

Teaching and learning cycle

Stage 1: Building the field (developing knowledge of the topic)

Students' ability to use their existing linguistic and cultural resources can be maximised by ensuring that they have meaningful ideas to write about. Therefore, the writing process should start with a focus on content: how to build up the information about the topic the students will write about. Knowledge of the topic is essential for both factual and narrative texts. Writers need to gather new information and structure their prior knowledge and experiences. At this stage, it may be relevant to encourage students with L1 literacy backgrounds to draw upon this resource to help them locate, evaluate and analyse information. Key vocabulary related to the topic needs to be collected and activated.

Possible activities at stage 1:

- Semantic mapping, wallpapering, brainstorming.
- Pre-reading activities (e.g. jigsaw reading in groups).
- Develop a word wall from topic-related vocabulary.
- Interview an expert.
- An excursion to a relevant place.
- Graphic outlining (timeline, information grid, etc.).
- Employ technology that students already use for information retrieval.

Stage 2: Modeling the genre

This stage aims to build students' knowledge of the focus genre. Students should become familiar with the social purpose, organisation and language features of the genre. With the help of good model texts, the key features can be highlighted: How is the text structured? How is it sequenced (e.g. logically or in time?) What tense is typically used? What is typical of the vocabulary used? What are the special characteristics of the language used?

Possible activities at stage 2:

- Display and read a model text to the students and discuss the purpose of the genre. Draw attention to the organisation and language features of the genre.
- Ask students to compare different examples of the focus genre and conclude how they are alike.
- Have students reconstruct a coherent text from jumbled sentences. Ask them to explain the sequence they choose.
- Develop an activity by deleting the words that typify the genres (e.g. connectives and word forms typical to the genre).

Stage 3. Joint construction

At this stage the previous stages are brought together, as the teacher and students write a piece of text on the chosen genre together. In this teacher-guided collaborative task, it is important to discuss the relevance of content, structure and language during the process of writing. The teacher's role is to help students to reshape the wording to follow the conventions related to the genre in question. This stage is important in terms of demonstrating both the process and the product of writing. Students see that writing is a continuous process of rereading, revising and rewriting the text. The final text is not developed the first time.

Stage 4. Independent writing

As students have developed knowledge of the topic and genre and experienced the process of writing a text representing the chosen genre, they should now be able to write a text independently. The teacher's role during this stage is to encourage students to refer to the models used in earlier phases, show their initial drafts to each other, to give and receive feedback and to support individual students as necessary.

Some students might need more scaffolding. The teacher can provide them with a framework that includes a ready-made structure for building the text. Below is an example of a framework for an argumentative text (adapted from Gibbons 2009: 120):

Title:

What is the discussion about? What is your opinion?

The topic of this discussion is...

Many people argue that...

However, in my opinion...

What are the arguments behind your opinion?

There are a number of reasons why this is the case.

First...

In addition...

Moreover...

Finally...

Why do other people disagree with your opinion? What are their counterarguments?

On the other hand, some people argue that...

In addition...

It has also been suggested that...

Repeat your view and summarise your arguments.

However, overall it can be argued that...

...because...