

Use clear sentence structures to focus on academic content

Three versions of the reading assignment:

1. The Original

Interest is often added to content-rich paragraphs by the use of long and unusual sentence patterns, but some students may become confused by these patterns as they read. Complex grammatical signals within long sentences must therefore often be deciphered by the students before the content can be understood.

2. How an English language learner might "read" this:

Interest adds . . . (interesting?) . . . content . . . rich paragraphs? . . . paragraphs contain . . . money? . . . long and unusual sentences . . . some students are confusing . . . they read. . . . ??? . . . long sentences . . . decipher (decide?) . . . students . . . students decide? . . . students decide the content? . . . the content understands? . . . students understand.

3. Simplified version:

When you use unusual sentence patterns, a paragraph can be more interesting. Sometimes, however, these long sentences confuse some students. If students don't understand a sentence pattern, then they might not understand the content.

Short, clear sentences in instructions, handouts, and assessments help students, including English language learners, to focus on the content.