

THE DIALOGUE JOURNAL: A TOOL TO IMPROVE TEACHER-STUDENT COMMUNICATION

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Affective communication between teachers and students is as essential as verbal communication between them. This is a fact we have learned through our work in the four-week intensive intermediate courses of English that have been given in our Medical College since 1996. In learning this remarkable reality, the application of the so-called "dialogue journal" has played a very important role.

And what is the dialogue journal? It is a written interaction between teacher and students, which can be conducted in a notebook, and the writing is done regularly throughout the course, semester or school year. Both students and teachers should write at least once a week to retain the sense of the interaction. The student usually writes first and initiates the majority of the topics. The teacher's contributions often support and sustain student topic development. Students might narrate personal experiences, but they can also seek information, ask for help, give information and opinions, and even criticize lessons or complain about classroom events. The writing is confidential. What a student writes should not be commented in public or with other students. And like in a polite conversation, there is no open error correction. If there are some gross mistakes, the teacher may model them in his answer.

In our experimental use of the dialogue journal, we have found these main benefits:

- Using language as real communication. With the dialogue journal, students have regular opportunities to use the language they are learning in communicating a genuine message to a proficient speaker of the language, in a non-threatening situation.

- Detecting students' fossils. This technique is a good way to detect students'-fossilized errors and also current mistakes in a non-repressive context, as we do not mark their writing in any way. On the other hand, the teacher's writing provides a model of correct language use related to the topics the student has written about and the words and structures the student has used.
- Developing writing and reading abilities. Students are able to experiment with written English without having to worry about getting a grade. They practice putting their ideas together and expressing them within the framework of the words and structures they already know. At the same time, the teacher's writing in the journal provides a reading text that is approximately adjusted to the student's level of language development and therefore trains him in the process of decoding written messages.
- Giving advice on key learning issues. The dialogue journal allows the teacher to give concrete advice on key issues such as study methods, learning priorities, sources available, etc. , designed to meet the specific needs of each individual learner.

Because of the benefits mentioned, as well as its feasibility in most teaching settings, the dialogue journal may be considered an effective tool to improve overall communication between teacher and students.

Bibliography:

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