



Learning reading strategies together through reciprocal teaching

Background

The school is an EMI school with enthusiastic, collaborative and hardworking teachers. With the introduction of Liberal Studies as a core subject in the New Senior Secondary (NSS) curriculum, teachers are very much concerned about how they can prepare their students for the change in the junior forms. They are aware that students need to be exposed to more reading of non-fiction texts, informational texts in particular, and they should be taught **reading strategies more explicitly** so as to enhance their comprehension.

Level

S1

Strategies used

Reciprocal Teaching (RT) was identified to improve students' comprehension. The rationale for using Reciprocal Teaching is summarised as below:

1. Reciprocal Teaching has been regarded as **effective in helping students improve their reading ability** in pre-post trials (Pearson and Doyle 1987, Pressley et al, 1987). According to Bruer (1993), Reciprocal Teaching helps novice readers learn and internalise the strategies excellent readers employ.
2. The technique is **easily understood and mastered** by both teachers and students. All it takes is for teachers to model the strategy, think aloud during the process, and give students guided practice and independent practice. Of course, we need to equip students with the language of discussion first before setting them out to tackle the task.
3. Most importantly, Reciprocal Teaching echoes the new definition of reading that describes the process of reading as **interactive**, in which readers interact with the text as their prior experience is activated. At the same time, meaning is constructed when they discuss with their group.

What is Reciprocal Teaching?

It is a cooperative reading strategy that engages teams of students in predicting, questioning, clarifying and then summarising passages (Palincsar and Brown, 1984).

The **goals** of reciprocal teaching are:

1. To **improve students' reading comprehension** using four comprehension strategies: predicting, questioning, clarifying and summarising
2. To **scaffold** the four strategies by modelling, guiding and applying the strategies while reading
3. To guide students to think about their own thinking (become meta-cognitive) and **reflective** in their strategy use
4. To help students **monitor their comprehension** using the four strategies
5. To use the **social nature of learning** to improve and scaffold reading

Action plan

No. of lessons	Focus
1	Reading Strategy Self Assessment Survey (Pre) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A survey was given to students to find out if they were aware of the use of reading strategies when they read.
2	Comprehension passage 1 - modelling prediction and questioning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher taught students how to use clues given in the text to make predictions. Students learned how to set literal questions and questions that required more thinking and researching.
2	Comprehension passage 1 – modelling clarifying <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher taught students how to clarify meaning of difficult words or phrases by re-reading the difficult part, reading on, looking for prefix and suffix, and breaking down the word into smaller parts.
1	Comprehension passage 1 – modelling summarising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students learned how to summarise a text by keeping the main ideas only and leaving out examples and elaborations. They tried to write a summary in their own words.
2	Comprehension passage 2– practising RT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> After learning the skills as a class, students practised the four strategies in small groups. They learned how to use the role sheets and started to discuss the meaning of the passage as a cooperative learning group.
2	Comprehension passage 2– practising RT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above.
2	(Pre-test)+ Comprehension passage 3 – practising RT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students were given a simple test to find out if they knew how to predict, clarify the meaning of difficult words, find answers for literal and inference questions and make a summary of the text. Then they worked in groups to practise the four strategies again.
2	(Post-test) + Comprehension passage 3 – practising RT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> After working in groups students helped each other to understand the passage. Then they were given the same test to see if the group discussion would enhance their understanding. Students were not allowed to use a dictionary to help them along.
Total: 14	Reading Strategy Self Assessment Survey (Post) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Questionnaires were given to students to find out their views on reciprocal teaching. A post reading strategy was also given to find out if students were more aware of the use of strategies after the project.



Reciprocal teaching in action



Students are eager to express their views

What teachers and students think

One teacher interviewed mentioned that she used to teach reading strategies to senior form students, but now she found she could start teaching reading strategies in junior forms. She also found that reciprocal teaching was more student-centred and students could work in groups to teach and learn from each other. To make reciprocal teaching a success, it is important to use it regularly, but to try to avoid using it for a full week so that students will not become bored.

Students thought that teachers in primary schools always explained everything to them. All they needed to do was to listen and write down the answers. Yet reciprocal teaching allowed students to find answers on their own. They predicted and asked questions when they read. They also worked together to clarify meanings and made a summary of the passage. They generally liked the increased participation. Two students found that being clarifiers was very difficult because it was quite difficult to guess meanings of the words since many English words have several meanings. But they liked working in groups because each member could teach each other.

Difficulties

Students are quite advanced in this school and have previously learned some strategies like prediction and clarifying. If teachers do not control the pace in the lessons very well, students will become bored easily.

It is quite difficult to find the right article for reciprocal teaching. For example, many passages do not have topic sentences, and also contain a lot of examples and illustrations. It is difficult for students to find the main ideas and therefore not easy to make a summary.

Tips for implementing a new initiative in school

To successfully implement any new initiative in school, we need to bear in mind:

Good communication

The rationale of adopting a certain initiative must be communicated well among all teachers who take part in the implementation process. Any doubts must be cleared up immediately with clear explanations.

Empowerment of teachers

Once the rationale is clear and accepted by teachers, the next step is to give teachers the autonomy to exercise their professionalism. If teachers find there are certain things that need to be changed, that should be welcomed.



Breaking 'big' changes into smaller manageable steps

Reciprocal teaching is a teaching strategy that requires teachers to scaffold the learning process step by step. To help students learn the strategy, teachers first demonstrated how each strategy is used to a whole class. Then they gave their students some guided practice with a lot of support. Finally, when each student had learned the four strategies and how to use the role sheets, they were sent to do their individual practice. Scaffolding is therefore a very important factor that led to the success of the project.

Conclusion

Reciprocal teaching is a powerful teaching strategy which allows students to play different roles to practise prediction, questioning, clarifying and summarising. These are important strategies for fostering and monitoring comprehension. To make it a success, it is important to find the right passage for students to practise these strategies and for students to practise these strategies regularly.

References

- Bruer, J. (Summer 1993). 'The Mind's Journey From Novice to Expert.' American Educator 17,(2): 6-45.
- Palincsar, A. and A. Brown. (1984). Reciprocal teaching of comprehension –fostering and comprehension – monitoring activities. Cognition and Instruction 1, (2): 117-75.
- Pearson, P. D. , and J. A. Doyle. (1987). 'Explicit Comprehension Instruction: A Review of the Research and a New Conceptualization of Instruction.' Elementary School Journal 18: 151-166.
- Pressley, M. , B. L. Snyder, and T. Cariglia-Bull. (1987). 'How can good strategy be taught to children? Evaluation of Six Alternative Approaches.' In Transfer of Learning: Contemporary Research and Applications, edited by S. J. Cormier and J. Hagman. Orlando, Fla,: Academic Press.

Wa Ying College
Cassandra TSONG (Language Support Officer)

Enhancing students' reading skills and providing them with a platform to share reading experience

Background

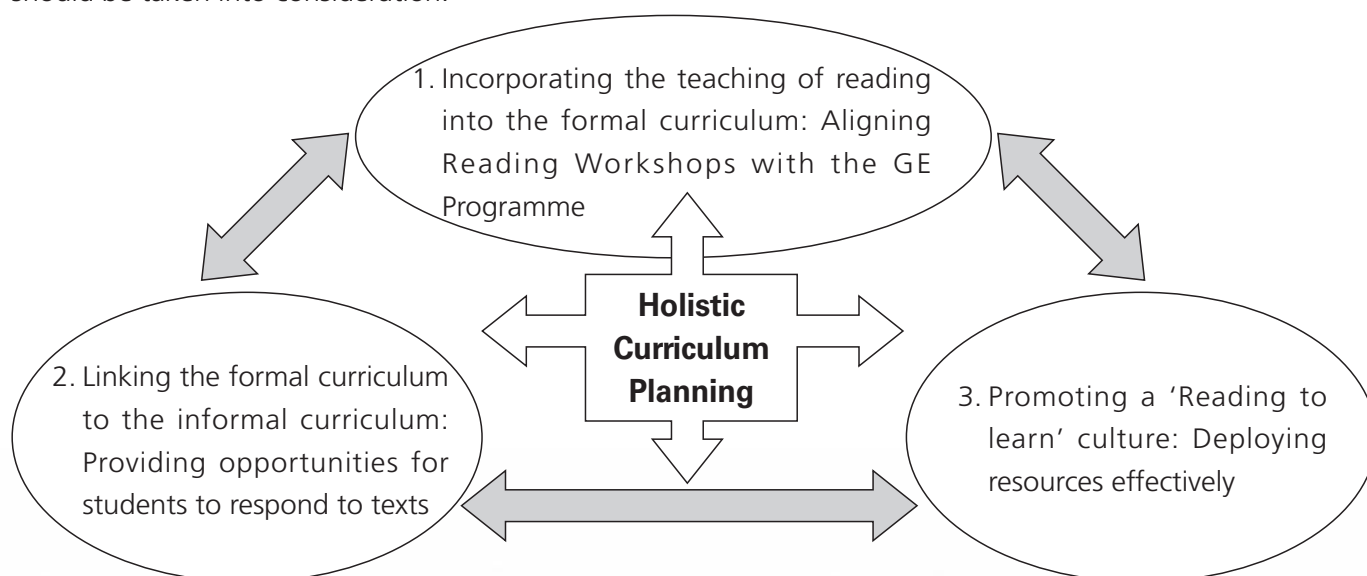
In the process of implementing Reading Workshops in school, teachers encounter the problem of having insufficient lesson time to teach both the textbook and the additional readers or reading materials. In addition, they have to accomplish different tasks such as creating an English-rich environment, conducting English Day/Week and promoting reading culture. Instead of handling these issues discretely, teachers should take a holistic approach to plan the English curriculum in which different English learning activities, the teaching of readers together with the formal General English Programme (GE Programme) can be integrated.

Levels

P3-5

Strategies used

In order to plan the GE Programme and Reading Workshops more holistically, the following three aspects should be taken into consideration:



1. Incorporating the teaching of reading into the formal curriculum: Aligning Reading Workshops with the GE Programme to make students' English learning experiences coherent

GE Programme and Reading Workshops are the key components of the English curriculum. According to the English Language Curriculum Guide (Primary 1-6) 2004, the former focuses on intensive learning and teaching of the English language knowledge and skills whereas the latter aims at developing learners' reading skills. Apparently, teaching students to comprehend a text and construct meaning from a text are the key tasks in the process of teaching reading and it can prepare students to read on their own and become lifelong learners. Linking up the Reading Workshops and the GE Programme makes English language learning experiences coherent and related.

2. Linking the formal curriculum to the informal curriculum: Providing opportunities for students to respond to texts

Reading can lead to the development of speaking and writing skills. It provides content and language for

the learners to use when writing and speaking so that there can be interaction between what the reader brings to the text and what the author has provided. Students should be encouraged to reflect upon their reading and provided with an opportunity to generate response to the text and share it in class. According to the Senior High School English Language Arts Guide to Implementation: Responding to text and context (2003), 'Personal response activities help students 'live' the text and make it their own; therefore, students need to be able to respond in a variety of ways individually and in groups, in writing, orally and visually, including such 'creative' activities as drama and art.'

3. Promoting a 'reading to learn' culture: Deploying resources effectively

Schools always provide many reading opportunities for students. Inside the classroom, there are Reading Workshops, reading comprehension exercises and silent reading period. Outside the classroom, there are programmes such as Extensive Reading Scheme, Online Reading Scheme, Buddy Reading or Reading Mums. As a matter of fact, these activities can be planned together to facilitate better resource and time management. To accomplish this, the best way is to start with programmes building on the existing facilities and resources and strengthening collaboration among staff.

The following three school cases demonstrate how teachers can work on these three aspects.

Case 1: Fuk Wing Street Government Primary School

Level: P5

Number of lessons required: 20 lessons

What happened

The school worked on aligning the Reading Workshops with the GE Programme in order to make the English language learning experiences coherent and related. The following elements were included in the project:

1. Linking Reading Workshops with the GE Programme

Reader chosen: When it rains

Textbook unit: Magic 5B–Unit 3 Weather in Hong Kong

In order to link up the Reading Workshops and the GE Programme, similarities between the two components were identified. The theme, vocabulary, key grammar items and sentence structures of the reader and the textbook unit were matched.

2. Teaching reading skills at Reading Workshops

In order to learn to read, it is important to equip students with different reading skills such as predicting the likely development of the story, visualising, recognising the format of stories, etc. In the classroom, teachers used the think aloud approach to demonstrate how to make use of different reading strategies to construct meaning from the text. Worksheets were also used to help students develop these reading skills.



Using think aloud approach

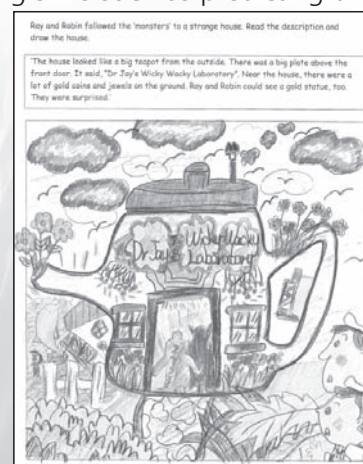
Captain Slow wanted to prepare a checklist and check whether the sailors have done all the things before leaving the harbor. Help him finish it.

Checklist	
Things that the sailors should do	Have they done it? Yes/No (✓/x)
1. Louis should _____	
2. David should _____	
3. Ray and Robin should _____	

What have the sailors done when the ship is leaving the harbor?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Locating specific information



Visualising

3. Setting a context for developing writing and speaking skills

After reading the story, students were given some information to write up a weather report. They had to act as weather reporters and give suggestions to the sailors in the story. The task provided an opportunity for students to apply the vocabulary and sentence structures that they had learned from the textbook unit in a meaningful context. The post-reading activities - writing a weather report and acting as weather reporters helped students develop their writing and speaking skills.



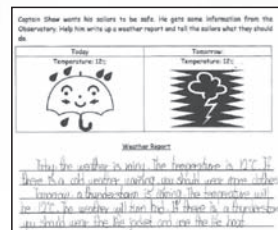
Students doing readers' theatre



Students discussing what the sailors should do under different weather conditions



Students writing up a weather report and acting as weather reporters



4. Monitoring students' progress through formative assessment

A formative assessment on reading skills was given to the students after teaching the textbook unit and the reader. It provided teachers with useful information about student learning. The teachers made use of the assessment data to adjust their teaching plans.

4. What does 'it' on line 9 refer to?
 - a. the headache
 - b. the noise
 - c. the shopping centre
 - d. the car
5. What does 'behave' on line 11 mean?
 - a. do good things
 - b. run and jump
 - c. be quiet
 - d. have new clothes

Read 'When It Rains' and use the words in the book to complete the story.

The weather was bad because there was a (1) _____. The ship hit a big (2) _____ and sank. Ray and Robin reached a beach called (3) _____. They followed two pirates to Dr. Jay's laboratory. They found that Captain Joe wanted Dr. Jay to fix the (4) _____ because they wanted to rob another ship. The pirates caught Ray and Robin and tied them to the (5) _____ of a tree. Luckily (6) _____ and his sailors saved them. The (7) _____ kept following the pirates. They were hungry and thirsty. Captain Shaw and his ship reached (8) _____ safely. The Governor was happy when he saw the (9) _____.

Testing students' reading skills

Case 2: Holy Family Canossian School (Kowloon Tong)

Levels: P4-5

Number of lessons required: 20 lessons

What happened

This initiative progressed from stage 1 to stage 6. Reading skills were taught to students explicitly at the initial stage and they were then guided to respond to the text through drama.

1. Linking Reading Workshops with the P4 GE Programme

Reader chosen: Charlie and the chocolate factory

Textbook unit: Primary Longman Express 4A - Unit 3 Buying food

- Match the reader with the theme of the unit so that students can make use of the vocabulary learned from the GE lessons and the Reading Workshops
- Teach students different reading skills such as predicting, sequencing, inferencing, book concept, etc. in the Reading Workshops

Topic	No.	Sentences
Charlie and his family	1	Charlie Bucket is a poor boy. He loves chocolate very much.
	2	It is the most famous factory in the world.
	3	They live next to a famous chocolate factory.
The Chocolate Factory	4	Charlie lives with his parents and four grandparents.
	5	He has invented lots of special candies.
	6	If the children find the tickets, they can visit the factory.
Five	7	One day, Mr. Wonka says that he has hidden five golden tickets in his chocolate bars.
	8	The factory owner is Mr. Willy Wonka.
Five	9	Wicket is the kind child who finds the ticket. She is rude and likes

Sequencing

2a. Is Charlie from a poor or rich family?

2b. Find facts from the book to support your answer.

(i) _____

(ii) _____

(p.4)

Identifying details that support the gist

2. Monitoring students' progress in reading through administering formative reading assessments

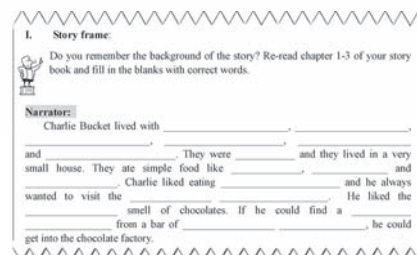
- Test students' reading skills, vocabulary and grammar points from time to time so that teachers can monitor their progress in reading
- Prepare students better for the Territory-wide System Assessment on reading by testing their reading skills through a variety of questions



Example of formative assessment paper:
Testing students' reading skills

3. Familiarising students with the story and characters

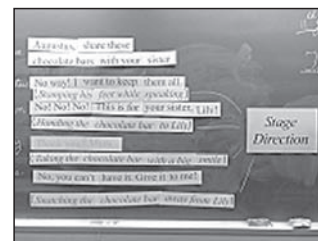
- Provide more opportunities for students to discuss the characters
- Develop students' ability to re-tell or summarise a story with the help of a story frame or story map so that they can have a thorough understanding of the story



Using a story frame to revise the details of the story

4. Introducing new text types to students

- Expose students to a play script
- Introduce elements of a play script – synopsis, dialogues and stage directions



5. Setting a context for creative writing as a way for students to respond to the text

- Set a context for students to write a new ending to the story or new episodes to enrich the story in the form of a play script
- Encourage students to write collaboratively so that more creative ideas can be generated and there will be peer support among the group members



Group writing

6. Providing opportunities for students to share their response to the text through drama

- Help students warm up and project their voice through the use of theatre games
- Encourage students to act out the key movements dramatically
- Allow time for students to do rehearsal, prepare props and costumes
- Provide opportunities for students to perform on stage so as to build up their confidence in speaking and make English learning fun for them



Students playing theatre games



Students performing on English Day



Case 3: King's College Old Boys' Association Primary School No. 2

Level: P3

Number of lessons required: 40 lessons (2 textbook units and a reader)

What happened

Reading activities inside and outside the classroom were interwoven.

Inside the classroom

Two in One: Linking Reading Workshops with the P3 GE Programme

	GE - 2 textbook units	Reader - Magic fish
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find out specific information about a person: What did you do? Talk about past activities 	
Focus	Language skills	Reading strategies

- The crucial linking element was the language focus – the past tense. As there was consensus that P3 students needed more help with the tense, one of the purposes of the Reading Workshops was to extend and reinforce the learning and teaching of the past tense.
- The reader was taught in consecutive lessons for a week as a follow-up of the two related textbook units.



A worksheet on book concept



Applying reading strategies

Conducting formative assessments to inform learning and teaching

- Three assessments were conducted to collect information about students' learning in book concept, reading strategies and the target language items.
- Teachers kept in mind what reading strategies to assess when setting the questions. This ensured an even distribution of reading strategies being tested.

Responding to the text

- To sustain students' reading interest, students were guided to analyse the story by studying the characters, plot, ending and moral
- To respond and interact with the story, they rewrote it in a new context
- To share and celebrate their interpretations, they acted out their own stories

K.C.O.B.A. Primary School No.2
2006-2007 2nd term J3 English Worksheet
Reader: The Magic Fish
Worksheet (5)

Date: 10th March 07

the story map

Characters: Magic fish, fisherman, wife ✓

Where / When: Once upon a time
At home, the beach and so on

Ending: The fisherman never saw the fish again.

What did you learn from the book? Don't be greedy.

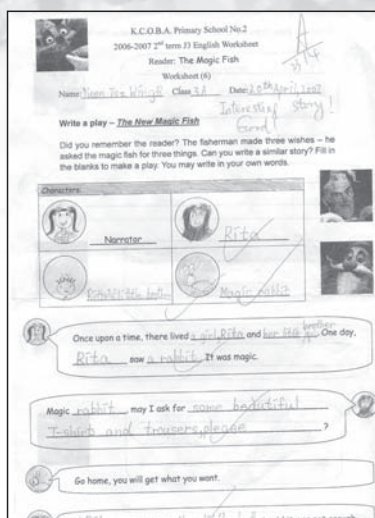
Title: The magic fish

The first wish: The fisherman and his wife wanted a table full of food.

The second wish: The wife wanted a big house with lots of servants.

The third wish: The wife wanted to be a queen.

Using a story map to analyse the story



Rewriting the story in a different context



Acting out the stories

Teachers' peer observation

- There were arrangements for teachers to observe one another's lessons. After observing lessons, there was discussion on areas for improvement such as what to strengthen, avoid and change. Consideration was also given to what adjustments had to be made to cater for learner diversity, e.g. changing the content of some activities and providing graded worksheets.

Relating what students are learning inside the classroom to the outside can help sustain and reinforce the impacts of classroom learning.

Outside the classroom

The school hall

- Video clips of post-reading performances were played in the school hall where all students attended their reading period. After showing the clips, some students shared their feelings about the books and it helped raise students' reading interest and enrich the reading environment.

The school library

- It is common to find English books in the library left untouched. This is due to the fact that students never think of borrowing them as they consider them irrelevant to what they are learning in the classroom. Indeed, they do not know how to choose the right books. To help students explore the treasures there, book displays in line with the GE Programme were conducted in the library.
- The benefits are fourfold.
 1. It is easier to identify topics for the book displays as they are the same as those of the GE Programme.
 2. The teacher librarian has a better understanding of what students are learning and their needs in reading materials. When procuring books and resources for the library, she knows what is most appropriate for students. Collaboration with English teachers helps her identify useful materials and resources for them. Hence, the collection in the library can better reflect curriculum needs.
 3. Students are more motivated to read books from the library when they are related to what they are learning.
 4. English teachers took students to the library and recommended books for them to read. These were echoed in the book displays. At the same time, there were book recommendations on the library bulletin board. This helped students choose the right books to read and enhanced their reading interest.

February	School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • «Leaflet» • «Song» • «Chant» • «Story» 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • «Ordinal number (first, second...)» • «Direction (on the left/right, next to...)» 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • «Schools» • «Schooling school» • «magic school» • «school facilities» • «school rules» • «school friends» • «school teachers» • «school heads» • «school games» • «school subjects» • «school songs» • «school activities»
April	Storytime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • «Diary» • «Poem» • «Letter» • «Post card» • «Advertisement» • «Story» 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • «Past tense» • «Sequence words (first, next...)» 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • «Fables» • «Fairy tales» • «Folk tales» • «Short stories» • «Diaries» • «Legends» • «Jokes» • «Plays» • «Comic strips» • «Animal stories» • «Ghost stories» • «Adventurous stories»
June	Yesterday / Old days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • «Cartoon» • «Comic strip» • «Story» 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • «Modal verbs: could» • «When I was» 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • «Personal recounts» • «Historical»

Topics for book displays



Students reading books selected by the teacher librarian

Impacts

- Teachers realise the importance of aligning readers with the GE Programme, designing worksheets to teach reading skills explicitly, administering formative assessments to find out students' strengths and weaknesses in reading and integrating other language skills in the Reading Workshops.
- Students start to develop a love of books when they can interact with them.
- The significant increase in the loan rate of English books indicates students' interest in books which they find relevant and appropriate.

Difficulties encountered

- Some teachers might have reservation about conducting the creative post-reading activities as they found that it could take up more teaching time than scheduled.
- Teachers had tension when they had to catch up with both the reader and textbook teaching.
- Teachers found that some of the readers chosen were not satisfactory as the author had put too much emphasis on introducing a particular language structure. As a result, the storyline was not interesting and motivating for students.

Implications for curriculum design

- Linking the formal curriculum with the informal curriculum is important as the creative post-reading activities conducted inside the classroom can become part of the English Day programme or extra-curricular activities. Such reading activities can help promote a reading culture in school or build up a language-rich environment.
- It is crucial to align the Reading Workshops with the GE Programme through careful curriculum planning so as to avoid wasting time on teaching repetitive contents.
- Choice of readers should be careful and not confined to publisher's series so that students can be exposed to a variety of authentic texts.

References

Alberta Learning (2003). Senior high school English language arts guide to implementation: Responding to text and context. Alberta, Canada.

Curriculum Development Council. (2004). English language curriculum guide (P1-6). Hong Kong: The Education and Manpower Bureau.

Fuk Wing Street Government Primary School
Connie LAM (Language Support Officer)
Holy Family Canossian School (Kowloon Tong)
Amy FAN (Language Support Officer)
King's College Old Boys' Association Primary School No. 2
Maria CHAU (Language Support Officer)

Writing and speaking with a purpose: the power of real audience on students' learning motivation

Background

Looking at the recent Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) review, published by the HKEAA in 2006, it is evident that junior secondary students are facing problems in both writing and speaking. In writing, they generally had difficulty in developing ideas, elaborating appropriately and making coherent links between paragraphs. In speaking their errors in pronunciation were already impeding communication. These findings should be of little surprise to most educators as students are often reported to lack motivation for writing and especially for speaking which requires even more self confidence. What students need is the motivational drive to write and speak.

Cook et al. (2001) argues that learners are reluctant to write because they have low confidence, inadequate writing time, limited peer collaboration and lack control over the writing tasks, which often have insufficient relevance to real life. The adoption of process writing can reduce these problems by providing longer writing time, peer support and regular feedback which allow more autonomy in subsequent changes. Requiring students to write to a specific target audience and arranging them to present their work orally to the real audience can even relate their writing to real life experiences and enhance their speaking skills in a self-motivating way.

In this school case, students were guided to use process writing to create stories for a follow-up primary school storytelling activity. It involved collaboration between two neighbouring schools. Storytelling has been recommended as one of the focuses for English Language Education curriculum development in junior forms (English Language Education Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide (P1-S3) 2002). Secondary school students can benefit from purposeful writing and speaking training while primary school students can in turn improve their listening and comprehension skills.

Level

S2



T.W.G.Hs. Li Ka Shing College (S2)



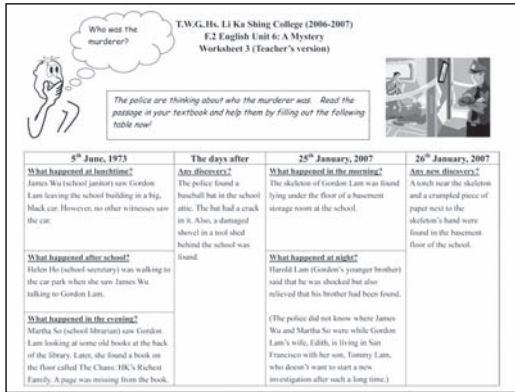
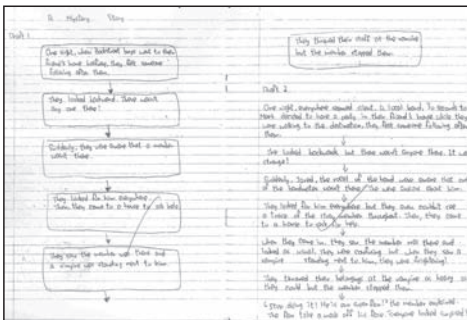
Fanling Government Primary school (P5)

Strategies used

Writing task: Writing a mystery story for a group of P5 students

Speaking task: Present the mystery story to a real audience (P5 students)

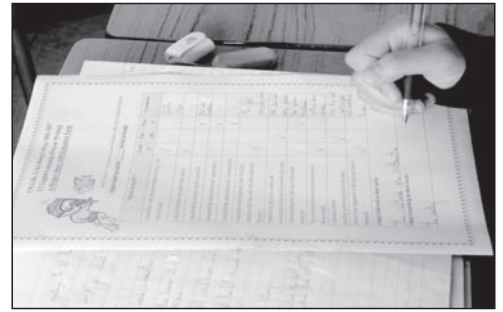
Target language: Past tense, past continuous tense & reported speech

Strategies used	What happened
<p>Pre-writing stage</p> <p>Ideas and vocabulary building</p> <p>1. Teacher telling a mystery story to show the students what they need to do at the end of the unit.</p> <p>2. Analysing a mystery story from the textbook as initial input.</p> <p>3. Brainstorming of ideas using mind maps to stimulate thinking.</p> <p>Language analysis</p> <p>4. Introducing past tense, past continuous tense and reported speech to strengthen the students' language skills and presentation in their writing.</p> <p>Organising ideas</p> <p>5. Rearranging sample paragraphs in the right order to learn the logical flow of ideas.</p>	<p>1. The teacher made use of dramatic intonation, pronunciation and body gestures to demonstrate how to tell a mystery story.</p> <p>2. Students examined the structure of a mystery story and guessed who the murderer was by filling out a worksheet which guided them to unveil the truth behind a murder case.</p> <div></div> <p>3. Students read more examples of mystery stories and thought about the outline of their own stories and characters involved using mind maps. They had not constructed a mystery plot before and so discussion among peers was allowed.</p> <p>4. To reduce language complexity which may affect learner motivation, the teacher highlighted the practical use of the past tense forms and reported speech in writing a story. Online interactive language games, pictorial games and class competitions were devised to arouse the students' interest.</p> <p>5. Students sequenced events and worked out how it could be set out like a mystery story. They also paid attention to the use of past tense forms and dialogues.</p>
<p>Drafting stage</p> <p>6. Students selecting, organising and drafting ideas.</p>	<p>6.</p> <div></div> <p>7. The teacher only focussed on reading whether the story plots were constructed sensibly and were appropriate for primary school children. The students then rewrote them as second (or even third) drafts.</p>
<p>7. Teacher gives initial feedback.</p>	

Revising stage

8. Reviewing of ideas by peers and the writers themselves to gather more comments and reflections.

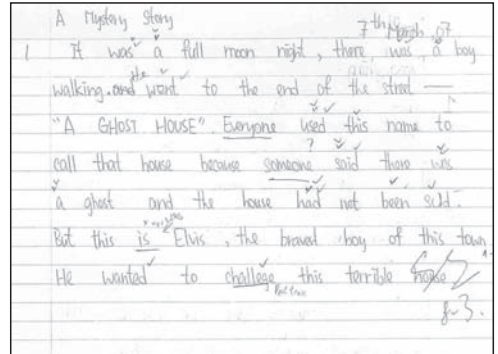
8. The students used a checklist for writing a mystery story to examine each other's work. The writers could then make changes to their work.



Editing stage

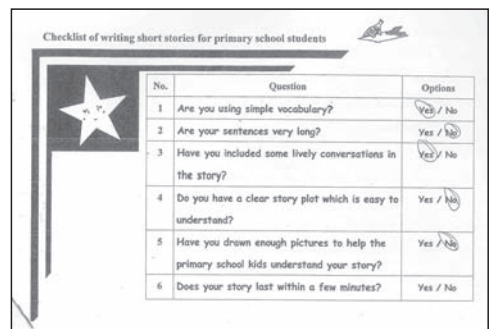
9. Checking of grammar by peers and the writers themselves to enhance language awareness.

9. The teacher performed a demonstration marking on the visualiser first before asking the class to check specific grammatical items (e.g. past tense).



10. Editing for target audience to make the stories more digestible for primary school students.

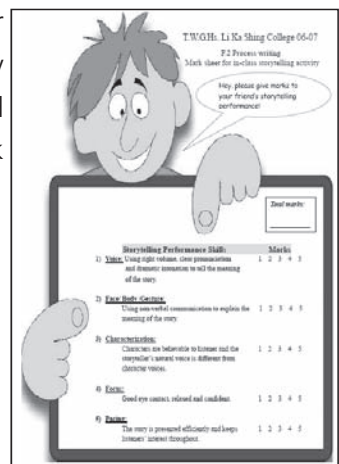
10. The students used a checklist of writing stories for young readers to adjust their use of language further and add more visual stimulation such as pictures.



Presentation stage

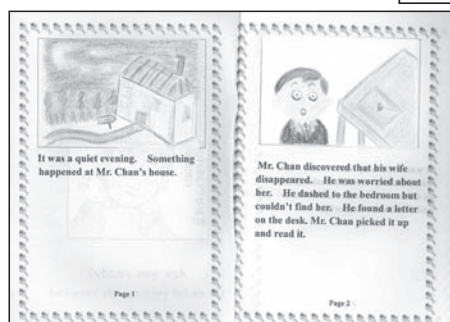
11. Selecting the best 3 storytellers to be representatives of P5 storytellers.

11. The presenters tried to be dramatic in their storytelling but generally they were still shy in their performance. Other students ranked their presentation by checking against a mark sheet.



12. Publishing the story books to make them look like real ones.

12.



Further training

13. Role playing unexpected scenarios to prepare for various responses.

14. Extra storytelling practice with the class representatives before the commencement of the real event.

Public presentation to real audience

15. Telling the stories to the real audience – P5 students.

13. The class discussed the solutions to the unexpected scenarios raised by the teacher and acted them out, leaving a vivid image in their mind.

14. The selected storytellers were reminded intensively of the use of clear intonation, pronunciation and dramatic delivery in their presentation. The teacher also gave further demonstration and individual guidance. Most of the presenters had acquired a certain level in their speaking skills.

15. Each storyteller presented the story to two P5 students, sitting next to them, followed by three short questions to check the listeners' understanding and a bookmark design activity to stimulate reflection on the story. Enthusiastic feedback was collected and the secondary school students also found it enjoyable to participate in this storytelling activity.

T.W.G.H. Li Ka Shing College 2006-2007
F.2 Process Writing (Teacher's version)

"Role playing Game"—What will you do if you face the following situations???
Contingency plans for unexpected problems encountered during storytelling

Problem	Solution(s)
1) Your listener (i.e. primary school student) dozes while you are reading your story.	Wake him/her up by exaggerating the sounds a bit involved in the story. Ask the student a question, e.g. "Hey! Guess what'll happen next?"
2) Your listener keeps asking you questions either related to or unrelated to the story.	Comfort him/her by explaining that he/she needs to be more patient when listening to the story or else he/she may forget what is going on in the story. He/She should also be reassured that more details are going to be unveiled very soon. "Um, very good question but please wait as you'll know the answer very soon! Let's look at page..."
3) Your listener runs away while you are telling the story.	"Hey kid, if you leave now you'll miss the most interesting part of the story. Do you really like that? Come over here my friend!"

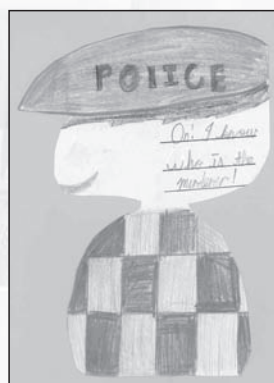
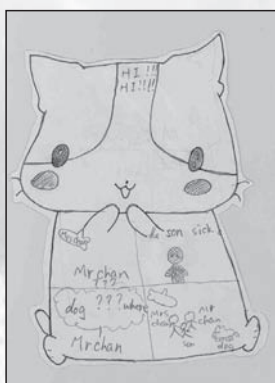


Impacts

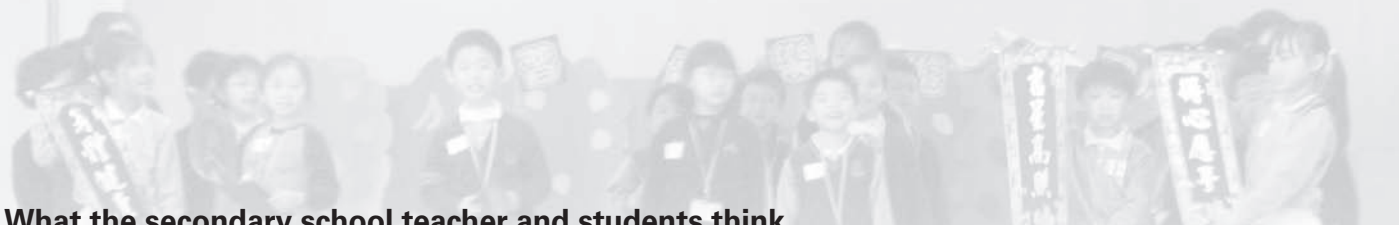
What the primary school teacher and students think

The primary school teacher commented that the storytelling activity was very meaningful as the students had learned the structure and dramatic mode of presentation of short stories. She was particularly impressed by the storytellers' lively way of presentation and their encouraging attempts to use English to explain difficult words to the students. Their patience and enthusiasm was much appreciated.

The students enjoyed the activity a lot and they felt that the stories were interesting. The storytellers were very kind to them and presented the stories clearly. They agreed that they had learned many new words, including pronunciation and intonation, which enabled them to understand English texts better and know how to tell a story with feeling. They also found the bookmark design activity fun and were looking forward to the next storytelling occasion.



Bookmarks designed by the P5 students after they listened to the mystery stories



What the secondary school teacher and students think

The activity coordinator from Li Ka Shing College, Mr Choi believed that his students' writing and speaking had improved as they had spent more time on the writing process and training of speaking skills which could help in their TSA performance. He supported the idea of using process writing because the students could follow a practical way of writing in a step by step manner. They also had a clear objective in mind during writing as they were writing for a real audience—primary five students. He was interested in sustaining the activity.

The students reflected that they were a little nervous during the activity and made occasional pronunciation mistakes but on the whole they liked the experience of storytelling. They commented that their confidence and motivation in both writing and speaking had increased, with speaking giving them more satisfaction.

Facilitating factors

- Li Ka Shing College had experienced process writing last year and therefore some teachers were well prepared for a continuation this year. The writing ideas involved could be passed on smoothly.
- Many English classes are used to putting students into mixed abilities groups during lessons, so the more competent students can help the weaker ones and they can all learn from one another.
- The project is meaningful for both groups of students. For the secondary school students, there was a genuine purpose for writing and speaking. For the primary school students, there was a genuine purpose for reading and listening. They are eager to learn and they responded to the activity enthusiastically. The development of social skills and peer feedback techniques were facilitated.

Difficulties and suggestions

The students reported that the real time spent on writing the mystery story was still not enough. They argued that the idea of constructing a 'mystery' story was difficult for them and they expected more teaching input. In addition, they were not familiar with the language used in primary school readers and therefore they had difficulty in adjusting their English during writing. When presenting the stories, ensuring the listeners' understanding of the texts was also a problem for them.

Highlighting the special characteristics of a mystery story like the addition of misleading clues and unnatural behaviour should be added to strengthen the students' knowledge of writing mystery plots. Also, samples of primary school readers should be distributed to the writers for reference, for content and language use. For speaking, regular, patient checking of the listeners' understanding and repetition of essential lines can help their comprehension and the successful conveyance of meaning. With careful refinement, the storytelling activity can be carried out more effectively and sustained long term.

References

- Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority. (2006). Territory-wide System Assessment, 2006. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority.
- Cook et al. (2001). Increasing Motivation to Write by Enhancing Self-perception, Utilizing Collaboration, Modelling and Relevance. ERIC.
- Curriculum Development Council. (2002). English Language Education Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide (P1-S3). Hong Kong: The Education and Manpower Bureau.

Fanling Government Primary School
T.W.G.Hs. Li Ka Shing College
Ken HO (Language Support Officer)