—in inner, primary, and secondary. These various language systems are intimately interwoven. Speaking and writing—though both outgoing forms of communication—are very different and require different kinds of planning. Writing is more demanding cognitively. For example, writing must rely on complete sentence units for clarity, whereas speech can use sentence fragments.

A student who has difficulty in oral expressive language or written receptive language will likely be impeded to some degree in the acquisition of writing skills. In such a case, writing skills may need to be addressed in conjunction with other remediation, perhaps within the context of speech-language therapy. More and more, speech–language pathologists are focusing on treating the entire language system, providing remediation in both oral and written language (Blachman, 1991; Catts, 1991; Norris, 1991). Norris and Hoffman (1993) describe the development of skills in oral language, reading, and writing as being a reciprocal process. Lombardino, Riccio, Hynd, and Pinheiro (1997) encourage the speech–language pathologist to develop in-depth treatment plans in collaboration with teachers and other professionals, so that the entire language system is focused on by all involved.

Many written language problems may actually spring from an earlier oral language disorder (Bashir, Kuban, Kleinman, & Scavuzzo, 1983). This symptomatic causal effect makes attention to written language even more critical. In a study of the overall quality of spoken and written narratives of students with language disorders, McFadden and Gillam (1996) found that these students produce narratives “that are not only structurally less complex but, to an audience of educators, are noticeably lower in quality than those of their same age peers (p. 53).” A similar problem with writing ability in children with language and learning problems was noted by Catts (1991, 1993).

For classroom teachers, written expression is a key part of instruction from the early grades upward. Attention to specific types of problems is crucial to students’ development of the writing skills that they will need in the school environment as well as in the adult world. Common problems—such as sentence fragments, comma splices, and paragraph organization—require focused instruction. ESL teachers, in using the notions of primary and secondary language systems, also find that written expression, by organizing and directing language so visually, is a boost to learning oral language and reading.

The goal of language instruction and remediation is communicative competence. Professionals actively work toward this goal. Communicative competence refers to more than skills in the four language systems. It also involves a social awareness and the use of language effectively and correctly in a variety of contexts.
Introduction

(Schiefelbusch, 1986). For example, communication directed toward a state senator will be more formal than a message to a third-grade child. A message to a family member concerning another family member will require less background and information than the same message directed to someone who does not know the family.

Successful social relationships are contingent upon language skills (Guralnick, 1992). Children with language difficulties often have difficulties with social skills and maintaining social relationships, as well (Fujiki, Brinton, & Todd, 1996; Gertner, Rice, & Hadley, 1994; Gottman, 1983; Hadley & Rice, 1991; Rice, Sell, and Hadley, 1991). Children with learning disabilities have been shown to have difficulty producing tactful messages to peers, which indicates problems with perspective-taking in social contexts (Bliss, 1992). Canady and Krantz (1996) point out the “social interactiveness of written material” (p. 232). These studies indicate the importance of a writing program that includes a variety of contexts and addresses the social uses of composition.

THE WRITING ACT

Writing has three components: (a) generation and elaboration of the writing act, (b) attention to audience and mode, and (c) proofreading and error recognition (Phelps-Gunn & Phelps-Terasaki, 1982). Figure 1.3 illustrates how these three components form the writing act. The first component, generation and elaboration, is similar to auditory receptive language (listening) as writers mentally “listen” to their writing and make sure that what they mean to say is being expressed—a kind of automatic internal mental feedback. Generation and elaboration refers to the writer's overall idea, or general underlying notion of what needs to be said, combined with the internal language skills that translate this general idea into specific words and sentences; that is, a recognition of intent is paired with linguistic form.

The second component, attention to audience and mode, is similar to oral expressive language (speaking) as writers pay attention to the needs of their particular audience and the effects of their message on that audience. Attention to audience refers to the writer's need to think through how the message must be tailored to a specific audience in order to obtain the writer's goals. A formal college paper and an informal letter to a loved one are examples of different audience requirements. Mode refers to the style a writer will use. When complaining to the phone company about a bill, a writer will use an argumentative or persuasive style. When writing a children's fairy tale, the author will use a narrative or storytelling style. For effective writing to occur, both audience and mode must be considered.

The third component, proofreading and error recognition, is similar to written receptive language (reading) as writers use the visual symbols to encode meaning, just as readers use them to decode meaning. Proofreading and error recognition refers to the conscious act of reading over a composition and correcting errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. These errors are difficult to attend to when the writing is “flowing” and require a concerted effort at polishing.

Together, these three components make up the total writing act. A thorough writing program must address all three components by focusing on generation, providing experiences with different audiences and modes, and stressing consistent proofreading and error recognition. The Teaching Competence in Written
THEORETICAL FOUNDATION OF THE PROGRAM

The Teaching Competence in Written Language program is composed of three major theoretical elements. The first is an adaptation and reworking of the approach used by the Fitzgerald Key (Fitzgerald, 1966), an enormously successful program designed for use with the hearing impaired. The second is the use of an interactive teacher–student structure (Duchan, 1993; Kovarsky, 1990; Lee, Koenigsknecht, & Mulhern, 1975; Panagos, 1996). The third major theoretical element is a heavy emphasis on the various pragmatic, or social and contextual, uses of written communication (Phelps-Gunn & Phelps-Terasaki, 1982).

The Fitzgerald Key was used as a basis for the Teaching Competence in Written Language program because of its solid theoretical core, workability, and proven...
success. The rationale behind the Key is that the critical element of English word order must receive stress and reinforcement to facilitate language acquisition. The Key consists of a frame with word class categories that can be filled in, from left to right, to make a sentence; it is a visual structure for guiding sentence production (Fitzgerald, 1966). An illustration of the Fitzgerald Key is given in Figure 1.4. With long-term use, the goal is that the student will internalize the frame and construct correct sentences spontaneously. The Key's effectiveness is illustrated by the finding that it continues to be the most widely used language program for hearing-impaired students (Moores, 1978). The Key was redesigned and restructured to yield a variation that effectively compliments written language. Called the Sentence Guide, it provides a visual framework for written language instruction and is heavily used in the Teaching Competence in Written Language program.

The interactive process used in the Teaching Competence in Written Language program is crucial to the program's success. Interactive exchange is the term used for a particular style of teacher—student dialogue that involves a highly structured questioning process and allows for an emphasis on target sentence constituents (Lee, Koenigsknecht, & Mulhern, 1975). With the use of the labeled Sentence Guide, sentence components and word classes also receive direct attention. The interactive exchange calls for expansion, remodeling, and correction of sentences.

Further support for the use of an interactive, remedial teaching process comes from Nelson’s (1973) investigation of the types of home environments conducive to language growth. The most powerful of these was the mother-child interaction, which was characterized by a questioning approach rather than a directive approach. This more effective interactive style is often ignored in instruction, but is a key element of the Teaching Competence in Written Language program.

The interactive exchange process is supported by Slobin’s (1979) work on operating principles in language development. Slobin argues that imitation is not a significant aspect of language acquisition since only the end product—the sentence,
for example—and not the idea and process of stringing words together, is available for imitation. Although Slobin’s work refers to oral language acquisition, a parallel argument is certainly true for written language. Merely exposing students to well-written sentences or correcting a paper will not directly teach them to generate ideas and translate these ideas into written form. Thus, learning the process of composing a written message is as critical as the end product. Slobin stresses that language learners need to develop operating principles, or learner-devised rules, to generate sentences. Again, the parallel in written language is clear. Students work out their own rules, test them, and, if the rules are effective, continue to apply and generalize them. The interactive process in the Teaching Competence in Written Language program, along with the concrete, structured Sentence Guide, encourage the development of student-devised, generalization rules.

The third element of the program, the heavy emphasis on the pragmatic aspects of written language, refers not only to linguistic and cognitive knowledge, but also to social knowledge and recognition of correct and effective ways to use language. Effective communication is the general purpose of all language. In writing, the specific purposes are many and varied. The writer may wish to persuade someone to accept an appointment, congratulate someone on a promotion, convince someone to lower an interest rate, or simply tell an amusing story. The writer must not only know how to generate good sentences and paragraphs, but also how to use that writing skill effectively in order to achieve a particular purpose. Dore (1986) defines communicative competence as an ability to communicate that translates into particular sentence forms designed to accomplish certain goals in the appropriate contexts. For instance, a formal writing style used for negotiating a home mortgage rate would be neither appropriate nor productive in trying to convince a friend to do a favor. The Teaching Competence in Written Language program provides rich and varied opportunities to practice writing for a variety of purposes and audiences.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM

The Teaching Competence in Written Language program begins with the basic sentence, integrates the sentence unit into a paragraph, focuses the paragraph around a purpose within different contexts, and then emphasizes the writing of themes. The use of the Sentence Guide is basic to the process (see Figure I.5). The Sentence Guide is a visual cue system used to generate sentences, to elaborate and expand sentences, and to order both the initial sentence units and the later paragraphs. The concrete structure of the Sentence Guide encourages students to internalize the categories, the cue words, and the left-to-right structure required of written sentences. With repeated exposure and practice, the student begins to have a mental representation, or “feel,” for a correctly structured sentence. In time, the student’s internal Sentence Guide can provide the structure needed to compose sentences.

The Teaching Competence in Written Language program encourages students to build mind pictures (or imagery) similar to the Discussion Pictures used in the lessons to motivate sentences. By building mind pictures, the student learns to participate actively in the construction and expression of individual ideas. Imagery practice is channeled toward painting a picture with words for the reader, which is a first step in developing sensitivity to an audience. By trying to see with the mind’s eye and transfer this image to the intended reader, the writer learns to decenter, objectify the message, and tailor the writing to the audience.
### Sentence Guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONNECTORS</th>
<th>WHO/WHAT?</th>
<th>DOING WHAT?</th>
<th>DETAILS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>And</td>
<td>Which?</td>
<td>Why? (because, since, so that)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>What kind of?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>How much?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Next</td>
<td>How many?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Then</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FIGURE 1.5. The Sentence Guide.
Finally, the *Teaching Competence in Written Language* program has two full units on learning to write basic paragraphs, paragraphs with different purposes, paragraphs for different contexts, and the writing of basic themes. Included in this instruction are persuasive, explanatory, descriptive, and narrative writing within different contexts and for different audiences. Practice in theme writing and "everyday" kinds of writing is also included.

**Program Materials**

The *Teaching Competence in Written Language* program consists of the Teacher's Guide and Student Lessons Book and the Student Tablet. The Teacher's Guide and Student Lessons Book begins with a background of the program, its theoretical base, and a discussion of the writing process and problem writers. It contains step-by-step instructional methods to present each lesson and suggestions for additional activities. The lessons in the student section can be reproduced as needed. The Student Tablet consists of blank Sentence Guide forms and other pages to be filled in by the student. Many of the Sentence Guides are partially filled in and the student is to complete them. These partially printed Sentence Guides provide specific practice and correspond to the lessons as indicated. Other Sentence Guides are blank and are to be used as indicated in the lessons.

**Teacher-Made Materials**

The Teacher's Guide and Student Lessons Book contains interesting, action-filled pictures to use as a source of motivation for writing sentences or stories. These pictures are referred to in the program as *Description Pictures*. A few of the lessons require teachers or clinicians to supply their own Description Pictures. If the skills focused on in some lessons require further practice, the teacher or clinician will want to spend more time at this level and will need additional Description Pictures.

Description pictures can be made by cutting out interesting magazine pictures or by using pictures from travel, circus, or theater brochures. Pictures can also be purchased, and posters, photographs, or slides can be used, as well.

A *Blackboard Sentence Guide* is constructed by the teacher for use in group instruction settings. It is made of strips of poster board with column headings written in large print. The Blackboard Sentence Guide can be attached to the blackboard and used as an aid whenever the teacher or a student writes sentences on the blackboard.

**Who Can Benefit from the Program's Use?**

The *Teaching Competence in Written Language* program was written and field-tested for use with the following populations:

- Children, adolescents, and adults with learning disabilities.
- Children, adolescents, and adults with language disorders.
- Children, adolescents, and adults in remedial reading and writing programs.
- English as a Second Language (ESL) students.
- Any persons in classes to learn English.
- Problem writers in regular language arts and English classes.
- Adult aphasics.
• Adults enrolled in writing improvement courses.

In some settings, the person receiving the instruction or remediation is referred to as a client. In other settings, this person is called a student. For the sake of simplicity, this program will consistently use the term student.

Who Can Use the Program?

This program can be used by teachers, clinicians, or other professionals involved in instruction or remediation of learning disabilities, language disorders, aphasic disorders, adult education, remedial reading and writing programs, and ESL programs, as well as in regular language arts and English classes with problem writers. The program has also been used effectively by parents in the home, either as a supplementary or solo program.

Although many different types of professionals can use the program, for the sake of simplicity the person presenting the program will be referred to as the teacher in the Teacher's Guide and Student Lessons.

The Organization of the Program

The Teaching Competence in Written Language program includes lessons on simple sentences, complex sentences, simple paragraphs, complex paragraphs, and stories. The lessons are organized into four units. Unit I emphasizes the following:

• How to construct a sentence
• How to encode time
• How to increase sentence complexity
• How to use subordinate clauses
• How to construct compound subjects, predicates, and clauses
• How to construct compound sentences
• Continuous proofreading and error recognition

Appendix A provides an extra Sentence Guide to be copied by the teacher and used as needed throughout Unit I.

Unit II introduces and provides practice in paragraph writing, initially by using sequenced pictures and having the students write one or two sentences per picture. Later, complete paragraphs are written about a picture, requiring imagery and creativity. Finally, more abstract topics are used as the focus of paragraph writing. Proofreading and error recognition are practiced throughout the unit. Common errors are introduced and correct usage is emphasized.

Unit III emphasizes audience and mode. The four modes of writing—descriptive, narrative, explanatory, and persuasive—are practiced, followed by practice using a particular mode for a particular audience. Sequenced paragraphs are taught next, along with “real world” applications of paragraph writing; for example, writing a letter of complaint or a biographical profile for a job application. As before, proofreading and error recognition are stressed.

Unit IV provides an introduction to the writing of a formal essay. A very structured and simple essay format is introduced. A basic model of an essay is presented. This model contains an introductory paragraph, a body of two or three paragraphs, and a conclusion. Students are given practice in organizing and writing paragraphs utilizing this model as a guide. Intensive practice is given to the mastery of main idea sentences and the use of chain words (words such as next,
then, finally, instead of, as a result, in conclusion, etc.) to link the sentences in a paragraph. Four basic types of paragraphs are introduced, each with a different pragmatic goal or purpose: descriptive paragraphs, story (narrative) paragraphs, explanatory paragraphs, and persuasive paragraphs. Practice using these different types of paragraphs is provided in a variety of real-life, everyday situations.

Appendix B at the end of the Teacher's Guide provides an extra Essay Outline Form and an Essay Form that can be copied by the teacher and used as needed throughout Unit IV.

The four units address all components of the writing act and include varied activities to help students learn, practice, and generalize writing skills.

**HOW TO USE THE PROGRAM**

**Understanding the Sentence Guide**

One of the key elements of the program is the use of the Sentence Guide, a four-column form that provides a visual system for composing and elaborating sentences. A sentence is generated and “plugged in” to the form, then, the questions on the form are used to expand the sentence. Column 1 of the Sentence Guide focuses on time ordering and the relationship words that are used in effective paragraph composition. Column 2 focuses on sentence parts that answer the questions of Who? or What? (the subject). Column 3 focuses on those sentence parts that communicate actions (the predicate). Column 4 deals with the qualitative details of the sentence.

Each column is headed by target questions that serve to direct and organize the student's ideas. The ideas are then written under the appropriate column of the Sentence Guide. Each column has enough space for the student to write the sentence parts that answer the target questions. For example, in the Who/What? column, the student answers by naming the person or object referred to, providing a subject for the sentence. To expand on the subject, students answer questions such as Which?, What kind of?, or How many? and thus compose a more informative subject. These questions focus the student's attention on particular sentence parts. This makes the elaboration process more manageable, and means that the student always has the opportunity to further develop each column by using the questions on the Sentence Guide. This process allows the student to feel a sense of self-directedness, competence, and success in sentence generation and elaboration. The Sentence Guide also structures student output within a complete sentence format and teaches students how to add information and fit it into a complete sentence.

**Individual and Group Work**

The *Teaching Competence in Written Language* program can be used in a variety of settings—with an individual, a small group, or an entire class. Regardless of the size of the group, the core components remain the same. These components are (a) the interactive process, (b) prompting and elaboration, (c) imaging, and (d) proofreading. In group work, the teacher first directs the entire group in the composition of a sample sentence or paragraph. Group work is followed by independent work with individuals or pairs. In individual work, the teacher interacts with each student, one-on-one. The student then works alone in independent composition practice. In both cases, the teacher directs and interacts with the student.
or students as they complete the lesson and the sample sentences or paragraphs. This is followed by independent student practice and teacher feedback.

The Interactive Process

Essential to the successful use of this program is the interaction between the student or group of students and the teacher. The interactive process allows the student to internalize the method by which effective sentences are generated and to associate questioning with elaboration. The interactive process also allows the student to associate completeness with writing.

The teacher uses the interactive process to guide students in written composition. Students are shown a Description Picture or other visual medium (e.g., a slide, poster, or photograph) and are asked to compose a sentence or paragraph about the picture. The column heads are used as guides for filling in sentence information. The teacher then questions the students, using the column headings to help phrase the questions. The following example, which corresponds to one of the first lessons in the program, illustrates this questioning process.

TEACHER: Who would like to read his or her sentence? (Pause.) O.K., Sam, why don’t you start?

SAM: The boy is riding on the bicycle.

TEACHER: Good. Who is riding on the bicycle? (Points to the Who / What? column on the Blackboard Sentence Guide.)

SAM: The boy is riding on the bicycle.

TEACHER: The boy is doing what? (Points to the Doing What? column on the Blackboard Sentence Guide.)

SAM: Riding the bicycle.

TEACHER: Yes. Now read the entire sentence to answer my question.

SAM: The boy is riding on the bicycle.

Note that the teacher desires a complete sentence in answer to every question. This forces the student to focus on the completeness of the sentence idea and not on bits and pieces of information. This interactive process is critical because it facilitates motivation and interest, allows for immediate feedback, maintains a teacher-student dialogue, and emphasizes the wholeness of a sentence.

After the students have become familiar with the questioning system and the Sentence Guide, the teacher can begin to elicit more elaborate information about the Description Pictures by devising more specific questions and continuing to require complete sentence answers. The method of teaching students to add more descriptive or informational content to sentences is called prompting. Remember that prompting is part of the verbal interactive process.

Prompting and Elaboration

Prompting encourages the student to elaborate on a sentence by using the column question words to focus the student's attention on the kind of information that can be added. The teacher points to the target question word on the Blackboard Sentence Guide and asks the corresponding question within the context of the sen-
tence thus far produced by the student. The following example illustrates the prompting procedure.

In response to a target picture, a student has written the following sentence: The boy rode on a bicycle. The student has volunteered to read the sentence aloud.

**TEACHER:** Who rode on a bicycle? *(Points to the word Who? on the Blackboard Sentence Guide.)*

**STUDENT:** The boy rode on a bicycle.

**TEACHER:** Which boy rode on a bicycle? *(Points to the word Which? on the Blackboard Sentence Guide.)*

**STUDENT:** The little boy rode on a bicycle.

**TEACHER:** Good. Now add little in front of boy on your Sentence Guide and read the sentence back to me.

**STUDENT:** The little boy rode on a bicycle.

**TEACHER:** Fine. Little gives us some extra information about the boy riding the bicycle. The sentence now tells us more and makes a better sentence. Now, what kind of bicycle did the little boy ride? *(Points to the words What kind of? on the Blackboard Sentence Guide.)*

**STUDENT:** The blue one.

**TEACHER:** Good, but say it like this: The little boy rode on a blue bicycle.

**STUDENT:** The little boy rode on a blue bicycle.

Note that prompting involves using question words and pointing to the corresponding column heading on the Sentence Guide to draw the student's attention to both the informative content of the answer to the question word and its visual placement and position in the sentence. By carefully selecting question words, the teacher can guide the student to expand the information in sentences orderly and logically.

Prompting within the interactive process allows the teacher to show students how to take a noninformative sentence and expand it into a more descriptive sentence. In time, students will learn to internalize the prompting process and will seek to elaborate sentences on their own.

**Imaging**

Imaging is an important part of the writing program. Like the Sentence Guide, imaging is a concrete method for the student to use and build upon. Initially, the program teaches the student to associate each sentence with one picture or image. The student practices constructing a mental image of what the sentence will convey to describe the target picture. Later, the student learns to view a paragraph as a group of related pictures by practicing describing sequenced pictures—one sentence per picture. The goal is for the student to learn to view ideas as mind pictures and to relate them to entire paragraphs without the aid of sequenced pictures.

The following teacher–student dialogue is an example of a procedure used to practice constructing mental images tied in with written communication.
TEACHER: Here's a picture. I would like you to write a sentence describing the picture on your Sentence Guides. (Waits for students to write sentences.) Now who would like to read a sentence?

STUDENT: The funny clown is laughing.

TEACHER: Close your eyes and think of the picture that you just saw. Now open your eyes and look at your sentence. Does your sentence paint a picture in your mind just like the picture I showed you?

STUDENT: Sorta.

TEACHER: Here's another picture of a laughing clown. Which picture does your sentence go with?

STUDENT: The first one.

TEACHER: How do I know which one you mean? Can you add some more information to your sentence so that I will know which picture your sentence goes with?

STUDENT: This one has on a cowboy hat.

TEACHER: Good. Let's add that to your Sentence Guide. (Pause.) Which funny clown is laughing?

STUDENT: The funny clown in the cowboy hat is laughing.

TEACHER: Fine. A little extra information paints an even better picture! It tells me more and, when I close my eyes, I get a good picture in my mind of the laughing clown in the cowboy hat. Also, since there can be many kinds of clowns, it helps me not to picture the wrong one. If you hadn't said the clown had on a cowboy hat, I might have closed my eyes and seen the other clown picture. The more you can tell me, the better the picture is in my mind.

The teacher made two points about adding information. First, with more detail, the sentence tells more about the real or mental picture; and second, more information allows control of the listener's or reader's mental image, because it will not be inaccurate or confusing. Although teaching imaging is quite concrete at first, this notion is later developed into an ability to communicate more abstract ideas in a complete and distinct fashion. Abstract skills are built upon the mastery of concrete skills.

Proofreading

At the end of each unit in the Teaching Competence in Written Language program, the student is given an opportunity to use learned skills by proofreading and editing errors in given sentences and paragraphs. By finding and correcting the errors, the student becomes accustomed to proofreading as an automatic part of composition. Additionally, this gives the teacher an opportunity to monitor the student's progress.

Completing Units I and II

As mentioned earlier, Units I and II are devoted, respectively, to the teaching of sentence writing and paragraph writing. Each lesson, with the exception of the review lessons, focuses on one new skill or ability. The program is designed to be used daily or biweekly, but the amount of time that any one student or group of
students will require on each unit will vary. Some students may need to spend extra time on a particular lesson, continuing to practice and improve the skills targeted by that lesson. Thus the teacher can design additional activities or practice as long as necessary until mastery of the target skill is achieved.

Completing Unit III

Unit III is devoted to teaching attention to audience and mode so that the student will be able to use written language comfortably and successfully. Again, as in the first two units, the teacher can devise additional activities or practice at any lesson level in order to provide ample opportunity for a student to achieve mastery.

The Structure of Program Lessons

The majority of lessons follow this format:

1. The teacher reads the Student Lesson aloud. Each lesson is simply written and serves as a preview to the goals and activities of the lesson.
2. The teacher discusses with the individual student or class the Description Picture for that lesson. Some students require direction in focusing on the important parts of the pictures. Students who overlook, for example, the activity of a volleyball game on a beach and attend instead to the setting of the beach may have difficulty generating an appropriate sentence. By attending to the background and not the action, they may miss the salient information and will require teacher guidance and prompting.
3. The students are asked to write sentences about the picture on their Sentence Guides.
4. The teacher writes several of the students' sentences on the Blackboard Sentence Guide.
5. An interactive prompting session begins in which the teacher uses a column word or cue word to structure interactive questioning.
6. Students are asked to choose the sentence from the Blackboard Sentence Guide that they personally feel paints the clearest word picture of the Description Picture. They are asked to copy this sentence on their individual Sentence Guides, providing them with practice in evaluating sentences, using imagery, and appreciating good writing.
7. Periodically, students are asked to choose their best sentence from a particular lesson and to copy that sentence on their Personal Progress Chart. This process encourages students to monitor their progress, recognize their writing abilities, and practice evaluating their sentences.
8. Students may wish to bring favorite pictures from home to use as stimuli for sentences, or they may look through magazines individually or in pairs to find appropriate pictures. Students may even wish to draw their own pictures. The more personally involved each student is in the program, the more effective the program will be for the student.

Program Use with Students of Different Ages

The Student Lessons are appropriate for all ages. However, the teacher will need to use care when selecting additional Description Pictures, making sure that they are appropriate to the age of the individual student. For example, an adolescent
may not relate well to a picture of five-year-olds playing Pin-the-Tail-on-the-Donkey. All students need writing stimuli geared to their level or to particular interests. Adult aphasics may respond best to pictures that relate to earlier hobbies or occupations; these adults or their families should be consulted as to what topics would be most interesting to them. Similarly, older children, adolescents, and adults may wish to have input in choosing some of the pictorial material.

Problems in Writing

Students with learning disabilities and language disorders may have special problems with any or all three components of the writing process—generation, audience and mode, or proofreading. At the level of generation, the problem may appear in various ways. There may be difficulty in adequately maintaining an idea so that it can be translated into a message, causing idea generation to be vague or incomplete. A student may formulate an idea globally but have difficulty with vocabulary choice, grammatical choice, or syntactic order. In other words, the student may have an idea, but then encounter difficulty in choosing words or in organizing the words into a written sentence (this may also be true of oral expression). Problems in audience and mode may take the form of confusion or vagueness in tailoring writing to different needs or persons. Finally, problems in proofreading or error recognition may appear when the student does not have a clear idea of what is correct and why it is correct.

Adult aphasics may have problems in any of the three writing components similar to those of learning disabled and language disordered students. Students in remedial reading or writing may also demonstrate difficulty in any or all three writing components. Although students in ESL programs may also exhibit problems in all three writing components, their difficulty is of a different nature. Generation requires the student to recognize that written English is more formal than spoken English, and that the skills required for writing must be practiced and understood. Attention to audience and mode requires that the ESL student become aware of social customs in the culture so that writing may be tailored appropriately. With an understanding of how and why English is translated into written form comes competency in proofreading and error recognition for generation.

Problem writers in regular language arts, English, or adult education classes may also have difficulty in any one or all three of the writing components. If the problem is generation, these students may make remarks such as:

"I don't know what to write."
"I can't think of anything to say."
"I can never write what I really want to say."

A common problem in generation is focusing on the message itself. The student has difficulty recognizing the precise content and intent of the message and organizing that information linguistically.

A problem with audience and mode is exemplified by writing that is inappropriate for a particular goal, for example:

Too much information is assumed to be known by the reader, resulting in confusion.

The writing is too informal for a class assignment.

The student cannot vary modes according to his or her needs.
Finally, a problem in proofreading and error recognition may be seen in the student who does not go back and edit well. This skill must be learned step-by-step. It is such a broad-based skill that it is unrealistic to expect a writer to do it automatically. Many writers lack efficiency in proofreading, and the quality of their work suffers accordingly.

Why the Program Works

As stated earlier, writing is composed of three elements: (a) generation, (b) attention to audience and mode, and (c) proofreading and error recognition (Phelps-Gunn & Phelps-Terasaki, 1982). The Teaching Competence in Written Language program is designed so that the student develops competency in all three areas, as follows:

1. Interaction is used to compose sentences, paragraphs, and stories. Prompting, elaboration, and imaging help the writer express and develop his or her ideas into a more coherent whole.

2. Skill in attending to audience and mode is developed and practiced so that communicative competence can be achieved.

3. Proofreading and error recognition are used throughout to allow for monitoring of written work.

This program has been specifically designed for use with special populations. It provides instruction and remediation in all three component skill areas of the writing process. It has been field-tested and proven successful.

Monitoring Progress

Progress is monitored in two ways. First, at every session, the teacher is actively involved in each student’s writing. The teacher monitors and reads the students’ written work and helps students clarify and elaborate through the use of questioning and prompting. Each student’s lessons and extra practice are kept in a separate notebook that can be reviewed occasionally. Thus, the teacher is clearly informed of individual progress on a session-by-session basis. Second, the Personal Progress Chart in the Student Tablet allows students to keep a record of their best written effort at various skill levels within each unit. Students can also review their Personal Progress Charts periodically as a concise measure of their improvement.

Spelling and Penmanship

The issue of spelling will come up regularly in any writing program. One approach is to compile a card file of words that a student needs to master. These words should not be taken from any formal spelling list but should instead be words generated by the student in the natural context of writing. The following steps are suggested:

1. When the student asks how to spell a word, write the word on an index card for the student to use as a model. If you see a misspelled word in a sentence written by a student, acknowledge the content of the message by indicating that you understood it, but show the proper spelling of the word by writing it
on an index card. Avoid circling the word in red or otherwise "grading" the written work.

2. Keep the spelling cards for each student in a file box with the student's name on it.

3. Allow students time at the beginning or end of a writing session to practice the words in their file boxes.

4. After a student has mastered a word, the corresponding index card can be put at the back of the file box, to be practiced again from time to time.

Other suggestions for teaching spelling can be found in Hammill and Bartel (1986) and Phelps-Terasaki, Phelps-Gunn, and Stetson (1983).

The Teaching Competence in Written Language program does not address penmanship directly. Suggestions for teaching this skill can be found in Hammill and Bartel (1986).

REFERENCES


