

Developing and improving writing accuracy through the use of visual and action speaking strategies.

N Hughes. Masters in Educational Practice.

Introduction

The inquiry explored how the introduction of oracy activities (such as actions and visual cues) had an impact on learners' writing accuracy.

I aimed to make pupils more aware of the importance of punctuation and grammatically correct sentences (by including key words) through the introduction of a more familiar, purposeful and practical speaking activity. The teaching was focused more on using pupils' oracy skills (as this was a strength of theirs) as a way of transferring their spoken punctuation and grammatical understanding into the written form.

Justification

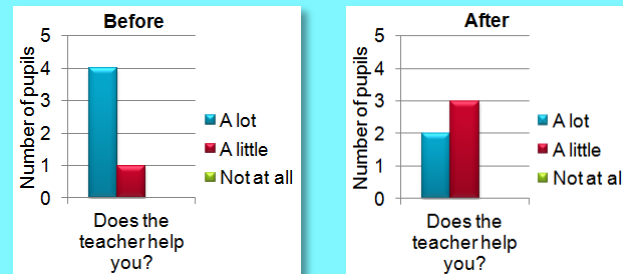
- The Welsh Assembly Government (2010, p.105) suggest that 'accuracy in basic grammar and punctuation is an important contributory element and teachers must do all they can to help learners understand this fact.' Not only is writing a national issue, the basic elements of writing are often affecting learners' written work. This is evident in my own classroom.
- Cremin and Myhill (2012, p. 33) state that 'when ideas are explored, inhabited, discussed and represented in a myriad of ways prior to writing, this offers strong support to writers'. Recording ideas on paper appears to be the final process of a writing activity; discussion of ideas and visual representations needs more focus in order to improve the act of writing. Thus, spoken elements can in fact play the bigger part in written tasks.

Inquiry Design

My inquiry was conducted over a two week period with a mixed Year 3 and 4 class. A familiar story was rehearsed orally as a class for the first week; visual images and actions were provided as prompts. To ensure pupil voice opportunities, the class created actions to be used whenever a piece of punctuation (capital letter or full stop) was needed in the story. The second week focused on learners working in focus groups to complete the written part (using their oracy activity as a tool).

My inquiry was classed as action research. Data was collected using different methods, including pupil questionnaires, focus group interviews, observations (including textual analysis) and journal reflections.

A graph to show pupils' responses before and after the use of oracy activities in a focus group environment



Research Questions

- 1) Can writing accuracy of my Year 3/4 pupils be improved through the introduction of visual images and related oracy activities prior to their writing activity?
- 2) How can oracy activities be integrated into lessons effectively to support written activities?
- 3) Will the introduction of oracy activities inspire learners' writing and accuracy?

Inquiry Findings

- Conversion of punctuation into a spoken and physical action allowed pupils more understanding of punctuation's purpose, and the chance to be transferred successfully back into the written form.
- A focus group environment was preferred by pupils, allowing them more chance to work with the teacher, making them also more engaged and independent.
- Oracy activities provide a secure and enjoyable environment and can impact on learners' attitudes, only if the activities are first modelled and understood.

Impact

- Learners: Oracy activities improved support learners' writing, in particular. Learners also took more ownership of their work and were more engaged.
- Teacher: Improved my understanding of how to teach writing, gaining further insight in to how activities should be differentiated correctly.
- Whole School and Beyond: Further meetings will be organised to gain feedback as to how the intervention could be implemented effectively across the school.

Conclusion

Oracy activities can improve pupils' writing accuracy, if tailored and modelled correctly. Yet using oracy activities is not enough – they need to be carried out in a secure, enjoyable, group environment for pupils to gain independence and understanding in their writing. We as teachers need to provide this classroom environment if we want to improve writing accuracy.

Key References

- Welsh Assembly Government. (2010) *Guidance on the teaching of writing skills*. Available at: <http://learning.gov.wales/resources/browseall/guidanceteachingskills/?lang=en> [Accessed: 5/03/2016].
- Cremin, T. and Myhill, D. (2012) *Writing voices: creating communities of writers*. Abingdon: Routledge.