

ELT Research Papers 16.03

Children and Teachers as Co-researchers: a Handbook of Activities

Annamaria Pinter and Rama Mathew



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Introduction

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This handbook offers a set of activities that teachers have tried out in their Indian school classrooms with children of 8 to 14 years of age. A special feature of the activities is that they focus particularly on how we can involve children as co-researchers in our normal everyday work in class. You might be wondering what ‘children as co-researchers’ actually means. We will explain it here and also tell you a little bit about the project from where these activities have emerged so that you can get a full picture before you attempt them in your class. What is special with these activities is that children have had a say in what they would like to do in class and they have collaborated with their teachers exploring aspects of their own learning. This way they have been equal participants and have contributed to the activities in a substantial way, learning in the process to become better collaborators and more confident users of English. Teachers on this project have enjoyed designing and using these activities as much as children have; and learnt more from such an involvement than in their ‘normal’ classes.

There are two main parts to this Introduction: the first discusses some details about the project from where the activities have emerged. It locates the activities in the context in which they were tried out. The other is about the Handbook itself. It presents details about the activities, the rationale for the different sections and its overall structure. You can read whichever section you like first depending on your interest and purpose.

About the project from where the activities emerged

The book is an outcome of a project entitled Children and teachers as co-researchers in Indian primary English Classrooms which began officially in February 2015. A brief report on this project is available at this link: <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/children-teachers-co-researchers-indian-primary-english-classrooms>

Pilot Study

In fact we started work on this project in November 2013 in the form of a pilot study in India with funding from the University of Warwick and the University of Delhi where the authors worked. About 12 teachers worked in the initial phase and we tried to clarify for ourselves what doing a piece of classroom centred research involved with a specific focus on learners as co-researchers. This phase opened up a whole set of questions: Is this action research? Do we start from an issue/problem that the teacher feels strongly about in her context? How do we actually involve learners? Do we need to train them in doing ‘research’? Do we need to be trained before we take up the research study in our classrooms? As we continued work into the main project, answers to the questions started to become clearer.

Main Study

Participants: For the main project we began with identifying teachers in different parts of India. We had five teachers from the pilot phase who served as mentors for the ‘new’ teachers who were about 18 in number. They came from different states and represented a range of urban/rural/semi-urban, primary/upper primary, government/private schools with not much prior experience of doing classroom-based research. However a distinguishing feature of these teachers was that they were volunteers,

i.e. willing to carry out a piece of research in their classrooms that involved their learners and most of them also had permission from their school principals to take on such work.

Mode of delivery

The project was carried out through three face-to-face workshops and plenty of online-discussion in the intervening periods. The first workshop helped participants to understand the concept, their role and the kinds of mini-research studies they could take up in their own unique contexts. As the mentors had already been through one cycle of this research, presentations of their experiences acted as a starting point. Further discussions and reading of relevant academic articles helped to give their work a concrete shape. The two subsequent workshops focused on getting teacher-researchers and some local child-researchers to present their work in a seminar mode through posters, with some 'outsiders' in the audience such as colleagues from some of their schools, other researchers in ELT/Education and colleagues from the Education Department where the second author worked. This not only allowed plenty of discussion and clarified ideas and concepts for the teachers, but also gave an opportunity to everyone to share their experience of struggles and successes they went through as the project unfolded.

Context and other factors to be considered

One of the main outcomes was the different activities teachers tried out in their own classrooms along with the insights that emerged from these. This handbook is a collection of these activities. We worked with a host of different kinds of variety in terms of the type of school, such as rural/urban/semi-urban, government/private, English medium and mother tongue medium, the number of languages children and teachers brought to the classroom as their L1, L2, L3, children from very poor to middle class backgrounds, varying parental education and support, children's language proficiency, their motivation to learn and do something new and how dependent they were on their teachers. Add to this other factors such as the teacher's own language proficiency, her/his motivation to move out of his or her comfort zone, whether the school environment was supportive to 'innovation', and the grades they taught.

Types of schools

Very broadly, we can perhaps divide the sixteen schools into two categories:

(i) government primary vernacular medium schools regardless of their location, i.e. rural/semi-urban/urban, that caters largely to under-privileged sections of the society. Parents of these children might not have even had school-education. (ii) private high schools which offer English medium education and cater to lower middle and middle class families. Facilities in such a school as well as parental motivation and support are what can be termed moderate to good. As children of these schools are nearer the school board exams at the end of Class X, there are compulsions for both teachers and students to adhere to the exam scheme in their teaching and assessment work. Typically, the teacher in this school is under pressure to complete the syllabus and to get children ready for the exams, even if they are in Class VIII.

Activities as outlines

The project provided an opportunity for teachers to address the complex combination of factors in their own individual ways. We could see that teachers acknowledged and accepted the children as they were and tried to start from where they were at. With each successive workshop, where teachers and some students presented their work in progress, one could clearly see the move from a lower level to a higher level on many dimensions. It will be impossible to collate and come up with a standard set of activities that worked with well-defined outcomes; what is possible and is of value is to see each activity within the context in which it was carried out and understand what was gained, however small the gain might be. For any potential future use, it is also possible and necessary to modify these activities depending on the actual context

that includes learners' readiness, language proficiency level and also teachers' own readiness to take on a particular activity. In this sense the activities are not lesson plans to be implemented but outlines to be adapted and tried out.

Each set of activities is carried out by the teacher over a period of time, not necessarily every day or every English class, but depending on the context: some activities are such that they are related for example, to writing skills, and therefore they would have been carried out whenever there was a slot for writing in the class-schedule. Some are examples of 'class projects' students are working on in the learners' free time. Another important dimension is that just as this project was a voluntary activity for the teacher, and not always part of the curriculum, students were in some cases also volunteers: only those who wished to work on it did, and in such cases others were either 'observers' or the activity was done outside of their timetabled classes.

Who are children as co-researchers?

We would like to caution the reader about the notion 'children as co-researchers'. This idea emphasises the importance of including learners in every-day decision making, taking responsibility for what they do and how they do it, collaborative learning, i.e. working with others in pairs and groups, negotiating and coming to a common understanding about something and other associated skills. It is not to be presumed that the teacher or learner is already an experienced researcher. This project was an attempt to figure out how both could engage in a meaningful dialogue that helped them to become 'researchers' together. The term 'researching' is used here loosely, to mean an act of questioning, hypothesizing, asking people to give their views/opinions, making sense of what they say, and arriving at an informed understanding about the task at hand. This whole enterprise is one where we don't presume things but actually try them out to see how they work in actual contexts. And this process is ongoing, i.e. one thing leads to another, and you will see some evidence of a 'journey' in some of the activities. In some cases the teachers didn't know beforehand what the first activity would lead to whereas in other cases they were following a pre-determined plan. This suggests that there is no one way of undertaking the task of researching with children.

The meaning of 'progress'

What is definitely perceivable is the 'progress' each teacher (with her/his learners) is making. Clearly they are moving on a continuum from a lower end to a higher end on the different dimensions mentioned earlier. Let's take an example to illustrate this progress along a continuum: a teacher who is teaching older children (Grade 8 or 9, age 13+ years) in a private school has a syllabus to follow (all the 'lessons', exercises, regular tests are given to her as part of the school board's mandate), from which she can't deviate, as they are getting ready for the secondary board exams. In such a scenario, the teacher and her small group of volunteers manage to take off from 'reading a story' to dramatizing it and then decide to make a presentation to the entire class after doing some 'research' on it. While this may appear as commonplace in a context where this is the norm, for this class and the set of students in question, this was a new way of working. Progress can also be seen in the way teachers learnt to 'let go' of their authority or teacher-centredness, and allowed students to take on a much more active and responsible role. This is clear in every teacher's trajectory.

When you select an activity from this handbook, you will need to assess whether it suits your context in terms of your school culture (supportive vs not-so-supportive, parental expectations) your own temperament/teaching style, and your students' enthusiasm, how open-minded they are and so forth. One thing we have found at least in younger children's schools is that they are more open and excited about doing 'new' things and take more risks compared to older children who are single-mindedly trying to 'master the syllabus' because they have to face school board exams; even their parents are anxious about their scores.

About the Handbook

The activities in this handbook have been presented in six sections, each loosely representing a theme, although a single activity could have elements of more than one theme. Also there is no hierarchy or order to these themes; however, the first one, 'Trying out something new' seems to capture work completed at the beginning of the project and similarly 'Designing research tools and analysing empirical data' makes more sense when children have had more experience of the researching processes towards the end/the second half of the project.

The sections are as follows:

- Section 1: Trying out something new
(6 activities)
- Section 2: Children making choices
(8 activities)
- Section 3: Teachers handing over control
to children (7 activities)
- Section 4: Building positive relationships
(4 activities)
- Section 5: Designing research tools and analysing
empirical data (11 activities)
- Section 6: Feedback and self/peer-assessment
(9 activities)

You are invited to read through the activities and understand how they have been carried out and then apply them with some necessary modifications in your classroom. It is even possible to pitch the activity lower or higher depending on your children's needs.

Each part begins with a brief introduction outlining the key features of the theme and how the activities concretise those features. The structure of the activities is as follows: the activities are numbered across all the themes of the handbook (from 1 – 45). Each activity provides a title that captures the main focus. This is followed by the name of the teacher who conducted the activity, the age group of the children, the approximate time it takes to carry out the activity (sometimes it is not within the class hour in which case the time it requires outside class hours is indicated), materials needed, and the kind of class organisation: individual, pair/group work or whole class. For some activities there is an additional description provided. This is followed by the procedures in steps that clearly outline what the teacher and the children did in each of the successive stages.

The 'Comments from the editors' at the end of the activity sums up the main ideas and sometimes suggests how else you might be able to carry out the activity. Examples of children's work are provided next which are actual samples of their work or show the children in action. These give some idea of how exactly the activity unfolded.

Almost all the activities have been carried out in under-resourced, large classes. Therefore they require very little by way of materials or extra resources. In a few cases, prior thinking and planning is essential so that children come prepared for the activity. This is clearly signalled. Although the activity is described in steps, these steps should be seen as guidelines only. You as the teacher can be flexible in interpreting it the way you consider it appropriate, either by collapsing some steps or creating subsidiary steps.

As the theme 'children and teachers as co-researchers' of the research project suggests, we would like you to take on a research-approach to trying out these activities and document if possible the modifications/additions/deletions you make as you go along. That we feel would be in-keeping with the notion of researching in the classroom. In this sense, this book offers a set of tried out activities but they are not

cast in stone. They have worked in the Indian context, in the numerous types of classroom contexts that we have tried to describe, and should work in other contexts with a little bit of imagination and commitment.

A final word

We would like to suggest that replicating activities in your classrooms the way they are presented here is not so important; what is important, though, is to develop an understanding of how children can be enabled to take charge of their learning and to devise your own activities or to negotiate day to day activities in that light.

We would love to hear about your experience of trying out these activities in your classrooms and that way we can enhance the value and usefulness of the Handbook. You can contact the teacher directly with your feedback or any query you may have even as you are planning to try it out in your classroom.

We hope that you will be as excited as we all were, especially when your children can join these 800 + children in their effort at becoming young researchers!

Annamaria Pinter

Rama Mathew

SECTION 1: **Trying out** **something new**

Section 1: Trying out something new

Many teachers started this project by simply trying out something new, taking a step outside their usual comfort zone. This meant that the children were encouraged to engage with activities in a new way compared to their usual class routine.

As children went on this path of discovery, their participation improved and they started enjoying their classes more. Of course we must remember that what is novel in one context could be commonplace in another.

In many cases these initial new ideas and ways of doing things led to children making choices and teachers eventually letting go of their complete control over the teaching/learning processes. In this sense these first few activities are seen as the first seeds of change.

1

Writing stories through comic strips

TEACHER: Pritinder Kaur Sodhi

AGE: 13+ years

TIME: 60 – 80 minutes

MATERIALS: Comic strips from newspapers /magazines, chart paper, colours, pencil, eraser, ruler

ORGANISATION: Individual, group work and whole class activity



PROCEDURE

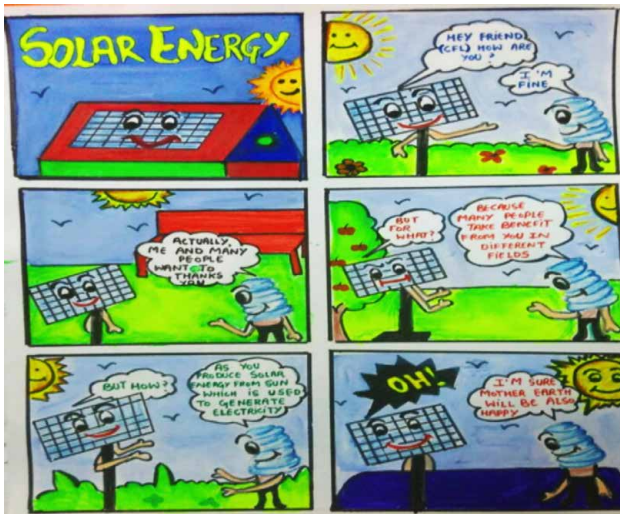
1. As reading comics is a favourite pastime for children, and as our school gets multiple copies of students' editions of the newspaper with plenty of comic strips, I decided to discuss some questions with the children about them:
 - a. Why do we enjoy reading comic strips?
 - b. What kinds of stories/events do they describe?
 - c. How are emotions conveyed in comic strips?
 - d. Can reading and writing comic strips help with language learning? How?
2. From this discussion it emerged that the children were interested in creating comic strips as opposed to just reading them. One day before the activity, I distributed some comic strips. The students analysed these in class and looked at how the comic-strip creator combined text, quotes and images to tell the story. For example, they noted how the captions were used, distinguished between speech and thought bubbles and a plot in each strip.
3. The students divided themselves into groups and chose a group leader to navigate the activity. Each group wanted to make their own comic strips.
4. The groups brainstormed about their characters, settings and objects. Then they created three-, five-, six-, or eight frame comic strips.
5. With speech and thought bubbles the students told their story. They used colours to brighten up their stories and to give more appeal to their work.
6. They put up the strips for display. As always, they wrote about their 'feelings' and put these in the 'Feelings Box'.

Comments from the editors

This activity grew out of the teacher's desire to do something different in class. The activity helped children to organise ideas on how to combine pictures, captions and use dialogue to tell a story, specific events or convey a message. They found this activity entertaining, engaging and non-threatening; it also helped in developing a happy relationship among students and with their teacher. It was heartening to see that students were giving tips to others on how to make a comic strip. Speaking/ listening, reading and writing happened much more meaningfully.

Example of children's work editors

Story in a comic strip



2

Creating a wall magazine

TEACHER: Sudeshna Dutta

AGE: 13 – 15 years

TIME: 60 minutes or more if necessary

MATERIALS: Paper, chart paper, coloured pens, sketch pens, stickers, kite papers, glue

ORGANISATION: Pair, group work and individual



PROCEDURE

1. I had been working on developing my learners' writing skills for weeks.
2. I wanted to know how much confidence learners had gained to start writing by themselves so I asked them what they wanted to write instead of telling them what to do. They wanted to do something colourful, decorate their writing with drawings, cartoons or even use paint.
3. They decided to create colourful English magazines. They worked in groups and decided about their roles, i.e. who was going to write, who was going to draw and decorate the pages, etc.
4. They wrote their poems, stories, and other pieces, consulting each other. They also completed drawings and decorated their magazines.
5. They checked each other's work by giving feedback/comments. Finally they displayed their work on the classroom wall.

Comments from the editors

This is also an example where the teacher decided to do something unusual, i.e. instead of following the next writing task in the book, she asked the children what they wanted to write in English. The activity is a collective effort which involves writing creatively in English. Children enjoy making their work attractive. When this happens, they also use language creatively. The other spin-offs were that they tried to work collaboratively with a sense of discipline.

Example of children's work

Children working on their poems and stories



3

From pictures to stories

TEACHER: Pavan S.R.

AGE: 10 – 12 years

TIME: 50 – 60 minutes to start with but continues over days

MATERIALS: A4 paper, crayons, pencil and eraser

ORGANISATION: Individual and whole class work



PROCEDURE

1. I noticed that my children were collecting pictures and I encouraged them to bring these into the English class to talk about. They were explaining to me that the pictures could be sorted into two categories: what they liked and what they did not like.
2. I then decided to discuss with them further about those pictures. They were asked to think about reasons behind their likes and dislikes. 'What kinds of things don't I like at all?' 'What things do I like? Why?'
3. Then in groups, they wanted to write stories around the pictures they liked most.
4. In the same groups they collaboratively thought of themes, searched for suitable words and phrases and also decided to stick the pictures next to the writing.
5. Many groups came up with creative titles such as 'How to kill witches? Why are bikes intelligent? How to earn money?'
6. Then they told their stories to the whole class and answered questions that the listeners asked.

Comments from the editors

In this activity, children develop their texts while achieving full potential of their creativity and curiosity. The teacher was just a 'sounding board' when needed. The leisurely and enjoyable atmosphere probably helped to encourage every child to write a story. Pictures act as a great trigger for creativity in class.

Examples of children's work

Children writing stories around the pictures they chose



4

Writing a story

TEACHER: Sudeshna Dutta

AGE: 13 – 15 years

TIME: 60 minutes

MATERIALS: Paper and pen/pencil

ORGANISATION: Group work and whole class activity



PROCEDURE

1. The starting point of this activity was that I wanted to try a new idea. The learners said that they were interested to write a story in English but didn't know how to start.
2. They sat in a circle and we selected a 'writer'/'scribe' whose handwriting was reasonably good. One learner took the lead and started with a single sentence that formed the beginning of the story.
3. The next learner added a sentence to the story and so on, until all the students had added one sentence and completed the story. (I also took part when I thought they were stuck or the story was ending too soon!). The scribe took notes as the story developed and children worked in groups afterwards to revise their stories.
4. They put their stories up for display for everyone (even students from other classes) to read.

Comments from the editors

In this activity the teacher decided to encourage the learners to do something different. The learners explored the entire process of drafting a story. They collaborated with each other in developing their communicative and thinking skills. This 'worked' as they were happy to give it a try. Some children initially constructed sentences in their mother tongue which were then translated into English with other students' help.

Example of children's work

Children create a group story



5

Book review

TEACHER: Sharada, M.

AGE: 13+

TIME: 8 (40 + 40) minutes

MATERIALS: Paper and pen/pencils for the learners, book to be reviewed, some samples of book reviews

ORGANISATION: Group work, whole class activity



PROCEDURE

1. One day we decided to do something different. We decided to review a book the learners had read. As preparation for the activity, they also read some examples of book reviews in magazines, newspapers and/or on the internet.
2. The learners formed groups of four based on the book they liked to review. This was their choice. The book could be a novel they had all read for fun or a book that was assigned in school or any other.
3. They discussed the features of some book reviews they had looked at and picked out the main elements such as the title of the book and the author, the summary, the book's strengths and weaknesses, the reviewer's personal response to the book with specific examples to support praise or criticism.
4. Some of them chose to do some background research on the author. Sources included the author's personal website, the website for the book's publisher, or biographies of the author. Learning information about the author and knowing what other books he or she may have written added context to the review.
5. They made an outline of the review before writing, using one paragraph for each point/element.
6. Finally, each group wrote its review collaboratively and the class shared these across groups.

Comments from the editors

This activity started with the intention to deviate from the textbook. In this case it was a book review where the learners were free to review any book they read for fun. Such an activity could also include a review of movies/plays/TV shows they have seen. Instead of writing a review for a journal/magazine, they can decide to write a letter to the author expressing their views on his/her book. Peer review can add another important dimension of learning. While various ways of writing the review are explored, the teacher could give some suggestions but all learners/ groups could decide for themselves what to do.

Example of children's work

Children discussing the main elements of book review



6

Creating a class library

TEACHER: Deepti Chawla

AGE: 8+ years

TIME: Two class periods of 50 – 60 minutes each over two days

MATERIALS: Story books read previously

ORGANISATION: Group activity

DESCRIPTION: In this activity, children in groups of four or five pick up one theme that they have already read about and write a new story around it collectively.



PROCEDURE

1. Students felt that they had only a limited number of books in class to read so while exploring how to get more books I encouraged them to create their own books based on previously read books and known stories.
2. They divided themselves into groups and accepted my suggestion that each group should be mixed and each group should have one member who could read and write in English a little.
3. All the groups picked up two or three of their favourite books that they had read over and over again and liked. I discovered that two groups had picked up the story 'Go Green', a story of a girl who had a kitchen garden with a lot of vegetables.
4. They were free to create stories using English or their mother tongue or both. They were also free to draw, sketch, paint or paste things together to express what they wanted say.
5. After creating their own stories they put them all together and tied the pages with a string and made their books. Then they read out their books to each other and other friends as well.
6. These story books were kept as part of children's literature resources in the classroom.

Comments from the editors

In this classroom the teacher has run out of story books. This is what we can call a 'blessing in disguise'. The children had already read many stories and engaged with them, so the teacher encouraged them to do something altogether different. The children were asked to make up their own stories even if that meant a combination of using their mother tongue (Hindi) as well as their English. When children read and write together in a meaningful way they get a sense of accomplishment. Helping each other provides a safe and secure environment to explore what they know and do not know yet in English. There is no pressure to perform as they are creating something together.

Example of children's work

Children creating their own story



**SECTION 2:
Children
making choices**

Section 2: Children making choices

Trying something new in the classroom may lead to children making choices about topics, materials and even the focus of the entire lesson. Many teachers were able to ask their children what they wanted to do or investigate. This meant that the children were encouraged to make sometimes small, sometimes bigger choices and this motivated them to try their hardest.

As soon as children were given meaningful choices, their participation in class improved. Making choices also involved decision making on the part of children, which in itself is a major step in contexts where usually teachers make all the decisions, as it is believed that children are still not ready to take that 'adult' step. What the children chose to do was often surprising to the teachers and most teachers reported that they had underestimated their children's capacity to make sensible choices and decisions.

7

Monster stories

TEACHER: Sonika Gupta

AGE: 8+ years

TIME: 50 – 60 minutes

MATERIALS: A4 paper, crayons, pencil and eraser

ORGANISATION: Individual and whole class work

DESCRIPTION: In this activity, children write or tell each other their imaginative ghost and monster stories/scenes.



PROCEDURE

1. In class I started by trying to understand what content might be of interest to the children. After some brainstorming, the children all agreed that they wanted to listen to ghost stories and monster stories. Such stories never appeared in their books but they all expressed great interest in them. So, the content of the stories we were going to work on was their choice.
2. In the next lesson I asked the children to place their chairs in a circle and I told a story about monsters (such as 'The monster who ate darkness', [http://www.mikbooks.com/library/9780763638597/the-monster-who-ate-darkness.](http://www.mikbooks.com/library/9780763638597/the-monster-who-ate-darkness))
3. After I told the story, the children closed their eyes and visualized the scene/part of the story which they enjoyed most. Then they shared their favourite part of the story with each other in pairs.
4. Next, I asked them to think of/create a new monster story/episode in pairs and share their ideas again by talking about these scenes together.
5. Then I gave them a piece of paper and asked them to draw the monster scene that they had imagined.
6. Next, I asked the children to write a story or part of the story that they liked on the same piece of paper but I gave them a choice of writing it in English or bilingually (in Hindi and English).
7. Finally, we displayed all the stories in class for everyone to enjoy.

Comments from the editors

Giving children choices such as deciding about topic areas, types of stories or types of activities is always good because the children will be keen to engage with whatever is their own choice. Young children often find it hard to choose unless there are alternatives to choose from, so you can prepare Activity A, B, and C, and simply ask them to choose one task (out of three) that they might like to work on. With time, children will be able to make more informed choices and they will be able to discuss and justify their choices to the teacher. To be able to make choices in one's learning leads to motivated engagement and this is good foundation for becoming a co-researcher.

Example of children's work

Children reading stories they like



8

Magazine tasks

TEACHER: Sonika Gupta

AGE: 8+ years

TIME: About 60 minutes twice a week over 2 months

MATERIALS: Copies of children's magazines (English), Champak and Magic pot

ORGANISATION: Individual and group



PROCEDURE

1. I wanted to introduce children's literature material in my classroom to expose the children to some authentic materials but did not want to give it as a teacher-initiated task.
2. I started by chatting with the learners about school, friends and everyday life, and I brought along some copies of children's magazines (such as 'Champak' and 'Magic pot'). These are English magazines available in India aimed at children.
3. As part of the informal chatting we started looking at the magazines as well and this gave me a chance to observe my children's reactions. Initially the children just looked through the pages on their own.
4. Then I noticed that they spontaneously started asking each other about the activities they liked in their magazines. This emerged because of the informal context that was created.
5. I gave them freedom to look at whatever they wanted to in the magazines and even though at the beginning they were only interested in games, gradually they started to take interest in the longer texts and wanted me to read these texts aloud to the whole class.
6. I made sure each child could choose their favourite story to be read in class.
7. Little by little the children explored the entire content of the magazines and they took the initiative to search for their favourite activities, looking through several copies of magazines.
8. The class particularly enjoyed riddles and we started to collect these from all the magazines in a class book. Everyone enjoyed learning these by heart and tried them out with their siblings at home and their friends and classmates in and outside the classroom.

Comments from the editors

In this classroom children took interest in reading and working with magazines. Sometimes, it is a good idea for the teacher to bring along favourite photos, picture books, cards, games or other authentic materials to see if the children take any interest in these. Authentic materials and prompts can be especially attractive if they belong to the teacher and if the teacher is seen to enjoy these. Children often surprise teachers about what they might take an interest in. Sometimes it is not what we expect.

Example of children's work

Reading magazines in pairs according to interest



9

Holiday homework

TEACHER: Esther Gloria Sahu

AGE: 12+ years

TIME: 40 + 40 minutes

MATERIALS: Notebooks and pen/pencil

ORGANISATION: Individual, pair or group as students want it

DESCRIPTION: Holiday homework, year after year, has been a problem because very few do it, however creative and interesting I have tried to make it. It was only when they could design it that they showed interest in doing it.



PROCEDURE

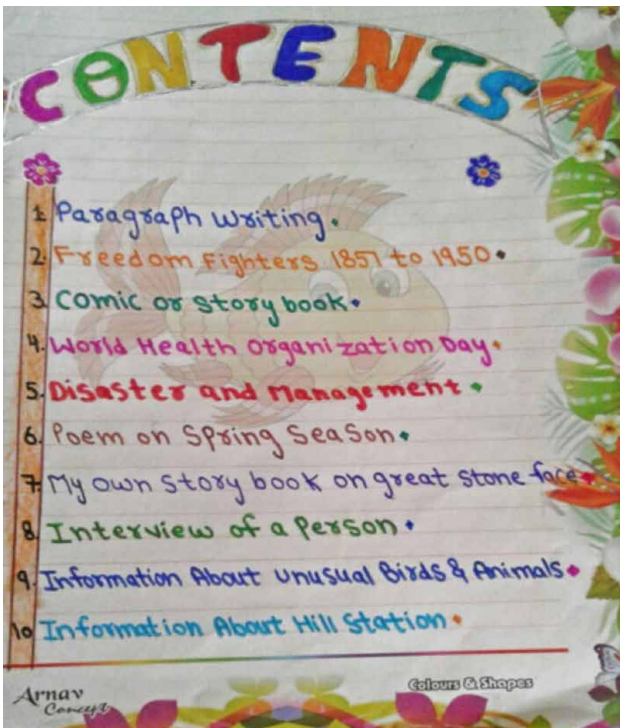
1. Home assignments in the summer holiday are very important in my context but I noticed over the years that most students did not do these tasks at all.
2. I decided to discuss with my children why they did not do holiday homework. They frankly told me it was boring and not to their liking and they immediately came up with the solution themselves. They wanted to draft the assignments themselves so that they could have a choice in what to do.
3. I encouraged them/allowed them to design it the way they wanted to. So, some of them worked individually, some in pairs and some in groups of 3-4 members.
4. I encouraged them to write the tasks in the language they wanted to, i.e. either in Hindi or in English. This was necessary because their language proficiency in English was low and working bilingually really helped them to express themselves.
5. Once they completed their first draft, they discussed them with me and the rest of the class.
6. They all completed a second draft of their writing, taking into account any suggestions and corrections from peers and myself.
7. Since the assignments were created by them, when they returned after the vacation, 80% of the students had completed their work.

Comments from the editors

In this example the teacher decided to ask the children about holiday homework and took the opportunity to build on their suggestions and ideas about doing it differently. Children could be consulted in a similar way about any other aspect of your teaching, such as how to start lessons, how to do test preparation, how to make speaking tasks more fun, and many others aspects of a lesson. Consulting with the learners is important and these initial consultations can develop into partnerships where teachers and learners explore their classrooms together.

Example of children's work

Children suggest holiday homework that they like to do



10

Making your own toys

TEACHER: Usha Malhan

AGE: 8+ years

TIME: 50 – 60 minutes or a little more

MATERIALS: Toys, A4 sheets, crayons, pencil, eraser and glue

ORGANISATION: Group work and whole class activity

DESCRIPTION: In this activity children in groups make two toys by using waste materials, and then make a story by using the toys and then present their stories in class.

PREPARATION: To start the activity you can show videos of how to make different toys by reusing waste material. To download videos on making toys by reusing waste material you can go to these links:

Make a Toy Insect Robot using Bottle – <https://www.Youtube.com/watch?v=-Pi3wUmgsY8>

Toys Train – <https://www.Youtube.com/watch?v=g7Rcf9Soqfg>

How to make a toy guitar – https://www.Youtube.com/watch?v=oPO_pBgbU0c

Match box microphone – <https://www.Youtube.com/watch?v=yj-wkw98j7Q>

For videos of different types of handmade toys you can visit: www.arvindguptatoys.com/films.html



PROCEDURE

1. In previous classes I asked the children what they wanted to do in English and they were eager to talk about their favourite toys.
2. After some discussion we decided to make toys in class using waste material. Before the lesson the children volunteered to collect cold drink cans, empty match boxes, straws, plastic bottles and cups, thread, old socks, bottle caps, buttons, small cardboard boxes, rubber bands, stickers and glitter. It was all their idea and they sourced all the materials themselves.
3. At the beginning of the lesson I divided the class into groups of 5.
4. Then the children were asked to put all the materials they collected on the table.
5. Each group made at least two toys using their materials. It was entirely their choice what toys to make.
6. Then each group started drafting a story about their toys. I helped each group but they decided about the characters and the storyline themselves.
7. Finally, the whole class sat in a circle and each group presented/acted out their stories.

Comments from the editors

In this example the teacher encouraged the learners to make their own toys. Doing craftwork and making things can be very motivational in children's English classes and these products can be used to practise English. For example, puppets can be described, they can make friends with others and create dialogues, or they can write diaries, just to mention a few examples. Collecting and recycling waste materials is also good for the environment, so this kind of activity would also fit well within the theme of 'going green'. In your classrooms it may be possible to make other types of products using recycled materials depending on the interests of your learners.

Example of children's work

Making paper toys



11

Stories from a mini library

TEACHER: Anirudha Rout

AGE: 13 years

TIME: Anytime during and outside class hours

MATERIALS: A large selection of stories

ORGANISATION: Individual and group work, whole class activity

DESCRIPTION: The activity has four parts – Choosing, Reading, Recording and Talking.

There were more than 600 stories for different proficiency levels in the teacher’s library. The learners tried to read a story at random. If they found the story too challenging, they could try a story at a lower proficiency level. If they found that too easy, they could go to a higher proficiency level. After reading these stories they recorded the title of the story, the level of proficiency and any other notes. They also noted down if they learnt something like new words or new structures in English. They were encouraged to share their views about the stories with their friends.



PROCEDURE

1. In a series of lessons I talked to the learners about the project I was involved in and my desire to involve them actively in their own learning. After some discussion we together decided to focus on stories. I had a mini library of story books in the school and I encouraged learners to choose stories they liked to read and later to tell these stories in class.
2. We agreed to keep the books accessible to the learners during school hours and they could also take home the book they picked.
3. The children had a choice about what story to read from a large selection. We discussed that it would be good to write down some thoughts about each book in their diaries. We agreed that everyone should record in their diaries the title of the story, what level the story is, what they learnt/liked. They had a choice whether they were going to record their ideas in their first language or in English (their second language).
4. When a randomly chosen story was not at the right difficulty level, learners were asked to choose something easier or harder. Then they were asked to share with a friend the story they read and why they liked it.
5. I also encouraged learners to tell their stories in class and over time, more and more children volunteered to do this.
6. Sometimes they wrote diaries (in their mother tongue) about their experience of reading stories.

Comments from the editors

In this example, the teacher offered a large selection of stories to his class and the children selected the books they wanted to read. Even though everyone had to record some facts and opinions about each book they chose, the freedom to choose whatever they wanted (and the freedom to put back whatever they did not enjoy) meant that everyone was engaged in reading. Watching their peers tell stories in class also gave other children the confidence to do the same. As long as children volunteer to tell stories, no pressure is put on those who are not ready yet. In your class you may be able to do something similar. Children can select books, or songs or poems or news items to write about or talk about in the same way.

Example of children's work

A student is telling the story she has read



12

Youtube videos

TEACHER: Priya Minz

AGE: 10+ years

TIME: 30 – 40 minutes

MATERIALS: Projector, laptop, video-audio clips, speakers, pen-drives/CDs, notebooks, pens and dictionaries

ORGANISATION: Individual activity (involvement of whole class)

DESCRIPTION: The teacher discusses with the students their areas of interest and their choice of videos useful for enhancing English learning in the class. The students either select or bring videos (animated educational/songs, etc.) to be played in the class. They keep a notebook and a dictionary handy for the session.



PROCEDURE

1. When I discussed with my class what they wanted to do to learn English, they suggested watching video-clips from Youtube.
2. Each student selected a short video (less than 5 minutes) to watch in class. The rest of the class jotted down any interesting phrases and new or unfamiliar expressions as they watched and listened.
3. Then we played the video again, sometimes several times.
4. All the learners, including the person who selected the video, were then asked to share their notes and teach each other some new phrases in groups. Then each group reported back to the class about how they got on and finally a poster was made using the new words and phrases.

Comments from the editors

In this example the teacher encouraged the learners to suggest a new way of learning English and, not surprisingly, the learners chose learning with short Youtube videos. In your classroom you could suggest learning with videos as well, or you could invite your students to suggest possible videos for your class. You will need to check the content and the suitability of the videos but overall the fact that the learners can choose the input will make a real difference to their motivation to participate. You can also exploit video materials in different ways such as watching them without sound and guessing what the people might be talking about, writing alternative subtitles or acting out alternative scenarios.

Example of children's work

Poster with new words and phrases



13

Group work to write stories

TEACHER: Fatima Parveen

AGE: 12 – 13 years

TIME: 60 minutes

MATERIALS: Sheets of paper and pen/pencil

DESCRIPTION: Learners expressed their interest to do group work. Their diary entries say, for example, “I love to do group work”, “I am waiting to do group work. It is so much fun” and we did just that!



PROCEDURE

1. When I asked my learners what they would like to do in groups, most of them were interested in writing stories.
2. They got into groups of their own choice and selected their group leaders to initiate the discussion. They decided on different roles for themselves but wanted me to give them some ideas about what to write about.
3. To start off, I suggested the hypothetical situation 'IF'. They decided on several ideas: for example if I am the first Indian on Mars, if I become small in this big world, if I could enter the black hole or if I am the last person in the world. They debated, negotiated and decided on the final topic based on their group consensus.
4. They also decided what kind of vocabulary is more appropriate for the story they wrote the first draft.
5. They showed me their first draft for feedback. I made some general comments without pointing out errors. They then edited it for avoiding repetition of ideas and to check accuracy.
6. Finally, the students completed a second draft with the help of their editors and displayed the stories for everyone to read.

Comments from the editors

This is an example of an activity where the teacher picked up an idea that the children initiated and built on it further. While she played the role of a facilitator, learners negotiated, took decisions and created a story of their own choice. While wanting to work in groups might seem commonplace, when you allow them their choice, they feel respected and put their heart into it. What is also important here is that the learners had lots of fun while dealing with serious issues like peer-review, editing, language accuracy which in 'normal' classes are all controlled by the teacher. It is a good idea to look for signs for what their learning preferences are or to even ask them directly. You are sure to succeed when they are fully involved in the activity they have chosen to do.

Example of children's work

Children editing their group writing



14

Lets' go shopping!

TEACHER: Pritinder Kaur Sodhi

AGE: 13+ years

TIME: 60 minutes

MATERIALS: Pencils, newspaper advertisements, scissors, glue stick, chart, sketch pens

ORGANISATION: Individual, pair, group, whole class



PROCEDURE

1. When students brainstormed as to what activity they would like to do in their next class, they decided to prepare a budget for their home shopping by looking at advertisements in the newspaper. They talked to their parents about what they needed and brought newspapers to work with.
2. They got into groups of their own choice and selected their group leaders to initiate discussion.
3. They decided about a hypothetical situation. 'If you are given Rs.1000/- and told to buy grocery for your home, what will you buy and how will you spend the money?'
4. They browsed through newspaper advertisements to select the best price of as many items as possible. They then listed the price of the items they wanted to buy for their home. Group members were consulted as they made their individual shopping lists to weigh up one option against another.
5. To make it more interesting they cut and pasted the pictures of their shopping list on a chart and shared it within the class.
6. Their work was displayed in class for others to see and ask questions about. They then wrote about their experience of this activity in their reflective diaries.

Comments from the editors

Here children thought of a novel activity that related everyday work at home with advertisements in newspapers. Although grocery shopping is typically done by parents, they were excited to participate in it. Scanning the advertisements to look for what they wanted at attractive prices came naturally. While children had lots of fun planning their grocery lists, they practised many research and language skills: browsing, sifting, classifying, collating, looking for evidence and drawing conclusions.

Example of children's work

A group's shopping list



**SECTION 3:
Handing over
some control
to the children**

Section 3: Handing over some control to the children

In this section we have collected activities that illustrate how the children who have once been given the opportunity, can take the initiative to come up with their own ideas to create learning tasks. Taking control and independence are concepts that are critical to learning in a research-oriented way. Just like giving children a 'choice and a voice', these steps are seen as important stepping stones toward becoming co-researchers. In many cases making choices is part of the process of taking control of the learning process.

What is perhaps important is that the teacher supports the learners' initiatives, which are sometimes not fully developed or thought out, and carefully escorts them through to the next steps. While it may seem as though once children take control of their activities and learning that the teacher's role is superfluous or redundant, it is not the case. On the contrary, the teacher's role becomes much more crucial and complex as she needs to guide the children in an unobtrusive and supportive way.

15

Writing lesson endings

TEACHER: Esther Gloria Sahu

AGE: 12+ years

TIME: 60 minutes

MATERIALS: Notebook and pen/pencil

ORGANISATION: Individual work and whole class activity

DESCRIPTION: This is an example of children taking over. Whenever such a ‘take over’ from me to them happens, with children doing the thinking, the results are always better. I have learnt that giving children liberty to be part of the whole process – planning, teaching/assessment – helps them learn better.



PROCEDURE

1. This is something that happened naturally in my class. We were reading a story from the textbook and someone suggested it could have a different ending. Many children agreed.
2. This gave me an idea. I encouraged them to write their own alternative endings for the story. They worked individually and came up with about 20 different ideas which were all shared in class.
3. In consecutive lessons I encouraged those who were interested to write a different ending to the lesson/the main reading text. They shared their ideas with some peers.
4. Then they were asked to write up one/their best idea (either in L1 and then in L2, or L2 only), get some feedback on this draft from a peer and finally put the idea on the notice board.
5. I found time in the next lesson for everyone to look at the notice board where the ideas were displayed. We all voted for the best ending for the text.

Comments from the editors

In this class the children suggested new/different endings to their reading text and the teacher managed to make the most of this. In this case the choice to think of different endings was theirs, the ending was theirs and the writing was done on their own. The children in your classrooms might suggest to you things that they might like to do differently or different ways in which learning activities and sources can be changed. It is always a good idea to follow up on these spontaneous ideas and try to let go of the control that comes so naturally to teachers.

Example of children's work

Children are writing the lesson ending



16

Writing questions

TEACHER: Esther Gloria Sahu

AGE: 12+ years

TIME: 60 minutes

ORGANISATION: Individual, pair or groups



PROCEDURE

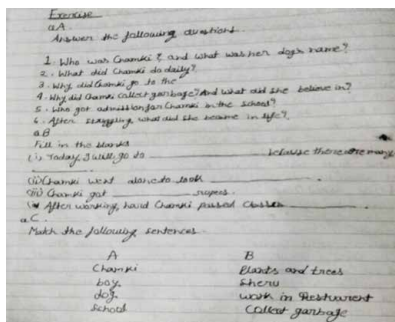
1. This idea came to me when a student chatted with me in the break. She suggested that children should write their own questions rather than use the questions given at the end of reading texts in the book.
2. We discussed this idea with the rest of the class and they were happy to do it.
3. In the following English lesson I taught the main part of the lesson using a text and the children were then invited to write their own comprehension questions.
4. The students gave their questions to their peers who answered them in groups.
5. In the next stage the children corrected each other's work by exchanging notebooks (see Activity 44, page 73 for details).
6. In the next lesson the children read the text from the book on their own. They discussed it in groups making sure that everyone understood the main points.
7. Then they wrote questions and answers like in the previous class and assessed each other's work.

Comments from the editors

In this lesson, just like in the previous one, the children were suggesting that the roles could be reversed. It is always the teacher who asks questions and they suggested that this time the children should come up with the questions. This is not such a new idea in itself but the main point is that these children initiated this idea and the teacher was happy to implement their idea. This gave them the motivation to work. This way the teacher was in a better position to research into 'how children like to learn'. You could listen carefully to suggestions and ideas children in your classes might come up with and act on them according to what is possible to implement in your class.

Example of children's work

Children write their own questions



17

Putting on a puppet show

TEACHER: Usha Malhan

AGE: 9+ years

TIME: 50 – 60 minutes and some time outside class hours

MATERIALS: Puppets made by students, material for the stage setup and sheets to write the story

ORGANISATION: Group work and whole class activity

DESCRIPTION: Children here create a story in groups by using puppets. They do the stage setup and practise the puppet show in groups. At the end they present the show in class.



PROCEDURE

1. In previous lessons the children had made puppets. I asked the children to bring along their puppets.
2. They were invited to think about a story involving the puppets. They worked in groups and I encouraged all the children to actively participate in their groups.
3. I also encouraged them to incorporate at least 3 to 5 characters of their choice in the story and to add a song or poem into the story.
4. Then the children were asked to jot down the outline of the story on a sheet of paper. They read and revised the story several times in the group based on suggestions coming from the other group members.
5. Then the children suggested that we should have a puppet show/a proper stage production.
6. They practised their roles in groups and practised manipulating their puppets at the same time.
7. Later the puppet show was performed in front of other classes of the school and parents as well.

Comments from the editors

This is a good example that illustrates how making choices and initiating activities can go hand in hand. In a previous activity the children suggested the idea of making puppets and here they wanted to put on a proper show. In real classrooms these activities develop organically, and where children have enjoyed working with materials that they have developed/selected and initiated, they will naturally want to do more of this. In your classrooms one idea that the children suggest might lead to something that is meaningful and appropriate for your group of learners. Another important thing that happened with this activity was that even the shy and not-so-articulate children participated in it and started talking. It is important to acknowledge their effort: it goes a long way to establish rapport and long-lasting relationships.

Example of children's work

The puppet show



18

Making a class newspaper

TEACHER: Usha Malhan

AGE: 9+ years

TIME: 50 – 60 minutes (work extends beyond one class hour to a couple of weeks)

MATERIALS: Different newspapers, children’s magazines, paper sheets and colours

ORGANISATION: Group work and whole class activity

DESCRIPTION: When children decided that they wanted to work on newspapers, we first looked at different newspapers and jotted down the different types of articles and columns. We also read some of the stories from children’s newspapers in the class. Then they decided on what kind of newspaper they wanted to make: about their own lives.



PROCEDURE

1. I divided the class into groups of four and asked them to write a list of features they liked in the existing newspapers.
2. Then we decided to choose a name for our newspaper.
3. I encouraged each group to share the list of possible names and we collated these names on the board. Together we decided on one name for the newspaper (which was ‘Nathkhat kids’ times’ meaning ‘Naughty Kids’ times’).
4. The children suggested that we should interview different people for our newspaper.
5. The children made a list of people they wanted to interview in their groups and jotted down questions for this interview.
6. Then they conducted the interviews and brought back notes they wrote during the interview. They also took a photo of the person they interviewed to be included in the newspaper.
7. The children also collected some news stories from their neighbourhood and the school to be part of the newspaper. They were reminded to write the following details: Name of the person, place, date, time and what happened.
8. Once the news items were collected I asked the children to share their material in groups. Within each group the children were reading out their stories and the group members were giving feedback to each other to help with editing and finalising the stories.
9. In each group children started working on deciding what columns will go into the newspaper. Topics included cartoon strips, advertisements, interviews, short stories, factual stories, current school news and puzzles.
10. Each child started working on a specific item. After completing their work everyone shared their work with their group and was given feedback.
11. The children wrote their group members’ names on the first page; they also acknowledged reporters, illustrators, editors and all writers.
12. The children organised the layout of the class newspaper and we displayed it on the school wall.

Comments from the editors

Children always enjoy working on a product that can be eventually displayed and shared with wider audiences and they put a great deal of effort into the final product. In this example the children wanted to create a class newspaper but in your class the children might want to create a film or a book of stories or something different. The challenge for the teacher is to help them break the task into component parts and assist them in organising the work so that everyone can participate. Some learners can take photos, do illustrations and work on the final presentation. It is important that everyone can be involved according to their strengths and interests.



19

Creating a word wall

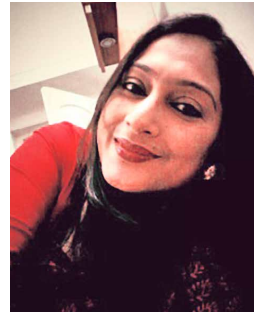
TEACHER: Sudeshna Dutta

AGE: 12 – 15 years

TIME: 60 minutes

MATERIALS: Paper and pen

ORGANISATION: Group work



PROCEDURE

1. I started by asking my class what they enjoyed doing most in their English classes.
2. After some discussion, we decided to focus on vocabulary building. The children suggested that vocabulary knowledge will make a big difference to their English fluency. They became enthusiastic to do research on “improving vocabulary” through different activities they recommended.
3. Some initiated the idea of designing a “wall magazine” and some wanted to write and perform “drama” but in the end we decided to build a “word wall/wall dictionary” in the classroom.
4. The learners themselves decided to collect words from different sources such as text books, story books and other sources available. Then they organized them and put those words alphabetically on the chart paper and then on the wall.
5. The learners were asked to write a diary to note down whatever important or interesting thoughts and reflections they had about the word wall activity. They were provided with a notebook for this.
6. The learners took their own photographs of the developing chart to have an accurate record and to help them learn the words.
7. In each lesson we made it a point to go through the collections of new words to discuss the meaning of words. All groups also actively used dictionaries.

20

Making silent films

TEACHER: Rachel Parmar

AGE: 10 – 12 years

TIME: 60 minutes

MATERIALS: A shoe box, pencils, erasers, plain papers, colour pens, glue, scissors, short sticks

ORGANISATION: Group work, whole class activity



PROCEDURE

1. In this class I discussed with the learners what they were interested in and what they wanted to do.
2. The children came up with various ideas. Suddenly, one of the children suggested 'bioscope' making. Other children raised a lot of questions about what it was. So, in the next lesson I showed a picture of a bioscope (early film making projector) from the Internet and gave a brief history of it. Children found this exciting and all voted in favour of this idea.
3. In the next class, in groups, children made their bioscope projectors using a shoe box and then they drafted a story with pictures to be used in the projectors.
4. Stories were screened with subtitles first (silent cinema).
5. Next, each group presented their story and they took turns to read/narrate their story.

Comments from the editors

In this example one of the children suggested a topic that was new/unfamiliar to the rest of the class and that is the reason why everyone wanted to look into it. Making the shoe-box and creating the illustrations for the silent films takes time and does not involve a lot of language practice but teachers can skillfully include ideas such as narrating stories as long as these do not ruin the original ideas. Of course a lot of informal chat in their L1 and English happens which in itself is a valuable experience.

Example of children's work

Children making their 'bioscope'



21

Creating a reading corner

TEACHER: Deepti Chawla

AGE: 9+ years

TIME: 7/8 sessions of 50 – 60 minutes

MATERIALS: Strings, charts, posters, colours, pens, sheets, newspaper, used cardboard

ORGANISATION: Group activity

DESCRIPTION: In this activity children created a reading corner for themselves inside their own classroom so as to enjoy reading books as well not having to take the books back home and bring them back every day.



PROCEDURE

1. We found that many story books that children borrowed came back torn or were lost and the children were unhappy about this.
2. One student suggested that we keep most books in the class itself, either in the teacher's cupboard or in a corner in the classroom. Many other suggestions came but the idea of hanging the books on a string for easy access had everyone's favour.
3. We discussed how exactly we were going to organise the books.
4. The children brought colours, charts, strings, crayons using their own pocket money to create a reading corner in their classroom.
5. They divided themselves into groups to do different tasks such as cutting, pasting, drawing, and colouring, and putting things together. They approached me only when they needed to resolve any conflict among them.
6. I suggested they could put drawings, self-created materials, also pictures into the developing collection of resources.
7. They tied a line with a string so that they could hang the story books on it.
8. They also made a reading list of all the books they had and displayed it on the wall of the reading corner.
9. They brought newspaper cuttings, drawings and other materials to add to the collection.
10. They used the reading corner the way they wanted to whenever they wanted to and continued to update it till the end of the year by changing the material every now and then. I saw that their reading habits were getting better.

Comments from the editors

This activity emerged from a real problem the learners were facing in the class and the solution that they offered. The teacher's job was to merely facilitate the process. The learners were in charge of conceptualising and creating the needed space in their own classroom. Language learning happened through organising the books (both English and Hindi). Reading and writing were happening simultaneously. The control over the book corner gave them a sense of belonging and ownership and the new resources made the classroom a livelier place.

Example of children's work

Children are discussing a story



SECTION 4: Building positive relationships

Section 4: Building positive relationships

An interesting outcome or by-product in many classrooms was that relationships between learners and the teacher as well as among learners were changing for the better. It was noted that as soon as teachers began to hand over control to the children and as soon as they began to discuss issues with the children, the learners and teachers grew closer together. As a result of this teachers reported that they found out new things about their learners and learners also found out new things about the teacher and about each other.

Many teachers also reported that they spent time on relationship building and the students took a spontaneous interest in social issues that affected everyone in the class. Pausing to think about others helped learners in many cases to show empathy towards the 'less fortunate' and to appreciate their own situations better. More positive relationships also allow for a better, more relaxed learning atmosphere, especially in a context where schooling happens in difficult circumstances.

22

Expressing how we feel

TEACHER: Sonika Gupta

AGE: 8+ years

TIME: 50 – 60 minutes

MATERIALS: Chart paper, marker, glue, magazine cut-outs, pencil and eraser

ORGANISATION: Group work and whole class

DESCRIPTION: In this activity, children prepare a collage of 'feeling' words in small groups and then share their feelings with the whole class. A week before the activity ask children to collect pictures from magazines or newspapers representing the feeling words list prepared in class and ask them to bring these on the activity day.



PROCEDURE

1. I divided the class into groups of 5 and assigned a 'feeling word' to each group (or children could choose from the list provided). For example: scared/frightened, embarrassed, proud and many others.
2. I distributed a chart, glue and a marker pen to each group.
3. I asked each group to write one 'feeling word' at the top of the chart paper using a marker pen. For example, group 1 wrote "sorry" at the top of their chart paper, and group 2 wrote "furious/angry".
4. I asked the children to keep previously cut out magazine pictures on the table and look at what feelings were represented in the pictures.
5. I asked the children to walk around the room and visit all the groups and pick the best/most suitable picture cut-out for their group's feeling word. I asked each group to justify their choice.
6. After this, I asked the children to come back to their groups with all the cut outs and make a collage of pictures and feeling words.
7. Then I asked the children to walk around the classroom and have a look at other groups' creative collages.
8. At the end of the activity, I asked the children to share their feelings about the activity. Finally, we displayed all the collages in the class.

Comments from the editors

In this example, young children work with words in English that describe how they might feel. This is important because it sends a message that feelings and emotions are important and the teacher is interested in how the learners feel. Talking about feelings and emotions in language learning is beneficial and it is important to stress that sometimes we all feel sad and less enthusiastic but we need to try to control negative emotions if we want to be successful learners. In your class, it might also be beneficial to share emotions and feelings of learners on a regular basis. The better/happier the learners and the teacher feel, the more learning will happen!

Example of children's work

Children look at each other's collages depicting feeling words



23

Diary writing to share

TEACHER: Ranjani Shankar

AGE: 13 – 14 years

TIME: 15 – 20 minutes

MATERIALS: A notebook/diary, a pen

ORGANISATION: Individual

DESCRIPTION: This activity began as a voluntary writing exercise, aside from others, such as writing stories, poems, essays, that students did as part of their holiday homework mainly to improve their writing skills. Even giving and getting feedback on the diaries was optional.



PROCEDURE

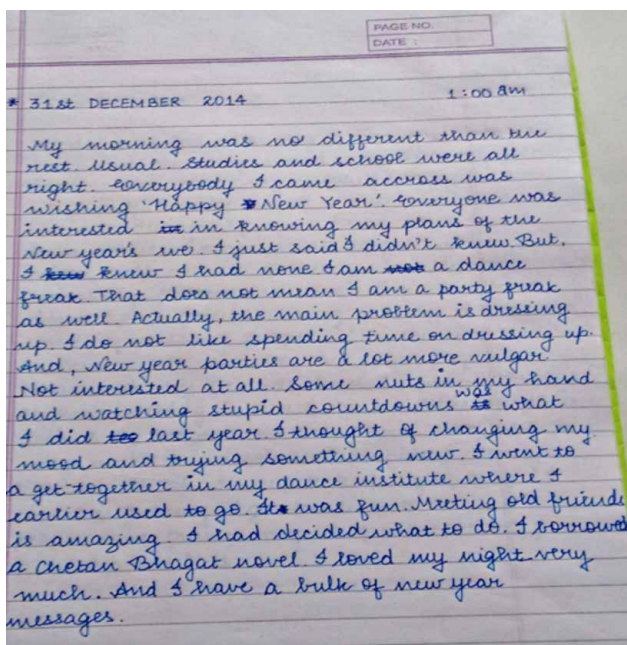
1. I encouraged my students to start writing a diary in English. It was not compulsory, so not everyone did it at first.
2. I showed some examples of diaries and we discussed and brainstormed a variety of ways in which diaries can be used.
3. The children were free to decide how often to write and whether they wanted to share their writing with others or not. I shared some writing from my own diary. We agreed that nothing about these diaries would be shared with others outside the class.
4. Gradually, more and more students decided to share their diary entries and they began to express their thoughts and feelings, thanks to the non-threatening and non-competitive atmosphere in class.
5. Those who read out their entries felt proud and gained confidence.
6. Through these diary entry reading sessions we got to know each other better and developed a special bond which helped with the process of learning/teaching.

Comments from the editors

In this example the teacher carefully introduced a diary writing habit where children were encouraged to share their stories and thoughts. This only works if there is trust and those who do not want to write and share are not forced to do it. Children should never be forced into activities like this. What tends to happen though is that some children like to share and this helps others to come forward and contribute. The shared concerns that came out of the writing found resonance in the class leading to better bonding. The teacher could get to know the students better and even advise them whenever the teacher felt this was appropriate. Some kind of diary writing might work in your own classes as well even if the diaries have to be bilingual or written mainly in L1 initially.

Example of children's work

Sample of diary



24

Social awareness

TEACHER: Esther Gloria Sahu

AGE: 12+ years

TIME: 40 + 40 minutes and outside class activity
for at least 30 minutes

MATERIALS: Children's notebooks and a pencil/pen

ORGANISATION: Whole class and individual work



PROCEDURE

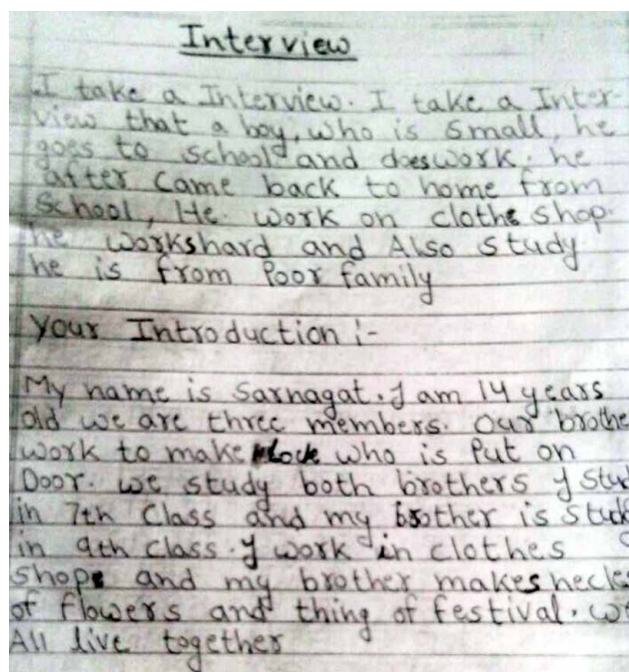
1. I asked the learners in my class how much they knew about each other. It was surprising for them that apart from basic information, they hardly knew anything about their "friends". So I suggested that they interview their friend in class to try and get as much information as possible about them.
2. The learners selected questions for their interviews and then gave a mini-presentation about their friend in the class in Hindi, English or both. They were then asked to write up the information collected in Hindi and in English and put it all up on the noticeboard.
3. This initial activity led to a further activity where the children themselves chose the people they wanted to interview. They developed their own questionnaires for the interviews. They chose to interview vegetable and fruit vendors, rickshaw pullers, a student studying in the same class in a different school, a policeman and a rag-picker.
4. Next, the children interviewed people near their homes and noted down everything they asked in a question/answer form. They also took the signatures or the thumb impressions of the people they interviewed. They used Hindi to express themselves freely and then translated it into English as the activity was part of the English class.
5. I noticed that these interviews changed their perspectives towards life as they always thought that they were the 'poorest' children in society. So these interviews made them thankful for what they had in life.
6. Children talked and wrote about the lives of rag-pickers with newly emerged awareness. Then they suggested that we should raise money to buy a school uniform and notebooks and pens for local children who are unable to attend school.

Comments from the editors

This example shows that children who explore their own immediate contexts can come up with meaningful learning tasks that improve their English proficiency but also helps open up their horizons about important social issues in their own worlds. Moreover this activity clearly gave children a first-hand experience of finding people to ask questions, designing their own questions, and documenting their findings. Speaking to others and then writing about their experiences led to natural opportunities to practise their English skills. In your classrooms, too, wherever you are, encourage children to engage with locally important social issues.

Example of children's work

An example of interview notes



25

Thank you notes

TEACHER: Ekta Goel

AGE: 9+ years

TIME: About 60 minutes

MATERIALS: Pen and paper

ORGANISATION: Individual and group



PROCEDURE

1. I had to do formal letter writing in my classroom but did not want to do the routine 'sick leave' or 'urgent request' applications.
2. I also thought of linking it with a real life example.
3. A few days earlier, we were moved to a bigger classroom and students were excited about it. They kept talking about the new larger space and how wonderful the room was.
4. I then thought it would be nice to thank the principal for moving the class into a new, bigger room.
5. I encouraged the children to think about what kind of formal thank you note they could write the school principal.
6. Some of them thought of writing letters and some thought about making cards. They also decided about working individually or in small groups.
7. Most of them wrote letters in English but some had to do it in two languages (mothertongue and English).
8. All the letters and cards were then given to the Principal. He was obviously very thrilled and thanked them in return!

Comments from the editors

In this classroom children made choices about how they would like to thank the Principal. Also the usually boring task of writing formal letters was linked to a real life example of writing a letter to the Principal. The students as authors had a clear purpose and audience in mind. They were able to express their joy in the form of letters and cards. You could also think of a real-life example to generate interest and to make the mundane letter-writing task more purposeful and meaningful.

Example of children's work

An example of interview notes



SECTION 5:

Designing research tools and analysing empirical data

Section 5: Designing research tools and analysing empirical data

In many classrooms, in addition to making choices and initiating own ideas for learning activities, children also undertook designing research tools, mainly interviews or questionnaires to look into questions that interested them. In most cases the children took charge of designing the research tools and gathered the data themselves. They really enjoyed the phase that involved exploring what other people have said about a topic that was important/interesting to them. They realised that beliefs or presuppositions needed to be examined against actual evidence and they were willing to revise their views/ideas about questions after the empirical work. The research work also generated a great deal of pride and a strong sense of accomplishment.

26

Explorations into shared concerns

TEACHER: Vinaydhar Raju

AGE: 11 – 12 years

TIME: 60 minutes

MATERIALS: Paper, pen/pencil

ORGANISATION: Group work, whole class activity



PROCEDURE

1. I initiated a discussion in class after correcting my children's exam scripts. Many of them did not do well in the exam. I asked them whether we could do research to find out the exact reasons for not getting good marks in the exam.
2. After a brainstorming activity together we came to the conclusion that the following were the main reasons for their poor performance:
 - I do not understand the questions in the question paper
 - I do not study at home
 - I do not pay attention to the lessons in class
 - I do not understand grammar
 - I am not regular to school
 - I do not do any homework
 - I never try to do things on my own
 - I make several spelling mistakes
 - I am not proficient to express myself in English
 - I am not competent enough to read the question paper
 - I do not participate in classroom activities
 - I do not carry the things needed for class everyday.
3. The children were asked to prepare a checklist to record the responses of their classmates.
4. While collecting data, the children worked in groups. After collecting the data we worked together on interpreting and analysing the data. Finally, they presented it to the class.

Comments from the editors

In this example, the teacher encouraged the children to think about why their exam scores were low.

The children themselves suggested many reasons. Once these reasons were listed, the children were invited to gather some data about themselves and their own classmates. This is inquiry that targets their English learning processes and can potentially raise awareness about important strategies or learning habits. What is important is that there has to be a positive angle, i.e. an intention to help everyone to get better at preparing for exams. Generally, when the data concerns themselves and their classmates, children take a great deal of interest.

Example of children's work

Handout 1:

Use the following Handout to record the assignment details in your notebook. (The initial checklist saw many changes during the project while collecting the data.) The teacher also has a column to fill.

S1 No.	Homework	Given Date	Due Date	Completed On	Teachers' Comments
1	Prepare a poster of your school	23rd June	30th June	30th June	Own work
2					Copied
3					

Handout 2:

Use the following handout to collect the data about completed homework by the students in a given period of time.

S.No.	Name of the Student	Assignment 1	Assignment 2	Assignment 3	Assignment 4	Assignment 5	Completed Assignment / Total Assignments
1	Raju	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	3/5
2							

27

A questionnaire about collaborative learning

TEACHER: Bhavani P.

AGE: 14 years

TIME: 80 minutes (2 class periods)

MATERIALS: Blackboard, ruled sheets of paper, sketch pens, handout of sample questionnaires

ORGANISATION: Group work

DESCRIPTION: I gave a brief introduction to aspects of researching, for example, getting to understand other learners, probing into their perceptions about a certain topic, and in turn arrive at conclusions. This triggered a spark of interest and helped to focus on the activity.



PROCEDURE

1. I divided the class into small groups, making sure that the groups were mixed ability.
2. I asked the children to suggest topics that they would like to research (for example, curriculum-based topics, school rules, suggestions for resolving an issue in school). I listed all of their ideas on the board. Finally as a class we decided on 3 topics.
3. I started with checking the children's prior knowledge about various tools used for research such as recording data, interviews and questionnaires.
4. After some discussion, the children decided to design a questionnaire on the topic "The advantages and disadvantages of collaborative learning".
5. Then the children brainstormed suitable questions for the questionnaire.
6. Next, they reviewed their questions, modified them by adding, deleting items, and finally sequencing their questions following feedback from other groups.
7. It was decided that the questionnaires were going to be embedded in an interview to make sure responses were as complete as possible. The groups divided their responsibilities among themselves about the process of interviewing people and practised interviewing.
8. They decided on a deadline for completing the interviews using the questionnaire.

Comments from the editors

In this example children were prompted to make questionnaires to find out what others in their school thought about collaborative learning. Questionnaires can also be given to teachers, parents, grandparents and other people in the community. Children should be encouraged to design questions about a topic they are really interested in so that the response they get can motivate them to work on the data analysis. In your class, too, there might be topics that children can explore in this way.

Examples of children's work

Children interviewing each other



28

Analysing questionnaire data about collaborative learning

TEACHER: Bhavani P.

AGE: 14+ years

TIME: 40 minutes

MATERIALS: Blackboard, collected data, ruled sheets of paper, sketch pens

ORGANISATION: Group work



PROCEDURE

1. Learners were asked to come prepared to class with their sheets of information collected from their interviews with other learners outside class (see Activity 27 above).
2. They got into their respective groups to reflect on the collected data. They were given some time to think about ways in which they could collate the information and share with the class.
3. The following is the table that was displayed on the board.
4. The children were asked to classify their data under the specific headings above or in any other way to see if patterns could be detected.
5. They had different alternative ideas to look at the data including the 'tally method'. They counted positive and negative responses.
6. They were given the choice of what kind of graphic representation they wanted to use to report the data (e.g. bar graph, pie chart, etc.) using a computer. They also prepared a short written report.
7. They reviewed their findings in groups and drew conclusions. Finally they were asked to summarise their findings in the form of a short report.

Comments from the editors

In this example the learners carried on with the next step of the task that was actually started in the previous example above. The learners were encouraged to analyse the data in various ways. Learners are always motivated to find out responses to questions that they decided to include. This type of data is authentic and meaningful. Some learners may take an interest in aspects of the research process that teachers do not expect. In such cases it is always a good idea to follow up their interests as much as possible.

Examples of children's work

A sample of the report

REPORT ON COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

OPINION ON COLLABORATIVE LEARNING AND THEIR PREFERENCE

A few children think that they find it better to understand and learn as more brains are being involved and different ideas are being put into action. One of the teachers says that "Initial learning can be done through collaborative learning." ...On the other hand, student says, "I don't understand what the teacher teaches the whole year but what a friend teaches just before the exam is easy to understand."

ADVANTAGES, DISADVANTAGES AND THE OUTCOMES OF COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

A few children think that children start talking and divert from the topic. 80% think it is advantageous as we get a lot of different ideas. A few think that through collaborative learning we learn and understand easily and improve our team spirit. We can also attain the objectives of learning.

GROUPING OF CHILDREN FOR COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Most children say that the way the teachers group the children is not comfortable. And the way they group makes the weak children copy from the stronger students and makes them more dependent and lose confidence. 95% of the children prefer the teachers to group them with friends as they feel more comfortable to mingle with them.

TEACHERS' WORKLOAD IN COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

95% of learners think that there is a decrease in the pressure of work for the teacher because we are doing the teacher's work and it would really happen if it is implemented well.

CONCLUSION

Through the research it has been found that most of the children prefer collaborative learning as they find it easy, comfortable and the standard of learning increases. We believe that collaborative learning can improve a child's performance as it is advantageous to them.

29

Designing an interview: good interview questions

TEACHER: Pritinder Kaur Sodhi

AGE: 12+ years

TIME: 60 minutes

MATERIALS: Pencil, notebook, recording device

ORGANISATION: Individual, group, whole class



PROCEDURE

1. In this class we decided to look into what makes a good interview.
2. We viewed some interviews on Youtube together.
3. We brainstormed ideas about what makes a good interview and arrived at guidelines.
4. Then the children were divided into groups. Each group selected a group leader to navigate the activity.
5. Each group also decided on a topic they wanted to interview a chosen person about.
6. Each group selected a person they wanted to interview (other students in class or at school, staff or friends outside school).
7. Each group wrote their draft questions for the interview.
8. Students then piloted the interview questions with other groups and got feedback from them before they went ahead to conduct their interviews.

Comments from the editors

This activity is a good example of how children can be encouraged to work on an interview protocol that they can use to interview real people in their families or schools. They not only decide the topic but also the people to be interviewed and what questions to ask. The idea of giving it a 'dry-run' before you actually use the interview is an important step and they can clearly see the benefits of this. You can try this out with other tools such as a questionnaire, or a checklist.

Examples of children's work

Class discussion of what makes a good interview

- Be courteous to the interviewee.
- Don't ask only yes or no questions. Make your interviewee talk.
- Always take time to ask for an explanation about things you don't understand.
- Don't be afraid of uncomfortable silences and pauses.
- Let the interview take its natural course.
- Look the person in the eye when asking questions.
- Always listen carefully to the answers Each answer could lead to more questions or include an answer to a question you haven't asked yet. Don't ask a question that has already been answered.
- Don't read your questions one after another like you can't wait to be finished. Conduct your interview like a conversation. Don't read your questions.

30

Designing a feedback questionnaire

TEACHER: Anirudha Rout

AGE: 13+ years

TIME: 60 minutes

MATERIALS: Learners' diary and some sample questionnaires

ORGANISATION: Group work and whole class work

DESCRIPTION: This is a two-part activity: First learners design a questionnaire and second they answer it and analyse their responses as a whole class.



PROCEDURE

1. My students had been involved in diary writing about their experience of reading storybooks selected from a mini library (see Activity 11 on page 24). After several weeks of reading storybooks and diary writing, I asked the students to go through their diaries and take note of important points.
2. They were asked to write a list of important points from the diaries and we spent some time discussing these points.
3. Then as a class we decided to design a questionnaire to evaluate the learning related to our story project. First of all I demonstrated how to make good questions and then asked the learners to write questions on the points from the diaries. We all helped each other to edit the questions after discussing these in the group.
4. Then I asked the learners to prepare/design a questionnaire, selecting the most important questions and sequencing them. At this point we worked as a whole class.
5. I asked one or two students to fill in the questionnaire as a trial to see if it works. Then we finalised the questionnaire and I made copies for everyone to use.

Comments from the editors

In this activity, learners pick up from a previous activity (diary writing) and take it further to design a questionnaire. While their personal diaries found a concrete expression, i.e. questions in the questionnaire, the effort at editing it collaboratively and then to trial it on themselves demonstrated important steps in research. You can also try out this idea in your class where learners act as co-researchers.

Examples of children's work

Children edit the questions in groups



The questionnaire we designed as a whole class

Research Theme: Learners and Teachers as Co-researchers in ESL Classrooms

Research Sub-theme: Can stories develop our language proficiency?

QUESTIONNAIRE

Read the following statements and circle the answer from the choices given. 5 is the highest and 1 is the lowest.

- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| 1. I learnt new words by working on this research project | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 |
| 2. I learnt to guess the meaning of new words in the stories | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 |
| 3. I learnt to speak English | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 |
| 4. I gathered new knowledge and information | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 |
| 5. I have become a better thinker | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 |
| 6. My memory has become stronger by working with stories | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 |
| 7. It gave me motivation and confidence to learn English | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 |
| 8. It enhanced my judgment ability | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 |
| 9. It gave me ability of self-assessment | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 |
| 10. I learnt how to create new stories | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 |
| 11. I learnt how to write new stories | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 |
| 12. I got pleasure by working with the stories | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 |
| 13. It enhanced my grammatical knowledge of English | 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 |

31

Analysing data from the feedback questionnaire

TEACHER: Anirudha Rout

AGE: 13+ years

TIME: 60 minutes

MATERIALS: Multiple copies of the questionnaire, blackboard, ruled sheets of paper, sketch pens

ORGANISATION: Individual work for giving feedback



PROCEDURE

1. I distributed the learner-made questionnaire to all the students and asked them to fill it in individually.
2. Then I divided the class into small groups. Within each group they looked at the data to see how they could collate it.
3. On the board I showed them how they can make a tally for each of the responses.
4. Then in their groups they made tallies, totalled them and calculated the mean. This was a bit tricky as they had to multiply each number (total of tallies for each score) by the respective score and then divide it by 21 (the number of people responding to the questionnaire).
5. We looked at the high mean values first and tried to draw conclusions. They could clearly see that there were four aspects in which they benefitted most and there was one in which they had not benefitted much (2.95).
6. The next step was the report writing stage.

Comments from the editors

This activity, which was the third in a series of activities, in a sense provided 'closure' and brought alive how the children's feelings and thoughts that they had noted down in their diaries could be systematically looked at to make a questionnaire and then analyse the data for the benefit of the whole class. We can see here that everyone's views counted and were part of the final scores.

Examples of children's work

Collating the data they have collected



Chart showing frequencies and mean values

No.	Opinion	Frequency					Mean Score
		1	2	3	4	5	
1	I learnt new words by working on this research project.	–	1	3	11	6	4.05
2	I learnt to guess the meaning of new words in the stories.	–	2	11	7	1	3.23
3	I learnt to speak English.	–	4	14	1	2	3.05
4	I gathered new knowledge and information.	–	–	4	8	9	4.24
5	I have become a better thinker.	–	5	6	7	3	3.38
6	My memory has become stronger by working with stories.	–	2	7	10	2	3.37
7	It gave me motivation and confidence to learn English.	–	–	2	11	8	4.29
8	It enhanced my judgment ability.	2	3	10	6	–	2.95
9	It gave me ability of self-assessment.	–	2	12	5	2	3.43
10	I learnt how to create new stories.	–	3	9	7	2	3.38
11	I learnt how to create new stories.	–	3	6	10	2	3.52
12	I got pleasure by working with the stories.	–	–	2	9	10	4.38
13	It enhanced my grammatical knowledge of English.	–	2	6	9	4	3.71

Observing peer participation

TEACHER: Vinaydhar Raju

AGE: 11 – 14 years

TIME: 60 minutes

ORGANISATION: Group work and whole class



PROCEDURE

1. After our explorations into why some learners do better than others in exams, one of the questions we wanted to investigate was how participation in class might be important (please see activity 26 on page 45).
2. Then I asked the question: 'How can we recognise active participation of a student in the classroom?' and the following responses were brainstormed.
A learner participates when he/she:
 - Takes responsibility for his/her own learning
 - Participates actively in classroom activities
 - Grabs opportunities to learn
 - Interacts with teacher without inhibition
 - Asks questions without fear
 - Completes the given tasks/home work independently
 - Is ready to help peers
 - Interacts freely with peer groups
 - Takes the lead position in group activities and collaborative projects.
3. After identifying these behaviours, students in groups prepared a check-list and they started to observe their peers (selected groups) during class.
4. Every group presented their project reports for the benefit of the whole class. Group leaders also presented these reports during the school assembly.
5. Some groups posted videos of their presentations on social media using Youtube.

Comments from the editors

Check-lists and class surveys can be excellent tools to raise awareness about who participates, who asks or answers questions most often over a time period, who works with whom, etc. In your class, too, children might be interested in such explorations. Children can also observe a small group at a time which makes the task easier.

Examples of children's work

Presentation (during school assembly)



Exploring a common concern: missing deadlines

TEACHER: Sushma Chaturvedi

AGE: 13+ years

TIME: Some months, whenever children found time, but planned in advance

MATERIALS: Paper, chart paper, sketch pens, glue etc.

ORGANISATION: Individual, pair/group work and whole class activity



PROCEDURE

1. As it was all our experience that learners often skipped deadlines, probably for valid reasons, in my class the learners suggested that we should investigate the reasons.
2. They decided on the tool which was a questionnaire. In pairs, they discussed factors that influenced meeting deadlines, both those facilitating it and hindering it.
3. Then in groups they designed and finalised some questions, shared these with the whole class and got some feedback. They came up with one questionnaire for the whole class by collating all their work.
4. They decided to contact learners from other classes as well as some parents and some teachers. When they thought that they should get responses from more people, they posted the questionnaire on social media.
5. Then they discussed in groups questions such as: 'Who would we like to share our findings with?' 'How would we like to share it?'
6. Each group made a presentation to the whole class using graphs and other visuals.

Comments from the editors

This activity brought all children on to a common platform in thinking about a topic that concerned all of them. This helped them to work together, share responsibilities of administering the questionnaire, collecting data and collating the data to arrive at findings. Every stage involved decision making which they happily undertook. Although it began with a few children, later on others also got interested in it, due to its inherent relevance.

Examples of children's work

Data collection plan for the study



34

A questionnaire survey about learning English

TEACHER: Rachel Parmar

AGE: 12 – 14 years

TIME: 60 minutes or more

MATERIALS: Sheets of paper, pens, blackboard, final copies of the questionnaire

ORGANISATION: Group work



PROCEDURE

1. I encouraged my learners to ask questions/share ideas/thoughts that were related to the teaching –learning of English which had never been asked before such as why some students are more motivated than others.
2. I wrote on the board the questions, doubts and ideas they came up with. I asked them how we could find out more about our topics/questions and through voting, they decided on the idea of using a questionnaire.
3. Then in groups the learners discussed their ideas and came up with five questions. I moved around the groups to help when needed.
4. Then I wrote all the questions on the board. The learners voted for the best questions keeping in mind the content, format and the wording. We also made a final copy of the questionnaire.
5. We decided on who should be answering the questions. I suggested that the number of people to be given the questionnaire be kept small keeping time available in mind.
6. I made multiple copies of the questionnaire.
7. The children then administered the questionnaire to another group/division of the same grade. When they returned to the class, they shared their experiences with each other. They also analysed the data in the same groups.

Comments from the editors

When students explore topics of their choice, the activity becomes much more meaningful and the language is used much more communicatively resulting in better learning. This activity also helped to understand the value of reflecting on one's own learning.

Examples of children's work

Children discussing their questions in a group



35

Developing a questionnaire about bestsellers

TEACHER: Ranjani Shankar

AGE: 13+ years

TIME: 2 classes of 40 minutes each

MATERIALS: A4 sheets to write their questions, pen/pencil for writing

ORGANISATION: Individual, Group work



PROCEDURE

1. When we completed the lesson, The Bestseller by O. Henry, we brainstormed about the elements that made a book a 'bestseller'. I encouraged the students to conduct a survey to find out others' opinions about bestsellers and their reading preferences.
2. We looked briefly at which tool might be good for this: interviews, checklists and questionnaires and they decided on questionnaires.
3. First students formed groups of 5-7 on their own. I reminded them that the groups must be heterogeneous. I told them they are free to decide on the questions within the group.
4. They decided in their groups the kinds of questions they wanted to ask. Some students also did research in the library or at home to come up with different kinds of questions.
5. We also discussed the pros and cons of having too many or too few questions, and the format (Yes/No, open ended) of the questions. They decided that five questions would be adequate so that too much time is not spent on the analysis.
6. The groups showed each other their questions and got their feedback. We arrived at five questionnaires for the whole class.
7. Then students administered the questionnaire to friends and family (either in school, at home or online).
8. We got together to look at the kinds of responses they had gathered and discussed how we could collate them.

Comments from the editors

Students developed the questionnaire all by themselves. When they discussed it in their groups or presented it to the entire class, even the shy ones opened up and shared their thoughts about their learning. On the whole everyone enjoyed working on this. For a class, which was used to a lot of teacher-centred work, this was a refreshing change. A student-initiated exploration can give rise to a lot of surprises.

Examples of children's work

A sample of the questionnaire with answers

QUESTIONNAIRE

Q. WHO IS YOUR FAVOURITE AUTHOR & WHAT KIND OF BOOKS DO YOU READ?

Q. WHICH WAS THE LAST BOOK YOU READ AND WHO WAS THE AUTHOR?

Q. HAVE YOU EVER READ A BEST SELLER? WHAT GENRE DOES IT BELONG TO?

Q. WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS ON ELEMENTS OF A BEST SELLER?

Q. DO YOU THINK THAT THE MODERN DAY NOVELS ONLY DISCUSS ABOUT FANTASY & FICTION & ~~DOES~~ CLOSE OUR EYES TOWARDS THE REALITY?

ANSWERS

NAME'S	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4
Sona Thomas	- Joffin Archer - Fiction	- gooschamps - unhappy books	- interesting fiction - suspense	- yes - yes
Jithin Chacko	- Charles Dickens	- unhappy books	- suspense - vocabulary	- yes
Aqsa Daniel Dad	- Cliff Meekish	- The silver child - cliff Meekish	- suspense - classical - good content	- yes
yukta sharma	- Ralindranath Tagore	- when Santa fell on earth - Cornelia Funke	- Romantic - good cover - page	- yes
Vaseha	- Chetan Bhagat	- 3 mistakes my life - Chetan Bhagat	- adventure - interesting	- yes
aniket	- Ravindra Chavan	- can love happen - unhappy books	- good - suspense	- no

36

Understanding beliefs through a survey



TEACHER: Pavan S.R.

AGE: 12 – 13 years

TIME: One class of 60 minutes and the rest outside class

MATERIALS: Paper, pen/pencil

ORGANISATION: Individual, group and whole class activity

PROCEDURE

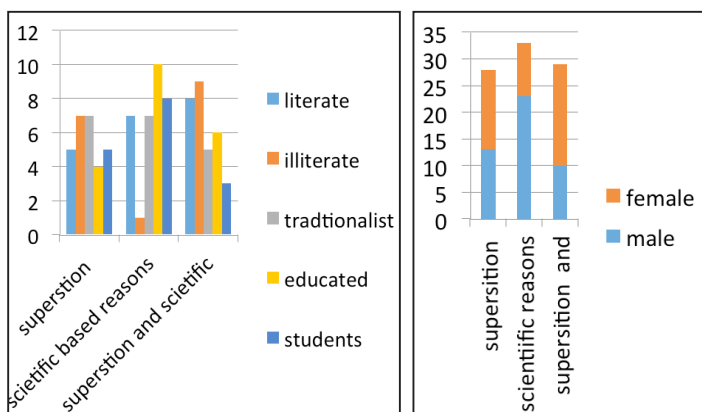
1. My learners kept thinking about what topic to research, and one day they decided on this idea: Why do people like cats more than dogs and set about to find out the reasons.
2. The learners made a list of all the superstitions that are connected with cats and dogs and wanted to ask people's ideas about them.
3. In groups, they made a list of questions and decided to interview at least 5 people each (both female and male) in their neighbourhood. The questions were:
 1. Do you like cats? Do you have any superstition/belief about them? What do you like most about them?
4. They also discussed how they should approach people and how they should record their answers.
5. When they came back with the answers I helped them to collate the answers and draw conclusions.
6. Based on the data each group prepared graphs and presented their findings to the class.

Comments from the editors

This activity demonstrates how children can work on their curiosity and given a little direction, can pursue it systematically through. It is an example of how they confronted existing superstitions in their own contexts and tried to understand how people felt about these. You may think about what superstitions exist in your area and encourage children to 'research' into these.

Examples of children's work

Graphs showing results



SECTION 6: Feedback and self/peer-assessment

Section 6: Feedback and self/peer-assessment

This last section collects together activities that focus on giving and receiving feedback on work done and also on self-and peer-assessment. We can see that even children as young as 8 years of age, when given an opportunity, can reflect on their own and their peers' learning and take the next steps. Older learners, it seems, need more support especially if they have got used to a more teacher-led classroom pedagogy.

Nevertheless, it is interesting that they are able to handle feedback with maturity and it has a beneficial washback as they work on it quite consciously. The complex concept of 'criteria', come alive in children's own words. They empathise with the teacher better as they put themselves in her shoes as evaluators. More importantly, evaluation and assessment, usually a much dreaded and intimidating area, seems to take on a 'fun and enjoyable' quality in their hands.

37

K-W-L CHART (Know, want, learn)

TEACHER: Usha Malhan

AGE: 8+ years

TIME: One week

MATERIALS: Papers or printed K-W-L sheets, crayons, scale, pencils and colours

ORGANISATION: Individual work and whole class activity



PROCEDURE

1. I asked the students to sit in a circle and I shared with them the K-W-L chart. I emphasised the concept of progression in learning, attitude changes and how your misconception about a topic can change. I also shared with them the kind of changes I found in myself.
2. Next, we selected a topic to make a K-W-L chart on the board. I encouraged each child to contribute to the discussion on what can be written under different columns.
3. I divided the students into group of four or five and distributed K-W-L charts with the following columns. (You can give printouts of K-W-L charts or you can also ask the students to make K-W-L chart on a sheet of paper).
Topic:

PROCEDURE		
Changes in myself:		
Changes in study buddy:		
Name:		

4. I asked the students to write the topic about which they were making K-W-L chart on the top of the paper. I encouraged students to respond to the first question in Column 1: What do you know about the topic? (Students can do this individually or in small groups of 4 or 5 students). I then created a master list of responses of all the students on the board to keep a record.
5. Then we completed Column 2. I asked the students to respond to the question: What do you want to know about this topic? Some students may not know where to begin if they don't have much background knowledge on the topic. You can assist them by asking a few more questions to scaffold their thinking such as: How do you know about the topic? Where did you hear about the topic? What excites you about the topic?
Note: This is a stage when learners can voice their choices about what they want to learn and it is a good opportunity for the teacher to take this on board.
6. Next the learners were encouraged to complete Column 3 and review columns 1 and 2. Throughout the project, theme or unit, students can review their K-W-L chart by adding to Column 3: What did you learn? As students record what they have learned, they can review the questions in Column 2, checking off any questions that they can now answer. They can also add new questions. Children should also review Column 1, i.e. they can identify any misconceptions they may have held before the start of the unit.
7. At the end, all the children could share their K-W-L charts with the whole class. They analysed changes in their own learning and that of their classmates.

Comments from the editors

This activity helps to clear some of the misconceptions learners may have especially when they share what they know (Column 1). Sometimes it may be appropriate to correct the false information right then; at other times, it is better to leave it as it is, so that children can correct it on their own as they listen to other ideas.

It is also important to avoid focusing on mistakes; rather, appreciate the way they have jotted down their ideas. It is best to let the children work on this activity in a recursive way, going back and forth, so they can adjust their learning and thinking about their learning, one feeding the other. Most importantly, teachers need to let the children use their L1. Over time, as they progress, they will gradually use more L2.

Examples of children's work

Circle time was very effective as we discussed each other's achievements together



Story appreciation

TEACHER: Fatima Parveen

AGE: 12 – 13 years

TIME: 50 – 60 minutes

MATERIALS: Stories written by learners

ORGANISATION: Group work and whole class



PROCEDURE

1. In this activity, we circulated the stories written by learners earlier.
2. The learners discussed what made a good story and why some might be less attractive. They arrived at a framework to evaluate the stories through discussion and negotiation and giving feedback: one strong point and one suggestion for improvement.
3. We made a chart as shown below to record learners' evaluative comments.
4. Each learner read individually at least five stories written by others.
5. They provided feedback for each story based on the criteria they had arrived at in the discussion. This enabled them to make decisions on their own and analyse others' work with a critical eye.
6. Some of them wrote a second draft at home incorporating the comments from their peers.

Comments from the editors

This is a useful ending to any writing activity. Interestingly, a peer-review process makes the writing work more meaningful as they take charge of evaluating it. Even if learners want the teacher to mark the writing and give scores/grades, it makes the job of the teacher much more purposeful (and easier) as the learners can see the value of criteria much better than when the teacher alone decides on the criteria and applies them.

Examples of children's work

Feedback Form

SR. No.	Title of the story	Group No.	Strength (Good and interesting points) of the story	Suggestions for improvement
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				

39

What have we learnt?

TEACHER: Fatima Parveen

AGE: 12 – 13 years

TIME: 60 minutes

MATERIALS: Sheets of paper and pen/pencil

DESCRIPTION: When we were reflecting on the journey of the project and on our feelings, during a sporadic discussion in the class we felt the need to ‘understand’ how the project went and what could have been done to improve it. This activity is the result of that discussion.



PROCEDURE

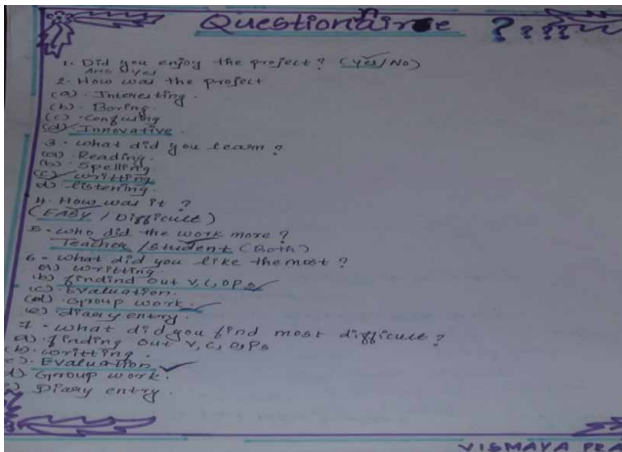
1. After the children spent several lessons on group story writing, we decided to look into what everyone learnt in this process.
2. I asked all the children to think about what they wanted to look into with regard to the project work. They worked in groups, brainstorming ideas for exploration.
3. I explained that the questions could be about the activity, the teacher’s role, the learners’ role or anything else related to their experiences. I encouraged all types of questions from the learners.
4. Each group was invited to put their questions on the board.
5. With a wide variety of questions on the board, individual learners were encouraged to select 10 questions that they felt were most meaningful about their own experiences.
6. In this way individual feedback forms/reflection forms were created by each student and they all felt motivated to give some feedback.

Comments from the editors

In this example the teacher was curious to find out how the children felt about their experiences of story writing in groups. Here, instead of giving them a feedback sheet, the children suggested content for the feedback sheet and then also selected those questions that seemed most meaningful to them. The teacher allowed children to express their voice and make a choice without thrusting her opinion on them. There might be other ways in which you can give over some control to the children when it comes to assessment and evaluation tasks.

Examples of children's work

An example of the questionnaire they developed



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Giving feedback after dramatisation

TEACHER: Ranjani Shankar

AGE: 13 – 14 years

TIME: 60 minutes

MATERIALS: A score card, paper and pen to jot down their reflections

ORGANISATION: Group, individual



PROCEDURE

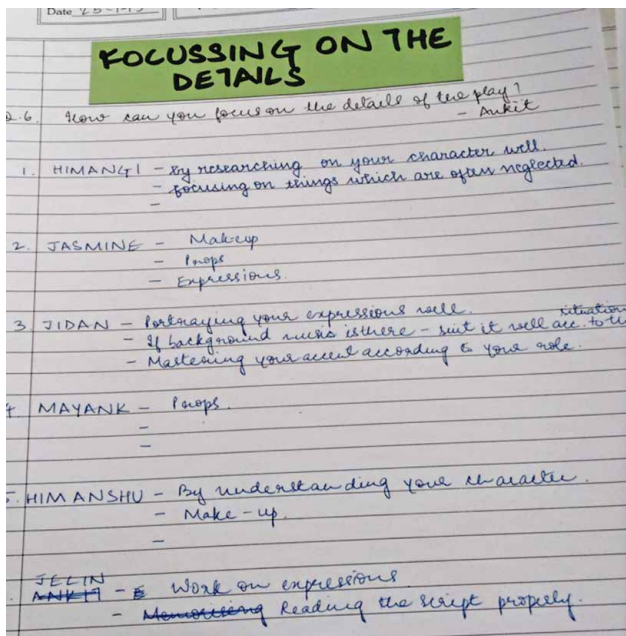
1. When learners were to dramatise and evaluate Shakespeare's Julius Caesar (improvisation was encouraged) as part of their regular assessment, instead of just watching different groups play their parts, they were encouraged to think deeply about various aspects of their dramatisation.
2. I helped them form groups which had the right balance in terms of students' abilities.
3. I talked to them about the meaning of feedback and why it needs to be constructive.
4. I asked the students on what criteria they would like to assess their peers' performance.
The parameters decided by students were:
1. Expression, 2. Team Work, 3. Confidence, 4. Creativity, 5. Voice Modulation.
Each of these were given 2 marks, making a total of 10 marks. The parameters can vary depending upon what the students decide to evaluate.
5. Next, we developed a score card which showed all the parameters/criteria in columns to assess every group.
6. We agreed upon some ground rules collectively for maintaining discipline while the students were acting.
7. Then the students gave their scores in consultation with the group members at the end of each group's performance.
8. I called a volunteer to share their comments about each performance. It was important to make sure that all groups had the chance to share their feedback.

Comments from the editors

In this activity, learners learnt to accept praise as well as criticism and to give constructive feedback. It is also possible to focus on the affective aspects, e.g. their feelings, emotions and likes/dislikes regarding the play. Learners can reflect on questions such as 'How they felt before, while and after the play', 'What strategies they used to learn their dialogues', 'How they dealt with stage fright' and write a reflective diary. This will enable students to look at their work from a new angle and develop affective qualities that are essential to being successful in social situations. Such a reflection will also help them know themselves better, handle their emotions and that of others with empathy.

Examples of children's work

Sample of their feedback



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Error correction by students

TEACHER: Sharada, M.

AGE: 13+ years

TIME: 60 minutes

MATERIALS: Writing board, chalk/marker pen for the teacher, paper and pen/pencil for the learners

ORGANISATION: Group, individual

DESCRIPTION: In an earlier activity the students had converted a narrative/story into a play/script after acting it out. While drafting and redrafting their scripts, students faced problems especially with language. As learners, taking responsibility for their learning, they wanted to identify their errors and rectify them too. This exercise became the basis for my second activity.



PROCEDURE

1. Students divided themselves to work in groups of four and chose their own leaders.
2. Groups read through their scripts together and identified language errors in them.
3. Depending on the types of sentences I drew columns on the board to list these errors in the respective categories, such as active and passive voice, direct and indirect speech, tenses, subject verb agreement, prepositions, articles.
4. Next, each group called out the category their error belonged to.
5. Following this, groups then tried to correct their errors by brainstorming ideas among their groups.
6. They could then cross check with the other groups and the teacher (when they thought it necessary) about their corrections.
7. Finally they redrafted the scripts by incorporating the corrections.

Comments from the editors

This activity helped to address language errors in a pleasant, non-threatening and constructive way. Moreover, as the learners were involved in it, they became more aware of the errors than when the teacher corrected them. You can also try out such a learner-led correction exercise and see if your learners find it productive.

Examples of children's work

Children discussing language errors in their scripts



Children drew this table on the board

Groups	Active/ Passive voice	Direct/Indirect speech	Tense	Subject – verb agreement	Prepositions	Articles
1				Who did not deserves it		
2		He said to her it has gone.				
3			He feel hungry because he had not eaten.			
4						
5						

42

The feed forward programme

TEACHER: Vinaydhar Raju

AGE: 11 – 14 years

TIME: 60 minutes

MATERIALS: All the artefacts learners have worked on from the project, paper, pen/pencil

ORGANISATION: Group, individual



PROCEDURE

1. We devoted the last two classes of the project to 'showcase' the work learners had done to all teachers and students in the school and to receive feedback.
2. We conducted a brainstorming session to create a rating scale. I supplied positive terms and explained the role of positive feedback. The rating scale had these five terms: Extraordinary (5), Excellent (4), Very good (3), Good (2), Needs improvement (1).
3. The learners prepared the sheets for their peers to record their views (see below).
4. They sat in groups with their work, which included charts, portfolios, notebooks. When their peers visited them they asked questions such as: How did they do the work? How did they collect and analyse the data? What tools did they use? What is the outcome? What did they learn from the project?
5. When they answered these questions they became more aware/critical of their work and understood the value of peer-evaluation.
6. We created a Facebook page of our school and shared it.

Comments from the editors

This activity is an example of how we consolidate the work done over a period of time and also get an 'external' review of our work. Giving and taking feedback becomes more meaningful this way. Instead of written feedback students and teachers may take notes and give oral feedback. This activity also acted as a trigger for others to think of similar projects in their own classes.

Examples of children's work

Watching their own presentations (Recorded)



Table for recording feedback

Activities	Rating (1 – 5)	Comments	Signature
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			

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Peer-assessment

TEACHER: Esther Gloria Sahu

AGE: 12+ years

TIME: 50 – 60 minutes

MATERIALS: Chart paper, marker, magazines, pencil, feeling cards

ORGANISATION: Group work and whole class



PROCEDURE

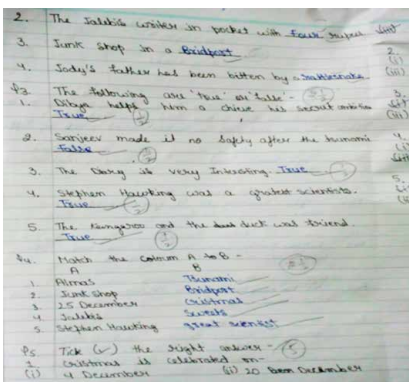
1. This idea came from the activity where the children suggested that they themselves wanted to write questions/ answers related to texts in the book.
I thought the idea was great: why not they do the first round of marking themselves and I only do the final stage! We took off from there.
2. After I taught the lesson (or they read the text by themselves), they wrote their own questions individually, in pairs or in groups, depending on how they liked to do it.
3. Then they wrote the answers and corrected each other's work (as a pair activity) looking for proper framing of questions, correct answers and spellings).
4. I did the final correction.
5. Next time round, they read the texts/lessons by themselves, wrote questions, answered them and corrected each other's work.

Comments from the editors

This activity was exciting for both learners and the teacher. The learners increased their confidence and interest level, especially those who were not interested in the lessons initially. The best part of it was that the understanding of the mistakes made it easier for them to correct them as it came from their peers and not from the teacher alone. Children also wanted to make fewer mistakes – what a positive change in their attitude!

Examples of children's work

Answers to questions written by a student and marked by a peer



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Question game

TEACHER: Sudeshna Dutta

AGE: 13 – 15 years

TIME: 60 minutes

MATERIALS: Paper, markers, sketch pens

ORGANISATION: Individual, pair work



PROCEDURE

1. We had done some work on vocabulary (see Activity 21 on page 36) and learners wanted to find out how they were progressing.
2. They put down questions that could give answers about different aspects of our work. They did this individually for about 10 minutes.
3. We decided to put those questions on the board. When one wrote it, others graded them as important/not so important/invalid. They put tallies for each question and counted them at the end.
4. We discussed why certain questions had been graded as most important, not-so-important and invalid. We decided to consider the most important ones and made modifications to the other two categories to make them appropriate.
5. Once we had all the questions in place, they wrote them up neatly. Each learner answered them carefully.

Comments from the editors

This is an example of how an otherwise serious activity can be fun but at the same time a learning experience. Children usually like to ‘take stock’ of things and if given a chance, would like to do it every now and then. Encourage it so that they know where they are and also decide where they want to go from there. This way children can also become more reflective.

Examples of children’s work

Putting up questions on the board



45

Student evaluation of English classes

TEACHER: Sonika Gupta

AGE: 8+ years

TIME: 50 – 60 minutes

MATERIALS: Marker, magazines, pencil, sheets for writing, evaluation chart (sample is attached)

ORGANISATION: Group work and whole class



PROCEDURE

1. I asked the children to sit in a circle.
2. Then I introduce the activity as “Memory lane to English classes”.
3. We switched off the lights and I asked the children to close their eyes for the activity. I asked them to listen and remember:
 - Visualise your English class at the beginning of the session with limited or almost no book in the class library
 - Recall the days when we all were rejecting and adding books to the class library
 - Think of the book you added to the library, who were your partners at the beginning?
 - Who read aloud stories to you?
 - What did you like most and did not like about the English classes?
4. Then we switched on the lights and I asked them to open their eyes.
5. I pasted an “evaluation chart” on the board and introduced it as the next activity.
6. Then I asked each child to rate the contents of the magazines i.e. “Stories”, “Comics”, “Riddles” and “craft activity” by drawing one star or more stars on the displayed chart paper.
7. At the end, we counted all the stars to find highly rated content/s of the magazine.
8. Finally, I provided a sheet and asked the children to write about their overall experience of English classes and having a library in our class.

Comments from the editors

This activity demonstrates how children evaluated their classes and their learning during the project. Evaluating their learning and showing their preference for their story/magazine/book added a new dimension to their learning. Reflecting on what they liked and why gave them a sense of responsibility and served as a closure to the activity. They also had an opportunity to express their overall experience about their English classes using their own words.

Examples of children's work

Students writing their reflections



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