



CAPE Alumni Internet Connection: English Teacher Talk

CAPE Internet Talk was started as part of CAPE follow-up activities to continue ties with CAPE alumni and those who are interested in professional development in English teaching. It is hoped that this would increase our bond and aloha among former participants, and that the information in the TALK would help our alumni and friends/members review what they know and deepen their understanding of issues and interest in the ESL field.

Timed Repeated Thinking and Writing

Richard R. Day

Introduction

In this article, I present and discuss a writing activity, *timed repeated thinking and writing*, that I have my students do after they have finished reading a book in the extensive reading program. First I explain how to do the activity. Then I discuss why I like it.

The Activity

Timed repeated thinking and writing (TRTW) involves students thinking about a book they have read and then writing about it for a set period of time. Many teachers of English, in both second and foreign language contexts, are familiar with the activity *freewriting*. In a previous article, I discussed freewriting. Students write without worrying about grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc., on any topic for a set period of time, say five minutes. The purpose of freewriting is to help students get started, to generate ideas, often considered one of the most difficult steps in writing. Generally, the teacher does not correct or otherwise evaluate freewritings. Some teachers believe that students' freewriting is private—only the students read what they write.

TRTW builds on freewriting. Students write without thinking about grammar, spelling, or punctuation, and so on. However, they are not free to write on any topic; they are instructed to write about a book they have previously read in the extensive reading program. The timed thinking feature allows the students a set period of time to think about their books before they begin to write.

Here are the instructions that I give to my students:

1. Think about a book that you have read for one minute.
2. Now write for two minutes about the book.
3. Stop. For two minutes, read what you wrote and think again about the story.
4. Now write again for two minutes. Start at the beginning.
5. Repeat step 3.
6. Repeat step 4.

The students do not have their books in front of them for this activity; rather, they rely on their memories.

Why I Like TRTW

Not only does TRTW help students with one of the most important steps in writing, getting started, the repeated feature helps improve their writing fluency. And there is a third



benefit: it allows me to gain insights into their reading. The activity helps me determine how well they have understood their books and what they have learned from their reading. I also like it because I can use it with most all levels of students, from high beginners to advanced. Finally, TRTW enables me to monitor my students reading. If they have not read a book, they will have little, if anything, to write about.

Conclusion

I believe in extensive reading. Extensive reading activities such TRTW make student reading a resource for language practice and use in reading, vocabulary learning, listening, speaking and writing.

Please take the time to give us the addresses of anyone else you think might be interested in receiving this newsletter of the CAPE Internet Connection: English Teacher Talk. And don't forget to write us with any comments you might have. Mahalo!

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