Bringing writing alive: Simple, compound and complex sentences

It is important for children to hear fluent speech and sentence patterns, to increase their linguistic competency.

Teachers need to model fluent, articulate speech. One way of doing this is to get children joining in with reading and ensuring that they experience high quality language through literature. Also encourage children to say sentence patterns aloud so they begin to internalise the grammar. Learning texts orally (storytelling) is a very powerful strategy for helping children internalise grammatical patterns. Children learn their grammar initially through ‘hearing’ patterns and by ‘saying’ patterns. Where immature structures are used by children (such as ‘he goed down the lane’), the adult needs to recast what has been said into standard English (he went).

**Clauses**
A clause is either a complete sentence or part of a sentence that has its own verb.

**A simple sentence**
A simple sentence has one clause. It must have a subject and a verb.
Example: Molly is eating.

**A compound sentence**
A compound sentence has two or more main clauses. It consists of main clauses of equal weight joined by conjunctions such as and, but, or, so.
Example: Molly is eating and Sam is drinking.

**A complex sentence**
A complex sentence contains a main clause and at least one other subordinate clause.
Example: Molly is eating because she is hungry.

**Subordinate clause**
A subordinate clause often begins with a subordinate conjunction such as because, if or when. It can come before or after the main clause but cannot stand alone.
Example: Because she is hungry, Molly is eating.

**Quickfire game:**
Provide a range of complex sentences and ask children to identify the main and subordinate clauses by underlining them in different colours. List simple sentences and ask children to add on a subordinate clause at the start, the end or to drop into the sentence a clause. Collect and categorise types of clauses, for instance the relative clause e.g. Peter, who was tired, jogged home.

**Writing tip**
Continually use a variety of sentences in in shared writing, listening for the impact on the reader.

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