

Illustrations as teaching material to encourage writing texts

Prof. Natalie Lavoie, Jessy Marin

Université du Québec à Rimouski, Canada

Abstract

Writing activities are often seen as unengaging and challenging by elementary school pupils. Many reasons can explain the apprehension towards writing, including the fact that they frequently do not know how to start the task. Therefore, it is important for teachers to support the process of text production. One possible form of support can be linked to the presence of writing prompts, elements that would help them write. In our study, illustrations were used as triggers and support for writing a narrative in pairs among elementary school pupils, to examine how this educational material could encourage writing. A total of 56 students (28 pairs) in 2nd grade (ages 7-8) and 66 students (33 pairs) in 6th grade (ages 11-12) participated in the study. The writing of a text was based on four images in 2nd grade and six images in 6th grade (tailored to their educational levels) that the students could manipulate freely. Discussions among students during the activity were recorded, verbatim transcripts were created, and these were analyzed. The results reveal four main functions (stimulating imagination, encouraging description, facilitating emotional expression, and structuring the text) that the images served during writing, which manifested differently in the exchanges depending on the grade level. These functions will be presented, and examples will be provided. A distinction will also be made between 2nd-grade and 6th-grade students.

Keywords: teaching material, writing, primary school