

Primary Pairwork

Pair work is all about...providing controlled practice, providing fluency practice, providing opportunities for speaking, speaking and listening for a reason, exchanging information, providing clear goals, building confidence, setting time limits, looking and listening, checking instructions, setting up and staging, monitoring and giving feedback, classroom management.

Can you add to the list?

Pair work is positive because it

- gives learners more speaking time
- changes the pace of the lesson
- takes the focus off the teacher
- puts the focus on the children
- allows the children to mix with class mates
- allows the teacher to monitor, move around the class and listen to language
- teaches the children how to lead and to be led by someone other than the teacher
- helps children to learn social skills - turn taking, helping.

Vygotsky (1934) puts language and communication at the core of personal development

Children who are unable to perform tasks when they are left to their own devices often succeed when they are helped by an adult. The capacity to learn through instruction is a fundamental feature of human intelligence. A child's potential for learning is revealed and realised in interactions with more knowledgeable others.

The gap between what a child is able to do alone and what he can achieve with help from one more knowledgeable or skilled than himself "The zone of proximal development"

Pair work and what do we know about children

- ***They love guessing***

A child puts her finger on one of the pictures on her page (new vocabulary item) The teacher has a limited number of guesses as to what the child has chosen. The children guess in the same way in pairs.

- ***They like to complete their tasks and feel a sense of achievement***

Create a suitable level of challenge.

eg The coloured rods- The first child has their eyes closed and the other takes one colour away. The first child says which colour is missing.

The alphabet maths game - *What's A plus 4? E.*

- ***They may be able to learn more effectively if the task has a visual, auditory or kinaesthetic focus***

eg The shape activity. Draw a triangle, square and a circle on the board. Ask the children to put various flashcards one by one into the different shapes.

- ***They like to be teacher***

Give each pair flashcards of vocabulary they have seen. They take it in turns to be teacher. *What's this?*

Hand out the pictures of food. The children add a happy or sad face to each card. They cut up the cards so there are two pictures on each. They then write the sentence about a child on the back. *He likes cheese but he doesn't like meat.*

They take it in turns to show the pictures (as a teacher) and ask their partner to say the correct sentence. If it is correct the partner can keep the card.

- ***They like to see how they a task becomes easier with practice***

Build their confidence. eg The dialogue cut up into lines. Say a line and ask the pair to find the line, pick it up and repeat it. Ask the children to put the dialogue in order and then turn all the questions face down. They try and remember the dialogue together and then turn the lines face up to check. They then turn the answers face down and try and remember the dialogue once more. See if they can turn over all the lines and remember the complete dialogue.

Pair work pit falls

noise level - keep a noise - o- meter on the board. Let them know what noise level you will/won't accept.

task being done incorrectly - prepare your instructions carefully. Stop the activity and re- direct .

use of L1 - make sure the children are confident about the language they need to use and the nature of the task itself. What Spanish are you going to accept /not accept. Make sure your policy is clear and award *pair work points* to the children for looking, listening, taking turns and speaking English.

uneven pairs - Get the children used to being a pair work helper Give the helper the task of making sure a certain number of pairs are keeping to the rules of looking, listening, taking turns and speaking English.

children not willing to work together - let them work with friends but also explain to them at the beginning of the year that in your class you are going to work with everyone. Make sure the tasks are short and lend themselves to changing pairs within the class.

Practicalities

Standing or sitting? Moving tables or chairs? Consider the layout of your classroom and prepare how your children are going to work together. eg two children next to each other, the children turning round and speaking to the child behind them?

Always remember to

- Set up your pair work activity carefully
- Plan your instructions
- Explain the procedure before splitting up the class
- Demonstrate with a volunteer
- Check their understanding of the task (written steps on the board, ask a volunteer to explain)
- Be prepared for fast finishers
- Prepare a feedback task
- Set a clear time limit
- Control who works with who ie not always the same children together
- See what your course book offers and how you can adapt it (Teachers book? Resource packs?)
- Integrate little but often