

How speaking frames can support pupils' critical analysis in art and design

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Key Points

To develop oral communication and depth of vocabulary used within art, I wanted to explore the use of models and speaking frames to deepen responses when observing and reflecting upon art.

Purpose

What were your reasons for doing this development work?

Art and design is a subject which I am extremely passionate about. I believe it is a key vehicle for communication and provides pupils with the opportunity to express themselves to others, whilst appreciating the work around them.

Having watched The Story of Austin's Butterfly, a study into Critique and Descriptive Feedback carried out by Ron Berger, I was motivated to explore how children's art and design language and ability to evaluate and critique could be developed. This clip demonstrated pupils using critique groups in art as a means of improving not only their learning in art and design, but also in their oral communication skills, which could be transferred across curricular areas.

I was particularly interested to see if through building upon pupils' ability to give and receive feedback using the appropriate terminology, there was an increase in self-esteem when undertaking tasks across the different areas of art and design.

Furthermore I was keen to assess if through using clear modelled frameworks, if pupils would be able to use specific art and design vocabulary to give and receive feedback?

In addition to this, this project also related to the schools improvement plan targeting the development of oral literacy amongst pupils.

Who were the identified target learners?

Year 4 pupils

How do pupils observe and reflect upon pieces of art? What vocabulary are they able to use?

Pupils who have been identified as having lower self-esteem and who can appear to lack confidence in their ability both when communicating to peers and when completing art activities. Could this be developed through supported speaking frames? Would confidence and enthusiasm to engage in discussions improve?

What specific curriculum area did you intend to have impact on?

Art and design in relation to the development and use of appropriate terminology when observing and evaluating pieces of art.

Oral language development.

PSHE in relation to the development of motivation and raising pupil self-esteem.

How were you intending to improve pupil learning?

Initially I planned to trial the use of critique groups in art and design to enable pupils to build upon and improve art work that they produced through receiving peer feedback.

I planned to provide scaffolded oral frameworks to support development of specific art and design language.

Teacher was to model the use of not only critique language, but specific Art and Design vocabulary e.g. shape, tone, line.

Art and Design vocabulary was to be displayed around the classroom/ on mats.

Prompt Mats were to be introduced and used to support small group feedback within critiquing/ evaluating sessions as peer assessments of learning are carried out.

What were your success criteria?

Looking at the language used by pupils and how this impacted directly on the art work that they were able to evaluate and produce themselves.

Children were to be able to express clear specific statements orally which can be acted upon.

Children were to use oral framework to support the development of their peers learning.

Language of art was to be deepened and applied across art and design lessons, e.g. pupils to use vocabulary such as visual elements.

Evidence to be gathered to demonstrate the effectiveness of critique groups across curricular areas, leading to increased self-esteem and the language associated with it.

Clear evidence of language of art and critiquing applied to Magic Lantern session when analysing and reflecting upon the work of established artist. (Responses from a variety of pupils were to be filmed to show progress made)

Evidence of greater detail, attention to visual elements to be included in art work produced.

Methodology

What did you do - what teaching approaches did you use?

My approach

Whole class teaching was used to introduce the concept of art and design language.

Use of visual prompts as pupils watched The Story of Austin's Butterfly

Modelling of language used when observing and reflecting upon a painting, with clear use of think alouds to support understanding and why it had been chosen.

Pupils were given a painting to analyse – How would they describe it? What language do they use?

Small group work was carried out to provide opportunities for pupils to apply modelled language and show in action – initially this was used with unknown samples of work, from established artists. It was hoped that this would then be applied fully to pupils own personal work and how it was presented and could be improved, although this area requires further development.

Language of Art and Design was displayed modelled and discussed.

Having been initially trialled, at the end of the project, pupils were provided with opportunities for deepening their language of art and design through participating in an art workshop. Here new paintings and pieces of art were observed and presented for discussion. Pupil responses were analysed to assess how their use of language had changed?

Use of IRIS to film sessions, which pupils will now be able to watch and reflect upon in order to assess their own development.

What specific teaching resources did you use?

Film clip of Art Critique groups and its impact – The Story of Austins Butterfly (Autumn 2015)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hqh1MRWZjms>

Display of art and design language in relation to the visual elements.

Visual elements speaking frame mats.

Visual elements fans with key vocabulary to support LP discussions.

Anonymous samples of work from established yet lesser known artists to support initial stages

Images of paintings/ pieces of art for pupils to observe, reflect and evaluate as part of an externally provided art workshop. (Summer 2016)

What CPD experiences, materials, research and expertise have you drawn on?

Demonstration – Online Resource from Ron Berger

Professional Reading – John Hattie – The Visible Classroom

Classroom Enquiry – Pupil Feedback gathered and analysed at high level analysis and evaluation.

Outcomes and Impact

What has been the impact on pupil learning?

This project aimed to improve the overall language and oral communication skills of pupils within the area art and design, recognising that for many subject specific vocabulary was unfamiliar and not always applied in the correct context.

For many artists, the visual elements of colour, form, line, shape, space, texture, and value, are considered to be the foundations for creating a piece of art, be it a painting, sketch or 3d sculpture. At the start of this case, 30 pupils in a Year 4 class were asked to observe a painting. Initially it was found that pupils were able to reflect upon the artwork, commenting briefly upon the style when prompted, however mainly describing in the simplest form what they were able to see. (E.g. 'I can see the artist has used bright colours for the sky') When the language of the visual elements was then introduced and modelled with respect to the same painting, some improvement was seen in both confidence and use of accurate terminology.

Through repeating the lesson, with clearer teacher modelling and a specific focus on the visual element of colour, results proved far greater. Once again the same artwork was used. This time, through explicit teacher modelling, pupils were introduced to key vocabulary associated with colour. This was then modelled in context, before pupils were given time to generate their own vocabulary alongside learning partners. This proved fundamental in enabling pupils to broaden their vocabulary. Coming back together as a class, ideas were shared and a word bank created. 6 pupils then took part in a guided session, where through written scaffolds all were able to comment on the colours used within the painting, using appropriate vocabulary e.g. pale, light, dark and warm. In contrast the remaining 24 pupils were each asked a series of questions, where responses encouraged pupils to demonstrate their understanding of terminology. The results were evident. Through assessing pupil responses, all pupils demonstrated a greater use of art and design vocabulary, when making observations. Responses were more focused and vocabulary richer.

Now when pupils are asked to observe and reflect upon a known/unknown piece of art, pupil's language is fundamentally richer and more specific to the given context of the piece. The children demonstrate a greater enthusiasm and eagerness to discuss art works and are more confident articulating their responses within sessions. (Filmed sessions support this for a range of pupils)

Evidence of impact on pupil learning

Initial observations showed that not all pupils were confident evaluating paintings drawing upon appropriate terminology and a breadth of art and design vocabulary.

IRIS sessions show initial responses from pupils and their ability to use a speaking frame to offer a more focused response when evaluating a piece of art work.

Written reflections show pupils' ability to select and use appropriate vocabulary to describe paintings and their responses towards them has deepened with a wider range of vocabulary being used.

Pupils' mind map activity looking at Art and Design vocabulary shows a richer ability to identify words in response to the visual elements. E.g. children recorded vocabulary including vivid, dominant, perspective, foreground, background.

Pupil participation and responses in an externally provided art and design workshop clearly demonstrated increased confidence and richer vocabulary when observing and evaluating. Modelled language and frameworks evident through articulated verbal responses. E.g. 'I think the artist has...'

What has been the impact on teaching?

Recognition of the need for clearer teaching modelling.

Need to focus on a clear breakdown in relation to introducing key vocabulary, what it means and how it can be used to offer responses and feedback.

Evidence of impact on teaching

Improved teaching through more focused and explicit teacher modelling.

Recognition of need for less is more effective. Need to embed vocabulary and a model fully before moving on.

Looking at word choice and what this means, clear definitions were needed and had to be applied against a piece of art to help support pupil understanding.

What has been the impact on school organisation and leadership?

Continued development of oral communication skills within the context of Art and Design, drawing upon previous models used within reciprocal reading, maths and science.

Evidence of impact on school organisation and leadership

Supporting the development of oral communication as part of the school development plan.

Increased progress to ensure coverage of Art and Design National Curriculum.

What is the crucial thing that made the difference?

The need for quality speaking frames and models to support pupil's oral communication skills in relation to their ability to evaluate and give feedback.

What would your next steps be?

I would now like to deepen pupil vocabulary across the visual elements through further focused sessions in both art and visual literacy. This would enable pupils to explore the importance of illustrations and how these support the development of characters, settings and events within a text.

This should then be disseminated across the school, with all pupils having the opportunity to use speaking frames and vocabulary to support art and design discussions. (Sessions to be filmed and evaluated through end of year Art workshops)

Finally pupils should be able to apply speaking frames to support discussions, self-assessments and peer assessments of the art work that they produce. Here opportunities for critique groups to be implemented and pupil led.

Sharing Practice

If another individual or school was attempting to replicate this work, where should they start?

A clear starting point is the need to identify the type of responses pupils are already able to offer when observing and evaluating pieces of art. What vocabulary do they use? Is there clarity in the response and is the vocabulary appropriate?

This could be carried out through a control group/ whole class filmed session to establish initial grasp of vocabulary.

What would be the essential elements to include?

A focus/ control group to measure the impact against.

Explicit speaking frames

Clear Models with art and design vocabulary.

Opportunities for group and learning partner talk.

Opportunities for pupils to evaluate a range of art works including in the later stages their own and peers.