

ESL Developmental Continuum P–10

Teaching strategy – Joint construction

Focuses on

Speaking Listening Reading **Writing**

Most useful for students at stages

A1 A2 BL B1 B2 B3 SL S1 S2 S3 S4

Purpose of this activity

Joint construction involves the teacher and students working together to collaboratively construct a text. The teacher scaffolds the students through questions, thinking aloud, explanations etc, as they write the text together. It is one of the writing strategies that form the Curriculum Cycle, based on a genre approach to teaching writing. Students are best supported to engage in a joint construction of text when they have been learning about a topic and have completed some research (i.e. building field knowledge) and have been explicitly taught something about the particular genre which is the focus of the joint construction (i.e. deconstruction). It is best used with small groups, but can also be used with individuals or whole class groups.

How this helps ESL students in particular

Joint construction:

- models writing conventions and behaviours
- provides a context for students to learn and talk about the structures and features of different text types
- supports students to understand how purpose and audience impact on language choices
- scaffolds the students through the writing process
- allows students to write a text that they might not be able to write independently in a supportive context
- provides a model for students to use for independent writing.

Procedure

The key steps of joint construction are:

- The teacher decides on the genre to be taught and the general topic of the text.
- The teacher sets the scene for the students, explaining the type of text that is to be written, the intended audience and the topic.
- The teacher guides the students through questions, prompts, reviewing what they know about the text type and the topic.
- The teacher and student write the text together, with the students contributing ideas about what should be written and the language that should be used. The teacher and students use the metalanguage (that is a language to talk about language) which has been developed through explicit teaching about the text type and its structural and language features.

- The text is edited and proofread, then published.

Using joint construction with ESL students

Before jointly constructing a text with students:

- Build the students' knowledge of the field or topic through:
 - research tasks or activities which develop vocabulary (e.g. a glossary)
 - activities which develop links between concepts and ideas relevant to the topic (e.g. concept map)
 - activities which develop organisation of information (e.g. data chart).
- Examine examples of the text type (through deconstruction or modelling) so that the students are familiar with the structures and features of the genre which you expect them to include in the text.

Use the metalanguage (i.e. the language you have been using with the students to talk about language) as you write and edit the text, for example the stages of an information report about animals:

- general classification, description, appearance, habitat etc
- grammatical items such as action verbs, noun groups, adverbials of place, pronouns
- organisational and cohesion features such as paragraph, topic sentence, referring words.

Expect the students to use the language too as they contribute.