e-Lingua

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Teaching & Learning

Creating an Authentic ESL Process Writing Lesson: Making 'Brainstorming' Fun and Meaningful

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Hi everyone! This is to share with you some integrated activities I once conducted in my ESL class. Among others, one of the objectives of the lesson was to get the students to learn and apply the brainstorming process before they can establish an essay outline and later write an essay. As to have an authentic lesson, I chose the topic related to the current world phenomenon – the Palestine–Israel conflict. For the set induction, the lesson began with the lecturer showing the students a video of a poem recitation (Language skills involved: listening). The students were asked to jot down certain words or phrases that intrigued them which they might use later in their essay writing. They were also asked to take note of certain words which they had never heard before. Then, I asked them to share and discuss the words they have captured with their classmates (Language skills involved: speaking). Here, I explained the importance of 'input and output' in language learning.

The activity proceeded with the lecturer giving the students an essay topic. Then, I assigned them to brainstorm for ideas related to the given topic (Language skills involved: writing). With the help of the words taken from the poem, the brainstorming activity became fun and meaningful when I instructed each student to contribute a line or two so a new poem can be created. Amidst word scribblings scattered all over the board, the students needed to cooperate in arranging ideas, searching for words that rhyme and sorting the lines and stanzas, so they could make a good poem (Learning skills involved: Collaborative learning). When the poem was ready, the students, by then, learned the vocabulary usable for their expository essay.

The emotions involved when listening to and creating the poem allowed the lecturer to touch on the elements of author's purpose and tone when producing an essay, besides highlighting the values learned from real–world occurrences. Now that the poem was completed. The next challenge was to transform the poem into an essay. The students were later instructed to individually group the ideas into several main ideas, together with their supporting details, before consolidating them into a piece of cohesive writing. This process became manageable as the students were now ready with a list of related vocabulary and ideas.

Presented here is the poem created by the students and the lecturer – out of the brainstorming activity. Everyone was so delighted to realise that engineering students can write poetry, too! Enjoy~