Developing writing and speaking skills

Tursunova Gulshan,
Uzbekistan Socio-economical college of Termez
E-mail: yasmina8687@mail.ru

Speaking and writing are the productive skills. Production processes control how well the child can reproduce the model's responses. The kind of speaking we are talking about here is almost always an Activate exercise. In other words, the students are using any and all the language at their command to perform some kind of oral task. The important thing is that there should be a task to complete and that the students should want to complete it. There are three basic reasons why it is a good idea to give students speaking tasks which provoke them to use all and any language at their command:

Rehearsal: getting students to have a free discussion gives them a chance to rehearse having discussions outside the classroom. Having them take part in a role-play at an airport check-in desk allows them to rehearse such a real-life event in the safety of the classroom. This is not the same as practice in which more detailed study takes place; instead it is a way for students to get the feel' of what communicating in the foreign language really feels like.

One popular information-gap activity is called "Describe and Draw". It has many of the elements of an ideal speaking activity. One way of provoking conversation and opinion exchange is to get students to conduct questionnaires and surveys. If the students plan these questionnaires themselves, the activity becomes even more useful. Role-play activities are those where students are asked to imagine that they are in different situations and act accordingly. Teachers can organize discussion sessions in their classroom, too. Speaking is important for the development of the other language arts: thinking, reading, writing, and listening. Thinking is actually enhanced by one's need to organize, conceptualize, clarify, and ip some instances, simplify thoughts, feelings, and ideas as they are shared orally. Speaking facilitates reading, especially in the area of vocabulary acquisition, as children add new words to their speaking repertoires and simultaneously to their reading vocabularies. Storytelling, a form of language sharing in which children can participate and which they enjoy, provides young children with a basic grasp of the important elements of a story: plot, characters, setting (both time and place), and theme. These elements are not only present in the simple texts children complete as "beg**inning** readers" but also in many of the materials they will encounter as "mature readers."

Oral language often supports writing, especially as young children are exposed to writing's initial stages. When undertaking a writing task, children often talk to themselves; such talk serving various functions. Some children engage in self-dialogue as they write. Other children talk to themselves as they generate their writing ideas in a type of oral evaluation of the soundness of their own creative efforts. Thus, self-dialogue is used as a means of analysis of a written product . Even as adults, people tend to read a written product aloud when the writing task is an important one.

Students at all grade levels need to engage in discussions about their individual pieces of writing. Having opportunities to talk with peers about a topic or idea prior to attempting to write a first draft enables students to refine their thoughts about the writing piece. Thus, when discussion precedes the writing event, the quality of the written product improves. This is true because the writer has probably analyzed, elaborated, questioned, and to some extent justified thoughts and ideas prior to putting them down on paper.

After students have completed a writing assignment, the teacher should set aside time for a sharing of efforts. At this point, the discussions should focus primarily on the positive aspects of each of the finished

pieces; this allows all the students to benefit from one another's successes.

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