



LEVEL 1 2 3 4 5

What Makes Talk?

THE LEARNING CONTEXT

This teacher began a five-week focus on writing explanations by using discussion and reading to scaffold the students' thinking.

The class brainstormed a list of topics under the headings "I wonder why ..." and "I wonder how ...". The teacher wrote several of these topics on cards, which she gave to the students to discuss in pairs. These discussions helped them to understand the purpose of explanations and to describe cause-and-effect relationships.

Through guided reading of a range of articles, the students developed an understanding of the structure and language features of explanations. The teacher asked the students to:

- consider initial paragraphs and how the author got the reader's attention;
- find information that explained the phenomenon;
- identify individual words that helped to explain the phenomenon;
- consider the impact of the writing on the audience;
- consider the importance of having prior knowledge about the topic.

The students then wrote explanations on a variety of topics, of which "What Makes Talk?" was the fourth. Rather than print resources, the teacher decided to use discussion and direct experiences as motivation for this writing. The students discussed what body parts could be involved in talk and how they might work. They used mirrors to observe themselves talking, touch to feel their voice boxes, and rubber bands to demonstrate vibrations.

The teacher then asked the students to write an explanatory article for an audience that had limited knowledge of the topic. The class used their prior experience of explanations to establish some criteria for their articles, including those of:

- opening with a definition;
- being explicit;
- concluding with a summary statement.

While the students wrote, the teacher roved and talked to them about their pieces, emphasising the need to make the explanations as clear as possible for the reader.

Teacher-student conversations

During drafting

Teacher: "Communicate" – with whom? [Paragraph 1.]

Lewis: With everyone.

Teacher: Do you think you need to expand your introduction to include that idea?

After drafting

Teacher: Where are the vocal cords? [Paragraph 2.]

Lewis: In your voice box.

Teacher: Do your readers need to know that?

INTEGRATING READING AND WRITING

Classroom reading programmes provide opportunities for students to identify how phenomena can be explained in a wide range of fictional and non-fictional written and visual texts. Teachers could expose their students to explanatory texts in the *School Journal* and *Connected* or to generic reference texts and texts on the Internet. The students could discuss the vocabulary, language features, and diagrams contained in such texts and practise them in their own writing.

WHERE TO NEXT?

To move Lewis towards the next learning step, the teacher could help him to focus on:

- ideas: supporting ideas and reasons with greater and more precise detail;
- structure:
 - developing his range of words and phrases about the relationship between cause and effect
 - making his summary statement stronger
 - becoming more confident with paragraphing.
- developing his range of vocabulary and his ability to select words that enhance his explanations, especially adjectives, adverbs, and verbs.

The teacher could do this by:

- encouraging Lewis to explore texts with examples of these features;
- setting specific goals and criteria with Lewis and providing specific feedback;
- modelling texts that have examples of the language features of explanation.

CURRICULUM LINKS

Level 3: Writing Functions: Transactional Writing

Students should write instructions, explanations, and factual accounts, and express personal viewpoints, in a range of authentic contexts, sequencing ideas logically.

Levels 3 and 4: Reading and Writing Processes

Exploring Language: Students should identify, discuss, and use the conventions, structures, and language features of different texts, and discuss how they relate to the topic.

Thinking Critically: Students should discuss and convey meanings in written texts, exploring relevant experiences and other points of view.

Processing Information: Students should gather, select, record, interpret, and present coherent, structured information from a variety of sources, using different technologies and explaining the processes used.

English in the New Zealand Curriculum, pages 35–36



LEVEL 1 2 3 4 5

What Makes Talk?

STUDENT'S SECOND DRAFT

What makes talk?

Talk is when we have a thought that we put it in to sound. When we talk we use words to ^{communicate} ~~comunicate~~ with one another.

As ~~humans~~ ^{humans} to be ^{able} ~~abel~~ to talk you need a voice box, lungs, tongue, lips ~~and~~ teeth.

If you put your ^{two} ~~to~~ fingers ^{about} ~~apout~~ three cm under your chin and talk you can feel a ~~vibra~~ vibration.

That is because there is ~~are~~ air ^{floating} ~~floatng~~ past ^{the} ~~it~~ ^{stretchy} ~~stretch~~ vocal cords making vibrations. There are ~~two~~ ^{two} ~~stretch~~ ^{stretchy} flaps of skin called vocal cords.

When ^{the} ~~the~~ vocal cords are ^{stretched} ~~high~~ you make a high sound.

Did you know that ^{you make} ~~it is~~ if we didn't have a ^{tongue} ~~tonge~~ we wouldn't be able to talk.

People all over the world use many languages to communicate.

We all use talk every day in some way.



Transactional Writing: Explanation

LEVEL 1 2 3 4 5

What the Work Shows

Lewis has explained a natural phenomenon with reasonable clarity and logic. He includes his audience in the explanation and speaks directly to them for effect.

STUDENT'S SECOND DRAFT

DEEPER FEATURES

Ideas

Supports objective ideas with detail and comment.

Structure

Begins with a topic definition.

Uses simple words expressing the relationship of cause and effect to link ideas logically.

Ends with a simple summary statement.

Begins to organise reasons into paragraphs.

Sentences

Uses a variety of sentence structures, beginnings, and lengths.

Vocabulary

Uses some precise, topic-related vocabulary to make the explanation more informative.

Language features

Uses the present tense consistently.

What makes talk?

Talk is when we have a thought that we put it in to sound. When we talk we use words to communicate with one another.

As humans, to be able to talk we need a voice box, lungs, tongue, lips and teeth. If you put your two fingers about three cm under your chin and talk you can feel a vibration. That is because there is air floating past the vocal cords making vibrations. There are two stretchy flaps of skin called vocal cords. in your voice box. When the vocal cords are stretched tight you make a high sonud. When the vocal cords are loose you make a low sound. Did you know that if we didn't have a tongue we wouldn't be able to talk.

People all over the world use many languages to communicate.

We all use talk every day in someway.

SURFACE FEATURES

Grammar

Uses most grammatical conventions correctly but with a few errors.

Punctuation

Punctuates with increasing independence though with occasional errors.

Spelling

Demonstrates a good understanding of all basic sounds and patterns in written English.

REFERENCES

The first page of this exemplar has been slightly shortened to fit. To see the fuller version, go to www.tki.org.nz/r/assessment/exemplars/eng/