



Transactional Writing: Explanation

LEVEL 1i 1ii 1iii 2 3 4 5

Pedestrian Crossing

THE LEARNING CONTEXT

“Explanation” had been a class focus for a period of four weeks prior to the development of this piece. The build-up to writing began with discussions on topics of interest to the students. These were mainly personal issues within authentic classroom contexts.

The first topic was “How to Play Cat and Mouse”. The class discussed and sequenced as the teacher modelled the writing. After this the teacher selected a series of experiences which would be enjoyable and easy to explain. Their first activity was popping popcorn. All students wrote one part of the process on separate cards, which were then ordered into an oral explanation as a class.

They were also working on a “Safe Walking” unit, so the pedestrian crossing was an authentic context to write about. The students practised walking across the road. Before they began writing, they talked about why the pedestrian crossing was a safe place to cross.

The teacher’s questions included these points:

- How do you know it is a safe place to cross?
- How do you know that cars will stop?
- How do you know that the people in the cars will see you?

She then sketched a picture of a pedestrian crossing, a car and children on the whiteboard. The students’ task was to explain why it is important to use a pedestrian crossing. She reminded them that they must think about who they are writing for.

The discussion was revisited and the students began their writing.

Teacher-student conversations

The teacher talked with Mitchell part-way through his draft.

Teacher: This is wonderful - can you read it to me?

Mitchell: "We cross the pedestrian crossing because it is safe".

Teacher: Yes, so why is it safe?

Mitchell: Because cars have to stop when they see people.

Mitchell recorded, "Because cars have to stop and watch". He then added, "and so do you" as a conclusion.

Mitchell: I’ve put in my own full stop!

INTEGRATING READING AND WRITING

Opportunities should be sought in classroom reading programmes for students to respond to written and visual texts, identifying how processes or phenomena can be explained. Picture books with narrative text will be useful for this. Exposure to transactional texts will be essential. The “reading to” programme will provide opportunities for discussing specific vocabulary, language features and diagrams, which may be transferred to student writing and drawing.

WHERE TO NEXT?

To move Mitchell towards the next learning step, the teacher might help him to focus on:

Ideas

- encouraging expansion of ideas independently.

Sentences

- writing simple sentences correctly with some variation in beginnings.

Vocabulary

- extending the range of content words.

Punctuation

- understanding and using capital letters and full stops consistently.

Proofreading

- beginning to check for misspelled words.

Layout

- spacing between words.

This could be done by:

- reading and writing supported by much discussion
- modelling with a small group with similar needs in writing and reading sessions
- giving Mitchell specific feedback.



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CURRICULUM LINKS

English in the New Zealand Curriculum

Level 4: Writing Functions

Transactional Writing: Students should write instructions and recount events in authentic contexts.

Levels 3 and 4: Reading and Writing Processes

Exploring Language: Students should explore choices made by writers, and identify and use the common conventions of writing and organisation of text which affect understanding.

Thinking Critically: Students should identify and express meanings in written texts, drawing on personal background, knowledge and experience.

Processing Information: Students should identify, retrieve, record, and present coherent information, using more than one source and type of technology, and describing the process used.

English in the New Zealand Curriculum, pages 35-36

REFERENCE

Ministry of Education. (1994). *English in the New Zealand Curriculum*. Wellington: Learning Media.



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WHAT THE WORK SHOWS: Mitchell develops a simple explanation, in an authentic context, with some clarity. He also demonstrates some sense of his audience by talking directly to them.

Student's first draft

Deeper features

Impact

Explains a personally significant occurrence with some clarity.

Ideas

Supports idea with some simple details or comments.

Structure

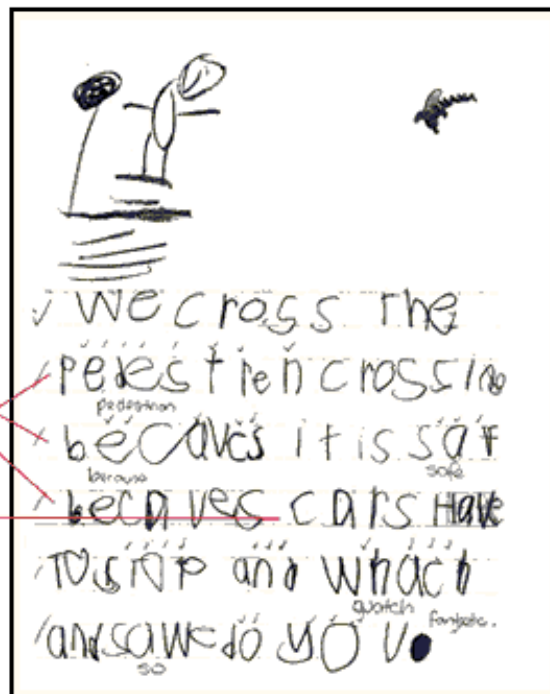
Uses simple cause-and-effect word to support ideas.

Sentences

Attempts a complex sentence.

Vocabulary

Uses some key topic-appropriate words and some high-frequency words.



Surface features

Punctuation

Experiments with capital letters.

Understands and uses full stops with support.

Spelling

Spells most high-frequency words correctly.

Records dominant sounds in order.

We cross The Pedestren crossing
because it is saf becaues cars Have To
sTop and which andsawedo you.

[We cross the pedestrian crossing
because it is safe because cars have to
stop and watch and so do you.]



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Student's first draft

