**Counter Arguments and Conjunctions PowerPoint - Slide Notes for Teachers 2.5**

The slides are animated: advance by clicking.

**Week 2 Lesson 2 (Slides 1-9)**

The focus on constructing effective counter arguments by using coordinating and subordinating connectives is designed to strengthen the cohesion of students’ argument writing at sentence level. Many students find it relatively straightforward to achieve whole text cohesion by using conjunctions signalling the start of paragraphs, for example, ‘In the first place’; ‘In addition’/‘Moreover’; ‘However’; ‘On the other hand’; ‘Finally/In conclusion’. Achieving cohesion of ideas within and between the sentences in a paragraph is a more sophisticated skill and the focus on counter arguments provides a rhetorical context in which to learn about, and practise, sentence variety. Essentially, the teaching is about the different rhetorical effects created by using compound sentences (to balance and contrast equally important ideas) and complex sentences (where the additional information/idea in the subordinate clause may be less important than that in the main clause, but where the positioning of the sub clause can subtly shift emphasis and meaning).

The terms ‘simple’, ‘compound’ and ‘complex’ to describe sentences are not used on the PowerPoint slides but do use them if you think they are helpful in reinforcing understanding of clause grammar and punctuation. The terms coordinating and subordinating conjunctions are used to draw attention to their different functions; students’ ability to use different conjunctions to write well-structured, accurately punctuated sentences is more important than knowing the terminology.

**Slide 4: Coordinating conjunctions**

Students do need to see that coordinating conjunctions join two main clauses (which could function as two separate simple sentences) and that the choice of conjunction signals a relationship between the ideas in the clauses rather than an accidental chaining: ‘but’, ‘yet’, ‘or’ indicate contrast, not mere addition. Try changing the order of clauses in the examples on slide 4 and substitute conjunctions to see which ‘work’ best e.g.

Zoos preserve species for future generations, **yet** they could be considered cruel and unnatural.

Zoos could be considered cruel and unnatural, **but** they preserve species for future generations.

Note the specific use of ‘or’ to imply a choice (either…or).

Is there a subtle difference of emphasis between ‘but’ and ‘yet’? Would the contrast in ideas be greater if the compound sentence was punctuated as two simple sentences, the second starting with ‘but’? Stress that questions like this often have no right or wrong answers but are a matter of style and taste.

Point out that coordinating conjunctions go in the middle of a sentence and have a comma before them to emphasise the contrast between argument and counter argument.

**Slide 5: Coordinating conjunctions**

When students offer suggestions for completing the missing half of the compound sentence, check that the ideas are logically related to each other as argument and counter argument, to make the whole sentence sound well balanced, for example:

You may think a pet hippo will be bored and miserable **but** actually they need very little to keep them happy.

Not:

You may think a hippo will make too much noise but actually they need very little to keep them happy.

If time, or to reinforce understanding, encourage students to devise additional examples of sentences that contrast argument and counter argument.

**Slide 6 Subordinating conjunctions**

Students need to ‘hear’ that the subordinate clause is dependent for meaning on the main clause, so read the example in a way that emphasises the ‘incomplete’ nature of the sub clause. Again, you can encourage students to change the order of main and subordinate clauses and evaluate slight shifts of emphasis: which order best stresses the main argument? There may well be different opinions about this: what matters is that students appreciate the extra flexibility and choice offered by being able to move the position of the subordinate clause within the sentence.

**Slide 7 Subordinating and coordinating conjunctions**

This is an oral activity and there are no right and wrong answers although clearly some combinations work better than others; encourage students to read the clauses aloud and to experiment with choices of conjunction and order of clauses. If time, or to reinforce understanding, encourage students to devise additional examples of sentences that contrast argument and counter argument. You could also offer additional subordinating conjunctions that indicate contrast e.g. *even though*. Students may want to use *however* as a subordinating conjunction but note that *however (*and *instead, alternatively)* cannot be used to join clauses within the same sentence, unless a semicolon is used as clause boundary punctuation:

They tend to spend all day sleeping**;** however, I’m sure that if we poke it enough it will wake up and play with us.

**Slide 8**

Grammatically, a comma is used to mark out separate clauses, phrases, and, sometimes, words. Point out the use of the comma in these examples to mark the different main clauses, or to separate the subordinate clause and the main clause. Try to avoid the misleading explanation that a comma provides a breathing space or pause, since students easily confuse a comma and full stop in this respect. In the examples on the slide, the comma functions to draw attention to the balance between the argument and its counter argument.

**Slide 9**

This is a short writing task: a well-crafted paragraph is ample. To encourage students to use a range of conjunctions, you could provide a formula or writing frame e.g.:

You may think....but....While some say that...Despite this...

**Week 2 Lesson 3 (Slides 10-15)**

This lesson continues to look at coordinating and subordinating conjunctions, now in a more varied context, not just those used to signal contrasts. Again, the emphasis is on differences in meaning and emphasis created by choice of conjunction and positioning within the sentence. The sentence combining task encourages students to experiment with a range of conjunctions and sentence types – again, there is no right or wrong version of the rewritten speech.

**Slides 10-12**

You could ask students to divide the list on Slide 10 into coordinating and subordinating conjunctions in order to recap different functions. The list is not exhaustive but you don’t want to overwhelm with choice. Note that the list of coordinating conjunctions may differ across grammar text books or websites: *and, but, or* are always listed; *yet, for, nor, so* less commonly. Use these slides to recap sentence types and to stress that the differences in meaning and emphasis resulting from choice of conjunction. It will be useful to flesh out the information on slides 11 and 12 with a few examples. You could use the topic of school councils, to prepare for the speech-writing task e.g.

School councils are important *because* they give students a chance to voice their opinions about school life.

*If* school councils are taken seriously by teachers and students, they can make a real difference.

**Slides 13-14**

Keep students focused on the style rather than the content of the speech. They should note that it’s jerky, disjointed, repetitive, boring sounding. You could refer back to how crafted the Tony Blair speech was as a comparison. The aim of the sentence combining is to craft for fluency and emphasis of ideas, rather than changing the content and you can stress this when you use slide 14. Students may need reminding that they can put the connectives at the start of the sentences to link them, as well as in the middle, and that they can avoid unnecessary repetition of ‘I’:

I can speak up at the school council *and will* make sure that people listen to our opinions.

**Slide 15**

This is also provided as a handout (*Sentence Combining, 2.7*). Encourage students to experiment with different changes and combinations, either by using word processing or by sentence combining orally, then choosing one small section to physically rewrite. The examples on slide 14 show ways of combining pairs of sentences and with some students, you might want to break down the speech into pairs of sentences that can be combined. However, if you can, encourage students to read ahead and consider the effects of combining several sentences and of deliberately varying sentence type and length for rhetorical effect. You could remind them of sentence patterning in Tony Blair’s speech. For example:

In conclusion, I’m a confident person. I listen well. I have big ideas. Vote for me!

*Do you want a confident person with big ideas who can listen well? Vote for me!*

The plenary discussion should reflect on how different conjunctions emphasise meaning as well as making sentences more fluent. For example, the use of *because* in the following sentence suggests a cause and effect relationship between ideas: *People come to me with problems* ***because*** *I always try to listen*.